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Augusta Adams Cobb Young: Priesthood Holder

In response to Jonathan Stapley and Kristine Wright’s article, “Female Ritual Healing in Mormonism” (37, no. 1 [Winter 2011]: 1–85), at least one prominent LDS woman certainly believed in the 1840s that she held priesthood.

Augusta Adams Cobb Young (Brigham Young’s second plural wife) specifically stated that she held “the holy priesthood” in two contemporary documents written two months apart. Augusta, a second-tier Boston Brahmin, was not only a faith healer, but also a midwife and “doctor” who received some minimal medical training in the Salem and Boston areas. She also became an ardent opponent of Thomsonian medicine, which many of the other early Mormon doctors (male and female) espoused, such as Willard and Phineas Richards, and Patty Bartlett Sessions.

She felt that mainstream medicine, combined with common sense and priesthood blessings/faith healing were the best path, while Thomsionians primarily prescribed *Lobelia inflata* as an emetic panacea to induce vomiting. Augusta apparently was a founding (or at least a very early) member of the Utah Council of Health, begun in February 1849. However, she was expelled in November 1851 for two reasons. First, she vehemently insisted that simply causing sick people to vomit was not necessarily conducive to their health; and second, she publicly defended Dr. Jeter Clinton when he was being expelled from the Council of Health, apparently because he too opposed Thomsonian medicine.¹

(Note that *Lobelia inflata* is extremely high in nicotine and has psychoactive properties, making it widely used by early New England Indians as an entheogen—a drug that induces a “high” and frequently leads to encounters with “the God within.” These properties would clearly make it against the modern interpretation of the Word of Wisdom.)

Before coming to Utah in 1848, Augusta wrote two significant statements indicating her belief that she held Mormon priesthood. The first

¹For Augusta’s early participation in the Utah Council of Health, see Augusta Adams Cobb, Letter to Brigham Young, October 6, 1851; Augusta Adams Cobb, Letter to “the Presidentess and Her Councilors” of the Council of Health, November 4, 1851; and Augusta Adams Cobb, Letter to Brigham Young, November 20, 1851, all three in Theodore A. Schroeder Collection on Mormonism, Wisconsin State Historical Society; microfilm and scanned images in my possession.
is found in a letter she wrote in December 1847 when she returned to Boston from Nauvoo to visit family once more before making the cross-country trek. While in Boston, she wrote a long-time Mormon friend, Amey Cecilia Cooper Aldrich, who had also returned to her home in Northbridge, Massachusetts (about forty-five miles west of Boston) after having been in Nauvoo where Aldrich was sealed to Brigham Young as his thirty-fourth wife.

The letter is unique in that Augusta basically frames its first half as a kind of patriarchal blessing (minus a tribal designation)—a matriarchal blessing, as it were. The blessing ends with: "Thou shalt have power to save thy kindred and if thou canst believe thou shalt have power to influence your husband to sell off all and gather with the Saints and go over with them next Spring, taking your Children along with you for their never will be so good and [sic] opportunity again."

Then Augusta seals the blessing as follows: "This blessing dear sister I seal upon your head in the name of Jesus Christ by virtue of the priesthood vested in me amen."

Then in February 1848 from Winter Quarters, Augusta wrote out a curious document she called her "Last Will and Testament." (She did not die until 1886.) It was actually a formal plea to have her sealing for eternity (but not for time) to Brigham Young canceled, so she could be sealed by proxy to either Jesus Christ (her first priority) or failing that, to Joseph Smith. Her relationship with Brigham Young had completely deteriorated because of several issues, including jealousy because he had married some three dozen women in Nauvoo. Augusta ended her request to the First Presidency with: "I do this in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by virtue of the Holy Priesthood vested in me, because I consider it necessary to my salvation, exaltation, calling and Election."

Then Augusta stated that she was vested with "the Holy Priesthood." This fascinating "will" was witnessed and signed by none other than Young's two counselors in the First Presidency, Heber C. Kimball and Willard Richards, indicating that they, too, actively believed that Augusta Adams Cobb held priesthood in 1848. (By the way, although Brigham Young rejected her several requests to be sealed to Jesus Christ, he did cancel their sealing for eternity and stood as proxy as Joseph Smith for her sealing to the founding prophet on April 14, 1848.)

In future academic research and thoughtful debate on the issue of female sacerdotal and spiritual au-

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3 The Last Will and Testament of Augusta Adams, February 21, 1848, Brigham Young Collection, MS 1234, Box 62, fd. 6, LDS Church History Library. (I am grateful to Todd Compton for informing me of the will.) For her desire to be sealed as a polygamous wife of Jesus Christ, see Augusta Adams Cobb, Letters to Brigham Young, January 20, 1846, and February 14/16, 1851, Schroeder Collection.
thority in Mormonism, Augusta Adams Cobb’s two statements must now be included, weighing heavily on the side of women’s full right to hold and use LDS priesthood.

Connell O’Donovan
Santa Cruz, California

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4Sealing record of Augusta Adams Cobb Young, Brigham Young, and Joseph Smith (in Thomas Bullock’s hand), MS 1234, Box 62, fd. 6, LDS Church History Library.
William P. MacKinnon
Introduction

I realize that there is a difference between an MHA presidential address and a sermon, but I do have a biblical text for my remarks—from the Gospel according to St. Matthew 25:35. More about this scripture later . . .

My wonderful wife, Pat, asked me if I was nervous about delivering these remarks from such an exalted position and to a truly re-
markable group. I certainly am not the first non-Mormon to lead MHA, but I realize that my election to this role in May of 2010 was a bit unusual.\footnote{Since MHA’s founding in 1965, non-Mormon presidents have included Jan Shipps (1979–80), Mario S. De Pillis (1994–95), Larry Foster (2002–3), and perhaps others, depending upon how one categorizes members of other Restoration Movement churches such as the Community of Christ and individuals who are inactive Latter-day Saints. It is emblematic of MHA’s welcoming tone that there is ambiguity about such a background factor.}

Over the past year, I have considered the presidency of MHA to be a special trust as well as a distinct honor. My answer to Pat was an easy “no,” for, although this gathering is surely not a Quaker meeting, I feel strongly that I am indeed among friends.\footnote{Just as “Mormon” is a nickname for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and its members, “Quaker” has long been shorthand for the Protestant denomination known formally as The Society of Friends.}

And so I press on in my own Presbyterian way—delighted to be in your midst once again. This time I am accompanied by a small battalion of my family members who have joined us from their homes in California, Massachusetts, Nevada, Oregon, and Texas. (Clearly it is only a matter of time before we have someone resident in Utah.) It would not be accurate to say that the members of the greater Clan MacKinnon have traveled to St. George without benefit of purse or scrip, but I know that they have made a long trek, as you have, and so I appreciate all the more their being here.

Now I want to do three things through these remarks. First, I will share what to me is an important lesson about research methodology learned while afoot, so to speak, in my long, fifty-three-year exploration of the Mormon past. I will then describe two of the most colorful “finds” about the Utah War yielded by this research technique—both undisclosed until now. After sharing these discoveries, I will close with a few comments about historians—specifically how I feel about you and MHA.

**SERENDIPITY**

In my 2007 *Dialogue* article titled “Loose in the Stacks: A Half-Century with the Utah War and its Legacy,” I discussed, among other lessons learned, the importance of serendipity in the pick-and-shovel

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work of historical research. Serendipity has been crucial to my discoveries; yet for some reason, it is a phenomenon rarely discussed in university history departments. What do I mean by serendipity? For me, it is an active process linking a prepared, receptive mind to a sense of inquisitiveness energized to spot promising leads and fruitful connections in the spirit of the hunt. I liken the process to use of my old Air Force squadron’s search radar in the Berlin air corridors of the Cold War—a matter of having the equipment on, properly calibrated, and constantly monitored.

The connectedness of it all evokes Ezekiel’s biblical visit to the Valley of the Dry Bones (Ezek. 37:1–14), or at least the old black spiritual’s description of the prophet’s encounter with anatomical linkages and “dem bones, dem bones, dem dry bones.” In his final novel, Robert B. Parker had his detective-hero, Spenser, describe the process of investigative discovery in similar but more prosaic terms: “It’s like what I do. I look into something and I get a name and I look into the name and it leads to another name, and I keep finding out whatever I can about whatever comes my way, and sometimes you find something that helps.” With an active, receptive mind properly tuned, connections click, things happen—documents surface and insights emerge from the obscurity of the past in a way that would not happen otherwise. These are the springs from which my “Eureka!” moments bubble up. Serendipity is a simple but powerful force for discovery, even for sophisticated historians. We ought to recognize it as such and develop a knack for building the friendships and sensitivities that

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4The term “serendipity” was coined by eighteenth-century English writer Horace Walpole and is technically derived from an early name for Sri Lanka: Serendip. The inspiration that prompted Walpole’s use of the name in the way that we now know it in turn flowed from the title of a whimsical tale, The Three Princes of Serendip, that Walpole described in 1754 as a story in which “as their highnesses traveled, they were always making discoveries, by accident and sagacity, of things which they were not in quest of.” Courtesy of MHA member-wordsmith Ben Bennion via American Heritage Dictionary (4th ed.).

5Robert B. Parker, Painted Ladies (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 2010), 61.
make serendipitous discoveries possible. It is a process far different from its passive, distant cousin with which it is frequently confused—dumb luck. The behavior I am describing is not just a matter of hanging around in hopes of something interesting turning up. Rather it is a matter of making one’s own discoveries happen through preparedness and, above all else, receptivity. Typically, the author Jack London put it more energetically in advising aspiring writers: “Don’t loaf and invite inspiration; light out after it with a club; and if you don’t get it you will nonetheless get something that looks remarkably like it.” Baseball executive Branch Rickey covered the same bases in more philosophical fashion than did Jack London: “Things worthwhile generally just don’t happen. Luck is a fact, but should not be a factor. Good luck is what is left over after intelligence and effort have combined at their best. . . . Luck is the residue of design.”

I could spend the rest of these remarks describing documentary finds and insights into Mormon history that have come to me almost weekly in this unpredictable, wonderfully quirky way. But I will confine my illustrations to two very recent such incidents, both relating to the Utah War of 1857–58. The first, I call, with apologies to Dr. Seuss, the Case of the Cat in the Hat; it bears on a somewhat minor yet persistent bit of Mormon folklore. The other, dubbed the Case of

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6For the stimulating effect on serendipity of dialogue between trusted colleagues, see MacKinnon, “Loose in the Stacks,” 65–66.

7Dale L. Walker and Jeanne Campbell Reesman, eds., No Mentor but Myself: Jack London on Writing and Writers (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1999), 57.


10The Utah War of 1857–58 was the armed struggle for power and authority in Utah Territory between the newly inaugurated administration of President James Buchanan and the leadership of the LDS Church, principally President Brigham Young, who also held federal office as Utah’s governor, superintendent of Indian affairs, and militia commander. It was a
Reflected Light, deals with a wholly unknown but far more global issue likely to keep at least a few historians busy for years.

**Case of the Cat in the Hat**

As is well known, the active phase of the Utah War ended on June 26, 1858, when Brevet Brigadier General Albert Sidney Johnston led his U.S. Army command in and through a Salt Lake City deserted and ready for the torch. With orders to burn the city if Johnston’s gargantuan force strayed, the small Mormon militia detail remaining in Salt Lake City watched closely how the Utah Expedition comported itself. Fortunately, General Johnston maintained strict discipline, and the army march-through—all eleven hours of it—took place without untoward incident.

For nearly 150 years, Mormon folklore has held that, while one of the Utah Expedition’s regiments, the Second U.S. Dragoons, marched past Brigham Young’s houses, its commander, Colonel Philip St. George Cooke, doffed his hat out of respect for the troops of the Mormon Battalion who had trekked from Santa Fe to southern Cali-

struggle ten years in the making that eventually pitted Utah’s large and experienced militia against nearly one-third of the U.S. Army. The campaign was the nation’s most extensive and expensive military undertaking during the period between the Mexican and Civil wars.

Absent a contemporary image of the Utah Expedition’s June 26, 1858, march through Salt Lake City, this engraving, the first depicting the event, was created in 1873 for T.B.H. Stenhouse’s Rocky Mountain Saints by adding a military formation to an unrelated existing street scene derived from an 1860 C. R. Savage photograph. It subsequently became the stock (but contrived) depiction of the U.S. Army’s march-through.

fornia under his command during the Mexican War. Precisely how and when this story originated is unclear. The earliest published account of which I am aware is included in a speech delivered by Apostle Wilford Woodruff twenty-two years later in 1880. Without specifying a source, Woodruff observed: “Col. Cooke . . . entertained great respect for the Mormon Battalion and he always spoke kindly of them before the government and all men. When he went through Salt Lake City with Col. A. S. Johnston, in 1858, he uncovered his head in honor of the Mormon Battalion, that five hundred brave men that he had led two thousand miles over sandy deserts and through rocky canyons, in the midst of thirst, hunger, and fatigue, in the service of their country.”

The following year, when former Mormon Battalion sergeant

11Wilford Woodruff, “Zion’s Camp.—Mormon Battalion.—Pioneers,” in Erastus Snow, ed., The Utah Pioneers: Celebration of the Entrance of the Pio-
Daniel Tyler published the unit’s history, he described a similar scene in slightly different words: "When the army passed through Salt Lake City on the 26th of June . . . Colonel Cooke, out of deference to the brave men who had served under him in the Mormon Battalion, took off his hat and rode through the deserted city with his head uncover- ed." It is possible that Apostle Woodruff was one of the Mormon leaders with whom Tyler met while gathering material for his battalion history, a possibility that raises the intriguing question of whether one man influenced the writing of the other.\textsuperscript{12}

Interestingly, Woodruff had been in Provo rather than Salt Lake City during the Utah Expedition’s march-through, had therefore not been an eyewitness, and had not recorded any such Cooke incident in his comprehensive diary for the period. Neither is there any indication that Daniel Tyler was part of the small Nauvoo Legion unit on duty in the city that day. But John R. Young, Brigham Young’s twenty-one-year-old nephew, claimed to be an eyewitness with this select group and remembered the scene differently. In his memoirs, published in 1920, Young recalled, “I sat with the guards in the upper room of the [Brigham Young] Lion House, and saw that army in death-like silence march through the deserted streets of the dead city, a few of the officers with uncovered heads, as if attending a funeral. To us western mountain boys, the solemnity of the march was oppressive; and glad relief came to our strained feelings, when we [later] saw the soldiers’ camp fires kindled on the ‘other side of Jordan.’”\textsuperscript{13}

Admittedly, this recollection was published sixty-two years later, but John R. Young—even with Woodruff’s and Tyler’s assessments publicly available—did not agree that there had been a show of respect by Philip St. George Cooke, the best-known U.S. Army officer in Mormon Utah of 1858.

Nor were Woodruff’s and Tyler’s the only drums beating for this romantic image. As the nineteenth century drew to a close, poets joined the memoirists and historians in perpetuating the Cooke leg-
end. In 1892, for example, respected Mormon poet Josephine Spencer commemorated the Utah War in a long epic titled “The Approach of the Army.” In one section Spencer described the Utah Expedition’s passage through a deserted Salt Lake City:

Riding through the lonely place
With a trim and martial pace,
Whilst the troops in wonder stared,
Swift the brave commander bared
His gray head—deep-thrilled at sight
Of the valley’s scene of blight.14

By “brave commander” did Spencer mean Philip St. George Cooke, Albert Sidney Johnston (who had died a Confederate hero at Shiloh thirty years before she wrote), or some other officer? Her ambiguity is emblematic as well as fascinating. Irrespective of its origins, by the turn of the twentieth century, the legend of a hat-doffing gesture by Cooke had become and remains an iconic, virtually unchallenged part of Mormon military history.15 In fact, in 1923 a teachers’ guide and coloring book designed for the LDS Church’s Primary edu-

15The Cooke hat-doffing story received significant reinforcement
cational program for young children used the Cooke legend to illus-
trate—literally—the value of obedience and discipline with a vignette
from the Utah War. This little lesson centered on a drawing depicting
a mounted Colonel Cooke, hat in hand, leading a group of flag-bear-
sing soldiers marching in perfect formation past Brigham Young’s
houses. Beneath the sketch were two stanzas of verse:

The word was sent to Johnston’s men,
“You may pass through our land,
If you will promise one and all
Not e’en to lift a hand.”
The army came and marched in file
Through Salt Lake City, fair,
And ‘tis said the Colonel bared his head
In respect to comrades there.\textsuperscript{16}

To me, this traditional story always sounded a bit “off.” Circum-
and attention with its repetition in B. H. Roberts, \textit{The Mormon Battalion: Its
History and Achievements} (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1919), 88. In this ac-
count Roberts, a Mormon General Authority, essentially quoted Wilford
Woodruff’s 1880 speech. Eleven years later, in his magisterial study com-
memorating the LDS Church’s centennial, Roberts returned to the Cooke
story in briefer fashion, simply stating that the colonel “passed through the
city with his head uncovered, as a token of his respect for the Mormon Bat-
talion.” Roberts, \textit{A Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Lat-
ter-day Saints, Century I}, 6 vols. (Salt Lake City: The Church and Deseret
News Press, 1930) 4:446. In the mid-1950s, Cooke’s non-Mormon biogra-
pher made no reference to any such gesture in describing the June 26
march-through. See Otis E. Young, \textit{The West of Philip St. George Cooke,
repetitions of the Cooke story in recent histories of Tyler’s unit or the fron-
tier army, see Norma B. Ricketts, \textit{The Mormon Battalion: U.S. Army of the
West, 1846–1848} (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1996), 271, and
Durwood Ball, \textit{Army Regulars on the Western Frontier, 1848–1861} (Norman:
University of Oklahoma Press, 2001), 165. There is no reference to this leg-
end in David L. Bigler and Will Bagley, eds., \textit{Army of Israel: Mormon Battalion
Narratives} (Spokane, Wash.: The Arthur H. Clark Co., 2000), or Sherman L.
Fleek, \textit{History May Be Searched in Vain: A Military History of the Mormon Bat-

\textsuperscript{16}Mormon History Coloring Book, 1923: June, ’Response to Good
stantially it seemed too good to be true in the way that many of the urban legends circulating on today’s internet send us to Snopes to check them. My doubts sprang not only from the ironic confluence of circumstances that brought Cooke and some of his former Mormon troops in proximity to one another as adversaries but from my inabil-

Emblematic of the hat-doffing story’s acceptance in Mormon historiography was this simple sketch suitable for coloring created by an unknown artist for the LDS Primary’s Children’s Friend, June 1923. Courtesy Ardis E. Parshall, Salt Lake City, and LDS Church History Library.


17Wikipedia defines http://www.Snopes.com, formally the “Urban Legends Reference Pages,” as “a [internet] web site discussing urban legends, Internet rumors, email forwards, and other stories of uncertain or
ity to corroborate the legend from the diaries and letters of the federal troops who marched through Salt Lake City with Cooke that day. Especially important was the “silence” on this matter in the reminiscences of Bugler William D. Drown and Second Lieutenant Samuel Wragg Ferguson of Cooke’s own regiment.\(^{18}\) Equally telling is the absence of a hat-doffing incident in the march-through description recorded by George (“Beefsteak”) Harrison, a Mormon teenager traveling with the army and working as a civilian camp cook.\(^{19}\) Given the hard feelings about Mormons and the Nauvoo Legion then rampant in Johnston’s Utah Expedition, including the Second Dragoons, such a highly visible gesture of respect by a strict, exacting officer like Cooke would have been remarkable—literally.

Fueling my skepticism was the restrained, if not frosty, tone of Cooke’s comments about the Mormon Battalion in a letter that he wrote to a Mormon officer on June 8, 1858, only eighteen days before he marched through Salt Lake City. In this incident, Brigadier General James Ferguson, the Nauvoo Legion’s adjutant general during the Utah War and formerly the Mormon Battalion’s sergeant-major, had challenged Cooke by letter to acknowledge the accomplishments of the Mormon troops who had earlier served under him. The questionable origin.” See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Snopes.com (accessed July 17, 2011).


lyst for Ferguson’s challenge—carried by messenger over the 113 miles between Salt Lake City and Fort Bridger—had been a November 29, 1857, letter allegedly written by Cooke and printed by a New York newspaper in January that belatedly came to Ferguson’s notice the next May. What caught Ferguson’s attention was a passage in the letter impugning Mormon military honor.20 His reaction was volcanic; although the letter had not mentioned the Mormon Battalion, Ferguson immediately drafted a prolix, emotional letter defending that unit’s military record and taking his old commander to task for ingratitude and betrayal. Ferguson’s letter is presented in the appendix to this article because of the light it sheds on the matter of his likely focus on Cooke during the June 26 march-through as well as on Cooke’s own mood during his passage through Salt Lake City in the choking dust of the Utah Expedition’s rear guard.21

On June 8 Cooke responded to Ferguson with a note as short as Ferguson’s had been long. In it Cooke informed him that the published letter attributed to him was bogus. The colonel characterized it as a “mysterious forgery.” The tone of Cooke’s note was civil, unemotional, and terse. He thanked Ferguson for bringing this hoax to his attention.


21 James Ferguson, Letter to Philip St. George Cooke, May 5, 1858, Utah Territorial Militia Records, fd. 44, item 655, Utah State Archives, Salt Lake City. In 1999, through serendipity, I became aware of this then-unknown letter in the Utah State Archives and facilitated its publication for the first time in Bigler and Bagley, Army of Israel, 435–39. Thirteen years after the appearance of this compilation, it remains the full document’s only place of publication. In 1858 and 1881 the Deseret News and former sergeant Tyler, respectively, had run a three-paragraph distillation of Ferguson’s letter, a circumstance that prompted Bigler and Bagley to speculate that perhaps the longer version was not actually sent to Cooke. Tyler, A Concise History, 369; Bigler and Bagley, Army of Israel, 439 note 48. I do not share this reservation and note that Ferguson, Brigham Young, John Taylor, Seth M. Blair, and other Mormon leaders routinely sent such prolix communications, especially when defending Mormonism. For example, in October 1857, while bivouacked in the wilderness, the Utah Expedition’s Captain John W. Phelps was startled to receive a twelve-page polemic from Apostle John Taylor, a total stranger.
attention and closed with the comment, “I can only refer to my connection with you, on the Battalion staff, as a satisfactory and pleasant one.” With respect to the Mormon Battalion itself, Philip St. George Cooke referred to its service—the main focus of Ferguson’s rhetoric—only obliquely: “My sense of the performance of the Mormon Battalion was expressed at San Luis Rey [Mission, California], in an order, which you remember, and which stands printed in a Senate document.”22 With this convoluted approach Cooke avoided in 1858 direct use of the warm, congratulatory language that, as Ferguson reminded him, he had used in 1847.23

The lieutenant-colonel commanding [Cooke] congratulates the battalion on their safe arrival on the shore of the Pacific ocean, and the conclusion of the march of over two thousand miles. History may be searched in vain for an equal march of infantry. Nine-tenths of it has been through a wilderness where nothing but savages and wild beasts are found, or deserts where, for want of water, there is no living creature. There, with almost hopeless labor, we have dug deep wells which the future traveler will enjoy. Without a guide who had traversed them, we have ventured into trackless prairies where water was not found for several marches. With crowbar and pick and ax in hand we have worked our way over mountains which seemed to defy aught save [except] the wild goat, and hewed a passage through a chasm of living rock more narrow than our wagons. To bring these first wagons to the Pacific, we have preserved the strength of our mules by herding them ever over large tracts, which you have laboriously guarded without loss. The garrisons of four presidios of Sonora, concentrated within the walls of Tucson, gave us no pause. We drove them out with their artillery, but our intercourse with the citizens was unmarked by a single act of injustice. Thus, marching half naked and half fed, and liv-

22Cooke, Letter to Ferguson, June 8, 1858, LDS Church History Library, and in Tyler, A Concise History, 369–70. What neither Ferguson nor Cooke knew was that the offending letter had been written by Major Fitz John Porter and that the New York Times had mislabeled it.

23Philip St. George Cook, Order Number I, Headquarters Mormon Battalion, Mission of San Diego, January 30, 1847, published in Cooke, “Journal,” Senate Exec. Doc. 2, Serial 547, 31st Cong., 2d Sess. (1849–50), 1–85; and Bigler and Bagley, Army of Israel, 171. Ferguson had included this order in his letter to Cooke of May 5, 1858. Since I present it here in the context of Cooke’s response, I do not include it in Ferguson’s letter. (See Appendix.) Cooke composed the letter at San Diego, but it was not read to the troops until a few days later at San Luis Rey.
ing upon wild animals, we have discovered and made a road of great value to our country. Arrived at the first settlement of California after a single day’s rest, you cheerfully turned off from the route to this point of promised repose to enter upon a campaign, and meet, as we believed, the approach of the enemy; and this, too, without even salt to season your sole subsistence of fresh meat. Lieutenants A. J. Smith and George Stoneman, of the First Dragoons, have shared and given valuable aid in all these labors. Thus, volunteers, you have exhibited some high and essential qualities of veterans. But much remains undone. Soon you will turn your strict attention to the drill, to system and order, to forms also, which are all necessary to the soldier.

By order of Lieutenant-colonel P. St. Geo. Cooke.

P. C. Merrill, Adjutant

In addition to Cooke’s lack of warmth in responding to Ferguson in June 1858, I became aware in 2000 that, in the late 1850s, the colonel did not seem at all proud of his association with the Mormon Battalion. Once Brigham Young pitted the Nauvoo Legion against U.S. troops, it is likely that Cooke’s demeanor toward Mormon soldiers, even those whom he had led, turned negative, at least in public.24 I offer two examples relating to the Utah Expedition to support this assessment.

24Starting in 1861, Cooke also became estranged from his own son, nephew, and two sons-in-law—all Virginians—when they left the U.S. Army to serve the Confederacy. Two of these officer-relatives had served with
First, in February 1859 Cooke wrote to Secretary of War Floyd to request promotion by brevet to the grade of brigadier general. In his long written justification for such recognition, Cooke provided Floyd with a description of his military career. For the Mexican War period, he wholly excluded any explicit reference to the Mormon Battalion or the religious affiliation of its troops. In this 1859 career summary, Cooke described the nature and significance of his long, difficult 1846-47 trek from Santa Fe to San Diego, but his only comments about the unit he led in accomplishing this feat were unspecific, if not negative. In one instance he referred only to “a very ill provisioned battalion” which experienced with him “risks, sufferings and exigencies as trying as any in the scenes of War.” Cooke also commented with exasperation on the need for him personally to control and direct this unnamed unit’s “ignorant guides,” command intervention that enabled “penetrating and passing wilderness tracts, dangerous to this day for the want of water; discovering springs, and digging wells, still important, and it appears, named after [me].” As Philip St. George Cooke limned for Floyd an account of the march that Latter-day Saints then (and now) regarded as epic, the colonel reduced the event to an incident about him rather than his men. In the process, he complained to the secretary of war that the assignment “deprived [me] of all brilliant chances which [my] peers enjoyed,—receiving, many, three brevets.” When Cooke turned to the subject of his Utah War duty, he described for Floyd the following: “Marched in command of [my] regiment on almost a forlorn hope—to cross the Rocky Mountains in November,—for the most important object which was accomplished, of driving off mounted banditti, who in large bodies were burning trains, and cutting off the communications of the Army.”

Further to the point, in 1890 when The University of Michigan asked Cooke for a career summary for its alumni records, his response made no mention of military service involving Mormons, Cal-

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25Cooke’s 1859 petition for promotion was unsuccessful. Secretary Floyd sent it without comment to the army’s adjutant general (who filed it) rather than to Scott, Buchanan, and the U.S. Senate for favorable action. Cooke, Letter to Floyd, February [no day], 1859, Letters Received, Records of the Adjutant General’s Office (RG 94), National Archives, Washington, D.C.
ifornia, or Utah. The closest he came even to an allusion to the Mormon Battalion was: “I received a Brevet Commission in the War with Mexico of Lt. Col.” These were hardly warm, appreciative recollections of service with (and even in pursuit of) Mormon troops of the type James Ferguson had solicited from Philip St. George Cooke in May 1858.

My sense of unease about the hat-doffing legend continued to grow, even though Colonel Cooke was explicitly mentioned by a Mormon, Andrew Moffitt, who traveled from the Salt Lake Valley to Provo on June 26 with a description of the march-through. Moffitt’s news was immediately entered into the records being kept by refugee Apostle and Church Historian George A. Smith: “Bro Andrew Moffitt brought the information that Col. Johns[ton] and his Army passed through Great Salt Lake City. . . . Col. Cook[e] passed through the town with his head uncovered, as a token of his respect for the Mormon Bat[t]alion.”

As intriguing as Moffitt’s information is, it is problematic. There is no indication that Moffitt, whom Smith cast in the role of messenger rather than eyewitness, had been on the streets of Salt Lake City earlier that day. Even if he had been, it is unlikely that Moffitt would have been able to identify Cooke, whose name was well known but whom he probably had never seen. Most troubling is the fact that Andrew Moffitt’s source of information is unknown.

For me, what undercuts the reliability of the information that Moffitt took south to Provo on June 26, 1858, is the far more detailed

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26After retiring from command of the army’s Department of the Lakes in Detroit, Cooke received an honorary M.A. degree from The University of Michigan in 1883 and is considered an alumnus of that school as well as a graduate of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point (Class of 1827). His biographical information may be found in alumni records, Bentley Historical Library, The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

27Historian’s Office Journal, June 26, 1858, LDS Church History Library, Salt Lake City. This then-unpublished record, to which Wilford Woodruff and Daniel Tyler both could have had access in 1880 and 1881, respectively, may have been the document that triggered the earliest published accounts of a Cooke hat-doffing incident. B. H. Roberts did not use this source in his 1919 study of the Mormon Battalion but cited it in his 1930 centennial history of the Church. Roberts, A Comprehensive History of the Church, 4:446 note 7.
report of events in and around Salt Lake City that Nauvoo Legion Major Seth M. Blair provided Brigham Young two days later. It was an account brimming with examples of hostility and abusive language by Utah Expedition officers rather than descriptions of respectful behavior. Blair, a legion battalion commander and one of Utah’s principal attorneys, had been playing a key role as the principal Mormon liaison in meetings with fellow Texan Ben McCulloch, one of the two peace commissioners whom President Buchanan had sent out from Washington to try to arrange a non-violent Mormon acceptance of the army. By his own account, Blair was one of the few legionnaires in Salt Lake City when the Utah Expedition marched through the city on June 26. When he arrived in Provo on June 28 he made no comment on the army’s demeanor during the march-through but instead provided to Young and Church Historian George A. Smith a vivid account of his reception on June 27 when he rode out to the army’s enormous, dusty bivouac across the Jordan River to visit Albert Sidney Johnston and several of his senior officers. Smith immediately recorded what Blair told him:

Seth M. Blair visited Gen. Johnston at his tent. [Peace Commissioner Kentucky] Gov. [Lazarus W.] Powell and several officers and gentlemen were present. Lieut. Col. [Charles F.] Smith [of the Tenth Infantry] made some remarks disrespectful about the Mormons. One of the company said “sir, you had better be aware how you talk about the Mormons, as they might hear you.” He said he did not care a damn who heard him, he would like to see every damned Mormon hung by the neck. This same Smith is considered one of the flowers of the army.

...When Seth Blair was in G.S.L. City, he asked Gov. Powell if any man of any grade or calling, on any occasion, offered to him an uncourtous word, while he had been in this territory. He said, “No,” but he had been treated with the greatest respect. Bro. Blair said, he wished he would remember that when he got to Washington, and he was sorry to say he could not say as much for the officers of Col. [Gen.] Johnston’s army, as he had been grossly insulted by Lieut. Col. Smith and Capt. [Jesse L.] Reno [of the Ordnance Department].

Nearly three weeks later, Major Blair took time to update his own journal and set down an account of the events of late June consistent with that which he had earlier provided to George A. Smith. With

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28Historian’s Office Journal, June 27–29, 1858, LDS Church History Library.
respect to the army’s march through Salt Lake City, Blair simply noted without elaboration that he had been present: “I was in the City when the U.S. Troops under Genl. Johnston passed thro & by invitation visited him while Encamped across the Jordan opposite the City.”

In the spring of 2011, while I was drafting a chapter for the second volume of *At Sword’s Point* about the Utah Expedition’s grand passage through Salt Lake City, serendipity struck again. An unexpected email message from a friend prompted me to remember a file of letters that I had acquired ten years earlier through an equally fortuitous chain of events. I unearthed the letters from my mountainous research materials and re-read them. The letters were written in June 1858 by Adjutant General Ferguson, whom Brigham Young, then in Provo with the Move South, had detailed to remain in Salt Lake to keep him informed about the army’s behavior in the city.

As indicated above, if anyone in the Nauvoo Legion would have known Cooke at a glance and have been a keen observer of how he and the Second Dragoons conducted themselves, it surely would have been Ferguson. How did James Ferguson describe the army’s march-through to Brigham Young? In a still-unpublished message couriered to President Young on June 26, the general wrote: “Genl Johnston and staff (including Capt. [R. B.] Marcy) passed the Governor’s [Cumming’s] residence at ½ past 10 this A.M. The 10th Infy passed your residence for the West at ½ past 11. Col [E. B.] Alexander (mounted) at the head of his Column [of 10th Infantry] doffed his Cap as he passed the very small crowd that stood at the corners watching his

29Seth M. Blair, Journal, July 15, 1858, LDS Church History Library. catalogued in 2001 as MS 1710 1–3. Colonel Smith undoubtedly shared the bitterness and frustration rampant among Johnston’s officers over the likelihood of a political rather than military settlement of the Utah War, a development that would deprive them of opportunities for promotion. Smith may also have been disgusted with what was perceived as the weak, soft-on-Mormonism demeanor of his regimental superior, Colonel Alexander. Smith was indeed considered one of the U.S. Army’s most capable officers. In late 1858, when General Johnston assumed responsibility for the Department of Utah, he turned command of Camp Floyd over to Smith. Later, during the 1862 Civil War battle of Shiloh at which Johnston, then a general in the Confederate Army, was killed, C. F. Smith was the senior Union commander, outranking U.S. Grant, until he himself received a fatal leg injury.
march. . . . The 4th [Artillery and] 5th Infy, the Heavy Battery and the Dragoons are now advancing.30

So, it was the Tenth Infantry’s Colonel Alexander, not the Second Dragoons’ commander, who for some reason removed his cap before what Ferguson described as a “very small crowd.” It all makes sense when one considers the polite, even semi-cordial tone of the Alexander-Young exchange of correspondence during the previous fall as well as Brigham Young’s reaction to the colonel’s respectful visit to his Salt Lake City office on August 8, 1858, probably as Alexander returned east on furlough. As Young described the meeting to Wilford Woodruff the next day, “It was vary agreeable. President Young said I was much pleased with him and am satisfyed that if he had the Sole Command of the Army & I Could have had three hours Conversation with him all would have been right and they Could have Come in [to the Salt Lake Valley] last fall as well as now.”31

Who were these few people on the streets of Salt Lake City for

30James Ferguson, Letter to Brigham Young, June 26, 1858, LDS Church History Library. It is possible, of course, that what Ferguson reported was not a gesture of respect but simply Alexander’s removing his hat in an attempt to gain some brief relief from the heat of a Salt Lake City summer day. The fact that the commander of Alexander’s Company G, Captain Albert Tracy, entered no comment in his diary that day about the colonel’s demeanor, lends support to this interpretation, especially since relations between the two officers were strained to the point that Alexander preferred court-martial charges against Tracy less than a month later. Had Alexander shown overt respect for Mormons in Salt Lake City on June 26, the hypercritical Tracy surely would have noted it disapprovingly in his long description of the army’s passage through the city that day. To the contrary, what Tracy did record was that, as Alexander’s Tenth Infantry marched abreast of Brigham Young’s Lion House, the regimental adjutant, in an act of disrespect, ordered the band to strike up “One-Eyed Riley,” a ribald marching and drinking song. Albert Tracy, Diary, June 26, 1858, in J. Cecil Alter and Robert J. Dwyer, eds., “The Utah War Journal of Albert Tracy, 1858–1860,” Utah Historical Quarterly 13, nos. 1, 2, 3, and 4 (January, April, July, and October 1945): 26–28.

31Brigham Young, quoted in Wilford Woodruff’s Journal, 1833–1898, typescript, edited by Scott G. Kenney, 9 vols. (Midvale, Utah: Signature Books, 1983–85), August 9, 1858, 5:205–6. Here Young falls victim to the belief that often seduces leaders—that their force of personality and powers...
whom one or more military hats may have been doffed? They were apparently not former members of the Mormon Battalion waiting to be acknowledged by their old commander, for New York newspaper correspondent Albert G. Browne Jr., another eyewitness, reported: “Early in the morning, the Mormon guard had forced all their fellow religionists into the houses, and ordered them not to make their appearance during the day. . . . The only visible groups of spectators were on the corners near Brigham Young’s residence and consisted almost entirely of Gentile civilians.”

Captain John W. Phelps left a very similar description. If respects were rendered, they were apparently a complimentary gesture directed at non-Mormons.

The Cat in the Hat? End of legend, or at least that part of it linking Philip St. George Cooke to a display of respect for the Mormon Battalion on June 26, 1858, that neither the Utah Expedition’s troops nor a vigilant James Ferguson, Seth Blair, John R. Young, and Albert G. Browne Jr. recorded. It is a small matter, but part of the admittedly unending quest to get both sides of the Utah War story “right” by separating legend from verifiable fact, where that is possible. In this connection, it is worth remembering President John F. Kennedy’s warning during his 1962 Yale commencement address about the elusiveness of historical truth: “For the great enemy of truth is very often not the lie—deliberate, contrived and dishonest—but myth—persistent, persuasive, and unrealistic. Too often we hold fast to the clichés of our forebears. We subject all facts to a prefabricated set of interpretations.

of persuasion can resolve most conflicts. At about the same time, President Buchanan was disclaiming to Delegate John M. Bernhisel “any desire to see any blood shed, and added that he wished he had Brigham Young here about two hours to talk to him.” “Account of Conversations with President Buchanan,” memo from Bernhisel to Young, June 1859, LDS Church History Library.

Of all the civilian eyewitnesses to the march-through, Browne would have had the most extensive and recent exposure to Colonel Cooke because of his winter spent with the Utah Expedition. Browne left two unsigned accounts of the army’s passage through Salt Lake City, neither of which mentioned Cooke. The freshest report was [Browne], “The Army at Salt Lake City” (Letter), June 28, 1858, New York Daily Tribune, July 30, 1858; the source quoted here is [Browne], “The Utah Expedition, Its Causes and Consequences,” Atlantic Monthly 3 (April 1859): 490. Captain John W. Phelps, Diary, June 26, 1858, LDS Church History Library.
We enjoy the comfort of opinion without the discomfort of thought.”

**CASE OF REFLECTED LIGHT**

The other research “find” that I want to describe—what I call the Case of Reflected Light—**took me through an even more unpredictable route to a strange scene in President James Buchanan’s second-floor White House office (now called the Lincoln Bedroom) during early 1858. My focus on this incident was the result of a half-century attempt to get into Buchanan’s head, as the saying goes, in order to figure out “Old Buck’s” sometimes quirky prosecution of the Utah War. The effort has not been easy, for the president did not keep a journal, and no member of his cabinet maintained a diary as did their counterparts in the Pierce and Lincoln administrations that bracketed Buchanan’s. With Buchanan presiding schoolmaster-like over informal cabinet luncheons on a near-daily basis, much of his administration’s business was handled conversationally rather than through an exchange of inter-departmental memoranda. Ever the cautious lawyer and political creature, Buchanan often responded to incoming mail or sensitive matters either through face-to-face discussions or not at all. With these constricted sources and the president’s guarded, convoluted personal style, there is a paucity of surviving material—what today would be called a paper trail—shedding light on Buchanan’s inner thoughts during the Utah War.

Given this thin written record, it struck me about fifteen years ago that the key to determining what President Buchanan did during the Utah War and why would have to depend on what I labeled reflected light—reports from credible visitors to the Executive Mansion who interacted directly with Buchanan or one of his cabinet officers.

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34 This section complements a more comprehensive article: MacKinnon, “Hammering Utah, Squeezing Mexico, and Coveting Cuba: James Buchanan’s White House Intrigues,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* (Spring 2012).

and recorded their conversations for the benefit of distant colleagues or relatives. And so I set out to search for the scattered papers of a large number of likely White House visitors.

In many ways, the most valuable of the accounts flowing from such insiders were the long, newsy Washington dispatches written to Brigham Young at least monthly by Utah's territorial delegate in Congress, Dr. John M. Bernhisel. Yet with respect to the Utah War, Bernhisel's reports have severe limitations since he seemed intimidated by Buchanan, avoided contact with him at key junctures, and once even withdrew from Washington during a crucial period.  

While thinking about this problem, it occurred to me that another source potentially even more valuable to historians than Bernhisel's reporting were the similar dispatches generated by Washington-based European ambassadors for the benefit of their foreign secretaries. Like journalists, the job of these diplomats was, among others, to report on major American events, economic conditions, and governmental issues relevant to their home country. Unlike newspaper reporters, foreign envoys were professionally accountable for their accuracy and often had direct access to the president as well as to at least one cabinet officer, Secretary of State Lewis Cass. I already knew that, at one critical juncture in the fall of 1857, a dispatch written by Edward A. de Stoeckel, Russian minister to Washington, immediately following a meeting with Buchanan, shed light on the president's frustrations with "the Mormon problem" and his reactions to rumors of plans for a mass Mormon exodus to Russian America (Alaska). That was an important dispatch that helped trigger the tsar's decision in December 1857 to authorize negotiations to sell Alaska to the United States rather than risk its seizure by Brigham Young without compensation. Might there be other such reports sent from Washington to different European capitals that also touched on the president's prosecution of the Utah War?

36 Bernhisel's reports are in the Brigham Young Collection, LDS Church History Library. For Bernhisel's ambivalence about contact with Buchanan, see MacKinnon, *At Sword's Point, Part 1*, 120–21. Bernhisel's most significant absence from Washington was for the period April–October 1857, during which Buchanan decided upon and launched the Utah Expedition. The net effect, with Kane's withdrawal to Pennsylvania's mountains that spring, was a damaging gap in advocacy for the Mormon cause in the capital.

37 For the text of this dispatch and differing interpretations of its sig-
During 1857–58 the diplomat in Washington closest to President Buchanan was Sir William Gore Ouseley, an old British friend. Their relationship dated from Ouseley’s posting to Washington as a junior foreign service officer in the 1830s while Buchanan was in Congress and was reinforced by Buchanan’s days as head of the Pierce administration’s diplomatic legation in London during 1853–56. In the midst of the Utah War—at about the time of Lot Smith’s October 1857 raid when Buchanan first became aware that the Utah Expedition was endangered and needed reinforcements—Ouseley arrived in Washington. He was on his way to a diplomatic post, not in that city but rather in Central America. Nevertheless, Ouseley dallied in Washington unofficially for nearly twelve months and quickly assumed the role of presidential confidant—even confessor—on international matters. That Ouseley succeeded in forging such an intimate, faintly Rasputin-like tie with President Buchanan so rapidly was at-
tributable to multiple factors: the length of their friendship; the diplomat’s charm and that of his American-born wife, Maria; their mutual connection to the Roosevelt family of New York; Buchanan’s isolation as an aging bachelor virtually alone in the Executive Mansion; the multiple political pressures besetting the president; and Buchanan’s significant lack of confidence in his ineffectual secretary of state, Lewis Cass.38

In the summer of 2009, while juggling a plethora of writing and family priorities, it occurred to me that the long and close Ouseley-Buchanan relationship might possibly have led to a series of unofficial reports sent by Ouseley from Washington to the British foreign ministry in London to supplement the messages being sent by Lord Napier, the official British minister accredited to the U.S. government. What triggered this thought was my daily, open-ended trolling through the internet in search of Utah War materials. One day the Google search engine identified an obscure volume of documents unknown to me. It was titled Private and Confidential: Letters from British Ministers in Washington to the Foreign Secretaries in London, 1844–1867.39 Intrigued by what might be included in this compilation for 1857–58, I initiated an interlibrary loan request for this volume at the Montecito Public Library and waited impatiently. A few weeks later, the book, edited by a husband-wife team, James J. Barnes and Patience P. Barnes, arrived from some distant corner of the United States, and I found to my delight that indeed there had been such

38For an in-depth discussion of the origins and dynamics of the relationship between Ouseley and Buchanan, including their own perceptions of it, see MacKinnon, “Hammering Utah, Squeezing Mexico, and Coveting Cuba.” Also relevant with respect to the president’s relationship with Ouseley’s superior in London is Frederick Moore Binder, “James Buchanan and the Earl of Clarendon: An Uncertain Relationship,” Diplomacy and Statecraft 6 (July 1995): 323–41. Maria Ouseley’s sister was married to a Judge Roosevelt of Manhattan and was a lady to whom Buchanan had earlier and unsuccessfully proposed marriage, according to unverified folklore. During the 1850s, Harriet Lane, the president’s niece, often visited the Roosevelts in New York.

Ouseley reports generated during the period of the Utah War.

The medium for Ouseley’s reportage from Washington was a series of dispatches written to the British secretary of state for foreign affairs, George William Frederick Villiers, Fourth Earl of Clarendon, at his explicit invitation. Ouseley’s reports, written on a specially designated type of paper and marked “Private & Confidential,” reached Lord Clarendon in London through an elaborate and secure three-stage, trans-Atlantic courier system that bypassed the public postal services of both the United States and Great Britain. It was a delivery arrangement worthy of a security-conscious Brigham Young, who adopted similar procedures for sending and receiving his most sensitive letters across the United States and Europe. Understanding the arrangements by which confidential dispatches from Ouseley were encouraged by Lord Clarendon and then transmitted to him in this way is key to evaluating the candor as well as importance of these reports.40

But Private and Confidential contained only excerpts from Ouseley’s reports, and not all of them at that. Where were the originals, and what else was there? With more digging, I found that when Lord Clarendon’s government fell and he left office in March 1858, he took Ouseley’s dispatches with him as personal property. Accordingly, these reports came to rest in Clarendon’s personal papers rather than in the official files of the foreign office, now publicly accessible in London’s National Archives. Consequently, the Ouseley material was and is sequestered. Today it is under the control of the present Earl of Clarendon and is, in effect, on loan by him to Oxford University’s Bodleian Library. The “Clarendon Deposit,” as the Bodleian designates this material, is housed in that institution’s magnificent, late medieval Duke Humfrey’s Library, which I visited on a rainy but wonderful day of discovery in September 2010.41

Because of space limitations what appears below are excerpts from two of Ouseley’s most relevant dispatches from the opening

40Ibid., 12–17. For Brigham Young’s secure communications techniques used during the Utah War, see MacKinnon, At Sword’s Point, Part 1, 29–30.

41I thank the Earl of Clarendon and Mr. Collin Harris, Superintendent, Department of Special Collections Reading Rooms, Bodleian Library, Oxford University, for access to and an electronic image of these holograph materials. For convenience, they are presented here as drawn from
months of 1858. Through this under-exploited material, students of the Utah War will now be better able to understand the linkages between multiple, widely separated events heretofore unknown or viewed as unconnected. The reports provide a unique glimpse of James Buchanan and his cloistered White House world as he: reacted in November 1857 to news of Lot Smith’s October raid in Utah; formulated his military response and presented it to Congress in December; simultaneously dispatched a secret agent to Spain to buy Cuba and met with Thomas L. Kane about his intended mediation mission to Salt Lake City; coped with the rise of Benito Juarez and revolution in Mexico; and posted a reluctant General Winfield Scott to California to open a second front against the Mormons from the Pacific Coast.

On January 23, 1858, in the midst of all these presidential activities, Sir William Gore Ouseley confided to Lord Clarendon:

I dined the other day with the president. This was not a private party but a large dinner. I was the only Englishman, I believe the only foreigner present. When the party was about to break up Miss Lane [his niece and hostess] had, or affected to have something to say to my wife, and asked her to remain.42 When the other guests were gone the President took me up to his room “to smoke a cigar” and a long interview and some apparently confidential conversation of a desultory but not an uninteresting character ensued.

Among the subjects he spoke of [were] the Mormons and the troubles in Utah. He said that he had upwards of two [three] thousand of the “best troops” ready to act against them in the spring; that they would probably migrate into British possessions and he wished me joy of them.43 He added that any number of volunteers were ready to march against the Mormons from California but that the Governor [of

Barnes and Barnes, Private and Confidential, 182–94, rather than from the originals in the Clarendon Deposit, citations to which I also provide.

42Buchanan often used Harriet Lane as a resource to facilitate his interpersonal manipulations.

43Here Ouseley reports Buchanan’s reaction to rumors of a Mormon mass exodus to the Pacific Coast in language consistent with that attributed to the president in the report two months earlier that Stoeckl made to the Russian foreign minister following his meeting with Buchanan about the same rumor: “As for us [the president said], we shall be very happy to be rid of them.” Because of timing and the similarity of the phrasing attributed to Buchanan, his comments to Stoeckl give credibility to Ouseley’s reporting
that state] had decided upon not calling for their services. I asked why, he replied that “all the Mormons would be massacred if the Californians marched against them.” He did not wish this and it was better to let them leave the country.44+(Yet General Scott is about to proceed to California ostensibly to conduct operations against the Mormons). Possibly there is an intention of directing or forcing the movement of the Mormons so as to serve the purpose of the U.S. Government in Mexico.45+

It is fascinating to correlate Ouseley’s comments about Buchanan and Mexico with the fact that, on January 18, Bernhisel reported to Clarendon of what he heard. MacKinnon, *At Sword’s Point, Part 1*, 442.

44Since March 1857, Buchanan feared that a full public awareness of inflammatory language from Mormon leaders would unleash an uncontrollable, violent public backlash, especially (but not exclusively) from California, where many residents still harbored resentment over their treatment while migrating through Utah. Ibid., 107. By the time of this January 1858 Ouseley-Buchanan meeting, rage over the Mountain Meadows Massacre had added to this volatility in California.

45Ouseley, Dispatch to Lord Clarendon, January 23, 1858, in Barnes and Barnes, *Private and Confidential*, 191; original Clarendon Deposit, Bodleian Library, Oxford University, cited as MS Clar. dep. c. 83, fols. 371–74.
Brigham Young that he also had visited the president and that Buchanan had unexpectedly dropped his objections to the rumored possibility of a Mormon exodus from Utah to Mexico.  

Notwithstanding this presidential change in position and his contemporaneous assertions to Ministers Stoeckle and Ouseley that he wanted the Mormons out of the United States, Buchanan would, on two subsequent occasions, disingenuously assure Delegate Bernhisel that he “thought that the people had better remain where they were for the present” and “observed that he was more friendly to us than Congress. Did not favor our removal; thought that we were better in Utah than in any other part of the world.”

On February 15, 1858, Ouseley reported again to Clarendon, this time to relay an account of what he had learned in confidence from Buchanan about the linkage between the president’s prosecution of the Utah War and his two highest priorities other than preservation of the Union—seizure of northern Mexico and the acquisition by purchase or conquest of the Spanish colony of Cuba. The envoy also described the extent to which prolonged Congressional obstinacy over funding for an expanded Utah Expedition was unwittingly threatening the viability of this presidential scheme:

The designs of the President respecting Cuba have met with an unexpected check in the refusal of Congress to allow the increase of the army or to appropriate funds for the [Utah] expedition of General

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46 John M. Bernhisel, Letter to Brigham Young, January 18, 1858, LDS Church History Library.

47 “Account of Conversations with President Buchanan,” memo from Bernhisel to Young, June 1859, LDS Church History Library. Unfortunately Bernhisel was not precise in specifying when during 1857–59 these White House “interviews” occurred, but from the internal evidence they appear to have taken place during the first half of 1858, probably early in the year.

48 Although unaware of the ripple effect created by Congressional wrangling over the military appropriations bill, a Mormon newspaperman in New York provided George A. Smith with an amusing account of Buchanan’s acute discomfort over the delay: “Old Buck is in the worst fix possible for the old man: He will get worse before he gets better. The Army Bill hangs on and the more they try to push it through it is like pulling at Aunt Jemima’s plaster—the more it sticks the faster.” T.B.H. Stenhouse, Letter to George A. Smith, March 14, 1858, LDS Church History Library.
Scott to the Pacific coast *une die* [at the same time].

It may seem that there is little direct connection between an expedition ostensibly against the Mormons or involving relations with Mexico and plans for the acquisition of Cuba. *The latter however is the real object; the other is subsidiary to it and serves to mask the real movement* [emphasis mine]. The intention as to the Mormons was to bring about their emigration to Sonora [Mexico] and thus to turn their rebellion to account by making them pioneers for future annexation [Texas-like] under a quasi-military colonial system, that General Scott was partly to inaugurate without however being aware of the full scope of the project for the execution of which he was to be one of the instruments. His [Scott’s] personal [wartime] experience and former relations with [President] Santa Anna and other leading men in Mexico was also to be used to the furtherance of the objects of the U.S. in profiting by the [Mexican] difference with Spain.

In all these matters, the increase of the army and a large appropriation for expenditure by the Executive, would have enabled the President when this Session [of Congress] is over to begin to carry into effect his grand object. I look upon it as only deferred and should not be surprised if before Congress disperses the President should obtain the means he covets for a purpose on which he deems absolute silence to be as yet necessary [emphasis mine]. He will find other ostensible motives to cover

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49 For a discussion of General Scott’s scheduled departure for the Pacific Coast to organize a move against Brigham Young from California and Oregon—a thrust to be undertaken over Scott’s objections and at the insistence of Buchanan and Secretary of War Floyd—see MacKinnon, “Buchanan’s Thrust from the Pacific: The Utah War’s Ill-Fated Second Front,” *Journal of Mormon History* 34 (Fall 2008): 226–60; reprinted with revisions in *The California Territorial Quarterly* 82 (Summer 2010): 4–27. Scott abruptly canceled his trip and on February 4, 1858—the literal eve of his scheduled departure—so notified Colonel Johnston without any explanation other than to say that there would be no thrust against Utah from the Pacific. When I first drafted this study of a second front for the Utah War, I was no more aware of the Ouseley-Buchanan discussions than General Scott had been 150 years earlier.

50 For a discussion of the extent to which General Scott was often unaware of what President Buchanan and Secretary Floyd were doing during the Utah War, see MacKinnon, *At Sword’s Point, Part 1*, 95–97, 129–33.

51 When Buchanan initiated the Utah Expedition during the spring of 1857, Congress had just adjourned. Ouseley here anticipates that Buchanan would again undertake a military intervention, this time in northern Mexico, without the hindrance of Congressional involvement.
his real object. The building and equipment of several war steamers now actively in progress, ostensibly for service on the African station [as anti-slavers] and to reinforce the Gulf of Mexico squadrons have, I more than suspect, reference to the same purpose. The real intention as to the Mormons is to buy them out which will it is said cost two or three millions of dollars, and the surplus of the appropriation would have given the Executive means for commencing the execution of its real plans [for Mexico and Cuba].

Buchanan’s intent to steer a mass Mormon migration to Mexico rather than to the Pacific Northwest must have been a vast relief to Ouseley, inasmuch as the British had been worried for months that the longstanding Mormon interest in Vancouver’s Island was being rekindled. For example, three days after Ouseley sent this dispatch to Lord Clarendon, the alarmed British colonial secretary cornered the U.S. minister, George Mifflin Dallas, at a royal reception and “entered upon the topic of the [presumed] intention of the Mormons to migrate into the territory held by license by the Hudson Bay Company. He said if they once get there it would be difficult to get rid of them, notwithstanding the expressed repugnance of the Queen to have such ‘horrid creatures’ among her subjects.”

Ouseley’s February 15 dispatch to Lord Clarendon was stunning in the complexity of the scheming that it attributed to Buchanan. The only study known to have commented upon this report is the Barnes and Barnes edition which summarizes Ouseley’s conclusion that Buchanan had “hoodwinked” an unwitting Congress into considering the possibility of increasing the military budget. He did so by using “the Mormon problem” as a stalking horse for his real objectives: Mexico and Cuba.

From Buchanan’s comments to Ouseley, it is clear that the president believed that annexing some or all of Mexico would follow the establishment of a critical mass of Americans in Mexico. It would be

52 Ouseley, Dispatch to Lord Clarendon, February 15, 1858, in Barnes and Barnes, Private and Confidential, 193–94; original Clarendon Deposit, Bodleian Library, Oxford University, cited as MS Clar. dep. c. 83, fols. 385–88.


54 Barnes and Barnes, Private and Confidential, 193.
along the lines of the break-away that had unfolded in the gigantic Mexican state of Tejas y Coahuilla during the 1830s. As historian Donathan Olliff—an authority on revolutionary Mexico—sees it, Buchanan viewed his objectives in Mexico “as achievable by either of two methods, by purchase or by settlement of large numbers of United States citizens in the subject areas. Such settlers in a [transcontinental Mexican railroad] transit zone would facilitate, if not insure, United States control of that area, while in areas which the United States wished to annex [rather than just build a railroad] a large Yankee population could result in annexation by the will of the inhabitants, as had happened in Texas.”

Olliff was oblivious to the possibility that tens of thousands of Mormon refugees might become such a “Yankee” influx, but James Buchanan was not. And so Brigham Young’s Move South, plotted for weeks and announced in Salt Lake City on March 21, 1858, takes on special significance.

The Move South was the exodus of an estimated 30,000 Mormon refugees from northern Utah to a holding pattern in Provo during April-June 1858 in anticipation of the Utah Expedition’s entrance into the Salt Lake Valley once it had received supplies, remounts, and reinforcements from Kansas, New Mexico, and possibly even California. This Mormon maneuver was, in turn, part of a broader gambit, Brigham Young’s Sebastopol strategy, by which he planned to execute a fighting retreat to unannounced havens while laying waste northern Utah’s infrastructure and agricultural improvements. The inspiration for this strategy was the Russian evacuation of its principal port on the Black Sea in the face of a siege by British, French, and Turkish armies during the recently completed Crimean War.

How Buchanan could believe that a southbound Mormon diaspora to Sonora—stimulated by military pressure from a Utah Expedition reinforced by General Scott from the Pacific Coast—would be willing to reaffiliate with the United States, is an intriguing mystery. Brigham Young had already been down that road after being driven out of Illinois and migrating to Mexico’s eastern Alta California (Utah) during 1847. Ten years later, Young still chafed over the approach of the Utah Expedition given the evidence of Mormon loyalty as manifested in the Mormon Battalion’s participation, tangential

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While Buchanan’s long-standing lust to acquire Cuba was well known, its connection to his scheme to manipulate Mexico by militarily forcing a massive Mormon exodus to Sonora was secret. This cartoonish political lampoon unwittingly appeared in a New York newspaper in close proximity to Ouseley’s revealing mid-February 1858 meeting with “Old Buck” in which they discussed all of these inter-related moves. In drawing the bachelor president with an exaggerated top knot, the cartoonist capitalized on Buchanan’s habit of appearing before Mathew Brady’s camera with his hair disheveled (see p. 23). Civil War Cartoon Collection, Box 1, fd. 1, courtesy of American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Mass.
though it was, in the Mexican War. James Ferguson’s letter to Philip St. George Cooke accurately and at length reflects Mormon bitterness at Cooke’s (and by extension, the U.S. government’s) perceived lack of respect for this achievement. To expect Young to flee to Sonora in 1858 at the point of a bayonet and then call for annexation by the United States as the Texans had done fifteen years earlier, is counterintuitive. Utah’s Brigham Young was not Texas’s Stephen F. Austin.

The means by which Buchanan planned subsequently to spring from Mexico to his apparent main objective, Cuba, is even more elusive. Unfortunately, the Cuban part of this expansionist billiards game was a scenario on which Ouseley did not report further. It is my assessment that Buchanan planned to purchase Cuba from Spain or to annex it in the wake of an American-stimulated revolution on the island. In mid-December 1857, just before meeting with Thomas L. Kane about Utah, Buchanan had secretly summoned another Philadelphia attorney (Christopher Fallon) to the Executive Mansion and sent him to Europe with the mission of exploring the Spanish royal family’s willingness to sell Cuba, a gambit to which Congress was oblivious. Notwithstanding the significant cash needs of Spain’s government and the royal family, Fallon’s discussions failed later in 1858 in the face of hypersensitivity in Madrid over the blow to Spanish pride associated with any potential loss of Cuba.

Because Ouseley was not formally accredited by the British government to the United States during the 1850s—his post was to be in Central America—historians of Mormonism and the American West have not associated him with a military campaign in Utah. For the most part, such analysts have been oblivious even to Ouseley’s temporary presence in Washington, let alone its significance. By the same token, diplomatic historians, primarily riveted on the intrigues in foreign chancelleries, have been wholly unaware of the Utah War, if not Mormonism itself. Lost in the process has been an appreciation of the confidential discussions of a western military conflict and its international linkages that unfolded at a critical juncture between a sympatico envoy and a lonely bachelor-president over Cuban cigars and tumblers of Old Monongehela whiskey in James Buchanan’s White House office.

56MacKinnon, “Hammering Utah, Squeezing Mexico, and Coveting Cuba.”
Awareness through Ouseley’s dispatches of presidential planning for a secret, complex chain of events designed to start in Utah and end in Cuba raises an important question. Should historians now consider an additional conspiracy theory alongside the several traditional ones that have lamentably shrouded the Utah War’s origins? I refer to the possibility that Buchanan initiated the Utah Expedition in March 1857 to advance international expansion—American Manifest Destiny—rather than simply to restore federal authority in Utah. Henceforth, such an interpretation will almost inevitably arise, especially among conspiracy theorists inclined to denigrate Buchanan’s presidency on a blanket basis or to view the Utah Expedition as wholly unnecessary. Such a new conspiracy theory would be an unfortunate distraction, and I hope it does not receive serious attention once initial fascination with of the Buchanan-Ouseley conversations wears off.

In brief, I believe that Buchanan’s long-term pursuit of Mexico and Cuba were not factors in the Utah Expedition’s origins. At that time—March 1857—replacing Brigham Young and restoring federal authority were, indeed, the president’s objectives. However, once Buchanan realized in mid-November 1857 that effective Mormon military resistance was a reality and that he would have to reinforce the Utah Expedition, armed confrontation in the Rockies and Great Basin provided a field for manipulation. This opportunity led to presidential fantasies, if not active scheming, about California, Utah, northern Mexico, and Cuba. The need to reinforce the Utah Exped-

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57 The longstanding conspiracy theories—none substantiated—by which Buchanan supposedly launched the Utah Expedition to enrich the army’s freighting firm of Russell, Majors and Waddell; distract the nation from civil conflict in “Bleeding Kansas”; or respond to a proto-Confederate cabal in his cabinet seeking to weaken the federal government by draining the treasury and scattering its army to the West, are discussed in MacKinnon, “125 Years of Conspiracy Theories: Origins of the Utah Expedition of 1857–58,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 52 (Summer 1984): 212–30; Richard D. Poll and MacKinnon, “Causes of the Utah War Reconsidered,” *Journal of Mormon History* 20 (Fall 1994): 16–44. When I published these studies, I was unaware of the Ouseley dispatches, which did not surface until the publication of Barnes and Barnes, *Private and Confidential*, in 1993.

tion in 1858 provided an opportunity—one that stimulated Buchanan’s more devious instincts. In early 1858 a second front for the war—a large thrust from the Pacific—to force Brigham Young out of Utah and south into Mexico, provided the means to scratch two presidential itches: Buchanan’s “Mormon problem” and his need to expand the United States to fulfill its Manifest Destiny.

Naturally a scenario of this character also raises questions as to whether a demonstrably devious President Buchanan misled, if not duped, not only General Scott but also John M. Bernhisel, Thomas L. Kane, and Brigham Young. I believe that he did so. It is likely that, at Christmas-time 1857, Kane told Buchanan that, when he reached the Salt Lake Valley and met with Young, he intended to broach the subject of a mass Mormon exodus from Utah. Yet the president apparently chose not to comment on Kane’s plan at that time, notwithstanding his own interest in seizing northern Mexico following a massive influx of southbound Mormon refugee-colonists. If and how Kane and Brigham Young subsequently discussed an exodus is unknown; but less than two weeks after Kane arrived in Salt Lake City on February 25, 1858, Young cryptically informed both Bernhisel, his territorial delegate in Washington, and Asa Calkin, the president of the Mormon British Mission in Liverpool, that he was continuing to keep his “eyes” on Russian Alaska.

On March 21, 1858, with a northern route for escaping the Utah Expedition foreclosed by the recent Indian attack on the Mormon outpost at Fort Limhi, Oregon Territory, Young abruptly announced

59MacKinnon, At Sword’s Point, Part 1, 501–3.

60Neither Thomas L. Kane nor James C. Van Dyke, the Buchanan political confidant who had engineered Kane’s December 1857 visit to the Executive Mansion, reported any presidential references to Mexico or Cuba in the memos that they later wrote to summarize what had been discussed during that meeting between Buchanan and Kane. Similarly, in recording what Kane told them about his White House conversations immediately upon returning to Philadelphia, neither Thomas’s father nor his wife mentioned any subject other than Utah. From these silences, I conclude that Buchanan said nothing about his own objectives and strategy for accomplishing them, thereby allowing Kane to sail west oblivious to the broader scheme the president would soon confide to Ouseley.

61Brigham Young, Letters to John M. Bernhisel and Asa Calkin, March 5, 1858, LDS Church History Library.
a change in policy. He would flee and continue to search for elusive oases in western Utah’s White Mountains rather than continue plans to fight the army. The initial destination for 30,000 southbound Mormons was Provo, with the location of the ultimate haven undisclosed. This was the largest movement of refugees in North America since the removal of Acadians from Nova Scotia after the French and Indian War and of British Loyalists from the United States to Canada during the American Revolution. On his return to Philadelphia and Washington in May 1858, Kane told a westbound New York Times reporter whom he encountered on the trail that he believed the Mormons’ destination to be Mexican Sonora. It was a region that James Buchanan formally asked Congress to sanction seizing six months later in December 1858, albeit without Brigham Young’s help and, as it turned out, without Congress’s either.

Whether James Buchanan succeeded with such intrigue is one issue; that as president he briefly entertained such plans and pursued them manipulatively and clandestinely is another matter. As researchers address anew the linkage between the Utah War and

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62Richard D. Poll, “The Move South,” BYU Studies 29 (Fall 1989): 65–88. The ultimate destination of this migration has never been established. Occasionally Young hinted that Sonora was to be the targeted haven, but he never said so clearly; and movement toward such a destination would have been highly problematic, if not logistically impossible. In late May 1858, an eastbound Kane encountered James W. Simonton, a New York Times reporter, at Sweetwater Bridge, Nebraska Territory, and gave him the impression that Young, whom he had just left, was heading for Sonora. “The Mormons. Colonel Kane’s Statement on the Way Home from Salt Lake City,” Dispatch of May 23, 1858 by “S” [Simonton], New York Times, June 25, 1858. Later, an anonymous letter-writer in Washington speculated emblematically, “Is it not more than probable that KANE was first sent out [to Utah] by the Administration, with the hope that the Mormon emigration South might contribute towards the acquisition of Sonora and Chihuahua?” Anonymous, Letter, July 19, 1858, New York Times, July 20, 1858, 1/2.

James Buchanan’s foreign scheming, the Utah War may be seen in its true lights. As I have long argued, it was a massive armed confrontation with regional (western) and international sweep, rather than an episode narrowly confined to Mormon Utah. In this connection, it is well to remember that the much-maligned James Buchanan was not just a parochial Pennsylvania politician. During the Mexican War, he had been President Polk’s secretary of state, involved with forging the treaty by which Mexico had lost one-third of its territory to the United States. Under presidents Jackson and Pierce, Buchanan had been American minister to Russia and Great Britain, respectively.

Historians of the Mormon past sometimes need to look beyond Utah and even the United States for the context by which to understand more fully the Latter-day Saints’ American experience. As Ousesley and Buchanan met in January 1858, William Tecumseh Sherman, a former army captain, saw the connection. Unemployed at Fort Leavenworth and seeking to reenter the army through the presumed opportunities of a reinforced Utah Expedition, Sherman wrote his congressman-brother, John, “I think in the next ten years we will have plenty to do in the war line—Mormon war, civil broils and strife, contests for political power, growing out of slavery and other exciting topics, and last a war with Spain, resulting in the conquest of Cuba.”

Also due for reexamination is the image of President Buchanan as doddering, passive, and indecisive. Historians of Utah and Mormon history have often added the descriptor “blundering,” as they tend to cast Buchanan cartoonishly as a hapless sort of Sheriff of Nottingham figure confronted by a nimble, energetic Robin Hood played by a strategically brilliant Brigham Young. Buchanan indeed faltered disastrously during the secession crisis of 1860–61; but in thinking about the opening year of his administration, I view James Buchanan as scheming, devious, secretive, manipulative, and—above

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64See, for example, MacKinnon, “Across the 49th Parallel: The Utah War’s Impact on British North America,” unpublished paper for the Mormon History Association, 47th annual conference, Calgary, Alberta, Canada, June-July 2012.

65William T. Sherman, Letter to John Sherman, January [no day] 1858, in Rachel Sherman Thorndike, ed., The Sherman Letters: Correspondence between General and Senator Sherman from 1837 to 1891 (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1894), 64.
all else—interventionist, rather than feeble.

In late March 1857, Thomas L. Kane described Buchanan in a letter to Brigham Young as “a timorous man.” Two months earlier, Young had confided to Kane: “We are satisfied with the appointment of Buchanan as future President, we believe he will be a friend to the good, that Fillmore was our friend, but Buchanan will not be a whit behind.” Ironically, four years later Young would stand appalled at the violence of the Civil War and would ask Kane, “Under existing circumstances will it not be better to annex Mexico to the United States and then go on and annex the Central States of America, Cuba—all the West India Islands—and Canada? What can we do to help you in this matter?”

Both men may have seriously misjudged the keenness of the presidential appetite for adventure at their expense and how sharp Buchanan’s teeth could be in pursuing it.

On September 14, 1857, as Brigham Young released his fateful gubernatorial proclamation of martial law in Utah Territory, George Mifflin Dallas, the American minister in London, wrote to Secretary of State Cass to describe the aggressive, acquisitive image of James Buchanan’s administration that had taken shape in Great Britain and Europe. The occasion for this report was diplomatic speculation, including Ouseley’s, that political chaos in Mexico would prompt an attempt by Spain to reassert its sovereignty over that country and that this distraction would, in turn, facilitate American seizure of Cuba. Dallas’s portrait of a United States led by James Buchanan featured an American leader who was neither timid nor benign:

My theory about the Spanish menace against Mexico is merging into reality. The dread of our seizing the plausible opportunity to acquire Cuba has put them [Europeans] into fidgets to prevent the quar

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66 The most recent examination of Buchanan’s temperament, administrative style, and actions as president is Michael J. Birker and John W. Quist, eds., James Buchanan and the Coming of the Civil War (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, forthcoming). For the relationship between this subject and the Utah War, see William P. MacKinnon, “Prelude to Armageddon: James Buchanan, Brigham Young, and a President’s Initiation to Bloodshed,” chapter in the Birker and Quist volume.

67 Thomas L. Kane, Letter to Brigham Young, ca. late March 1857, Thomas L. Kane Papers, Stanford University Libraries, Stanford, California; Brigham Young, Letters to Thomas L. Kane, January 7, 1857, and September 21, 1861, LDS Church History Library.
rel. All over Europe just now, there is a disposition to regard the United States as a sort of “John Jones of the War Office”;—a belligerent individual to be encountered wherever there is a muss, and who cannot be put down:—when he [the U.S.] looms up the alarmed [Europeans] gaze at him, as Alpine travellers watch the impending avalanche, which a single musket-shot may bring crashing upon them. You’ll say, this is flighty figure: I insist that four-fifths of it are positive matter of fact.

THOUGHTS ON MHA

In closing, I want to turn from such “stuff” of Mormon history to the people of MHA who study and write it. I leave my role as the Mormon History Association’s president with the belief that this service has been one of my life’s great learning experiences and satisfactions. For me, MHA’s annual gatherings are unlike any others that I attend. I could spend a lot of time over the “why” of this perception. Suffice it to say that you are indeed a special people. I have been privileged and blessed to be among you. Life with MHA’s members and among the Latter-day Saints has been a warm and delightful experience for me and Pat MacKinnon. As the theme for this conference puts it, our time with you has been transformational.

I owe much to this group for what you have taught me and for the sustaining warmth of your welcome over a long period of time. One of the things I have learned is that, for most aspects of Mormon history, there are at least two sides to every issue. But I have not yet brought myself to anything other than unbalanced affection and re-

68 *John Jones of the War Office* was a theatrical farce created by English actor-playwright John Baldwin Beckstone that was performed in both England and the United States, ironically sometimes before Mormon audiences. Nola Diane Smith, “Reading across the Lines: Mormon Theatrical Formations in Nineteenth-Century Nauvoo” (Ph.D. diss., Brigham Young University, 2001), 91–92.


70 The conference theme for MHA-St. George was “From Cotton to Cosmopolitan: Local, National, and Global Transformations in Mormon History.”
spect for MHA’s members. I think Thomas L. Kane, a fellow non-
Mormon, said it far better than I can, and so I refer you to Matt Grow’s
excellent book about Kane’s experiences among and on behalf of the
Latter-day Saints.71

With this little testimony, I return to where I started—that is to
Matthew 25:35. In that verse you will recall that Matthew quotes
Christ as telling the disciples: “I was a stranger, and you took me in.”
So also with me and you.

May God continue to bless you, your families, and the important
work that has brought us together in St. George. May we find the wis-
dom and the strength to continue our collective pursuit of the truth
about the extraordinary Mormon people and their equally remark-
able past.

APPENDIX

Great Salt Lake City U.T.
May 5th 1858

Col. Cooke

In looking over some files of eastern papers received by the Southern
[California] Mail, I noticed a letter, professedly an official report from you
under date “Camp Scott U.T. Novr. 29th 1857.” I was not surprised at the
long vexed columns of absurdities issuing from the correspondence of that
mongrel variety of Army parasites and hot-blooded young Candidates for
military honors who invariably make up the material of a military Camp.
Nor was I much astonished at the manifestations of vexation and disap-

71Matthew J. Grow, “Liberty to the Downtrodden”: Thomas L. Kane, Ro-
mantic Reformer (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2009). In the in-
terests of full disclosure, I received MHA’s Thomas L. Kane Award in
2008.
try amid the desolation of our own homes, and when our hopes appeared blasted forever; that you who led us from our household treasures, threatened in their peace and honor by red savages and white barbarians; that you should degrade yourself to a level with lying scoundrels and join in the general hound-yell against us, indeed surprised me. That your duty compelled you to advance with the Army intended for our subjugation and extermination might indeed have been true. That armies at best are but scalps to be used for the torture of the living, the hacking up of the unresisting corpse, or to give relief to the sufferer, at the will of the directing hand, is most true. But that an officer of your rank and reputation was at any time necessitated to justify an awkward position by scurrility and insult I had yet to learn. This however may be among the “moral lessons” the gallant army now croaking upon our borders may have been sent to teach. Perhaps, Colonel, bright associations among the virtues and moral revellings of your peace garrisons may have dulled your memory. Or it may be that the precious laurels won by your brilliant conquest of the poor old Brulés [Sioux in 1855 at Ash Hollow, Kansas] and their trembling squaws may have confused your ideas or whetted your appetite for blood.

Collect your ideas; smooth down your mettle for a few short minutes, while I reprove in kindness your treacherous memory and compare the Cooke of ’57 with the brave gentleman and gallant Commander I knew eleven years agone [sic].

Thus, it is said, writes Colonel Cooke in November 1857:—“This people design our starvation, our destruction, and there is no device man can resort to which they will not practice, from assassination, murder[,] fire and flood. The robbers and assassins will scatter and form bands of guerillas, and no party, no train, no band of cattle, will pass to the valley, if they can murder, burn or run off.... The Mormons are a set of Cowards, like all assassins and bullies.”

Hear now what Colonel Cooke once wrote of the same ‘Assassins and bullies.’ In his official journal under date Decr. 20, 1846, in speaking of the patient endurance of the Mormon Battalion, on quarter rations, while passing the Sonora deserts he says; “They are almost barefooted, carry their muskets, knapsacks &c and do not grumble!” ... 72

These were the genuine sentiments of what then I believe was a brave and honest heart. And these sentiments added to the companionship of long con-

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72 Ferguson here also reproduced the text of a congratulatory order written by Cooke in early 1847 and subsequently read to the Mormon Battalion. For editorial purposes, I delete it here but present it above in the article’s text.
continued sufferings on our weary march, I am not even now ashamed to say; endeared you to us. Then Colonel, in all our rags you were proud of us. “Assas-
sins and bullies” as we were you slept soundly while guarded by our sentinel,
and did not blush to wear the honors we gained for you. “Cowards” as we were
you did not hesitate to assure Genl. [Stephen Watts] Kearny of our ability to
sustain him against the insurrectionary demonstrations of a late candidate for
Presidential honors, nor did you feel yourself dishonored by the compli-
ment paid those same “Cowards” by that brave, generous old chief, when he
refused Capt. [Jonathan D.] Stevenson’s request for a detachment to be sent
from his corps for the repulsion of the Indians who were then threatening the
southern frontiers of California, directing you (to use his own words) to “send
the Mormons they know how to march and how to fight.”

“The Mormons” you say “have great fear of mounted men.” You forget
that these are the same “Cowards” with whom you were not afraid to meet
the gallant [Californio] Cavalry of Genl. [Jose Maria] Flores on his retreat
from Los Angeles. But, by the way, if you wish to know who really are afraid
of mounted men I would refer you respectfully to that gallant officer of the
10th [U.S. Infantry], who immortalized himself by his diving retreat through
Hams Fork not many years ago.

“This people design our starvation, our destruction.” Did you say that
for effect, Sir, or are you serious? You cannot mean it. No, Sir. You have had
far too much experience in starving and destroying,—your own proper
trade, not ours, to have indulged the illusion for a moment, that we did not
hold your whole army for weeks at our mercy. Had we possessed in our
hearts a fractions part of the bitterness that dwells in yours, you would not
have lived to scrawl that villainous letter at Camp Scott. We could ourselves

73Ferguson is referring to John C. Frémont, who in 1856 had run
on a Republican Party campaign platform denouncing polygamy and
slavery as “the twin relics of barbarism.” “Insurrectionary demonstra-
tions” refers to an 1847 conflict between Frémont, a lieutenant colonel,
and General Kearny for primacy in California during which the Mor-
mon Battalion, under Cooke’s leadership, supported Kearny, who ar-
rested Frémont and sent him east to stand trial by court martial with a de-
tachment of Mormon troops serving as armed escort. Sherman L. Fleck,
“The Kearny/Stockton/Frémont Feud: The Mormon Battalion’s Most
Significant Contribution in California,” Journal of Mormon History 37
(Summer 2011): 229–57.

74Probably a sarcastic reference to Colonel Edmund B. Alexander’s
ineffective, embarrassing march and counter-march along Hams Fork of
the Green River with the Utah Expedition during October 1857.
have selected the spot for your destruction, and furnished you with a [funeral] winding sheet in the snows of the South Pass or in the ashes of your own trains on Green River. 75 At whose mercy were the unprotected trains that lay for weeks within our reach and from which you have drawn your subsistence during the winter? What act of ours bears testimony to your base insinuations? Was it the order forbidding our men to fire at your shivering pickets, or the recall of our detachments that you might prepare your winter quarters in peace? Was it the return of your people after a short humane confinement, while you vented your spleen on one poor fellow by abusing him in cold chains during the winter, under the terrors of an illegal gallows?76 Was it the invitation to the officers of your army to participate during the winter in the hospitalities of our mountain home? Was it the offer of provisions for the whole army when your supplies should be exhausted? Was it the supply of salt to season your fresh meat furnished by us, and spurned with a pretty [petty?] peevishness by your commander?77 These, Sir, are your proofs; these are your arguments, to sustain your accusation. Are they not powerful and convincing? How worthy of a gallant mind, matured with the discipline of thirty years. Based upon what tried courage and skill do you assure your “dear Major”78 that “when spring comes, a more devastating swarm of grasshoppers will never have swept that valley of Salt Lake than will this Army be if our progress is molested.” Is it the judgment that scattered your supplies

75 The Nauvoo Legion’s Major Lot Smith led a fiery raid on undefended Utah Expedition supply wagons during the night of October 4–5, 1857.

76 Here Ferguson refers to the Mormons’ release of three federal prisoners at Christmas 1857 and the Utah Expedition’s persistent retention for trial of Lieutenant William R. R. Stowell, who had been captured along the Sweetwater on October 16. Ferguson omits reference to the fatal bludgeoning by legion officers of Richard Yates, an unarmed civilian prisoner, in Echo Canyon a few days after Stowell’s capture and Brigham Young’s authorization of lethal force at that point in the conflict.

77 In November 1857 Albert Sidney Johnston, declining to deal with what he viewed as traitors, had curtly refused a badly needed gift of salt laboriously packed through the snow to Fort Bridger by three of Brigham Young’s agents. This declension enraged Young. Later, Sam Houston of Texas told the U.S. Senate publicly and Buchanan confided to Delegate Bernhisel privately that Johnston’s refusal had been a mistake and that he had missed an opportunity for reconciliation.

78 “Dear Major” was the unspecific salutation in the November 29, 1857, letter attributed to Cooke. It was probably an intended reference to
from Laramie to Bridger, rendered Hams Fork immortal for your marches and counter-marches, and strewed the plains with the skeletons of your teams and chargers? Or is it the courage and discipline that prompt your brave troops, to pursue the Squaws of your Indian guests into the thickets and there abuse and violate them? These indeed may be samples of your discipline and skill, and others of the grave "lessons of morality" you are sent to teach, but they do not prognosticate a very serious devastation. Your troops must feel particularly complimented by your comparison. A gallant army, a cloud of grass hoppers. They should vote you a medal, Sir, a medal with the insect on both sides, mounting a pair of huge spurs, string it on your neck, and send you home to share your dignities with your Countryman [fellow Virginian Secretary of War John B.] Floyd, and mingle in his griefs for the disappointment of his favorite schemes. Perhaps after all, Sir, your comparison is correct and just; for it has been too often proved that the armies of a Republic in times of peace, like grasshoppers are only used to destroy or consume the fruits of the labor of industrious, honest men. And it may also be proved in your case they are as short lived and transient.

But finally Sir, upon what principle do you presume to “So hope Congress will declare the Territory in rebellion” &c? What right have you even to express an opinion on any political question? Why do you even dare to reflect on what a freeman's rights are? You are but a tool;—the tool of a tyrant Sir; the willing or unwilling slave of a bad administration: a foreman butcher employed to make the free soil of our country a slaughter-house and spread the carved relics of liberty on your bloody shambles.

Oh, Sir, you dealt us out treachery and ingratitude in return for our services and affection. A kind word or even your silence, would have cost you no more than your insults and abuse. How have we ever spoken of you? In terms of honor and respect.

In one of our first celebrations in this city you were termed by the principal speaker “that worthy model of Irish generalship” the highest compli-

Major Irvin McDowell, an assistant adjutant general at army headquarters.

79Although not awarded a medal (none then existed in the U.S. Army), Cooke was to be commended in published orders by Lieutenant General Winfield Scott, the general in chief, for his superb leadership in bringing the Second Dragoons through the longest cold-weather march in American military history during the fall of 1857 with only one death. Ferguson’s repeated reference to grasshoppers in this paragraph is probably rooted in the Mormons’ bitter experience over the years with plagues of these insects as well as crickets.
ment in my opinion that could be paid to an officer.80 And one of the battalion you commanded, in addressing a public assembly in Europe, thus speaks of you:—“And our brave Colonel! He was rigid in his discipline and often cross and exacting. But, beneath it all he had a kind manly heart, and while sometimes he would curse us to our face, he would defend us as his own honor in our absence.”81

These were the feelings of the men towards you, over whose homes you wish to spread your devastating pestilence; and whose wives, sisters and daughters you would place under the moral tuition of your troops.82 What have we done to you, Sir? What have we done to our country to deserve to be butchered or enslaved? We have fought for and with you. You wear the laurels now that we won for you.85 Our country’s highways are laid upon the tracks of our weary marches. Her treasury has drawn millions from the wealth that we discovered84 [emphasis Ferguson’s]. To the suffering Mormon and Stranger alike has the hospitality of our dear-bought homes been extended. In dreary camps did we leave our weeping babes and their heart-broken mothers to march wearily and far for the defense and honor of our Country’s flag still red with the blood of our murdered prophets. And thus we are repaid. Think of it, Sir. And if you have a heart not yet frozen up to all the feelings of humanity, blush for your country and your profession. Blush for it and leave it. There is no longer honor in it. The epaulets of every officer in

80Ferguson had been born in Belfast, Ireland.

81Bigler and Bagley, Army of Israel, 438, note that Ferguson was quoting from a speech that he had himself given in Liverpool, England, as a missionary on November 7, 1855.

82See MacKinnon, “Sex, Subalterns, and Steptoe: Army Behavior, Mormon Rage, and Utah War Anxieties,” Utah Historical Quarterly 76 (Summer 2008): 227–46. A desire to operate unfettered as well as fear of rape, summary executions, and discovery of the Mountain Meadows Massacre drove Mormon leaders to oppose the army’s entrance into the Salt Lake Valley.

83Unknown to both Ferguson and Cooke, the latter was about to receive notification at Fort Bridger that he had been promoted from lieutenant colonel to colonel, replacing Harney as commander of the Second Dragoons, which he had led as its executive officer.

84This statement is a reference to the landmark presence of discharged Mormon Battalion veterans in the work crew that first discovered gold in John Sutter’s California millrace on the American River in 1848.
your army are spotted with dishonor by the act of a cruel despot. Your sabres are sullied with his pestilential breath. Throw your Commission in his teeth and tell him your sabre was given you to defend the rights of freemen, and not gore them into slavery.

I have the honor to remain, Colonel,
The friend of my Country and soldier of her Constitution.

James Ferguson
WHEN BILL MACKINNON ASKED ME TO DELIVER this year’s Tanner Lecture, I hesitated. For nearly thirty years, I have enjoyed the privilege of attending to and adding to the extraordinary collection of Mormon Americana that the distinguished private collector William Robertson Coe donated to Yale in the 1940s, but I have never considered myself an expert on Mormon history. I know just enough to be aware of how ignorant I am. Bill trumped my concerns by pointing out the purpose of the Tanner Lecture is to bring to the annual meeting of the Mormon History Association someone from outside the field whose interests and expertise might overlap in ways beneficial to the membership and who, in turn, would benefit from attending the meeting. I assure you that I

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George A. Miles
am coming out way ahead in this exchange. If had known then the
distinguished list of previous Tanner lecturers, I certainly would
have demurred.

It is impossible to be a curator of a collection devoted to the his-
tory of the American West and not be impressed, intimidated, and
overwhelmed by the Mormon commitment to recording and preserv-
ing history. The office of the Church historian was created a century
before the federal government created the National Archives. Under
the direction of Richard E. Turley, the LDS Church History Library is
becoming an international agency with an agenda and a scale of oper-
ations that have not been seen since the heyday of the Spanish Coun-
cil of the Indies. There is not a Western Americana curator, rare book
dealer, or scholar who does not marvel at the work of Dale Morgan,
the original force behind the Mormon bibliography project executed
by Chad Flake and Larry Draper.2 The work of bibliographers like Pe-
ter Crawley, David J. Whittaker, James B. Allen, Ronald W. Walker,
Ronald Davis, Richard Saunders, Lynn Jacobs, Stephen Shields, and
Susan L. Fales3 sit in every serious collection of Western Americana.
Librarians Greg Thompson, Dean Larson, and Alfred Bush have long


been recognized as leaders in our field. Nor should I neglect the prominent role of Mormons in the antiquarian book trade, from the legendary Zion Bookstore, now operating as Sam Weller’s Bookstore, to Curt Bench, Rick Grunder, Ken Sanders, Michael Vinson, and the inimitable Peter Crawley, whose knowledge of early Mormon printing is beyond description. I am humbled to trespass on their territory this morning and hope that they will forgive my impertinence. I also want to thank my mentors in Mormon history and Mormon literature: William P. MacKinnon, Howard Lamar, Thomas G. Alexander, Charles S. Peterson, D. Michael Quinn, Jan Shipps, and Terry Tempest Williams. If I say anything of value today, it will be due to their guidance. Any gaffes, of commission or omission, are my responsibility. Much of what I have to say this morning will be speculative, intended to stimulate your historical imagination. I hope that you will respond creatively and freely to the ideas that I propose today, that you will challenge me, and contribute additional insights.

I spent many weeks last winter seeking a way to frame my comments when a note from Patricia Lyn Scott reminded me that the meeting was to be in St. George. Pat’s note stirred in my memory a recollection of one of my first major acquisitions of Mormon Americana for Yale: the purchase from Peter Crawley of a set of issues of the first newspaper printed in St. George, *Our Dixie Times*, written, edited, published, and printed by Joseph E. Johnson beginning in January 1868. In May that year, Johnson changed the name of the paper to *The Rio Virgin Times* to avoid having readers associate the paper with the rebellious states of the former Confederacy and to make certain that people were aware that St. George was near water. The twenty-seven issues of *Our Dixie Times* and *The Rio Virgin Times* at Yale enjoy a distinguished provenance. Multiple copies were signed by either George A. Smith or Wilford Woodruff. It had been years since I examined the paper, but the occasion seemed right for me to reacquaint myself with it.

Editor Johnson’s running commentary on the newspaper’s importance to the community and the need for local residents to support it by subscribing in advance fascinated me. I gather that newsstand sales were an unreliable way to fund a newspaper in those days. Johnson’s column usually appeared on the second page of the four-

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I wondered what had become of Johnson. Yale’s library catalog quickly revealed that the demise of *The Rio Virgin Times* did not discourage him. In May 1870, he began a new, more specialized periodical in St. George, *The Utah Pomologist*. As with his earlier paper, Yale’s copy of the *Pomologist* appears to have belonged at one time to George A. Smith, whose signature appears on multiple copies. In March 1872, Johnson renamed the paper *The Utah Pomologist and Gardener*, which he published through 1875. Unlike the general-purpose *Rio Virgin Times*, the *Pomologist* focused principally on agriculture, gardening advice, and advertisements. It sought to help St. George bloom.

My search also led to a small pamphlet printed in St. George some years later in 1882 by C. E. Johnson, Joseph E. Johnson’s son. The title of the pamphlet runs on as so many nineteenth-century titles do: *Jottings by the Way: A Collection of Rustic Rhymes by George W. Johnson with a Brief Autobiography Containing Also Selections from the Writings of Other Members of the Family*. In addition to the “rustic rhymes” and autobiography, contributed by George Johnson, the pamphlet includes brief notes about the life of his brother Joseph, the newspaper editor, and about a third brother, B. F. Johnson, best known in Mormon circles for his account of early polygamy in Nauvoo where he was a confidant of Joseph Smith’s and facilitated Smith’s plural marriage to his sister. A short “family history” (which covers only a single generation) appears on the final page. The poetry was decidedly rustic, but the biographical content began to fill in my knowledge of Joseph Johnson’s life.

Born in Pomfret, New York, in 1817, he moved to Kirtland, Ohio, in 1832, and was baptized as a Latter-day Saint in 1833. He is described as having been among the Saints who accompanied Hyrum and Jo-

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5George Washington Johnson, *Jottings by the Way: A Collection of Rustic Rhyme by George W. Johnson, Containing Also Selections from the Writings of Other Members of the Family* (St. George, Utah: Printed by C. E. Johnson, 1882).
seph Smith to the Carthage Jail. What caught my attention, however, was the suggestion that, after the Saints were driven from Nauvoo, Joseph became a town-site promoter, general goods merchant, and newspaper publisher in numerous towns throughout the Missouri River Valley. I knew that Orson Hyde had published a Whig paper, The Frontier Guardian, in Kanesville, Iowa (the original name for the settlement that became Council Bluffs), but I was unaware that Johnson had edited and later published The Western Bugle, a Democratic Party paper established by his brother-in-law Almon W. Babbitt in Council Bluffs in late April or early May of 1852. The paper became The Council Bluffs Bugle in April 1854. At some point in 1856, Johnson sold the Bugle to Lysander W. Babbitt, after which he moved to find a new town, Crescent, north of Council Bluffs on the Missouri River where he thought the transcontinental railroad bridge might be constructed. He lost that bet; but while he lived in Crescent City, he founded The Crescent City Oracle in 1857. As he had in Council Bluffs and would later in St. George, Johnson urged all residents to subscribe to his paper for its success would be essential to the long-term growth and prosperity of the new town. On April 15, 1859, after two years in which he published 104 issues of the Oracle, Johnson announced that the paper would suspend publication, at least until he could collect for unpaid subscriptions and other debts owed to the paper.

The woes of a frontier editor don’t seem to have diminished Johnson’s journalistic enthusiasm. In April 1860, in Wood River, Nebraska, he founded The Huntsman’s Echo. The Echo appears to have run for thirty-four issues published through the summer of 1861. In 1863, Johnson was off to Spring Lake Villa, Utah, to publish The Farmer’s Oracle, an agricultural newspaper that resembled the Utah Pomologist. The Oracle lasted for sixteen months.

As I followed Johnson’s peripatetic career, I found it challenging to distinguish his Mormon identity and characteristics from his traits as a frontier editor. Years ago Jan Shipps observed that Western historians had so written around Utah and the Mormon community that Utah resembled the “hole” in a Western history doughnut. John-

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son’s career offers a story that breaches the walls of the hole. His engagement with print culture, in and out of Utah, sometimes in direct

6Lysander W. Babbitt was unrelated to Almon W. Babbitt. A Methodist, Lysander ran the Bugle until 1870.

7Jan Shipps, “Gentiles, Mormons, and the History of the American
service to the Church and to the Mormon community but at other times in service to his personal aspirations as a town-site speculator, resembles that of dozens if not hundreds of other newspaper printers and publishers who sought to establish themselves throughout the American West. His story reminds us that as prominent as books, pamphlets, and newspapers were for the early Church, the Mormon engagement with print culture was part of a much broader trend in antebellum America. Joseph Smith and Brigham Young used the press in new but not unique ways. For all the distinctively Mormon aspects of the founding of St. George there was, in the role of *Our Dixie Times* and *The Rio Virgin Times*, a link to the stories of Gentile communities throughout the West.

Jan Shipps’s observation about the narrow focus of Western historians implies that not only has Mormon history been neglected, but that Western history in general has gaps (and opportunities) to address. Given Joseph Johnson’s story, might there be other ways to integrate the history of early Mormonism in the broader history of antebellum America so as to develop fresh comparative insights that illuminate not only the experience of the Saints, but of Americans in general?

Several additional examples concerning print culture reveal patterns that cross Mormon and Gentile boundaries. Early leaders of the Church made extensive use of the press to publicize doctrinal development and to create a common, shared understanding of Mormon religious and social thought. The translation of the Book of Mormon into dozens of vernacular languages echoes the long-standing Protestant emphasis on making scripture available for immediate, personal consultation. The extensive collections of the Yale Divinity Library’s collection of missionary publications reveal wonderful similarities in topics and themes with Beinecke Library’s collection of LDS tracts published in Wales, England, Scandinavia, and India. While American Protestant missionaries did not proselytize in Europe, both Mormon and main-line American churches established local printing operations to sustain their missions. Whether it was the Riggs family in Minnesota, the Judds and Binghams in Hawaii, or Parley Pratt in Britain, it often seems that to be an American missionary in the nineteenth century was to be a printer. Similarly, the importance and

abundance of theological, ecclesiastical, and devotional works in the output of the Mormon press resembles the pattern of frontier press operations throughout antebellum America. Alongside newspapers, religious job printing made up an extraordinary percentage of rural and small-town American printing throughout the 1830s and 1840s.

Like Stephen Austin in Texas, Joseph Smith and Brigham Young used the press to communicate to their colonists breaking news about political and social developments and to support the legal and economic infrastructure of their new settlements. Although their production was separated by more than twenty years and thirteen hundred miles, there are remarkable similarities between Austin’s famous broadside, To the Settlers in Austins Settlement, issued in 1823 to alert prospective immigrants to Texas about the terms of colonization he had confirmed during a nine-month trip to Mexico, and Brigham Young’s General Epistle from the Council of the Twelve Apostles to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints Abroad, Dispersed throughout the Earth and his Second General Epistle of the Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints from the Great Salt Lake Valley, to the Saints Scattered throughout the Earth, printed to alert the Saints about what was being accomplished at Salt Lake City.8 Austin and Young worked tirelessly to produce printed codes of law for their nascent communities. In Austin’s case it was the Translation of the Laws, Orders, and Contracts on Colonization, from January, 1821, Up to This Time, in Virtue of Which Col. Stephen F. Austin Has Introduced and Settled Foreign Emigrants in Texas.... 9 For Young it was The Constitution of the State of Deseret, with the Journal of the Convention Which Formed It, and the Proceedings of the Legislature Consequent Thereon.10 It is worth noting that, while Austin and Young always spoke of themselves as Americans, they imagined they were leaving the United States. Both were prepar-

8Stephen Austin, To the Settlers in Austins Settlement (San Antonio de Bexar: Asbridge, Printer, 1823); General Epistle from the Council of the Twelve Apostles to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints Abroad, Dispersed throughout the Earth (St. Louis: 1848); Second General Epistle of the Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints from the Great Salt Lake Valley, to the Saints Scattered throughout the Earth (Salt Lake City: B. H. Young, Printer, 1849).

9Stephen Austin, Translation of the Laws, Orders, and Contracts... (San Filipe de Austin: Printed by Godwin B. Cotten, November, 1829).

10Brigham Young, The Constitution of the State of Deseret... (Kanesville,
ing their followers to adopt new political identities. While other Western communities might have been less concerned about political reformation, territorial governors throughout the West frequently lamented the lack of a printing press to provide the basis for orderly and efficient government.

A final example of the similar roles that print culture played across the Mormon-Gentile divide requires expanding our frame of reference to cross the Atlantic. The controversial literature about Mormons that exploded in the 1840s bears eerie resemblances to Yale’s collection of highly charged polemics defending or attacking the Oxford or Tractarian movement of the 1830s and early 1840s in Great Britain. While John Henry Newman’s dissatisfaction with liberal Protestantism took a very different shape than that of Joseph Smith, the conduct of the controversies suggests opportunities to explore not only the sociology of religious conflict in the Anglo-American world of the early nineteenth century, but also the ways in which the development of steam printing in the 1820s contributed to and shaped not only early Mormonism, but numerous social, economic, and religious movements across the Anglo-American world.\(^\text{11}\)

Considering Yale’s collection of Mormon books and manuscripts in the context of its other collections generates a variety of questions extending beyond the role of print culture. Perhaps the most far-fetched and romantic notion to present is that there are intriguing similarities in the lives (if not the theological ideas) of Joseph Smith, the most original American religious thinker of the nineteenth century, and Jonathan Edwards, the most powerful religious mind of eighteenth-century America. They were rural religious figures who clashed harshly with the established urban religious leaders of their times. Extraordinarily charismatic, they frequently alienated close associates. Both found themselves forced to retreat to the frontier to practice and develop their spiritual insights. The parallel efforts of the Church Historian’s Office to publish *The Joseph Smith Papers* and of the Yale University Press to publish *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (Iowa: Published by Orson Hyde, 1849).  

Edwards ought to enable comparative study of two giants of American religious thought.\textsuperscript{12}

Less extreme is the suggestion that abundant insights could be gleaned by comparing Mormon concepts of socio-economic organization and social justice to such antebellum utopian communities as Brook Farm; Clermont Phalanx; Utopia, Ohio; Harmony; the Hope-dale Community; and Icaria whose stories are documented at Yale in a collection assembled by the scholar A. J. MacDonald.\textsuperscript{13} Alternatively, one might compare the Mormon experience in Salt Lake City to later nineteenth- and early twentieth-century California communes such as Llano del Rio, Kaweah Colony, Pigsah Grande, Ojai, and Holy City whose histories were documented by Paul Kagan.\textsuperscript{14} A bit more far-fetched and perhaps a source of scandal for contemporary Church leaders would be a consideration of the similarities and contrasts between the effort of nineteenth-century Saints to make the desert bloom and the communal efforts of the rural counter-culture in the 1960s and 1970s at such places as Libre in Colorado’s Huerfano Valley. I suggest this comparison to remind us just how outlandish was Brigham Young’s proposal to establish Deseret. The Mormon success story often blinds us to how contingent and challenging that process was. If the comparison intrigues you, I highly recommend Roberta Price’s \textit{Huerfano: A Memoir of Life in the Counterculture} and her photo book, \textit{Across the Great Divide: A Photo Chronicle of the Counterculture}.\textsuperscript{15}

That Mormon Utah prospered far beyond any other reform community in American history was due not only to the power of reli-


\textsuperscript{13}For a detailed description of the MacDonald Collection, see http://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.macdon (accessed September 5, 2011).

\textsuperscript{14}For detailed finding aids for two collections created by Paul Kagan, see http://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.utopia and at http://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.kaganphotos.

\textsuperscript{15}Roberta Price, \textit{Huerfano: A Memoir of Life in the Counterculture} (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2004) and her \textit{Across the Great Divide: A Photo Chronicle of the Counterculture} (Albuquerque: University of
gious conviction and social integration, but also to the ability of the early Church to develop an effective political culture that recruited new residents, integrated them into the community, and provided ways to navigate through rough times with the federal government. Yale’s collection of papers of frontier governors such as John White Geary in Bleeding Kansas in the 1850s, Andrew J. Faulk in Dakota Territory in the 1860s, and John Green Brady of Alaska in the first decade of the twentieth century reveal that they faced many of the same challenges and day-to-day decisions as Governor Young. A comparison of annexation and reconstruction in Texas to Utah’s history during the same quarter century might reveal links between southern and western experiences at the hands of an energetic and expansive federal government that emerged during the Civil War.

Let me offer a final example of the ways in which the Mormon documentary record resonates with broader themes in the literature of the American West. In Utah, as throughout the West, the maturation of settlement sparked an outpouring of memorial literature. Autobiographies, memoirs, county histories, and town histories reflected the historical self-consciousness of people who were proud of what they (or their ancestors) had accomplished. The practice of keeping a personal journal may have been more formally encouraged among the Saints, and it may be a more persistent contemporary practice among Mormons than among Gentiles, but it has never been a unique practice. All sorts of westerners of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries delighted in writing about how they and their communities had come to be.

As I suggested earlier, my goal in contextualizing the materials and experiences of Mormon history has been to break down the isolation that Jan Shipps described years ago and to suggest that, in many ways, the “hole” resembled the communities that enveloped it. But it is dangerous and misleading to carry this exercise too far, for as much as we might, after the passage of a century, detect ways that Mormons and Gentiles of the nineteenth century confronted similar issues, employed similar technologies, and resembled each other in memorial practices, we must remember that, in the nineteenth century, both the Saints and the Gentiles regarded the Saints as a distinctive people. Early Mormons chose their identity; they were not born to it. They embraced what set them apart. Gentiles, even those who identified admi-
rable traits among the Mormons, rarely identified with them.

Indeed the historical distinctions and divisions are more than binary, for after the deaths of Joseph and Hyrum Smith the Mormon community was never unitary. The James Jesse Strang Papers at Yale reflect one of the schisms that rent Mormon identity. Yale’s holdings of Strangite, Morrisite, Brewsterite, and RLDS materials reveal the power of relatively small disagreements in shaping religious and social identities. Out of multiple identities arose unique records, unique experiences, and distinctive stories about the past, about what mattered in the past, about which events were (or were not) significant, and about what those events meant—then and now.

As historians grapple with the stories of distinctive communities, we must recognize that our attempts to speak and write about the past are inevitably selective. We cannot relive or recapitulate the total experience of even one ancestor, much less villages of them. Consequently, all of our history, no matter how scrupulous and accurate, is incomplete. This incompleteness means that different stories about the past can often coexist peacefully. They contribute variety without raising contradictions, fill in otherwise blank spaces on our historical canvas, and lead us to celebrate the way historical diversity enriches our understanding of humanity.

But we do not live solitary lives, and when we share space (historically as well as personally) our accounts of the past do not always complement each other. As George Jones and Tammy Wynette sang:

We always wanted a big two story house,
Back when we lived in that little two room shack . . .

Now we live (yes we live) in a two story house,
Whoa, what splendor!
But there’s no love about.

I’ve got my story,
And I’ve got mine, too.
How sad it is, we now live, in a two story house.¹⁶

Our roaming newspaperman Joseph E. Johnson recorded his

¹⁶“Two-Story House,” words and music by Glen D. Tubb, David
own two-story encounter in the pages of the *Crescent City Oracle*. After Johnson sold *The Council Bluffs Bugle* to Lysander W. Babbitt, he and Babbitt fell into an increasingly acrimonious dispute. Although it is difficult to isolate the origins of the disagreement, Johnson’s acidic but cryptic comments in *The Oracle* indicate that it had political dimensions (accusations concerning who was responsible for Democratic set-backs in a recent election), economic aspects (arguments concerning the future prospects of each paper’s home town), and a personal component concerning the terms by which Johnson sold *The Bugle*. Whether the dispute arose from innocent, honest misunderstandings or from malicious, self-consciousness misrepresentations by one or the other man, two competing stories soon emerged—each story claiming to be accurate and authentic. The conflict was not academic. Each man recognized that his reputation for honesty and integrity was at stake and that the outcome of their dispute could determine whether they would thrive and prosper or suffer social disgrace. It was, at its heart, an affair of honor. While there is no evidence that the argument escalated to a gunfight, nineteenth-century Americans dueled over less. Johnson never reported whether the dispute was resolved. Perhaps the men reconciled, deciding that it was an innocent misunderstanding about which they could henceforth share the same story, or perhaps Johnson’s frequent relocations rendered the dispute moot.17

Historiographic disputes are usually just academic tempests, but sometimes they have dramatic social consequences and stir deep emotions. In March 1991, as the sesquicentennial of Columbus’s first voyage to America loomed, the Smithsonian American Art Museum, under the leadership of senior curator William H. Truettner, opened *The West as America: Reinterpreting Images of the Frontier, 1820–1920*. In creating the exhibit, the curators did not try to change which images of the frontier we should contemplate; they exhibited the same paintings that have been displayed and studied for nearly a century. They insisted, however, that we consider the paintings in new ways. They raised explicit questions about the way iconic images encoded ideological perspectives alongside historic details; they encouraged viewers to acknowledge the ways that art and artists shaped the “facts”

Lindsey, and Tammy Wynette, 1980.

17The dispute can be followed in the pages of the *Crescent City Oracle* beginning in August 1857.
they recorded to tell particular stories about the frontier. Many people who visited the exhibition as well as some influential academics were dismayed by the interpretation presented by the Smithsonian’s staff—ironically confirming the exhibit’s contention that art is not neutral. A major thread in conversations about the exhibit was whether the “elite” curators of the Smithsonian had the right to reframe long-held views of about the history of American art, about American history, and about American society.

Four years later another branch of the Smithsonian, The Air and Space Museum, found itself in a similar controversy. Its staff proposed to explore the decision to drop nuclear weapons on Japan through an exhibit that would display the recently refurbished Enola Gay, the B–29 bomber that delivered the first atomic bomb. Building on a half-century of documentation and historical research, curators proposed that the decision to drop the bomb was shaped not only by a desire to save the lives of American servicemen but also to address concerns about Russian involvement in a prolonged Asian conflict. Many veterans and their families perceived the exhibit as negating their service and ignoring their voices. Under extreme political pressure, the Smithsonian reorganized the exhibit multiple times, not satisfying anyone. The incident has become a staple of public history curricula across the country as an example of the challenges we face living in a multi-story house.18

Books may provide a better means, or perhaps a lower-profile means, of addressing the challenge of conflicting and competing stories about the American past. In Shadows at Dawn: A Borderlands Massacre and the Violence of History, Karl Jacoby explores the ways in which Anglo-American memories and histories of the Camp Grant Massacre rendered silent the perspectives of Mexican-American, Tohono O’odham, and Apache communities, all of which were intimately involved in the incident.19 Jacoby was less interested in resolving factual disputes about the massacre—for there are relatively few—than in presenting how each community involved at Camp

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19Karl Jacoby, Shadows at Dawn: A Borderlands Massacre and the Violence
Grant came to be there and how each community came to understand what transpired there. He demonstrates how the facts of the event came together in different ways for each community, how they placed the same fact in different contexts, and how they interpreted differently the meaning of the same fact. One of Jacoby’s remarkable accomplishments in his beautifully written book is to honor the integrity of each historical tradition without ignoring the horrific violence of the massacre.

If museums have been battered by history wars over the last twenty years, libraries and archives have not escaped the issue of who gets to tell stories about the past. Native American scholars and community activists have rightly drawn attention to the ways in which European and American accounts of the frontier demonized and trivialized Indian communities across the continent. Special collection librarians have been challenged not only to more fully document both sides of the frontier, but also to draw on the insights and wisdom of Indian peoples to understand the meaning and significance of documents regarding their communities. In 2006 a group of nineteen archivists, librarians, museum curators, historians, and anthropologists gathered in Flagstaff to consider whether they could agree upon best professional practices “for culturally responsive care and use of American Indian archival material held by non-tribal organizations.” They composed a six-thousand word document, Protocols for Native American Archival Materials, which was released by the First Archivist Circle in April 2007. The protocols urged professionals to reconsider long-standing archival practices and to adopt new approaches to providing access to what the group described as “culturally sensitive” materials. Their proposals included “rethinking public accessibility and use of some materials.” The authors of the protocols observed:

Native American communities have had extensive first-hand experience with the ways that information resources held in distant institutions can impact their quality of life, their practice of religion, and their future as a people—sometimes with disastrous consequences, sometimes to their benefit. Libraries and archives must recognize that Native American communities have primary rights for all culturally sensitive materials that are culturally affiliated with them. These rights apply to issues of collection, preservation, access, and use of or

restrictions to these materials.\(^\text{20}\)

Although carefully written and cautiously phrased, the protocols propose that Native American communities be allowed to determine who may or may not consult “Native American archival materials” no matter where those records are preserved.

Relations among individual Native Americans; Native American communities; Native American governments; individual archivists, librarians, and scholars; archives; research libraries; and academic institutions are complex. As the authors of the protocols suggest, they present abundant opportunity for misunderstanding and conflict as well as collaboration and mutual learning. Individuals, community associations, and governments must improve communication across cultural, community, institutional, and political boundaries. Archivists and librarians who collect or care for materials that document Native American history and culture have a responsibility to educate themselves about the issues surrounding the origin and use of their collections. Just as we recognize the authority of nation states throughout the world to control the export of their cultural patrimony we must recognize the ongoing right of individual Native Americans, their communities, and their governments to exercise authority over themselves, their property, and their records. An uneven distribution of resources often makes it difficult if not impossible for Native Americans to consult important collections about their personal, community, and cultural history.

The protocols seriously address challenging issues, but they are often vague and fail to define adequately what constitutes “American Indian archival material.” The term appears throughout the report but is never defined. While most observers would agree that the records of Native American tribal governments ought to be covered, should the term also apply to the records of non-governmental pan-Indian cultural organizations, or the personal papers of a Native American author, or the letters of a missionary who worked among Native Americans? Should the term encompass photographs taken of Native American diplomats when they visited Washington or the diaries of a white trader reminiscing about his experiences with Indian customers? What of motion picture and sound recordings made by non-academic scholars in the early twentieth cent-

ury or recordings of conversations among political activists promoting Indian rights in the late twentieth century? Such rhetorical questions are not meant to draw a line but to suggest the breadth and ambiguity of the term as it appears in the protocols.

Of greater concern, the authors of the protocols elevate sensitivity to community values above free inquiry. Aware that stories told about Indians have had detrimental effects on the lives of generations of Native Americans and concerned about the ability of Native Americans to determine what shall be said about them in the future, the authors propose that Native American communities decide when and how individual scholars may consult materials concerning them. The protocols accurately point out that archivists and librarians in the United States routinely restrict access to certain kinds of materials but do not acknowledge that virtually all such restrictions are in place for limited periods of time and that few if any of those restrictions provide selective access. Most restrictions close material to all prospective users until the restriction expires. American archivists and librarians would resist the open-ended, selective restriction policy the protocols endorse if they were proposed by religious, political, cultural, or business figures. It seems unlikely that they would allow European governments to monitor and approve access to books or papers the governments deemed vital to their national security. Neither would they allow a religious organization to restrict access to the unpublished memoirs of dissident members or permit a corporation to regulate access to the personal papers of a former employee. In each scenario, there might be specific considerations for a library or archive to question the suitability of its holding material. Perhaps the federal government has enacted legislation that classifies certain foreign documents. Perhaps an employee stole corporate property in the form of product designs. In each case, the library or archive would consider clearly defined principles of property law to explore whether it had a legitimate right to hold the material in question. It would not grant to a third party broad rights to review who could or could not consult it.

In recent years the libraries at Cornell, Yale, and the University of Illinois as well as professional organizations such as the International Federation of Library Associations, the American Library Association, the Association of College and Research Libraries, the Canadian Association of Research Libraries, and the Japan Library Association have addressed the issues raised when libraries are asked to
destroy or remove from their collections material that individuals or communities regard as malicious, slanderous, or misleading.\textsuperscript{21} Individually and collectively their statements assert that libraries and archives cannot assume responsibility for monitoring or restricting the stories that are told about our past without endangering free inquiry and free expression. Recognizing that our knowledge will always be incomplete, research librarians and archivists seek to document the full range of human activity and expression so that all of us can, now and in the future, contemplate, explore, assess, and critique humanity’s failures as well as its successes.

Throughout its history, the Mormon community has experienced the consequences of intemperate, misleading, or ignorant stories about it. In the quarter-century after the Church was founded,

those stories contributed to multiple assaults on Mormon settlements, to the deaths of Mormons, and to the massive destruction of their property. Anti-Mormon polemics and the events they engendered constricted Mormon opportunities to define themselves spiritually and politically. Even as the Church splintered in the wake of Joseph Smith’s death, antagonistic stories encouraged each Mormon community to close ranks and to develop a unique counter-narrative that drew believers together in a cohesive community. The Mormon commitment to history and to heritage is a reflection of the importance and vitality of their shared understanding of their origin and evolution.

In the latter twentieth century, as Utah flourished and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints became an international religious community, the need to define a single counter-narrative began to fade. A vibrant, dynamic community inevitably generates multiple understandings of its past, present, and future, and Mormons began to discover and develop numerous stories about the past that helped them understand their ancestors and themselves. Not surprisingly, many of these newer stories clash with Gentile perspectives. A greater challenge for the community is that some of the new stories clash with each other and with traditional Mormon narratives of their past. Some new explanations of the past will fail because they do not marshal sufficient evidence, but it will be impossible to disprove or to reconcile all of the new stories. Mormons clearly live in a multi-story house.

The ferment of contemporary Mormon intellectual life presents challenges and opportunities to libraries and archives in and out of Utah. No archive, no matter how extensive its collections, can stop the emergence of new narratives that address sensitive issues. Restrictions and secrecy only provoke curiosity. They frequently diminish the accuracy and richness of new explanations of the past, but they rarely stop determined investigators. To preserve documents without providing equitable access to them is to attempt to hide from history—an effort that inevitably fails.

Our documentary heritage is rich and deep. Joseph Johnson and his colleagues in the early Church have much to teach us if we are prepared to explore the messy, confusing tracks they have left in libraries and archives throughout the United States. That we will discover different tales ought not to dismay us. That our knowledge is and will be incomplete and imperfect reminds us that we can always improve our understanding of the past if we are prepared to examine it with fresh eyes.
FROM DOCTOR TO DISCIPLE:
WILLARD RICHARDS’S JOURNEY TO MORMONISM

Devery S. Anderson

ON MARCH 11, 1854, LDS APOSTLE Wilford Woodruff paid private tribute in his journal to his friend and colleague Willard Richards, who had died earlier that day after battling “dropsy.”¹ Woodruff noted those attributes of Richards that had long been recognized by those who knew and admired him, chiefly that he “po[ss]e[s] a strong mind[,] a mighty intellect & a valuable peculiar combination of intellect[,] & such another the world can Hardly produce.” Woodruff also noted that Richards was “the first man that has died a natural death in this Church & kingdom from the first Presidency or

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¹This nineteenth-century description of excessive fluid below the surface of the skin, known today as edema, is frequently caused by kidney failure.
Twelve Apostles. All that have died before have been martered.”

Willard Richards had been a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints for just over seventeen years. His rise to prominence was not unlike that of other early Mormons, but certain aspects are distinctive. Six months after his baptism, he sailed to England with six others (including apostles Orson Hyde and Heber C. Kimball, in addition to Joseph Fielding, John Goodson, John Snyder, and Isaac Russell) as the first group of Mormon missionaries to preach the gospel overseas. He remained there nearly four years. When he first arrived in July 1837, he was thirty-three, unmarried, and a relatively new convert. He returned to America in April 1841 as an apostle, the husband of Jennetta Richards, and the father of Heber John, born in 1840 (a son by the same name, born the year before, had died and been buried in Elswich, near Preston).

Jennetta, whose maiden name matched that of her husband, was from the village of Walkerfold, in Lancashire. Heber C. Kimball had baptized her in Preston on August 4, 1837. Her confirmation that same day gave her the distinction of being the first member of the Church confirmed in England. “I baptized your wife today,” Kimball wrote jovially to Willard, then serving in Bedford. Richards, no doubt stunned, yet intrigued, had to wait until the following March before meeting the twenty-year-old Jennetta. They married six months later on September 24, 1838. Two and a half years later, she bade her parents and siblings goodbye and, with her husband and sec-

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3 The first phase of the British mission lasted until April 1838. At that time, Orson Hyde, Heber C. Kimball, and Isaac Russell returned to America. John Snyder and John Goodson had abandoned the mission and returned home soon after arriving in Britain. Willard Richards and Joseph Fielding stayed behind and, with British convert William Clayton, formed the British Mission presidency with Fielding as president. In April 1840, eight members of the Twelve returned to the mission and, at that time, ordained Richards as one of their number. See James B. Allen, Ronald K. Esplin, and David J. Whittaker, Men with a Mission, 1837–1841: The Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in the British Isles (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992).

ond-born child, sailed to a new life in America.

The marriage was, by all accounts, a happy one, and Jennetta was a fervent convert. In 1843 she bore her third child, Rhoda Ann Richards. That same year, Willard married three plural wives. Jennetta died at age twenty-seven on July 9, 1845, and Willard married five more plural wives in the seven months following Jennetta’s death. He had married two more by 1851, for a total of ten plural wives and fifteen children.5 There is also a possibility that Richards was briefly and polyandrously wed to Nancy Marinda Johnson Hyde, wife of Apostle Orson Hyde, while Orson was on a mission to Palestine in 1841. Todd Compton believes that extant evidence does not warrant the conclusion that a marriage took place, while D. Michael Quinn does, listing Marinda among Richards’s wives.6

As Willard Richards established himself at the Church’s new headquarters in Nauvoo, Illinois, he became closely associated with Joseph Smith. After earning the Prophet’s deepest trust, Smith declared that Richards “has done me great good and taken a great burden off my shoulders since his arrival in Nauvoo. Never did I have greater intimacy with any man than with him.”7 Richards became the Prophet’s secretary, kept his journal, and was appointed Church historian and recorder in 1841. His bond with Smith led him to accompany the Prophet to Carthage Jail in June 1844, where he survived the mob attack and wrote the account of the slaying of Joseph and Hyrum Smith.8

In Utah, Richards was appointed postmaster of Salt Lake City in 1850 and founded the Deseret News. When he died on March 11, 1854,

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5George D. Smith, Nauvoo Polygamy . . . “but we called it celestial marriage” (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2008), 615–16. Smith does not include Willard and Jennetta’s first child, who died in England.


8Willard Richards, “Two Minutes in Jail,” Nauvoo Neighbor 2, no. 13
he had been serving as second counselor in Brigham Young’s First Presidency since 1847.

For nearly two decades, Willard Richards enjoyed a fulfillment in Mormonism that he had been searching for in religion since his youth. This journey was long and the path was uncertain until he came upon the Book of Mormon in 1835. This article examines Richards’s religious journey with particular attention to his espousal of Thomsonian medicine. The beliefs he held as a botanic physician, together with his intense religious yearnings, were catalysts that facilitated his transition from Congregationalist to Latter-day Saint.

CONGREGATIONALIST UPBRINGING

Willard Richards was born in Hopkinton, Middlesex County, Massachusetts, on June 24, 1804. As the eleventh and youngest child of Joseph Richards and Rhoda Howe Richards, he was twenty-one years younger than his oldest sibling, Joseph Jr. His sister Rhoda, their mother’s namesake, was nineteen when Willard was born, and was living with an uncle and aunt across the state in Richmond (her parents had left her there three years earlier to recover from a case of the mumps). Willard was two and a half when Rhoda first returned home. She wrote of their affectionate first meeting: “He [Willard] had sent me word if I would come home he would hug and kiss until he would almost break my neck. I reminded him of his promise. He came at me his arms tight around my neck and put on the kisses until I had to call for help. He jumped away. There he said have I not done it? I told [him] he had.”

Two years later, while Rhoda was away once again, sister Hepzibah (“Hepsy”), then age thirteen, wrote her: “Willard wants to come and get his kisses; he says if he could get to you he would hug you a 100 times.” From these early, affectionate moments among siblings, an important bond was formed. Willard and Rhoda were particularly close. As he matured, Willard became Rhoda’s protector. She, in turn,


9Rhoda Richards, Journal and Letters of Rhoda Richards: Reminiscences of 1806 Events, 2, MS 1558, fd. 4, LDS Church History Library. The early entries in this journal are a retrospective memoir.

10Hepzibah Richards, Letter to Rhoda Richards, January 20, 1809,
became his greatest admirer. The relationship between them would greatly influence Willard’s later decision to practice medicine.

When Richards was seven, the family moved from Hopkinton to nearby Holliston and, three years after that, to Richmond in Berkshire County, near the western Massachusetts border. From the time of their marriage, Joseph and Rhoda Richards had attended the Hopkinton Congregational Church, where they had been accepted into full membership in 1790. However, only one of their children, Nancy, had taken the same step while the family resided there.\textsuperscript{11} In Richmond, however, some of the other children acted on their religious feelings. In May 1819, during a revival following the installation of Pastor Edwin W. Dwight, thirty-four-year-old Rhoda and a brother, William, were received into full membership in the Richmond Congregational Church. In September 1820, after another, more intense, revival, thirty-one-year-old Phinehas was admitted.\textsuperscript{12}

During the 1819 revival, Willard, who turned fifteen that June, joined Rhoda and William in seeking membership in the Richmond church. In a letter to a Christian minister, Richards later detailed this emotional ordeal:

Richards Family Letters, 1801–83, Vol. 1, MS 1558, fd. 1, LDS Church History Library.

\textsuperscript{11}First Congregational Church, Hopkinton, Massachusetts, Church Records, 1724–1880, 117, 113, Microfilm #954364, items 1–2, LDS Family History Library, Salt Lake City.

\textsuperscript{12}Congregational Church, Richmond, Massachusetts, Church Records, 1784–1899, 19–20, microfilm #510739, item 2, LDS Family History Library. In his history of Richmond, Edwin W. Dwight mentions revivals in 1820 and 1827 but not the one following his 1819 installation. However, between March and November 1819, twenty-three people were admitted, a number equaled only during times of revival. Rev. Edwin W. Dwight, “A History of the Town of Richmond,” in \textit{A History of the County of Berkshire, Massachusetts; in Two Parts. The First Being a General View of the County; the Second, an Account of the Several Towns, by Gentlemen in the County, Clergymen and Laymen} (Pittsfield: Printed by Samuel W. Bush, 1829), 28. Willard Richards, in a letter to a minister, mentioned “the revival of nineteen.” This letter was printed in “History of Willard Richards,” \textit{Deseret News}, June 23, 1858, 1; reprinted in \textit{Millennial Star} 27, no. 7 (February 25, 1865): 118. The letter does not identify the minister or date the letter. The location of the original is not known; it is not among the Willard Richards Papers.
Near the commencement of the revival of nineteen my mind became impressed with the importance of the things then called in question, and well had it been for me had I then listened to the calls of the gospel, forsaken all, and followed Christ. I was impressed with a sense of my sins; I attended meeting after meeting, but all, I fear, to no purpose, until my feelings rose to such a height, that I lost all hopes of mercy, or of ever obtaining the one thing needful. Despair seized my whole soul; I concluded that I had sinned until it was too late for me to be pardoned. I forsook all meetings, thinking that my destruction was sure, and that all the calls of mercy would sink me deeper in everlasting misery. Night after night would I lay my head on my pillow, and close my eyes in sleep, wishing that I might never more open them in that world in which I should treasure up wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.

Thus I was for a number of weeks with my feelings wrought up to the summit of terror and despair indescribable; I cared not what I did. Other books were as agreeable to me as the Bible, believing that all I read in that, and all the meetings I attended and all other privileges would sink me deeper in the labyrinth of woe. My feelings were wrought up to the highest pitch of despair, and I was ready to curse the day in which I was born, if I did not in my heart really do it. But they were of short duration for this time, for in a few moments I relapsed into a state of stupidity and insensibility and concluded my case was hopeless. I wanted to pray, but I thought it would be mockery as my sins were unpardonable.13

Another sketch of Richards’s early life, published in the *Millennial Star* shortly before his death, was probably written by him although it is cast in the third person; if not the author, he was certainly its primary source of information. This record also said he had “previously passed the painful ordeal of conviction and conversion, according to that [Congregational] order, even to the belief that he had committed the unpardonable sin.” Yet, for reasons not clear, Reverend Dwight rejected the young man’s attempt to be admitted to membership.14 This refusal would be devastating to anyone who had put himself through the required steps toward membership—and all the more humiliating when it occurred on the heels of his siblings’ acceptance. Officially

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14“History of Joseph Smith,” *Millennial Star* 15, no. 52 (December 24, 1853): 843. The author does not identify Dwight as the pastor who rejected Richards’s application; but since 1819, he had been the minister at the Richmond church. In this account, Richards reportedly sought membership at age seventeen, not fifteen, as implied in the *Deseret News* version.
without a church to call home, Richards spent the next seventeen years of his life outside the bounds of formal religious affiliation. Richards’s biographical sketch explains that this rejection motivated him “to a more thorough investigation of the principles of religion, when he became convinced that the sects were all wrong, and that God had no Church on earth, but that He would soon have a Church whose creed would be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, and from that time kept himself aloof from sectarian influence, boldly declaring his belief, to all who wished to learn his views.”

This account paints a picture of disillusionment with religion that the historical records, in actuality, do not bear out. If Richards did lose all faith in the churches of the day, it happened just prior to his conversion to Mormonism. Although there is no evidence that he made another attempt toward Congregational membership, surviving letters indicate that he retained an intense interest in Congregationalism and at least occasionally attended revivals and other Sunday meetings (discussed below).

In 1820, the year following his failed attempt at Congregational membership, Richards began teaching school, with brief stints in Lanesborough and Hinsdale, Massachusetts, and Chatham and Nassau, New York. A teaching recommendation came from none other than Reverend Dwight himself, whose brief letter stated:

>This certifies that the bearer Mr Willard Richards is a young man of fair moral character and as such he is recommended in the capacity of a Teacher wherever he may find employment.
Richmond Oct 30. 1821.
E. W. Dwight Pastor of the Church.

This recommendation came to Richards two years after his admittance for membership was declined. Apparently, Dwight recognized Richards’s secular talents even if he found his spiritual gifts lacking. Richards, however, grew tired of teaching after three years. Later, in 1827 and 1828, he earned his living presenting demonstra-
tions on electro-chemistry to audiences all over New England.\textsuperscript{19}

Religious excitement continued at home while Richards was engaged in other pursuits, but it is not known if he was present to witness it. However, even if he was absent, he certainly would have been aware, through his family, of the revival that added forty-four people to the Richmond church in May 1827, a number greater than the previous seven years combined. At this time, Joseph and Rhoda, along with four of their children, were still among the admitted members of the church.\textsuperscript{20}

Two months before the Richmond revival in May, Charles G. Finney (1792–1875), one of the most celebrated evangelists of the nineteenth century, preached in Troy, New York, forty-three miles from Richmond. This revival convened at the First Presbyterian Church, pastored by Nathan S. S. Beman. Finney’s passion for saving souls by creating an unforgettable conversion experience for his followers led him to adopt techniques of persuasion that came to be termed “New Measures.” His success brought both great popularity and bitter opposition.\textsuperscript{21}

One opponent was evangelist Asahel Nettleton (1793–1844), who was visiting nearby Albany while Finney was preaching in Troy. The two met briefly in Albany twice, and Finney even went to hear Nettleton preach.\textsuperscript{22} Six months later in July 1827, the two evangelists met publicly at a conference in New Lebanon, New York, eight miles from Richmond. Nettleton attacked what he saw as Finney’s abuses in his “New Measures”; Finney, in return, “affirmed that so far as I was personally concerned, not one of those facts mentioned there and

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\textsuperscript{19}Richards’s electro-chemistry presentations are documented in several sources. See, e.g., his seven-page, handwritten lecture called “Electricity,” Richards Papers, Box 4, fd. 20. For a handbill advertising these demonstrations, see Matthew and Claire Noall Papers, MS 188, Box 10, fd. 6, Special Collections Department, Marriott Library, University of Utah, Salt Lake City.

\textsuperscript{20}Congregational Church in Richmond, Church Records, 23–25.

\textsuperscript{21}For more on Finney’s influence, see Sean Michael Lucas, “Charles Finney’s Theology of Revival: Moral Depravity,” \textit{The Master’s Seminary Journal} 6, no. 2 (Fall 1995): 197–221.

complained of, was true.” 23 This exchange remains well known in the
history of nineteenth-century New England Protestantism. Again, if
Richards did not attend the conference, he surely was aware of it.

Historian Marvin S. Hill concludes that Richards knew Nettle-
ton and even corresponded with him but is mistaken. He quotes from
a letter purportedly written by Richards to Nettleton, in which Rich-
ards expressed disapproval of Finney’s New Measures and their ef-
facts. 24 The letter is found in the Willard Richards Papers, Box 4, fd.
20. The letter exists only in two unsigned, handwritten copies claim-
ing to be extracts, presumably from the original. On what appears to
be the newer of the two copies, the heading reads, “Extract of a letter
from Dr. Richards to the Rev. Mr. Nettleton, January 30, 1827.”
Nettleton was corresponding frequently at this time with Dr. James
Richards, professor of divinity at the Theological Seminary in Au-
burn. The two appear to have been good friends. In the letter that Hill
assumes was written by Willard Richards, the author writes to
Nettleton: “I have just finished reading your letter to Bro. Aikins,
[which Nettleton would later read at the New Lebanon conference]
for which I thank God and you. We are on the confines of universal
misrule and moral desolation.” A letter to Nettleton from Dr. James
Richards three weeks later again refers to Aikin (Dr. Samuel Clark
Aiken was pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Utica, New
York): “My opinion is, that your letter to the Rev. Mr. Aikin ought to be
immediately published.” 25 It seems clear that the letter attributed to
Willard Richards, and that written by James Richards, both of which
mention Nettleton’s letter to Aikin, were written by the same person.
The Aikin letter was apparently known to Nettleton’s inner circle, but
not to twenty-two-year-old Willard Richards. The handwriting on the
older copy of this extract is less legible, but it attributes the letter to a
“Betcher,” possibly Lyman Beecher (1775–1863), Presbyterian minis-
ter, leader of the Second Great Awakening, father of Harriet Beecher

23Ibid., 221.
24Marvin S. Hill, Quest for Refuge: The Mormon Flight from Religious Plu-
ralism (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989), 7.
25Bennet Tyler, Memoir of the Life and Character of Rev. Asahel Nettleton
(Boston: n.pub., 1855), 267. The Nettleton Manuscript Collection is housed
at the Hartford Seminary Library, Hartford, Connecticut.
Stowe, and Nettleton’s close friend. In conclusion, Willard Richards is clearly not the author of the letter, although he may have come to own a copy of this extract, which would indicate that he found the subject matter of interest and also, why it is in his papers.

**FAMILY ILLNESSES AND ALTERNATIVE HEALING**

Four months after the 1827 revival at Richmond, events at home launched Richards on another phase of his journey that, in time, came to match his intense religious yearnings. Between his travels, he often returned to Richmond where he witnessed the sufferings of his sisters Rhoda and Susan, both of whom were plagued with ill health much of their lives. Rhoda’s autobiography records several personal incidents that required medical attention. She wrote that in 1823, “a cancer broke out on my side,” an ailment she kept to herself for four years. Eventually, she accepted the advice of a doctor and consented to an operation, which occurred on September 7, 1827. She wrote of those present to witness the procedure: “Fourteen were invited to attend. Doctor Bachelar the opperator then stood at the head Institution in Pittsfield with one student, two other Doctors. Ten brothers[,] Sisters, and friends.” Willard, then twenty-three, was one of those in attendance. Rhoda continues:

I entered the room[,] gave the Doctor my hand[,] steped up on the chair [and] seated myself on the table that was prepared for me. And when lying down I thought it was like lying down in my coffin. The opperation commenced which lasted eleven minutes, and a most hideous groan not broken only to scream twice. The Doctor took a large sponge placed it in the wound and put his hand upon it, I asked him if it was [the] weight of his hand, I more thought it the weight of the meeting house. They gave [me a] glass of wine [and] put the down [blanket] over me that I might not take a chill. The second operation lasted twelve minutes, cutting, digging, scraping tying. (I was afterward told the big artery was carelessly cut off after it was tied). I lay in that horrid place over an hour. I held the Shaken Doctor by the hand the only ef-fort I made. I was told that it was black for a long time. I was in perfect agony during the examination of the part removed. I was then laid into

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26In his autobiography, Finney makes several references to both Nettleton and Beecher, and the letter to Aiken. For his full account of his Troy and New Lebanon encounters with the two ministers, see Rosell and Dupuis, *The Memoirs of Charles G. Finney*, 203–31.
bed. I sent for my Parents. They came. I spoke with them, then I could not speak loud [only] a low whisper. This was on friday. The sabbath following it was thought I could not live the day out. I remained at b[rother] Phineas six weeks then was moved to [my] sister [Nancy] Peirson. stoped four weeks. Then returned home to my Parents.

Spent the winter in Sister Susans room with her. We were some times able to walk out and eat with the family. I did not speak a loud word during the winter, three weeks I could not utter a whisper.27

At this time, distrust was growing in America over the methods of the established medical community, and the Richards family easily joined the ranks of the disillusioned. First, as in Rhoda’s case, doctors often used methods of healing that were painful and barbaric, with heroic measures as bleeding, blistering, and purging being the standard remedies. The indiscriminate use of such harsh substances as calomel, tarter emetic, and opium resulted in further criticism and gave orthodox physicians the label of “poison doctors” by their enemies. Second, the move of regular physicians to organize themselves professionally sparked fears of a medical monopoly at a time that America was moving away from such exclusiveness and elitism. Third, with the generally unscientific nature of medicine—with thirteen weeks of study being the norm—the public would see a monopoly as anything but in its best interests.28

Preventative steps were also on the rise, and antebellum Americans began attending lectures promoting exercising, bathing, and other ideas on hygiene. For centuries, health spas had been a pleasure in Europe but had only recently become popular in America. Some

27Rhoda Richards, Journal and Letters, September 7, 1827, 5–6, 9. Rhoda made two sets of entries for many 1827–38 events, often providing details only in one. Where she gives duplicate entries, I cite both.

doctors incorporated spas into their own practices while others saw them as competition and a potential loss of income. In addition to any therapeutic value, spas, by their very nature, also had social benefits, and families would often utilize them as vacation resorts. The hydro-pathic, or “water-cure” movement, which saw water as the means to rid one’s self of pain and disease, was gaining in popularity—especially among women—at these spas, or any location with an abundance of water.29

Because Rhoda’s recovery was slow following her surgery, she agreed to visit a mineral spa in Casety Hollow (now Oriskany Falls), Oneida County, New York, perhaps at Willard’s urging. He accompanied her to the site in June 1828 and left her in the care of the staff. There, Rhoda spent the remainder of the summer bathing, exercising, and making full use of the healing waters.30

“DOCTOR CRANE”

Richards began the journey back to Richmond in July and stopped to spend the night with a William Smith in Danube, Herkimer County, New York. Willard wrote Rhoda of an unusual—perhaps life-changing—conversation he had the following day with a local physician:

In this days peregrinations spent an hour with Doctor Crane... We entered into a free discussion of your case; what your situation is and has been; the treatment heretofore, the present prospects and effects of the Spa, &c. &c. I had the pleasure of having every sentiment I have advanced to you on the subject, fully confirmed by the opinion of the Doctor. This right or wrong, I am not wholly alone. My own case


also was examined, and in that we agreed except in one point which was this. After examining[,] the doctor advised me to find a physician (if such a man could be found) and supply myself with a horse and commence reading and practicing. His reasons were these; that nature has done her part towards preparing me for the work— which would give me an opportunity of riding on horseback, and which would be permanently useful in restoring health, if I could bring my mind to bear on the profession.31

This “Doctor Crane” was Dr. Rufus Crain of Warren, also located in Herkimer County, about seventeen miles south of Danube. Crain had been born in 1774 in Worcester County, Massachusetts, was one of the original members of the Herkimer County Medical Society when it was organized in August 1806 and was also an early patron of the Fairfield Medical College. Besides tending to his medical practice, since 1817, he had served intermittently as a judge of the court of common pleas. Three months before Richards’s visit, he had been appointed to that position once again, and would serve until 1833. A friend described Crain as possessing “a large fund of anecdote, and was very social and hospitable.”32 It is no wonder then, that Crain encouraged Richards to engage in a medical practice and impressed Richards’s personally despite the young man’s growing skepticism about doctors. Crain would soon be appointed the Democratic presidential elector of his congressional district in the election of 1828, casting one of the 178 electoral votes that put Andrew Jackson in the White House as the nation’s seventh president.33 Thus Crain would, ironically, help define the “era of the common man” as the Age of Jackson—a time during which Americans grew more skeptical of the established medical community of which Crain was a part and which Richards would soon fully reject.34 Yet Richards did not forget Crain’s recommendation to follow nature’s call to practice medicine.

31Willard Richards, Letter to Rhoda Richards, July 13, 1828, Richards Family Letters, Vol. 1. Richards may have known Crain from previous visits to Herkimer County, New York.


33Ibid., 305–8.

34Although Andrew Jackson’s presidency spans 1829–37, the Age of Jackson by definition, covers 1815–48. For more on Jacksonian America,
When Richards returned to the spa to escort Rhoda home in September, he found that her health had improved significantly. She recorded in her autobiography: “[My] speech was restored in eight weeks with the use of the water. My arm that I carried out on a pillow was restored by the use of the warm shower bath so that I could move any way.”

In contrast, forty-three-year-old Susan’s suffering had continued and even increased. The cause and nature of her illness is unknown; but as her condition worsened in January 1830, Rhoda began giving her round-the-clock care, assisted by younger brother Levi, who lifted her in and out of bed daily. Susan died on April 11, 1830. Her death unquestionably increased Willard’s distrust in the established medical community, which had been unable to cure her.

**Return to the Mineral Spas**

On June 2, less than two months after Susan’s death, Willard accompanied Rhoda to New York’s healing waters once again, this time to the Chittenango Sulphur Spring, just south of Chittenango Village, Madison County. Owned by Peter Collier, the springs had become a popular resort after Collier cleared land and opened a wagon road for easier access around 1825. Milton Leach opened a shower bath house there for visitors shortly thereafter. Richards paid $1.50 per week for Rhoda’s stay at the hotel plus an additional fee for the bathhouse. “Take care of yourself,” he wrote from a nearby town, “get well fast as you can; stay as long as you please; that is all your business.” Richards spent the summer visiting family and friends in New York until

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36 Ibid., January 1, April 10, and April 11, 1830, 6, 10.
Rhoda was ready to leave. Rhoda recorded that after she and Willard left the spa, she “returned home with improved health.” The results of these excursions naturally strengthened Willard’s belief that such means of healing surpassed the remedies of traditional doctors.

By June 1832, however, Rhoda’s health began to fail again. After a local doctor decided he could do nothing for her, her friends sent for another, who “found me suffering from the loss of appetite a bad liver, and anguish of a remaining cancer and very soon I was a great sufferer from disease upon the kidney, at times was brought very low.” This physician ran through a list of common remedies of the day: “I was treated with bleeding, blistering, tartar emetic, litcuta stramoniam. A large blister was drawn on my stomach with spanish flies[,] the skin was peeled off then covered with tartar emetic to make sores. I have counted seventy scars on my stomach produced in this way.”

**SAMUEL THOMSON AND BOTANIC MEDICINE**

Contrasting the negative effects of these treatments with the positive results of the spas, it is no surprise that Richards’s attention turned to one of the many alternative medical sects that had arisen in the early nineteenth century. The most aggressive was the system developed by Samuel Thomson (1769–1843), a New England farmer lacking formal education. He had, however, learned about the medicinal value of roots and herbs during his childhood from a local healer known as Widow Benton, whom his family often relied on for

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39 Rhoda Richards, *Journal and Letters*, June 2, 1830, 6, 10.
40 Ibid., June 1832, 7. The use of Spanish flies, or cantharides, for medicinal use dates to Hippocrates. One common procedure for allowing the discharge of fluids was to apply cantharides to the skin and form a blister by inducing second-degree burns. Reynolds, *Waking Giant*, 228.
medical care. Furthermore, when Thomson was twenty-one, he witnessed the death of his mother and blamed her demise on the mercury, opium, and vitriol used by the orthodox physicians who tended her.42

His next negative experience came when physicians treated Thomson’s wife after the birth of their first child. “For the complications before and after delivery, Thomson engaged the services of several regular physicians who bled and puked her almost to death,” writes historian John Haller. “Dismissing them, Thomson sent for two root doctors.” Their remedies, in contrast, resulted in his wife’s recovery.43

Later, Thomson began employing his knowledge of herbs in dealing with the ailments of his own family, as well as some of his neighbors. In 1805, as he was still developing his system, he leased his farm, became an itinerant healer, expanded his practice into the towns of New England, and preached the benefits of his remedies to all who would listen. Haller, whose specialty has been Thomson and his methods, has noted: “This itinerant people’s doctor promised to release patients from the tyranny of regular physicians (and the heroics of their bleeding and purging regimens) by offering cheap and kindly medicines from their own fields and gardens.”44 With this message, it is no wonder that orthodox physicians denounced him and his remedies as his reputation grew.

Thomson’s system consisted of lengthy sessions called “courses,” which he administered to patients in response to their ailments. Thomson believed the ancient Greek theory that animal bodies contained the four basic elements of earth, water, fire, and air. The earth and water were the solid components, and air and fire (or heat) were what kept the body alive. He also believed that all disease was caused by the body’s loss of heat. A cure, then, required a way to restore that heat. Thomson’s materia medica eventually totaled seventy plants and herbs. Chief among them was lobelia inflata, a plant that induced vomiting and also restored heat to the body. Thomson also relied on cayenne pepper to maintain that heat. A full course included a steam bath, an emetic, a purging, and various tonics. In summarizing the process, Haller explains: “Compared with regular medicine, Thomson’s course was a time-consuming process that re-

43 Ibid., 13.
44 Ibid., 15.
quired hours of work instead of the regular physician’s few minutes of bedside conversation and prescription. Thomson had to labor a good half day for his charge of two to three dollars.”

In 1811, Thomson established the first of his Friendly Botanic Societies, made up of families who would use the system and care for each other when illness struck. In 1822, he published his *New Guide to Health; or, Botanic Family Physician, Containing a Complete System of Practice*. He also began selling the rights to his system, which, for twenty dollars gave the purchaser a copy of the book and the right to practice the system on himself and family. Strictly speaking, Thomsonianism was not unique, for as Haller points out, “The seventy medicines that eventually became his *materia medica* included a combination of Native American, immigrant, folk, and domestic remedies whose origins were blurred but stood the test of his own practice and experimentation.” Thomson secured a U.S. patent for his system, signed March 2, 1813, by then Secretary of State James Monroe. Between 1822 and 1834, the *New Guide* appeared in thirteen editions, and reportedly more than two

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46Ibid., 16.
million people found relief by using the system. The message of Thomsonianism, to “let every man be his own doctor,” was a welcome one in Jacksonian America. Elitism did not fare well during this era, when many came to reject traditional doctors and the high price of their services.

**Doctor Willard Richards**

By 1833, it would have been nearly impossible for Richards to have remained uninformed about Thomson and his methods. Word spread about the system in 1832 following a cholera epidemic that hit several states, wreaking havoc that lasted until 1834. Thomsonian infirmaries, complete with a staff and beds for patients (cost may have varied, but at least one charged $2.50 per week for board and $2.00 for a course of treatment) made claims of dramatic cures during the epidemics in Massachusetts, New York, Ohio, and Virginia, and publicized these successes while contrasting them vividly to the regular physicians’ failures. “The claims, though anecdotal,” says Haller, “made an impression on public opinion and contributed significantly to the acceptance of botanic practice.” Thomson’s official organ, the biweekly, twenty-four-page *Thomsonian Recorder*, had begun publication in September 1832, advancing the botanic message and news of the dramatic cholera cures. In October 1833, the editor of that periodical stated enthusiastically that, at no time, “has the Botanic cause spread so successfully as it has since the *Thomsonian Recorder* began to command an extensive circulation.”

It was precisely at this time that Richards became a Thomsonian subagent. His certificate, dated October 3, 1833, was signed by Joseph Skinner, one of only a few authorized agents then in Massachusetts. Richards’s standing as a subagent, which was good for one year, authorized him to “use and sell the Medicine secured to SAMUEL THOMSON, by Letters Patent from the President of the United

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47Ibid., 58.
48Ibid., 113.
49Ibid., 80–81.
States; and also to sell FAMILY RIGHTS, (signed by me, the Agent of SAMUEL THOMSON, with one of his NEW GUIDES TO HEALTH, and a NARRATIVE OF HIS LIFE, to each Right; all of which are to be furnished by myself,) to all suitable persons, except Physicians or their Students, and collect pay for the same."

As a subagent, Richards would keep a percentage of the money he collected from selling Thomson’s book, certificates for family rights to the system, and medicines. To guarantee compliance with all the terms of the agreement, he may have also been required to post a bond.

Eleven days later, on October 14, the Thomsonians began their second annual convention in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, which lasted until October 19. There, they adopted a constitution for the Friendly Botanic Society of the United States and passed a resolution to establish a national “infirmary.” Richards was not a delegate to the convention. He was in West Stockbridge, Berkshire County, where he attended an eight-day Congregational religious revival at the Reverend Munson Gaylord’s meetinghouse. He wrote sister Hepsy: “Something like 1500 people present yesterday. Sermon in the forenoon from [the text] ‘make to yourselves a new heart’. p.m. [sermon] to about 500 young converts from [the text] ‘Lord What wilt thou have me to do.’ More than 200 of these were numbered Last week at their meeting.”

Richards’s passion for the religion of his youth appears to have remained intact.

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51 Berman, “The Impact of the Nineteenth Century Botanico-Medical Movement,” 164. Joseph Skinner, although described as an authorized agent on Richards’s certificate, is not listed among agents residing anywhere in the United States in issues of the Thomsonian Recorder published after this date. The Recorder typically listed the names of all agents on the last page of each installment. It is possible that Skinner was only a subagent.


53 John S. Haller Jr., email to Devery S. Anderson, November 9, 2010.

54 “Thomsonian Convention,” Thomsonian Recorder, November 9, 1833, 1; Haller, The People’s Doctors, 144–45.

As a subagent, Richards was an authorized salesman of the Thomsonian system, but he also purchased rights, for twenty dollars, to use it on himself and family. Yet he may have even gone beyond that, by purchasing a hundred dollar patent (plus medicines) to become a general practitioner.\textsuperscript{56} Although documentation substantiating such a step is currently lacking, a letter from Rhoda in late December advises Hepsy, “You must be sure and keep clear of the Doctors” and assures her that “if you are sick you may send for him [Willard].” Rhoda also noted that her brother’s medicines should arrive in Richmond at the end of December. “He is licensed and will soon be ready to hear when he is called a Botanic Physician.”\textsuperscript{57}

It is not known how frequently the Richards family took advantage of Willard’s herbal remedies in the months after he took up the Thomsonian cause. In April 1834, he accompanied his cousin Selima Parker to her family’s home in Southboro, and then went on to Boston, twenty-eight miles away.\textsuperscript{58} There, he came in contact with one of Thomson’s agents, Benjamin Thompson, who owned a Thomsonian infirmary. On April 28, he paid Thompson twenty dollars, received a new certificate allowing him to use the system and treat his family, and became a member of the Friendly Botanic Society. If Richards had, as Rhoda explained four months earlier, already become a practitioner (and not just a subagent), it is not clear why he received similar certification for a second time.\textsuperscript{59}

Richards, now twenty-nine, began working in one of the Boston infirmaries upon his arrival, possibly to receive additional certification or because he preferred practicing under supervised conditions.

\textsuperscript{56}For the process and fees, see Berman, “The Impact of the Nineteenth Century Botanico-Medical Movement,” 179; Haller, email to Devery S. Anderson, November 9, 2010.


\textsuperscript{58}Rhoda Richards, Journal and Letters, April 18, 1834, 11.

\textsuperscript{59}For a photocopy of Richards’s 1834 certificate, see Noall Papers, Box 10, fd. 6. Some Thomsonians went into general practice only on the basis of having purchased a family right, but that method was not approved. It is possible that Richards chose that route initially; however, his excursion to the infirmary months later seems to indicate that he was determined to play by the rules. I thank John S. Haller Jr. for this suggestion. Email to Devery S. Anderson, May 8, 2003.
One account states that he worked under the direction of Samuel Thomson himself.\textsuperscript{60} This may or may not be the case. Thomson had long opposed infirmaries, as they contradicted his ideal that people should be their own doctors. However, he came to accept three such establishments bearing his name in Boston. He personally supervised the work done at Dr. William Clark’s Thomsonian Infirmary at 118 Pleasant Street. If Richards worked directly under Thomson, it was most likely at this establishment. However, since Richards had been in contact with Benjamin Thompson, who signed his certificate, it seems more likely that he worked at Thompson’s infirmary at Mount Vernon and Charles streets instead.

Samuel Thomson did provide occasional advice and support to patients at Benjamin Thompson’s establishment. The infirmary, consisting of several buildings that occupied a half block, had cared for over one thousand patients in the sixteen months following its April 1832 opening. Thompson boasted that nearly all of these people, “in almost every state and stage of disease” had been cured.\textsuperscript{61} Nine months later he noted that the total number of patients treated was at fifteen hundred. “The demand for Thomsonian practitioners is continually increasing,” he wrote in the \textit{Recorder}, “and students can be admitted to the Infirmary on reasonable terms. A good English education, moral character, and \textit{common sense}, are all the requirements requisite for admission.”\textsuperscript{62} Richards pursued his training at an infirmary (whether Clark’s or Thompson’s) for about two months—the timeline that can be constructed from Rhoda’s letter of April 18 about his departure for Boston, Benjamin Thompson’s signature of April 28 on Richards’s certificate, and Willard’s letter on June 21 explaining to Rhoda when he began riding a “circuit.”\textsuperscript{63}

This circuit-riding began twenty-seven miles from Boston at

\textsuperscript{60}“History of Willard Richards,” 1.

\textsuperscript{61}Benjamin Thompson, “Thomsonian Infirmary,” \textit{Thomsonian Recorder} 2, no. 15 (April 26, 1834): 240. Thompson’s letter to the \textit{Recorder} is dated August 15, 1833.

\textsuperscript{62}Benjamin Thompson, “Thomsonian Infirmary,” \textit{Thomsonian Recorder} 2, no. 18 (June 7, 1834): 287–88. This second letter is dated May 9, 1834. If Richards did study at Benjamin Thompson’s infirmary, he was there when Thompson published this short piece about the establishment.

\textsuperscript{63}Rhoda Richards, Journal and Letters, April 18, 1834, 11; Willard
Holliston where, at the invitation of Albert P. Rockwood, Richards stayed with the family and tried out his newly acquired knowledge.64* “I have had as much business as I wanted since my return, in Holliston, Milford and Natick,” he wrote Rhoda on June 21, 1834. “When you write give some names. I go through Sherborne to Natick and return by Framingham. Shall go the rounds this week again. Have seen but few of our friends since I returned.” His travels exposed him to the increasing popularity of the cause: “I can see that Thom- sonsians have gained in this vicinity within one month. People are thinking of the subject throughout the state much more than 6 months ago.”65*

Richards visited Richmond briefly in mid-summer, and no one was happier than Rhoda, who had been forced to rely on orthodox physicians in his absence. “I have this day bid adieu to the poison prac- tice,” she wrote in her journal when Willard returned on July 25, 1834. “I was all but dead.”66**

Richards remained in Holliston for the next year and continued to ride the circuit selling family rights, Thomsonian medicines, and, for a fee, caring for sick patients.67** By the year’s end, Selima Parker, living with her family in nearby Southboro, also noted the enthusiasm of Thomsonianism in Eastern Massachusetts in a letter to Hepsy: “I see nothing why he [Richards] should not meet with good success in his practice as his course seems to be gaining ground everywhere. Tell mother (as I used to call her) she need not worry about her youngest for I trust he will find good friends here.” Richards had already used his remedies on Selima, and she added: “I feel greatly indebted to him for his kind attentions the past sum-


64“History of Willard Richards,” 1, states that Richards moved to Holliston in 1835, but Willard Richards, Letter to Rhoda Richards, June 21, 1834, dates the move before the summer of 1834.

65Willard Richards, Letter to Rhoda Richards, June 21, 1834.

66Rhoda Richards, Journal and Letters, July 25, 1834, 8. In a second entry on this date, Rhoda writes: “Doct Deivit visited me for the last time[.] I can take no more from him” (11). Ironically, despite battling ill health for much of her life, Rhoda Richards lived to age ninety-four. She died on January 17, 1879.

mer. But for his course I know not how it would have been with me now.”

One benefit to Richards from working so close to Boston was easy access to supplies. Like the infirmaries, there were authorized and unauthorized Thomsonian depots. Richards could choose between the unauthorized New England Thomsonian Depot at Common and Tremont streets or the approved establishment at 40 Salem Street. Although the former advertised lower prices for medicines, Richards may have avoided purchasing there. Thomson had earlier denounced it and revoked the licenses of agents who he learned had patronized it.

Lacking similar access and support made it more difficult for the Richards family in Richmond, where few in the community had embraced Thomsonianism. Besides Rhoda, Levi had converted to the system and, like Willard, became a practitioner. Letters between the siblings in Richmond and Willard in Holliston document many botanical courses given by Levi at home and to a few interested neighbors. They were challenged by backsliders who returned to the care of regular doctors. For example, Levi went to the home of a Mr. and Mrs. Branch and “found Mrs B[ranch]—had quit the new system...Foun d the ma ll feeling as if the Thomsonian system of practice would not answer for her; no doubt is good in many cases such as hard colds and fever.” Rhoda, informing Willard of this, said that she (Rhoda): “Recommended to her to be more faithful...Yet says she has been just as faithful as she could and meant to be all the while; but never has thought it would do her any good and was never her mind to try it. Sister had seen her before; found her discouraged, the neighbors all talking to her. She told her she would come and see me then see her again. She did but to no purpose. She had

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69Haller, The People’s Doctors, 114.
70Hepsy Richards, Letter to Rhoda Richards, February 3, 1837, Richards Family Letters, Vol. 2, communicates a lack of interest in Berkshire County: “We hope the time may come when the people of Richmond will open their eyes and be willing to take the benefit of that which they now so much despise.” The typescript at the LDS Church History Library erroneously dates this letter as 1847.
Doctor B[ranston]. that day and was bled.”71

This view of Thomsonianism as a righteous system battling the evils of orthodox medicine made the cause a religious one for the ardent adherent. Haller adds: “There were even those who pointed out similarities between Samuel Thomson and Jesus of Nazareth. Like Jesus, the founder of botanic medicine was an unlearned man who faced persecution from the established orthodoxy.”72 A catechism that family right holders were encouraged to teach their children read in part:

**Question. Who is the greatest medical reformer the world ever knew?**
**Answer. Samuel Thomson.**
**Question: Who are the most wicked men?**
**Answer. The regular physicians.**
**Question. Why are they wicked?**
**Answer. Because they persecuted Dr. Thomson.**
**Question. Why have they persecuted him?**
**Answer. Because he exposed their malpractice, and cured patients which they could not.**73

For those who already had embraced Christianity, the lines were often blurred, allowing the two causes to co-exist within a religious context. Richards did not abandon his Congregationalist upbringing, despite being denied membership as a teenager and never again attempting admittance. For example, just after moving to Holliston in 1834 to open his medical business, he reported, “I have attended three meetings this day, and three the last Sabbath.”74 Up to now, his lifelong religious yearnings had never deviated outside the Christian mainstream. Yet with Thomsonianism, he found legitimacy in dissent and passionately defended the persecuted medical sect against an established medical orthodoxy. That contrast is significant, for it made him open to an embrace of unorthodoxy in religion when confronted with a relatively new, American-born movement that promised him fulfillment at last. And if—unlike others—he was at all hesitant to compare Thomson to Je-

72Haller, *The People’s Doctors*, 82.
74Willard Richards, Letter to Rhoda Richards, June 21, 1834.
sus, he could more easily equate the doctor with Joseph Smith, the founder of the religion that was about to command his attention.

**Conversion to Mormonism**

In the summer of 1835 while Richards was still engaged in his practice in Holliston and residing with the Rockwoods, he became aware of a new religious sect started in western New York in 1830, desirously called the “Mormons” or “Mormonites.” Ironically, the new religion and his new medical understanding may have been linked in his mind in 1834, when an orthodox physician recommended: “Neither Thomsonianism, nor Mormonism, nor witchcraft, nor any other kind of foolery, can be put down by legislative enactments, by fines or imprisonments, and they should not be if they could. Such laws infringe the inalienable rights of the citizen. They ought to be met by unsleeping opposition. They force, they exasperate, but do not convince the mind. The wide diffusion of useful knowledge can alone dispel such gross delusions.”

Richards later said that what little he already knew of the Mormons was based on hearsay, such as “the scurrilous reports of the public prints, which amounted to nothing more than that ‘a boy named Jo Smith, somewhere out West, had found a Gold Bible.”

When Joseph Smith established the New Testament office of apostle in the fledgling movement in February 1835, Brigham Young, a cousin of Richards and an 1832 Mormon convert, was ordained one of the Twelve. On May 4, the Twelve Apostles began a five-month proselytizing mission that took them to New England, New York, and Canada. Young preached in Massachusetts in August and September. On September 7 he traveled from Boston to Hopkinton where he visited his grandmother, Susanna Goddard Howe. The following day he arrived in Southboro and went to the home of his Uncle Jeroboam Parker, Selima’s father, who for thirty-three years had been pas-

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76 “History of Joseph Smith,” 843.

tor of the Congregational church there. That same day, he left a copy of the Book of Mormon with Parker’s son, Lucius, for it was this very volume that “accidentally or providentially fell in his [Richards’s] way” about this time. Richards was still living in Holliston and there he received his first real introduction to Mormonism. What Richards may have heard secondhand from Lucius Parker about the new religion is not known. However, Richards perused the Book of Mormon on his own, first allowing it to fall open at random. After scanning the page, he declared to himself: “God or the devil has had a hand in that Book, for man never wrote it.” This led to a more thorough study. Over the next ten days, he read it through twice and became convinced that it was of God.

Yet Richards felt compelled to investigate further, and the timing seemed right for such an exploration. Before encountering the Book of Mormon, he had decided to move to Boston, perhaps because riding the circuit was grueling and working in an infirmary would spare him the difficulties of soliciting business. He also considered going to the southern states, which may have been prompted by the national Thomsonian convention scheduled to be held in Richmond, Virginia, beginning November 16. At some point, he decided to go to the Mormon headquarters in Kirtland, Ohio, to “give the work [Mormonism] a thorough investigation” by observing the Saints, their leaders,

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80 Levi Richards, Letter to Willard Richards, September 18, 1835, Richards Family Letters, Vol. 1. According to Haller, The People’s Doctors, 28, most Thomsonian practitioners preferred the infirmaries over riding the circuit because of the ease in treating several patients in one location, together with the benefits of having assistants. However, “infirmaries were not always pleasant, particularly when patients began throwing off perspiration and other evacuations.”

and their way of life firsthand. However, as he was selling his medicines and closing his business, he was, unfortunately, “smitten with the palsy” (partial paralysis, perhaps a mild stroke), which prevented him from going anywhere for the time being.  

The Richards family, however, was anxious that Willard come home to Richmond, both to facilitate his recovery and to promote Thomsonianism in Berkshire County, where its success had been limited. “If you will come home and spend the winter I will make your condition as comfortable as possible, and we all should like that best,” wrote his older brother Levi. “[There is] pork and potatoes enough for comfort and sustenance. Mother thinks it would be a privilege to cook the same for you as that had formerly been your favorite dish.” Yet Levi also wanted to accompany Willard to Kirtland to satisfy his own growing interest in Mormonism: “If you will come here and assist me in arranging my business and spend the winter so that I can, I will go to Ohio in the spring with you.”

Richards returned to Richmond, but he and Levi delayed their journey to Kirtland from the spring of 1836 to the fall. Earlier, on June 26, Brigham and Joseph Young stopped in Richmond while on another proselytizing mission, lodging with the Richardses until July 6. This eleven-day stay must have been marked by numerous discussions about Mormonism, for Rhoda and Phinehas joined Willard and Levi in their interest. On September 2, the Youngs again stopped briefly in Richmond on their way back to Kirtland. Brigham recorded that, upon leaving, “Cason Levi Richards braut us [us] as far as Al[b]any.” The omission of Willard in this account suggests either that he was away (indicating a restoration of health) or just the opposite—that he was too ill to accompany them.

Perhaps motivated by their discussions with Brigham and Joseph Young, Willard and Levi made preparations for their trip to Kirtland and left Richmond within weeks of the Youngs’ final departure. Hepsy accompanied them to Madison, New York, and William went as far as Albany. Levi used his botanical skills to care for Willard on the long journey to Kirtland.

82 “History of Joseph Smith,” 843.
83 Levi Richards, Letter to Willard Richards, September 18, 1835.
84 Young, Holograph Diary, events recorded between June 26 and July 6, 1836.
85 Ibid., events recorded September 2, 1836.
journey. The brothers arrived in Kirtland in October (one source says November) 1836 and moved in with Brigham Young and his family.\footnote{“History of Joseph Smith,” 843. Rhoda Richards recorded that her brothers left Richmond in November; Willard and his cousin Brigham Young both state that Willard and Levi arrived in Kirtland in October. Rhoda Richards, Journal and Letters, November 9, 1836, 8, 11; “History of Joseph Smith,” 843; and Eldon Jay Watson, ed., \textit{Manuscript History of Brigham Young, 1801–1844} (Salt Lake City: Secretarial Services, 1968), 18.}

It had been thirteen months since Richards first encountered the Book of Mormon. Although his interest remained keen, he arrived in Kirtland harboring some questions about the faith. Two and a half years later, he reminded Rhoda: “Before we entered into the New Covenant you doubtless remember that there was some uncertainty or doubt upon our minds. We felt that it was possible we might be deceived; that we might be wrong while we were thinking ourselves right.”\footnote{Willard Richards, Letter to Rhoda Richards, May 10, 1839, Richards Family Letters, Vol. 1.} It comes as no surprise, then, that Richards spent his first few months in Kirtland giving Mormonism “an unceasing and untiring investigation.”\footnote{“History of Joseph Smith,” 843.}

This investigation solidified Willard’s confidence in Mormonism, and he made the momentous decision to join with the new faith. Brigham Young wrote that, after Richards “investigated thoroughly the principles and doctrines set forth by the Prophet and Elders of the Church[,] on] Dec. 31st, he requested baptism at my hands.” Apostle Heber C. Kimball spent the day chopping a hole in the ice of the Chagrin River in preparation.\footnote{Watson, \textit{Manuscript History of Brigham Young}, 18.} Richards used the occasion to begin the journal that he would keep until near the end of his life: “I was Baptized at Kirtland under the hand of Elder Brigham Young December 31, 1836 after the sun had set in the West.”\footnote{Willard Richards, Diary, undated entry referring to events of December 31, 1836, Willard Richards Papers, Box 1.} Levi, too, was baptized that evening.\footnote{Joseph Grant Stevenson, \textit{Richards Family History}, Vol. 2 (Provo, Utah: Stevenson’s Genealogical Center, 1981), 17.} Perhaps the brothers found something deeply symbolic in beginning the new year as Latter-day Saints.

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\footnote{“History of Joseph Smith,” 843. Rhoda Richards recorded that her brothers left Richmond in November; Willard and his cousin Brigham Young both state that Willard and Levi arrived in Kirtland in October. Rhoda Richards, Journal and Letters, November 9, 1836, 8, 11; “History of Joseph Smith,” 843; and Eldon Jay Watson, ed., \textit{Manuscript History of Brigham Young, 1801–1844} (Salt Lake City: Secretarial Services, 1968), 18.}

\footnote{Willard Richards, Letter to Rhoda Richards, May 10, 1839, Richards Family Letters, Vol. 1.}

\footnote{“History of Joseph Smith,” 843.}

\footnote{Watson, \textit{Manuscript History of Brigham Young}, 18.}

\footnote{Willard Richards, Diary, undated entry referring to events of December 31, 1836, Willard Richards Papers, Box 1.}

\footnote{Joseph Grant Stevenson, \textit{Richards Family History}, Vol. 2 (Provo, Utah: Stevenson’s Genealogical Center, 1981), 17.}
Three weeks after his baptism, Richards enthusiastically wrote Hepsy, describing his new home and religion. Naturally, he observed the Latter-day Saint attitude toward medicine: “Poison Drs fare no better here than Sectarian Priests, they are all treated well so long as they keep their poisons in their own pockets. When the saints have not faith to be healed, the word of wisdom is, herbs & mild food, consequently the saints are Thomsonians, so far as they know. Levi has practiced some & if he will consent to continue the business, I think will soon be the first physician in the City.”

Although a Mormon for only two and a half months, Richards was set apart on March 13, 1837, by Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon (Smith’s counselor in the three-man First Presidency), to accompany Brigham Young on a special “business mission to the East.” The purpose of the mission was to raise money to help alleviate the Church’s debt, which had mounted in the months since the dedication of the Kirtland Temple, and to help aid the Kirtland Safety Society, a financial institution set up to create cash flow at a time when assets were tied up in land. After Richards and Young parted company in Richmond following the completion of this mission on April 27, Richards


92Willard Richards, Letter to Hepsy Richards, January 20, 1837, Noall Papers, Box 9, fd. 10; emphasis his. For more on the botanic movement in Ohio, see Frederick C. Waite, “Thomsonianism in Ohio,” Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Quarterly 49 (1940): 322–31.

93Willard Richards, Diary, March 13, 1837. Richards did not disclose the purpose of the mission. According to Arrington, Brigham Young, 58, neither did his companion, Brigham Young. Mark Lyman Staker, Hearken O Ye People: The Historical Setting for Joseph Smith’s Ohio Revelations (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2009), 501, affirms that the mission was an attempt to aid the Kirtland Safety Society. See also his discussion on Kirtland’s economic situation (391–548). For additional studies of the Kirtland economy, see Max H Parkin, “The Nature and Causes of External and Internal Conflict of the Mormons in Ohio between 1830 and 1838” (M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1966); Marvin S. Hill, C. Keith Rooker, and Larry T. Wimmer, The Kirtland Economy Revisited: A Market Critique of Sectarian Economics (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University
spent time with his family and, from May 23 to June 5, gave Rhoda daily courses of Thomsonian treatments, an exhausting feat for even the most experienced practitioner.

CONCLUSION

Although Richards had earlier found fulfillment in medicine, his brief career clearly failed to fill a need created by the absence of official religious affiliation. As an account of his Mormon conversion published in his lifetime noted, if Mormonism were true, then “God had some greater work for him to do, than peddle pills.” After he arrived in Kirtland, he filled that void and never looked back—never worked professionally as a Thomsonian practitioner again, and devoted himself full-time to Church service. Through his mission in the East with Brigham Young, he proved himself an asset to the Church that laid the foundation for much future service.

Two days after returning to Kirtland with Young in June, he left on his four-year mission to England. By the time he returned to the United States, the Mormons had abandoned their headquarters in Kirtland, had been driven from Missouri, and were well established in Nauvoo.

Richards maintained a belief in herbal remedies over the treatment of orthodox medicine, however, and was affectionately called “Dr. Richards,” or “The Doctor” for the rest of his life. In Utah, he helped organize the Council of Health in the spring of 1849, which thereafter met weekly in his home. The purpose of the council was to educate the citizens so as “to reduce the causes and to increase the cures of disease.” The first issue of the Deseret News, of which Richards was the founding editor, announced the formation of the council:


Though we may fail to convince some of the superiority of botanic practice, we feel confident that our exertions, under this head, will shake the faith of many in the propriety of swallowing, as they have long done, with implicit confidence, the most deleterious drugs, under the sole authority and responsibility of technicalities. We intend to lay before the Council, from time to time, such medicinal plants, as shall come to our knowledge, for their approval or refusal, as we shall find in this vicinity; believing in the goodness of the Creator, that he has placed, in most lands, medicinal plants for the cure of all diseases incident to that climate, and especially so in relation to that in which we live.96*

And what of the alternative medical system he had practiced so enthusiastically? By the time Richards left for England in mid-1837, Thomsonianism as a movement had begun to collapse. Dissension created factions that the founder could not control, and soon Thomson’s agents began organizing medical schools that took the system away from the people and away from Thomson’s original vision. Because of this division and shifts in ideology, there were no national conventions held after 1837. Thomson’s death in 1843, according to Haller, “caused little more than a ripple within the ranks of the botanics.”97* * As for Richards, although he remained committed to the benefits of botanic medicine, he had found something more meaningful, and this he explained to Rhoda two years into his British mission: “Thomsonian[ism] is good in its place. It is good for just what we have used it, and yet the fulness of the Gospel is so far superior, I think little of T[homsonianism]. in comparison. He that hath not faith to be healed—then comes T[homsonianism].”98* * *

For Richards, the transition into Mormonism proved to be a joy-


97Haller, The People’s Doctors, 187.
98Willard Richards, Letter to Rhoda Richards, May 10, 1839, Rich-
ous one, partly because after embracing it so enthusiastically, it embraced him in return. This was the acceptance that, for years, he had longed for.
NEW WAYS IN:
WRITING INTERDISCIPLINARY
MORMON HISTORY

INTRODUCTION

Rachel Cope

The writing of Mormon history has undergone a series of transitions. The partisan views of the 1800s, dominated by faith claims and polemics, evolved at the turn of the century as trained historians relied upon scholarly methods to interpret their work. By 1968, Moses Rischin, then a Fulbright professor of history at the University of Uppsala in Sweden, suggested that the writing of Mormon history had become less rigid and more nuanced, and thus the story more accessible to the non-Mormon world. He titled this development the New Mormon History.1

Scholars who embraced the New Mormon History worked primarily with the tools of social history that were popularized in the 1960s and 1970s. While this perspective remained the dominant aca-


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demic approach for some time, the shifting of trends in the writing of
American religious history, shaped by contemporary historians such
as R. Marie Griffith, Grant Wacker, Robert Orsi, and others, have en-
couraged young scholars of Mormon history to consider how interdisci-
plinary tools can lead to a better understanding of the Mormon
past.

This discussion, drawn from a session held at the Mormon His-
tory Association Meeting in Kansas City, Missouri, in May 2010, is a
continuation of a similar session-followed-by-article that was publish-
ed in the Summer 2009 issue of the *Journal of Mormon History*: “What
Do We Do Now That the New Mormon History Is Old?” The first arti-
cle addressed the nature and reasons for the shift away from the New
Mormon History; this series attempts to push the questions it raised a
bit further by asking several young scholars to explain how their par-
ticular disciplinary lens enriches approaches to and the evolution of
Mormon historiography.

It is important to keep in mind that the authors are not respond-
ing to one another but rather to the question of how the particular
disciplinary tools, methods, and/or theories they employ can be used
by those writing Mormon history. Common themes, such as lived reli-
gion and the importance of considering gender, arise. And yet, at the
same time, each author is sharing personal insights that explore the
various types of approaches that can and should be utilized. It is our
hope that this article will encourage further discussion in a variety of
settings.

**SHIFTING THE PLOT:**
**POSSIBILITIES IN MORMON WOMEN’S HISTORY**

*Rachel Cope*

While I was reading the devotional diary of Emilie Royce Bradley, a
woman who had united with the Congregational Church in Clinton,
New York, in 1831, one entry in particular struck me in a rather pro-
vocative manner: “I could not forbear shedding tears at the thought of
how little I see,” it began. Emilie explained that insensitive comments
about her poor eyesight had “wounded my feelings so much I could
not conceal them.” She lamented further that nobody understood the
“daily and hourly” limitations she encountered, nor did they realize
“what a continual mortification” her poor sight had caused her. Her frustration seemed to be exasperated when friends and family members made “unfeeling remarks.”

The day following this despairing disclosure, Emilie included an addendum in her diary—the solution to her painful problem. Early that morning she tried on a pair of spectacles and, by so doing, discovered “a new world.” “Persons, leaves, fruit, houses that usually are totally confused were all,” she explained, “as if touched by the hand of magic, suddenly placed in order and every outline traced distinctly.” A mere lens had restored the intricate textures and patterns that surrounded her; glasses had added layers of richness to a formerly flat existence. Overjoyed, Emilie declared, “I do not suppose that any person can imagine how everything appears to me. I could truly say more heartily than ever before that this world is beautiful. I was really giddy with delight & for hours I could think of nothing but how happy I should be when I got my new eyes.” Her account concludes quite simply: “Yes, I think I shall send to Utica soon and get me a pair of glasses.”

As I finished reading this entry, I remembered the day I got my first pair of contacts at age eleven. My reactions were, in fact, quite similar to Emilie’s: “The world is so amazing!” I informed my mom. “I can see every blade of grass, every petal on the flowers, and every individual leaf. Everything is so beautiful. How did I not know I couldn’t see?” The new eyes I acquired, however, paled in comparison to the eyes I gained as I made the decision to become a historian of religion and then, later and more specifically, a historian of women. Since then, the lenses I have chosen to wear have expanded and enhanced my vision and understanding of the world around me as well as the world within me: enlightenment, reorientation, healing, rejuvenation, and transformation all come to mind. When I think back ten years ago, or five years ago, or even six months ago, I find myself echoing the early sentiments I expressed as I observed and reveled in the beauty of my surroundings through my first pair of contact lenses: How did I not know I couldn’t see?

The myopic tendencies that plague humankind diminish the

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1 Emilie Royce Bradley, Diary, September 21, 1832, Dan Beach Bradley Family Papers, Mudd Library, Oberlin College Archives, Oberlin College, Oberlin, Ohio.

2 Ibid., September 22, 1832.
layers of complexity that are woven throughout and give deep meaning to the lives that have been and are being lived. By telling the stories of men while excluding women, by omitting questions about people’s faith from the study of religion, by ignoring diversity, by suggesting that those in positions of authority are more important than ordinary women and men, we, often unwittingly, perpetuate the faint outlines that are the product of our own near-sightedness. In order to see more fully, in order to complete the partial pictures that crowd our minds, we must study the past with new, or more inclusive and historically conscious eyes. Looking through lenses that include women, I would contend, is the fundamental beginning.

In an essay titled “Women’s History Is American Religious History,” Ann Braude clearly argues that women should be the protagonists in the narrative of America’s religious past. She notes that her careful analysis of the historiography, however, has revealed a strong absence of the central character. Rather than exploring female presence, Braude explains, religious historians have focused primarily on male absence.3 Ten years following the publication of Braude’s article, Catherine A. Brekus laments, “It is still difficult to ‘find’ women in many articles and books about American religious history.”4 Their lives—their contributions, experiences, and influence—are essentially considered separate topics peripheral to the larger narrative; and consequently, women’s religious history has remained primarily what Neal A. Maxwell called “an untold drama within a drama.”5

Although the New Mormon History created some interest in women’s history—we will forever be indebted to women like Jill Mulvay Derr, Carol Cornwall Madsen, and Maureen Ursenbach Beecher—it has not yet evolved much beyond its initial compensatory purposes. The work of reconstruction is still in its beginning stages. In Mormonism, as in other traditions, women are usually studied as a separate category rather than being viewed as central characters whose stories can

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and should, as Catherine Brekus explains, shift the larger plot. While many historians of women attempt to contribute to “traditional” areas of study such as immigration, theology, and politics, “traditional” historians fail to integrate female experiences into the themes, patterns, and ideas they explore. Simply stated, historians need to think about the ways in which history can be “transformed or enriched” by asking “questions about women’s lives as well as men’s.”

We must be asking what difference it would make if we included women in narratives of Mormon history. What did women’s participation mean to the movement as a whole? How might the experiences of women transform, augment, and improve our understanding of the Mormon past? How can women be integrated into narratives about Mormon history; and perhaps more importantly, how can Mormon history be integrated into the experiences of Mormon women? Did women think about religious questions in the same ways as men? In what ways did male and female activities and vocations intersect and influence one another? Did shared values build a bridge between the sexes or did it separate them? Such thoughtful and provocative questions can become the new eyes we so desperately need—eyes that can see beyond the long-standing assumptions that have determined the types of questions historians have deemed important, eyes that can challenge the omissions that limit traditional narrative frameworks.

In 1835, Alexis de Tocqueville observed, “In no country has such constant care been taken as in America to trace two clearly distinct lines of actions for the two sexes and to make them keep pace with one another, but in two pathways that are always different.” In essence, de Tocqueville proposed that American men and women lived and worked in separate spheres; he described parallel rather than relational lives. More than a hundred years later as women’s history began to emerge as a credible academic field, the metaphor of separate spheres—an idea that permeated the past and lingered in the then-present—became the lens many historians relied upon. It be-

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7Ibid., 4.
8Ibid., 34.
came the means, Linda Kerber explained, through which scholars determined “what to study and how to tell the stories they reconstructed.”

In 1966, for example, Barbara Welter underscored the concept of separate spheres in her description of a nineteenth-century stereotype that she termed the “Cult of True Womanhood.” Piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity, she argued, were the attributes that were encouraged and expected of women at that time. Aileen Kraditor and Gerda Lerner likewise relied upon separate spheres as a conceptual framework for their innovative scholarship. Later, Carroll Smith-Rosenberg and Nancy F. Cott built upon the foundation of their predecessors by identifying and examining separate female worlds in which women cultivated friendships and relied upon associations with one another to meet their emotional needs.

The metaphor of separate spheres, then, allowed the first historians of women to suggest that female experiences were meaningful rather than trivial; indeed, separate spheres enabled women’s stories to shift into the realm of analytical social history. This lens made it clear that women did have their own stories to tell. And yet, paradoxically, this significant trope also stressed the notion that men and women lived in different worlds. In some ways, it perpetuated power differentials, which inadvertently suggested that all women lived sub-


ordinate lives, that females engaged in the unimportant work of the private sphere—things that happened in the home and in the church—and that men were involved in the public things that mattered: politics, economic expansion, warfare, and leadership.15

By the 1980s and 1990s, historians of women began to ask different kinds of questions. They wore new lenses that permitted more complex analysis. As they transcended the language of separate spheres, they were no longer constrained by earlier conceptions and interpretations of the past. Many, such as Brekus, have since acknowledged the middle ground that exists by describing a “civil society” in which men and women interacted.16 In Mary P. Ryan’s study of women in nineteenth-century upstate New York, for example, she stressed the connections that existed between public and private realms and explored the changing interests of families as a whole.17 More recently, Mary S. Hartman has argued that the greatest potential for historical change resides in the household and that the pattern of later marriages, beginning in the Middle Ages, has shaped the modern world.18 Such probing investigations, and the conclusions that have resulted from them, have pushed scholarship about women in new directions. New eyes tend to be more aware of inclusiveness and recognize the importance of integration.

Although historiographical conceptions of separate spheres have evolved in relation to (shall we say) the secular history of women, women’s religious history, at least at times, remains more polarized, perhaps because men stood in the pulpits as women filled the pews. And because historiography traditionally valued the pulpit over the


pew, the history of religion has usually focused on the male “sphere” rather than the female majority. Of course there is evidence of some change: Catherine A. Brekus, Ann D. Braude, Susan Juster, and Phyllis Mack among many others are actively engaged in shifting the plot.

And yet, in the case of Mormon history, it seems that the language of separate spheres remains an interpretive framework for us—if we even bother to consider women. Perhaps this can be explained by the predominance of separate-spheres ideology that is woven throughout our daily lives. It permeates our culture, shapes our history, dominates lessons, and is, in many cases, considered akin to doctrine. It seeps into the way we understand the past and the present, and it underlies what we expect of the future. Consequently, the larger narrative is rarely one of unity but rather (even when unintentional) a story of separation. In the words of Linda Kerber, we are “impos[ing] a static model on dynamic relationships.”

As it stands, the story of Mormonism continues to focus on male leadership, as well as other (as Gerda Lerner would say) male-dominated spheres. Although a fundamental part of the story, a single dimension cannot account for the entire narrative. In the attempt to complete this partial picture, perhaps historians of Mormonism should spend more time exploring family life as a driving force behind the social/historical/cultural and theological dimensions of restoration groups. For example, to really look at the history of the family—to explore the household and how religiosity impacts the daily lives of believers—is to show that men and women worked together and that separate spheres is not the LDS reality.

I wonder if we can expand our vision of Mormonism by turning to the homes. How does redefining power, or valuing the contributions of those who do not hold positions of institutional leadership, change and expand our understanding? How have women as well as men created change? In other words, how might women be connected to agency and causation in Mormon history?

By continuing to suggest that men and women lived, worked, and developed in separate spheres, historians of Mormonism, even if unwittingly, also suggest female subordination and perpetuate conceptions of inequality. Differences, in many cases, denote superiority.

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19Kerber, “Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman’s Place,” 38.

and inferiority: one side is better—more powerful, more important, more capable—than the other. If we wear lenses that enable us to see complexity rather than separation, we can move past the limiting perceptions of victimization. Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, an early historian of women, described a dramatic self-realization: by emphasizing male oppression of women, she had in fact become a “historian of men” when she actually wanted to be a “historian of women.”

By focusing on women’s victimization, she had heightened the sense of female inferiority; she was trapped by a thought expressed by Polish poet Czeslaw Milosz: “It is possible that there is no other memory than the memory of wounds.” By recognizing her own myopia, Smith-Rosenberg was able to change how she approached her subject. She began to write a history rather than a grievance.

In what ways can scholars of Mormonism apply Smith-Rosenberg’s insight to our own commitment to separate spheres ideology and our strong awareness of victimization (meaning Mormons as a people who have been persecuted and women as a group who have been overlooked)? Are we allowing ourselves to tell the history of Mormonism, or are we still so entangled in our past oppressions that we are continuing to place too much emphasis on our victimhood? And how might we transcend the near-sightedness we impose upon ourselves? Can our historiography eventually move past what has been described as the “outworn dichotomies” of oppression and empowerment, subordination and equality, domestication or freedom?

Might we escape a sense of victimization by moving away from separate spheres and instead by exploring what we are rather than what we’re not? Can we examine contributions rather than limitations? How might considering theology as well as the religious underpinnings of the female experience improve and even radically alter the picture of Mormonism? How has Mormonism been lived—internalized—and remembered by women? Can we, like Scott Stephan, examine the everyday lives of converted women, specifically within their households, and consider how wives and mothers sought to redeem their loved ones for Christ? Can we look at the interconnectedness between women’s personal, family, and public piety? Rather

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than seeing women as oppressed or resigned to particular positions in a patriarchal world, can we show how agency was made available to women who have recognized and exercised moral authority in private and in public? And what might women’s religiosity tell us about what made Mormon theology and practices meaningful? What do their stories reveal about their views of God as well as their conceptions of themselves and the world around them? In what ways did conversion experiences, prayer, fasting, church attendance, and service opportunities affect personal and communal spirituality and foster a sense of endurance, redemption and healing in female lives? In essence, how should the telling of Mormon women’s history, and thus Mormon history, improve as we wear our new eyes?

Following her conversion to Mormonism in nineteenth-century New York, Lucy Collins declared to a friend: “Every thing looked different.” New eyes—spiritual eyes—had changed how she saw the world. As I work my way through journals and diaries, as I read letters and memoirs, as I parse correspondence, as I delight in conversion narratives, I discover worlds replete with meaning, worlds women contributed to and were influenced by. I find myself healed and cleansed and renewed, and thus I feel encouraged and hopeful. I find confusion dissipating as understanding surges forth—in the lives of those I study as well as in my own. My personal hope is that as we look into the past and think about the present, “everything will look different” and that we, like Emilie Royce Bradley, can overcome our personal myopia and learn to see more completely. By so doing, I believe the narratives of Mormon history can become more inclusive, so much so that they can shift in new—in more complete—directions. May we all approach our work—regularly—with new eyes.

**HISTORY THROUGH LITURGY: WHAT WORSHIP REMEMBERS**

*Matthew Bowman*

I WANT TO BEGIN, OF ALL PLACES, in Marburg, Germany, of 1529, during
the German Reformation, where Reformation instigator Martin Luther confronted the ex-monk Huldrich Zwingli over a theology of the Eucharist, or Lord’s Supper. Any historian of Christianity could easily tick off the evolution of Eucharistic theology in this period—from Catholic transubstantiation through Luther’s moderated consubstantiation to the radical memorialism of Zwingli.

But that’s not where I want to go. Rather, I will point to a particular sneering comment that Luther made about the Mass that he had left behind: “But as ye massmongers cannot be baptised nor believe for other, no more can ye receive the sacrament for other. As every man is baptised for himself, so must he eat and drink...for himself. Can my eating slake your hunger? No more can your eating of the sacrament do me good. ‘The righteous man,’ saith the prophet, ‘shall live by his own faith.’”

This passage, from Luther’s famous tract “The Babylonian Captivity of the Church,” blasted the common Catholic practice in which the priest would eat the fragment of the Host and drink the wine as a proxy for the congregation. And it indicates not merely something about Luther’s emerging theology of sacraments, but additionally, something of the complicated ways in which social change, theology, and religious practice collide. This passage, and other evidence like it, has in the past two decades attracted great attention from historians studying what’s become known as the social history of the Reformation, which argues that the Protestant Reformation succeeded not merely—or even mostly—because its theology seemed more plausible, or because its charges of corruption and venality against Catholicism took root. Rather, the Reformers succeeded because their movement both embodied and enabled social and cultural evolution in early modern Europe. According to this school, Luther’s insistence on administering the Eucharist to the members of the Church marked a shift in Europe away from a comprehensive economy of salvation which understood religion as a communal transaction involving pub-

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lic, theatrical sacrifice and penance. Rather, modern European society, after the Reformation, began to intertwine religion with an emerging civil and ethical culture that stressed individual responsibility and emerging rituals of gentility that appealed to a growing urban society.²

These arguments should emphasize to us the importance of religious belief as a motive force in its own right. We might think about this phenomenon in terms of theology—and indeed, one of the more valuable manifestations of the upswing in interest in Mormon studies in the past ten or fifteen years has been the emergence of serious work in Mormon theology. The New Mormon History school tended to treat Mormonism as an institution—as a group of people requiring administration and organization. Its most influential works of synthesis tended to follow Max Weber’s dictum about the institutionalization of religious charisma.³ The work of D. Michael Quinn emphasized dynamics of power and the emergence of institutionalized leadership; that of Thomas G. Alexander the adaptation of the Mormon community to the demands of settlement in the American West and assimilation into the United States; that of Leonard J. Arrington, following his own graduate training, economic up-building.⁴

Like the social history that emerged in America in the 1960s and 1970s, the New Mormon History downplayed politics and great men in favor of community dynamics and administration. These are the Mormons as pioneers—the fantastically well-organized, industrious

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people who impressed visitors to their valley.

Such a focus may have been intentional. Arrington, the father of us all, hoped that his movement would shy away from the myriad methodological problems that lay between the historian and the sacred narrative of the Mormon past, instead stressing what he called “the human side of Mormon history”—those events and decisions subject to human causation. “LDS history is the history of Latter-day Saints,” he said—that is, people, not the divine. “Our historical training warns us that the accurate perception of spiritual phenomena is elusive.”

Perhaps because of this focus, perhaps because so many of the New Mormon Historians had training in Western history or American history more generally, the history of Mormon religiosity has generally been neglected. How and when Mormons read the scriptures, how they prayed, how they administered their ordinances—and more, what these things said about how they imagined their community and their identities, both in ways self-contained and in ways that separated them from the American and Christian worlds around them, are the very subjects we need to know a great deal more about. As long as we don’t, Arrington’s ultimate goal—to understand “aspects of ordinary life” among the Mormons, remains elusive.

Theology does help here. Knowing more about what Mormons have believed and, in the best cases, why they have believed it, gets us closer to their cosmology: the world both seen and unseen that they lived in. The work that’s been done and work that’s underway on the sources and development of Mormon ideas, particularly that which positions Mormonism in dialogue with other traditions, is essential. But for historians, theology alone cannot be enough. We need to know, as the scholars of the Reformation are coming to know, the ways in which these ideas were manifest in the community. How did they change how people lived? It’s not enough to know what was taught; we need to know what was heard—not simply what was instructed, but what was done.

I don’t want to imply here a sort of artificial distinction between religion in the pulpit and religion in the pews, or between theology

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6 Quoted in Ronald W. Walker, David J. Whittaker, and James B. Allen, Mormon History (Urbana: University of Illinois, 2001), 66.
and practice. Categories are never that settled—and indeed, these terms might simply be labels used to categorize in political or polemical ways, like the words “heresy,” “superstition,” and “cult.” Scholar of religion Jonathan Z. Smith has observed that such terms reflect a particular bias about religion that tends to be suspicious of religious practice and ritual.\(^7\) That reaction may be due to the heritage of the Enlightenment, which understood human beings first and foremost as thinking machines. This notion underlies many traditional interpretations of religious acts—arguments that events like baptism or the Mass are merely symbols for underlying ideas or mental structures or worldviews, a notion that became the affirmed theology of much of the Reformation. Participating in a ritual, therefore, affirms one’s allegiance to those ideas, or teaches it through action rather than word.\(^8\)

This view of ritual, however, simply takes us back to theology: to religion as a set of ideas. Actual religion—the messiness of relationships between humans and each other, humans and the divine, humans and a whole host of unseen and unpredictable forces in the world—is not as neat as these labels.\(^9\) And, it may be too messy to be laid down in the lines of systematic theology. Following Jonathan Z. Smith and the evangelical philosopher James K. A. Smith, I want to maintain that religion is not, in fact, a set of ideas, because human beings are not simply thinking machines. Rather, as James Smith argues, we are creatures who want, and love, and desire, and hate, and do all sorts of things for reasons that are never really clearly articulated in our minds but which, rather, emerge from the unconscious realm of ourselves that we don’t really control—the sorts of biases that we may not even be aware of, because they are ingrained within us at the very levels of our brain chemistry, reaction, and reflex—the level at which we know how to play the piano, or feel the desire to

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hug our parents, or so on.¹⁰

James Smith argues that this level is fundamentally religious; it is where we hunger for the ultimate. It is, of course, where St Augustine said original sin is located, though we, as historians, don’t need to get that theological. But we should, if we want to better understand how religion works, and how religiosity shapes our actions, understand that religion is not merely about believing things, but also, and even especially, about doing them. James Smith calls religious behaviors liturgy—ritual actions that orient us in the world, give us things to desire, focus our emotional energies, and, hence, actually, formulate our identities on levels far deeper than intellectual instruction.

The anthropologist Talal Asad, in his study of the Benedictine monks of medieval Europe, touches upon this reality in his wonderful term “inscribe.” The genuflections, the disciplines of waking, sleeping, and diet, the kneeling and prayer that made up the religious life of the Benedictines inscribed their religion upon their bodies; it made them in actuality believers in St Benedict’s rule and his Christianity, far more than prodding them to claim assent to a creed might do.¹¹ It is in religious behavior that we really get at the ways religion governs what historical actors do; it is through religious behavior that the ripples of belief’s influence on the past are manifest. Luther’s insistence that all among them, not merely the priest, partake of the sacrament, suddenly stands before us more clearly. It seems to us not merely the physical manifestation of belief in Reformed theology, but also a ritual that inscribes upon its practitioners particular ways of being in the world, ways of functioning in one’s relationship with others, with society, and with God.

All of this is a long way around to get at the main point, which is that we need to spend more time studying the worship and devotional practices of Mormonism, past and present. We have a significant amount of ritual and anthropological analysis of the temple, in part because the temple’s liturgy is of the high sort that seems curious and out of place in our otherwise Puritan, stripped-down, plain Sunday worship. And it may be because the temple so outshines the seeming


mundanities of sacrament meeting that our primary accounts of the ordinances performed in worship have come either in the context of doctrine or administration: either what Mormon theologians believe about such rituals or who is authorized to perform them.

What we need is more work on how these rituals frame the lives of Mormons. In what ways might the remarkable level of lay participation in the Sunday liturgy shape what Mormons understand to be the proper nature of the good religious life? How do Mormon devotional practices like family home evening shape what they understand and desire to be salvation? A recent Pew survey on American religious practices revealed that Mormons in fact read their scriptures much more frequently than nearly every other Christian denomination in America.\(^\text{12}\) Why is this? What ramifications might such frequent reading have for how Mormons use scripture to explain the world around them? These are all questions which may force more historians to read more theology, but doing so will allow them to more deeply integrate religion in the lives of their subjects—who are, after all, religious.

A SHARED HISTORICIST ENTERPRISE:
MORMON HISTORY THROUGH A LITERARY LENS

Amy Easton-Flake

Ezra Pound wrote in 1934, “Literature does not exist in a vacuum.”\(^\text{1}\) Nor, as many literary scholars have since pointed out, is it created in a vacuum. Rather, literature is an outgrowth of the social, economic, philosophical, linguistic, cultural, and religious contexts in which the author lived. It brings to life those conditions and eluci-


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dates aspects that modern historians might otherwise overlook. For example, factory mills were an important engine of economic growth in nineteenth-century America’s industrial revolution; however, studying their influence in terms of economic activity alone will neglect key elements of their human impact—ranging from the degraded to the heroic—that show up in Rebecca Harding Davis’s *Life in the Iron Mills*.\(^2\) Conversely, reading that novel only as a literary classic misses its insight into the mid-nineteenth-century American economy and working conditions, as well as into a host of racial, gender, and religious issues. Scholars of history and literature share many touchstones; and both groups may benefit by understanding their counterparts’ questions, textual criteria, and textual functioning. In particular, Mormon historians may find new questions, approaches, and sources through which to explore the Latter-day Saints’ complicated past.

Historians and literary historians are both involved in historicist enterprises and as such often ask complementary questions. For instance, a historian may ask what happened or what an event indicates about history, while a literary historian asks how an event has been interpreted and what that interpretation indicates about the interpreters. Recognizing that all texts arise from an individual’s subjective experience, literary historians are quick to note that they, too, are subjective interpreters, though they may strive for objectivity. As Mormon historians, we must be particularly vigilant in acknowledging our own paradigms, thereby imposing less of our current understanding of Mormon theology and history onto people and texts of the past.

Approaching historical documents from a literary perspective will open up a range of new questions with which to interrogate a text, particularly about its literary dimension. Form contains meaning; consequently, when we understand the conventions under which individuals wrote texts for both public and private consumption, we can more accurately situate the content. For instance, nineteenth-century Mormon short stories most often conform to the popular nineteenth-century marriage plot. Sermons from that same time typically follow either the tradition of the logical or analogical arguments, and many journals reflect a Protestant New England tradition.

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\(^2\) *Life in the Iron Mills* is one of the earliest American realist works. It was first published in the *Atlantic Monthly* 7, no. 42 (April 1861): 430–61.
By deciphering how a text is constructed, we can then ask how the author used the form to aid his or her message or why the author decided to present his or her materials in this style. Reader response questions can interrogate the reception of form and content, the author’s capacity to express specific ideas in a given medium (compared with other media), and the persuasive nature of a text. Analyzing how the language, character, and events presented in the work reflect the author’s day can also provide insight into the cultural construction of identity. We can inquire what the text reveals about the producer, as well as about the people it describes.

A central issue in literary history that merits the attention of Mormon historians is the relation of print culture to identity formation. For instance, in *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson argues that print capitalism allowed for the development of new national cultures; it laid the foundation for national consciousness through fixing language and providing a means of exchange and communication. In a similar way, the print culture that accompanied the Mormon Church almost from its inception played a crucial role in constructing and maintaining Mormon identity and community. Mormon historians will benefit from looking seriously at the impact circulated texts had on individuals and society.

In 1973, John V. Fleming called for historians to “engage themselves seriously in an analysis of the historical evidence offered by literary documents.” Thanks to the cultural and linguistic turn of the 1980s and 1990s, scholars responded to his call; and as a result, analysis of print culture came to the center of many fields of historical inquiry. However, other fields of history, such as Mormon history, have not fully embraced the rich resources available through print culture. In 1888, Orson F. Whitney, a ward bishop, the well-known city editor of the *Deseret News*, and later a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, called for the Latter-day Saints to write a “home literature” because of the immense influence of the press: “I would also speak of the press, that modern giant, that great engine of power, scattering far and wide the embers of intelligence, kindling on ten thousand times ten thousand hearth-stones the fires of thought and noble aspi-

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ration. . . . How mighty its mission, how far-reaching its influence, how invincible its power!"5 Such statements should lead historians to ask: If the people we study saw print culture as playing such an influential role in the Church and the world at large, should not that sentiment be reflected in our historical accounts of their lives?

In taking print culture seriously, historians should also focus on literature in its narrower sense—poetry, short stories, and novels—as legitimate sources for understanding the context from which they emerged. Novels and short stories often serve as snapshots of their day, embodying the cultural atmosphere of their time through the author’s choice of language, vocabulary, grammar, and tone. Scholars should read these works as textually dense cultural documents that respond to and extend the discussions in which they engage. Though often regarded by historians (at best) as an index of a cultural debate, nineteenth-century novels were widely understood in their time to be agents of cultural transmission. As an anonymous editorialist stated in the Literary World in 1850, “The novel is now almost recognized with the newspaper and the pamphlet as a legitimate mode of influencing public opinion.”6 In fact, President Lincoln reportedly said to Harriet Beecher Stowe: “So you are the little woman who wrote the book [Uncle Tom’s Cabin] that started this great war!”7 Stowe corroborated his idea twenty years later: “It is now understood that whoever wishes to gain the public ear, and to propound a new theory, must do it in a serial story.”8

These examples illustrate how authors saw their works as activist tools; consequently, scholars will benefit by assessing and evalu-

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ing rather than dismissing this role. For instance, historians could study how Mormon authors not only reflect public attitudes, but also, through their acceptance of dominant tenets of the religious culture or by mounting a challenge to these values, how they participate in shaping their readers’ understanding of these issues. Moralistic stories “appeared in virtually every issue of the Contributor, the Woman’s Exponent, the Young Woman’s Journal, and the Improvement Era” and were considered to wield particular influence over the readership of these magazines.⁹

Asking how and why authors used literary forms to mobilize political or religious ideas and challenge or strengthen ideologies will add another dimension to historical inquiry. For instance, scholars of nineteenth-century women’s literature have shown that women often used novels as a space for exploring contested ideas.¹⁰ The same could be said of Mormon authors—particularly Mormon women authors—who often had only limited access to other forms of public communication. Historians, therefore, can turn to fiction to hear women’s voices and analyze their influence. Even though scholars consider most Mormon literature written by such authors as Augusta Joyce Crocheron, Josephine Spencer, Susa Young Gates, and Nephi Anderson to be didactic, they acknowledge that this fiction offers an exploratory space not available in other forms. The story’s ending may contain that searching, but what exists in the interim often reflects the struggles their audiences commonly experienced. Mormon historians may also look to literature to find interpretations of doctrine by non-ecclesiastical leaders: these writers are interpreting, re-contextualizing, shaping doctrine, and then teaching it to others—a labor that scholars should not dismiss lightly.

History and literary works exist in a symbiotic relationship: Studying texts reveals more about history and studying history reveals more about texts. By accepting literature as a legitimate primary source, placing circulated texts at the center of their studies, and asking questions posed by literary historians, Mormon historians will add a profitable new dimension to their scholarship. In his famous call for home literature, Orson F. Whitney declared, “It is by means of

⁹Cracroft and Lambert, introductory essay on fiction, A Believing People, 331.

literature that much of this great work will have to be accomplished. . . . It is impossible to compute in figures, or express in words, the blessings that books and book-makers have been to humanity.”

Here Whitney recognized the impact that texts would have on both the building up of the kingdom of God and the history of humanity. We as Mormon historians would be wise to do the same.

**MORMON HISTORY AND “LIVED RELIGION”**

Ryan G. Tobler

Like every field, Mormon history has had innovative moments. The “New Mormon History,” with its pledge to reject polemic arguments and its turn to face the wider world, is probably the field’s most widely recognized transformation. But there have also been other, more subtle, changes over time, driven by new ideas and new scholars with alternative visions of how Mormon history is best made. Innovation, successful or not, has been valuable for the discipline, providing it with opportunities to grow, challenge, and remake itself. Exposure to new historical principles continually enables the discipline to weigh ideas that may be promising for future explorations of the Mormon past.

One such seminal moment was surely the publication of Jan Shipps’ monograph *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition*, in 1987. By training, Shipps was a historian, but what she brought to Mormon history in her book was more than historical method. Not only did she bring the critical perspective of a non-Mormon outsider but she also brought a broader understanding of religion that has enriched and deepened conversations about the meanings of Mormon-
ism and Mormon history. Her approach to Mormon history has been deeply influenced by her involvement with the emerging discipline of religious studies. More a thematic than disciplinary domain of study, religious studies was a young academic entity in the 1980s and arguably remains in its infancy today. Prescribing no strict method—it borrows from many disciplines—it is open to anything that yields better understanding of the subject. While the field is eclectic and diverse, it draws most heavily upon the insights of the social sciences.

Despite being recognized only recently as an independent academic field, religious studies has a lengthy pedigree that extends back indefinitely, and runs through a long line of academics working on aspects of religion from their respective fields. Max Weber and Emile Durkheim in sociology, Williams James in psychology, and Clifford Geertz and Mircea Eliade in anthropology are only a few of those who have made major contributions to the nature of religious studies as we now see it.

As Shipps demonstrated for historians of Mormonism, religious studies has much to offer historians of religion, and this is something that historians have lately begun to realize. As they have become increasingly self-conscious and more methodologically savvy, historians have been increasingly receptive to insights that might affect the way they work. Overlapping as it does with the study of religious history, religious studies has transmitted many of its borrowed insights to religious historians. Jan Shipps was receptive to these transmissions. Indeed, she set out to consider “LDS historical materials within the broad framework provided by religious studies.” Drawing on anthropologists’ rich understanding of how people understand religious stories, history and time, Shipps labored to sketch out not only a narrative of Mormon history, but an account of Mormon self-understanding. Rather than merely giving an overhead view of religious events, she descended to give a first-hand account of religious meaning as Mormons knew and know it.

While the total impact of religious studies on religious history is too complex to describe cleanly, a good deal of it is captured by the ideas or concepts that now conventionally go under the title “lived religion.” Although the descriptor “lived religion” is fuzzy and inadequate in many ways, it gets at the heart of what the social sciences have given scholars of religion. It carries prominently the sense of experi-

\(^2\)Ibid., xi.
ence and of an internal view of religion as it is “lived”—in other words, as it is perceived, felt, interpreted, understood, and performed.

Studies that take this approach have come to focus, naturally, on factors that influence and contribute to experience most directly. Although lived religion weighs a diversity of elements, most scholars acknowledge that it concentrates on three main spheres of inquiry. These are (1) the social and communal dynamics in conversation with religion, (2) cultural and symbolic systems that overlap with religion or (help) constitute it, and (3) the material dimensions of religious practice and performance. Social scientists, whether they are sociologists, anthropologists, or linguists, apply these forms of inquiry to contemporary cultures and people. But historians of religion are also finding them more than relevant to the historical subjects of the past. When stressed in religious history, these three emphases foreground new sources, introduce and make available new narratives, and yield profound insights that others have missed.

In the last twenty years, an increasing number of historians of American religion have recognized the value of “lived religion,” and put the concept to use. Among its practitioners and advocates are some of the most respected scholars of American religion. These include David Hall, the noted scholar of Puritanism and colonial book history, as well as Leigh Schmidt, a prolific historian of American religion during the Enlightenment. Perhaps the most enthusiastic practitioner is Robert Orsi, a prominent scholar of Catholicism. His *Madonna of 115th Street*, a thick description of Italian-American religious community in New York, is widely considered one of the pre-

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mier examples of this approach. Collectively, the work of these scholars and their like-minded colleagues has invigorated the study of American religious history.

This is a movement that Mormon history might join. While Jan Shipps introduced some of religious studies’ impulses to Mormon history, much has still yet to be incorporated. For Mormon historians, “lived religion” and its elements are still largely unfamiliar, although inroads are being made. There are many opportunities for fruitful exploration. Consider the potential applications to Mormon history within the three general orbits of lived religion’s methodology:

Society and Community. Lived religion is highly interested in social dynamics in and around religion because they contribute so strongly to individuals’ religious experience. Scholars speak of people being deeply influenced, even “constructed,” by their communities and their associations with others; lived-religion historians attempt to understand how this has occurred among religious groups.

Mormon history presents a promising context in this regard since Mormonism has often produced its own distinct social principles and effects. It carries its own social philosophy, with unique conceptions of religious and political authority, highly distinctive social ideals (some involving economics), and a singular theology that emphasizes the ultimacy of social relationships. Mormons have experienced collective persecution, displacement, and isolation, as well as internal conflicts and other social upheaval. Although talking about factors like these in the abstract tells us little, they and others like them have exerted real influence on Mormons who made everyday decisions like where to live, whom to marry, and whom to trust. If these abstractions are followed to their concrete connections with individual lives, they become immensely valuable. Considering the emergence of Joseph Smith’s “dynastic” theology in Nauvoo, for instance, which taught that family and social ties were immortalized through temple rituals, yields insight in the way that individual Latter-day Saints of the period grieved and were consoled at the deaths of their loved ones.

Culture and Patterns of Meaning. Related to social and community

interests is “culture,” a battered and elusive yet indispensible concept. One of the classical meanings of culture lies at the heart of lived religion, where it refers inclusively to the prevailing patterns of meaning in a religious group that constitute its unique “way of life” and collective worldview.\textsuperscript{6} Scholars of lived religion are deeply interested in these patterns, which manifest themselves in all kinds of media from language and images to behavior and customs. Groups of people build and live inside these ‘symbolic’ systems; scholars have described the culturally immersed individual as “suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun.”\textsuperscript{7} These webs and patterns are the elements believers grapple with as they live their faith and establish religious understanding. In other words, these patterns and symbols help set the stage and the terms for an individual’s religious experience.

Again, the Mormon historical past has immense potential as a sphere for the exploration of cultural systems. Mormonism has at times maintained a collective culture so distinct that some scholars have argued it approaches ethnicity in strength.\textsuperscript{8} Mormons have established their own cultural discourse, fed by a distinct and vivid theology. They have also defined their own visual symbols and tropes. Mormons have as rich and colorful an array of symbols and webs of meaning as any other religious group. As an example, think about the plentitude of phrases and unique religious concepts available in the Mormon culture. When Mormons think or talk about their faith, they use concepts like Zion, or family home evening, or the plan of salvation, to do so. These are the organizing themes and patterns that make meaning for Latter-day Saints.

\textit{Religious Practice.} A few scholars of Mormonism have begun to plumb the depths of religion as disclosed by the study of religious practices, an angle that has grown popular in studies of religion generally.\textsuperscript{9} It turns out that human bodies and religious rituals, space, structures, and objects—all the things involved with the active and ma-

\textsuperscript{6}Raymond Williams, \textit{Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society}, 2d ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 87–93.


\textsuperscript{8}This perception was first articulated by Thomas O’Dea in \textit{The Mormons} (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 115–18.

\textsuperscript{9}An excellent example of Mormon historians exploring the dimen-
terial dimensions of religion—have much to do with how religion is understood and experienced. People do not somehow do religion apart from their physical bodies. Neither do they experience it apart from the material conditions of their lives. It is inevitable that these conditions contribute to any human experience, and religious experience is no exception.

Mormonism is again a religion rich in this dimension. Mormons have a special interest in matter and materiality. They believe in sacred space; they’ve constructed special orders of structures that reflect religious vision. They’ve also come to hold an extensive and conscious theology of the body and have a rich appreciation of embodiment. From temple garments to CTR rings, Latter-day Saints practice a faith that has much to do with the flesh they inhabit. Mormons also emphasize religious rituals or “ordinances.” Over the course of early Mormon history, bodily rituals and performances came to play an unusually prominent role, from variations on baptism to a robust, dramaturgical suite of temple rituals intended to echo the eternities. And scholars of Mormonism can easily recognize how physical buildings like the temples and material objects like scriptures contribute to the religious lives of Latter-day Saints.

It might seem that following a lived religion approach to Mormon history would require a deterringly deep theoretical knowledge, but more important than immersion in formal religious theory is simple openness and appreciation for the capacity of disciplines like the social sciences to grant deeper or different insights into the religious lives of our historical subjects. All that is needed is a willingness to recognize that human life in the past contained all of the complexity as ours does, but that time obscures it. Other disciplines can empower historians of religion to uncover the nuances of daily personal life. They help them to more fully enter the worlds of those they study, enabling them to better appreciate the personalities of subjects and recover the meaning they found—one of the noblest objects of historical inquiry. This is what “lived religion” seeks.

Near the end of his life, in his remarkable King Follett Discourse, Joseph Smith spoke to the convergence of experience, knowledge, and history. “No man knows my history,” he said, according to

one account. Another says that he told his listeners: “You don’t know me—you never will. I don’t blame you for not believing my history. Had I not experienced it I could not believe it myself.” Experience, according to Smith, was a precondition for knowing and for history, and a growing number of historians agree.

Joseph Smith, of course, is not alone in obscurity. All the Latter-day Saints of history are removed from our understanding because we are removed from the content of their lives. However, since it is historians’ calling to diminish this distance, we have ample incentive to seize the tools and opportunities we find to recall their life experience. The paradigms of religious studies and lived religion promise to assist us.

“WHERE NOTHING IS LONG AGO”:
CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH IN MORMON HISTORY

Rebecca de Schweinitz

In her classic Where Nothing Is Long Ago: Memories of a Mormon Childhood, Virginia Sorensen relates largely autobiographical stories of a Mormon past from the perspective of a child. Readers come to understand something of the faith and foibles of a Mormon community as Sorensen’s child-narrator reacts and watches others react to people and events, and as that child grows up and is initiated into a rural Mormon world. My favorite story explores the young narrator’s


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first encounters with African Americans—on a train to Colorado and then in her own small Utah community.

Sorensen’s description of these encounters is both similar to others from the period and yet also distinctly Mormon. Like many other white liberals in mid-twentieth-century America, the author constructs youth as a period of racial innocence during which adult ideas about race don’t make sense and seem, in fact, counter-intuitive, and hence immoral, given widespread assumptions about the natural purity of childhood. But while Sorensen’s child-narrator doesn’t quite comprehend what race means and why, she has been exposed to Mormon beliefs about skin color. In addition, her racial coming of age is shaped by her father’s marginal status in the Mormon social and organizational hierarchy; he’s a grown, married man with children and a deacon at a time when teenage boys commonly held that position. It’s a poignant and revealing story; a narrative that places Mormonism within the context of a national culture and issues, and one that demonstrates how looking at childhood and young people’s perspectives can be an effective way of discerning, representing, and critiquing the Mormon experience and central themes in Mormon history, theology, and culture.1

In recent years historians have turned to the history of childhood and youth as a way to better understand topics we think we already know a lot about. They have also argued that young people are proper subjects (and not just objects) of historical inquiry. Indeed, beginning with the revolution in social history of the 1970s and increasing in the last decade, there has been a growing literature that explores this most “bottom-up” and seemingly “voiceless” of all groups of historical actors, and that successfully links the history of childhood to a range of larger historiographic questions and debates. From the history of slavery, imperialism, and war, to the history of the civil rights movement, consumer culture, immigration, and globalization, scholars have convincingly shown that looking at young people in the past, adult ideas about youth, and at the treatment of society’s youngest members, tells us a great deal about the past—including that young people often influence the world around

them in significant ways.

If Sorensen’s autobiographical fiction and the work of scholars in other subfields is any indication, looking at children and youth in history offers historians of Mormonism a promising way to reexamine the past and understand the present. While there is little scholarly work to date on Mormon childhood and youth, it is not an altogether new topic for Mormon historians. Not surprisingly, most of the existing studies follow either early trends in children’s history or familiar lines of inquiry in Mormon history. So, like other scholars interested in childhood, Mormon historians have looked at child education, work, family relationships, recreation, material culture, and transitions to adulthood. And, like LDS history in general, work on Mormon childhood and youth has concentrated on biography, nineteenth-century Church history (especially polygamy), and Primary and youth organizations with a heavy focus on the role and vision of adult leaders and the structural changes of Church groups for young Mormons.2

But while scholarship on Mormon youth has followed develop-

ments in Mormon history and reflects traditional lines of inquiry in
the history of childhood and youth, with few exceptions it has not en-
compassed the main paradigmatic organizing principles that cur-
rently drive the field. The first is that childhood and youth are social
constructions. As Allison James and Alan Prout explain, “The immat-
urity of children is a biological fact of life but the ways in which this
immaturity is understood and made meaningful is a fact of culture.”

I think this is something that M. Guy Bishop’s “Preparing to
'Take the Kingdom': Child-Rearing Directives in Early Mormonism”
begin to do. Bishop finds that Mormons shared child-nurture philoso-
phies and ideas about punishment with their national peers (both
moved away from corporal punishment) but with different results, or
at least different goals. Latter-day Saints emphasized an orderly com-
munity and strove to mold children who would usher in the Second
Coming, while other parents wanted to create good citizens and suc-
cessful adults. What is significant about Bishop’s work, and what
bears further consideration, is his close examination of the meaning
of child in Mormon theology and the significance of child rituals such
as the naming and blessing of infants and baptism at age eight. Bishop
defines theologically, and locates in LDS practices, what childhood

and Little Saints: One Hundred Years of Primary (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book,
1979); Susa Young Gates, History of the Young Ladies’ Mutual Improvement As-
sociation from November 1869 to June 1910 (Salt Lake City: General Board of
the Y.L.M.I.A., 1911); Jubilee History of the Latter-day Saint Sunday Schools,
1849–1899 (Salt Lake City: Deseret Sunday School Union, 1900); Dorothy
Geneve Young Willey, “Childhood Experiences in Mormon Polygamous
Families at the Turn of the Century” (M.A. thesis, Utah State University,
1983); Jessie L. Embry, Mormon Polygamous Families: Life in the Principle
(Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1987); Jessie L. Embry and Martha S.
Bradley, “Mothers and Daughters in Polygamy,” Dialogue: A Journal of Mor-
on Thought 18 no. 3 (Fall 1985): 99–107.

While the work of many scholars has helped establish these princi-
ples, I am especially indebted to Colin Heywood’s explication of current

Allison James and Alan Prout, “A New Paradigm for the Sociology of
Childhood? Provenance, Promise and Problems,” in James and Prout, eds.,
Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood: Contemporary Issues in the Sociologi-
meant to Mormons in a particular place at a particular moment in time. It is this type of inquiry that can help us better understand the Mormon past and present.

More common in explorations of Mormon childhood are explicit and implicit assumptions about what childhood ought to look like and how the experiences of Mormon children in the past defy those expectations. Devotional works like Susan Arrington Madsen’s “I Walked/Sailed/Grew Up, etc. to or in Zion” frequently center on childhood scrapes, funny childhood incidents, or children assuming adult responsibilities and facing tremendous hardships—all themes which reinforce current notions of childhood rather than providing historical context for understanding young people’s lives within the Mormon tradition. Madsen’s books, of course, are directed toward a popular audience with the apparent goal of using sentimental ideas about childhood to highlight the sacrifices of early Saints and thus strengthen modern members’ dedication to the Church. But much of the limited attention to children and youth in Mormon history fits in this devotional category.

Moreover, even work with a more scholarly intent and tone, especially on children in polygamy, often assumes particular concepts of childhood. Martha Sonntag Bradley’s “‘Hide and Seek’: Children on the Underground,” for example, examines the effects of anti-polygamy legislation such as the Edmunds-Tucker Act on children of Mormon polygamous unions. While offering insight into the experiences of “innocent bystanders,” Bradley tells us perhaps as much about late-twentieth-century views of childhood as she does about how young people experienced the “underground” when she emphasizes that such legislation and family decisions to subvert the laws raised moral dilemmas for those children and weakened their sense

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of stability. These effects may certainly be true, but she and others seem also to take for granted particular (sentimental) understandings of childhood: that young people’s lives usually reflect societal ideals about them, that children know what their childhood is supposed to look like, and that children don’t regularly confront a range of moral dilemmas as they learn to interact in the world. As Mormon scholars think critically about childhood and young people in the past, they may be served by considering Steven Mintz’s contention that childhood has never been an age of innocence for most children, nor has childhood been “insulated from the pressures and demands of the surrounding society, and each generation of children has had to wrestle with the social, political, and economic constraints of its own historical period.”

Another illustrative example along these lines is William G. Hartley’s “Childhood in Gunnison, Utah,” which uses one family as a case study of an “everyday, garden variety, plural LDS family during its child-rearing years in a typical Mormon village for three decades.” Hartley concludes that the eight children of the family experienced a happy childhood, maintained close bonds (even with “half” siblings) into adulthood, and were generally at least moderately successful adults, as measured by home-ownership and education. Like many who pursue the topic, Hartley is largely descriptive in this article, with his analysis generally restricted to determining how “normal,” “happy,” and “successful” children of polygamy were according to culturally and class specific standards. Such questions limit our framework for understanding polygamy and seem at least partly guided by problematic normative definitions and assumptions that, as Jan Kociumbas puts it, “childhood and family life have always been invested with the [same meaning and] importance we assign to them today or, if they were not, they ought to have been.”

The second principle that guides current scholarship is that childhood is a central variable of social analysis (like race, class, gender,
ethnicity, and I’ll add religion) but one that cannot be understood without reference to those other forms of social differentiation. Because of the important work of Mormon women’s historians, scholars are paying some attention to gender, but very little to other variables. What happens when we explore the ways that generally unspoken notions of whiteness are embedded in Mormon identity (as in Sorensen’s story)? Brian Q. Cannon’s exploration of the religious, humanitarian, and economic reasons for Native American child servitude and adoption in Mormonism is suggestive, as is Ruth Knight Bailey’s account of the impact of shifting ideas about race on Blue Ridge Mountain Saints. Cannon’s work is also perhaps the only study to explore the experiences and repercussions of Mormon settlement and beliefs on diverse children. Bailey provides a moving glimpse into what priesthood restrictions felt like, restrictions that resulted in nineteen-year-olds with proven white pedigrees leading congregations rather than adult men of questionable racial descent, and in very different Church experiences for “black” and “white” boys as they turned twelve.10

What about notions of class? While Mormon historians have considered rural versus urban experiences, there has been less explicit attention to class, both as a dynamic that shapes people’s lives and as an analytical category. Scholars might, for instance, look at the ways that Mormon youth programs and periodicals reflected, assumed, or advocated religious values which themselves were rooted in particular class values. Did the Church’s increasing focus on reverence, as described by Kristine Haglund Harris, reflect a rising Mormon (and American) middle class and its behavior proscriptions for children?11 Does the creation and modification of Girls Camp or Personal Progress and the shifting importance of the Boy Scout program within the Church tell us anything about class (and gender) formation


11Kristine Haglund Harris, “‘Who Shall Sing If Not the Children?’:
and anxieties among the Latter-day Saints? And how has religion shaped young Mormon’s lives in different times and places? Elliot West’s description of three distinct generational experiences in nineteenth-century Mormonism and Matthew Bowman’s suggestion that a “generation gap” accounts for some of the differences between the Mormonism of Jon Huntsman and Mitt Romney are indicative of the importance of both age and what child psychiatrist Robert Coles called “the historical moment” to understanding Mormon identity and the religion itself. And questions about growing up Mormon outside of Utah or the United States in different historical periods will undoubtedly help scholars gain much-needed perspectives on Mormon history and theology.12

The third principle of the “new children’s history” is that children must be seen as active agents in shaping their own lives, the lives of those around them, and the institutions and programs in which they participate. Most Mormon scholarship on young people to date is more interested in exploring the history of Church youth organizations, the influence of adults on Mormon youth and youth activities, and in establishing that children and youth were simply there—and that their early years either joyful, full of hardship, or both.

My work on the Young Woman’s Journal, for instance, explores what older Mormon women had to say to their younger counterparts on a range of subjects—from education, work, and women’s rights, to marriage, home-life, and faith. It used a periodical founded and largely written by women and directed to girls and young unmarried women in the Church to understand LDS women’s values and tensions in the gender and religious ideologies of the time. But like other work that might have recognized youth as significant historical actors, it paid little attention to the young people to whom the periodical was directed.


Similarly, Richard Kimball and Jessie Embry each examine the importance of youth to the Church and the role of youth recreation in Mormonism. Both scholars focus on how adult leaders perceived the problems of youth, how the Church used youth recreation to bolster young people’s commitment to Mormonism, how LDS recreation programs represented accommodations to the American mainstream, and how those programs helped to define and reinforce Mormon gender ideals. These are significant lines of inquiry to be sure, but they do not take into account young people’s perspectives or how youth may have shaped Church programs.13

David Howlett’s “Eating Vegetables to Build Zion: RLDS Children in the 1920s” may be the only significant example of youth agency as a central theme in Mormon scholarship. In this essay Howlett draws on letters written by children to RLDS Prophet and President Frederick Madison Smith while he was in the hospital in 1927, on the topic “how a boy or girl can build Zion.” Rather than focusing on spiritual work, many letters that the children wrote included some ideal of health or hygiene: eating vegetables, keeping homes clean, or picking up trash on the city streets. Howlett suggests that these children’s responses did not fit the expectations of their leaders, demonstrating ways that RLDS children “expanded the rhetorical boundaries that adults prescribed for them.” And although he doesn’t explore it, Howlett’s research indicates that these young people had a more literal, material, and visual sense of Zion than their elders, which raises questions about other differences we may find if we take seriously children and youth as historical agents.14

Another example of the limits of current Mormon scholarship as well as its promises when it comes to children’s agency is Richard Neitzel Holzapfel and Marc Alain Bohn’s “Photograph of Children

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Traveling to the Salt Lake Temple Dedication.” This photograph and its accompanying textual explication briefly tell the story of children attending the dedication of the Salt Lake Temple. Its primary purpose is to establish their presence at this important religious event. The article hints, however, at the financial role that young people played in early Church history, observing that “Sunday School children [donated] their means to assist in building the Salt Lake Temple.” This is a potentially notable point since scholars have found that young people in other organizations, religious and secular, often played crucial financial roles. How important were young Mormons’ financial contributions to the early Church? How did leaders view youth contributions? Were they significant during a time of monetary instability or more valuable for teaching youth important life-lessons and getting them committed to the Church, or both? And how did the young people themselves view their financial contributions?

That Church leaders set aside special dedicatory sessions for youth, and the fact that some 13,000 children attended the temple dedication indicates something about how the LDS hierarchy thought of youth and about the ways young people experienced Church membership. We know that General Relief Society President Emmeline B. Wells drew on sentimental notions of childhood when she recalled the temple dedication; the “children passing through the Temple and joining in the ‘hosannas’ must have been a sight for angels to gaze upon, and undoubtedly myriads of them were present,” she reported. It seems striking that Wells heightened the emotional memory and sacredness of this religious spectacle by drawing on ideas about children’s innate connection to spiritual realms and also that she made the children, and not the possible unseen angels in attendance, the focus of her (and her readers’) attention. In addition to exploring how Church leaders embraced and promoted sentimental notions of childhood and how young people have been important symbols of Mormon belief, which seems clearly the case here, scholars can benefit from thinking about children as subjects rather than


as objects and ideas. The historical photo, after all, shows young people not in the temple but aboard a trolley. How did they experience the event? What did they remember about it? And what does that tell us about both childhood and Mormonism in the late nineteenth century?

If we are looking for examples of what children’s history has to offer Mormon history we can also turn to Kristine Haglund Harris’s “Who Shall Sing if Not the Children?” Primary Songbooks, 1880–1989.” Here Haglund explores the history of children’s Primary songbooks and music, showing how valuable looking at children and their programs can be in better understanding women’s intellectual life in the Church, the Church’s correlation program, assimilation with or reaction against mainstream American currents, shifting Mormon theology and the “doctrinal commitments most important to Church members at a given time,” as well as “children’s roles in changing doctrinal understandings and cultural practices.”17 She finds, for instance, that early Primary songs presume that young people will play significant roles in building the kingdom while later songs try to limit children’s activity (think “reverence”) and suggest that children prepare themselves for future contributions. Early songs talk about homes as places to practice and learn virtues as preparation for important work in the world, while later songs emphasize “love at home” as an end in itself. Haglund hints at children’s own song preferences—the Church actually surveyed children in 1967.18

But scholars know very little about what children thought about the songs they sang or about any of the Church’s programs or doctrines, leaving us mostly with adult assumptions about young people’s proclivities and beliefs that support particular (adult) religious sensibilities. My local Primary leaders insist that you can tell what religious teachings children have the strongest testimonies about by the songs they sing most passionately. Such “spiritual epiphanies” are further evidence of the ways that sentimental ideas about childhood are often (however unconsciously) used to link emotional responses to religious beliefs and to reinforce adult agendas. From my experience as a Primary teacher and a mom, not to mention my sensibilities as a historian, I know that cool props and hand motions, and what adult leaders

18Ibid., 111, 96.
and parents like—and make kids sing over and over, so that they actually learn the words—has at least something to do with “passionate” singing. Furthermore, as a revelation of agency, my six-year-old hates any song the other kids sing too passionately and usually insists on the *Scooby Doo* theme song when it’s her turn to pick the music for family home evening.

But as we acknowledge and explore young people’s agency, we don’t want to fall into the trap of overly romanticizing the child as a self-made individual, as some scholars in the field have been accused of doing.\(^\text{19}\) Individual adults as well as institutions like the LDS Church work assiduously to socialize children. Yet young people are not the same as our ideas about them. Nonetheless, that young people negotiate a multitude of influences in unique ways neither denies those influences nor suggests that Mormon children and youth experience those influences and make choices solely as autonomous individuals or as discrete generational cohorts. Indeed, Mormon historians should be especially wary of privileging individual over collective identities or even over any one collective identity.

Given the LDS Church’s efforts to socialize youth, it’s hardly surprising that much of the attention to young people in Mormon history seems to have been motivated by an effort to understand how Mormons of the past effectively passed on their religious heritage to their children and how experiences in childhood shaped adulthood and adult roles within the Church. Hence, scholars have been especially interested in the childhood of Mormon leaders, Brigham Young’s correspondence with his sons, the hereditary patterns of RLDS leadership, the long-term effects of youth associations, and the shift from bestowing Aaronic Priesthood offices on men to adolescent boys, in hopes of charting successful paths to committed Mormon adulthood.\(^\text{20}\)

Mormon history frequently reflects an Aristotelian concept of childhood; the child is important, not for herself or himself, but for

\(^\text{19}\)See, for example, David Nasaw’s path-breaking (but perhaps flawed) *Children of the City: At Work and at Play* (New York: Anchor/Doubleday Press, 1985).

his or her potential. Or perhaps it unwittingly demonstrates Freud’s influence: an acceptance of the crucial importance of childhood in determining adult personality and behavior. As a 1907 Young Woman’s Journal article suggests: “Give childhood its attentions, sympathy, and love, put noble ideals before it, and the future will be sure.”

But childhood seems to mean more in Mormon history and theology. Mormons carry to a further point the Romantic’s idealized child—a creature blessed by and closer to God. Mormonism stresses Christ’s teaching to “become as little children,” identifying each child (and adult) as a literal spirit child of God, sanctifying childhood, and labeling whole generations as chosen (Matt. 18:3; D&C 137:10). And Mormonism’s founding story is about a boy-prophet who challenges the ideas of his elders and established religious authority and practice. Complicating this focus on the value and agency of youth, however, are beliefs circulating in Mormon theology and culture about wayward children being inevitably returned to righteous parents to whom they are bound through religious rituals, or those who die young continuing in a state of childhood after death so that bereaved adults will have the opportunity to fulfill their roles as parents. What has and does all this mean for young people in the Church and for the histories we tell both about them and about the religion?

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21Eunice Dille, Happy Childhood,” Young Woman’s Journal, October 1907, 463–64; Heywood similarly discusses different ways of thinking about childhood in his introduction to A History of Childhood.

Certainly more can be done to interrogate ideas about childhood and young people’s experiences in Mormon history. But looking at Mormon history through the history of childhood and youth also holds tremendous promise for a “new” Mormon history. Children and youth in Mormonism are agents. Yet they are also products—of cultures, of families, and of institutions (which in the Mormon context can be broken down into such units as wards, stakes, and missions, as well as female-run Primaries, mixed-gender Sunday Schools and seminaries, gender-segregated youth groups, and coeducational universities). It seems to me that looking at young people in the Mormon past is a great way to create a more holistic history. Can we begin to understand something of the dynamics of the Church in the lives of individuals and families as we look at youth? Will we see more of the ways that women and men influence Mormonism on multiple levels by looking at young people? And since children in Mormonism are targets for the filtered religious beliefs of parents and local communities of Saints, as well as actual physical sites for religious ritual and practice (think eight-year-olds getting baptized and twelve-year-old boys passing the sacrament), can attention to their history tell us something about, or do young people literally embody, “lived religion”?

In *Youth Ministry in Modern America: 1930 to the Present*, Jon Pahl, a thoughtful scholar and theologian, looks at four portraits of Christian youth and the efforts of their churches to educate and form them in faith during the twentieth century. Most American youth, he reminds us, are participants in religious traditions, but much of the scholarly attention to children and youth has not reflected this reality. His observation, and Sorensen’s proposition that “nothing is long ago”—that Mormon history and culture are embedded in the experiences of childhood—suggest that attention to the history of young Mormons can have far-reaching significance both within Mormon history and on the field of children and youth history more broadly.

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IN RECENT DECADES, LEADING SCHOLARS in religious studies have shifted their focus from a study of the lives and words of religious leaders to the religious imaginations and practices of ordinary people.1 In my doctoral work, I am extending the study of this “lived religion” through the close reading of recipes. Reading recipes for insights about religion and culture builds on the approaches of lived religion, material culture, and even literary technique. Cookbooks produced in the name of religious communities exemplify ongoing conversations between the individual and the collective, and between leaders and laity. These texts reveal popular attitudes about religious priorities, telling where allegiances lie in the daily experience of decision-making and the compromises inherent to eating and preparing food.

Recipes ramify because they represent responses to the body—what Colleen McDannell has called “the primary mediator of religious
Religion dictates the ways in which some everyday physical desires should be denied and other hungers fed. But individuals themselves are the final arbiters in the rule of the body. David Hall in particular has shown how theological ideas represent a complex dialectic between clergy and lay people instead of a top-down, wholesale absorption of belief from leaders to ordinary believers. This dialectic is alive in recipes, which function as recorded sites of everyday praxis. In Mormon recipes and cookbooks, for example, official messages from general conference addresses, scripture, and pamphlets from Welfare Square interact with popular norms and individual preferences to create a living map of compromise and allegiance.

Sometimes the map is explicit, as when Winnifred Jardine’s *Mormon Country Cooking* advises, “Eggs and cheese together make a nutritious, delicious combination that is grand for a people who have been counseled to use meat ‘sparingly.’” Here a straightforward pronouncement alludes to canonized dietary law. This recipe aids directly in Word of Wisdom observance, which advises limited meat intake. But cookbooks also show areas in which the Word of Wisdom exerted less influence than Welfare Square. The Word of Wisdom text itself emphasizes: “Every herb in the season thereof, and every fruit in the season thereof; all these to be used with prudence and thanksgiving” (D&C 89:11); but Mormon cookbooks contain recipes for preserves and pickles, so that food could be eaten out of season. The Word of Wisdom allows eating “flesh . . . of beasts and of the fowls of the air” but stresses that “they are to be used sparingly” (D&C 89:12); yet cookbooks are replete with ideas for dressing viands. Instead of a strict implementation of Word of Wisdom ideals, Mormon cuisine has reflected practicality, frugality, and the need to create food stores

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3Hall, *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment*.


5These include recipes from such collections as the Lion House cookbooks, *The Mormon Family Cookbook*, and other locally produced ward and Relief Society cookbooks. See, e.g., the following cookbooks published by Deseret Book in Salt Lake City: Helen Thackeray, *Lion House Recipes* (1980) and *The Mormon Family Cookbook* (1982); Gloria W. Ryting, *Christmas Recipes from the Lion House* (1989); and Melba Davis, *Lion House Lite Recipes*.
against an ever-uncertain future.

The following sample from Winnifred Jardine’s *Mormon Country Cooking* provides an additional example for how recipes convey values and what those values might be.

**Rhubarb Ice Cocktail**

4 cups (1 1/3 lb.) sliced fresh rhubarb
2 cups water
2 cups sugar
Ginger ale, chilled
Fresh mint, if desired

Wash and clean rhubarb; cut into 1-inch lengths. Combine with water and sugar in medium saucepan; cook until tender. Thoroughly strain juice from rhubarb, but do not press pulp through. Freeze juice.

(Use drained rhubarb for pie or cobbler.) When ready to serve, break up rhubarb ice and mash into a slush. Spoon into punch cups or glasses; pour in chilled ginger ale. Garnish with mint leaves, if desired.6

Remarkably, this recipe takes a vegetable that flourishes in the Utah climate and makes of it a party beverage. But what does that mean? The “Rhubarb Ice Cocktail” view of the world is pragmatic, since the ingredients are few and inexpensive, given access to garden rhubarb. The author’s language further stresses a utility as it is brusquely instructional and assumes familiarity with kitchen etiquette. The juxtaposition of utilitarian perspectives with a party beverage recipe suggest that parties themselves fill a practical role—they must be useful to the enterprise of building God’s kingdom. In addition, the parenthetical instruction to use drained rhubarb in pie or cobbler is a declaration against waste; drained rhubarb will not have much flavor, so adding it to another dish will serve the purpose of filling bellies but without careful attention to palates. “Rhubarb Ice Cocktail” teaches a lesson of economy, finding a social use for something that cannot be eaten off the vine. But this lesson does not include economizing labor. Taking the time to make a rhubarb syrup to add to ginger ale, where ginger ale alone might suffice, is a statement about using the earth’s bounty.

A recipe for “Italian Seasoning,” presented with the same prag-

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matic emphasis as “Rhubarb Ice Cocktail,” conveys additional related but distinct values. “Italian Seasoning” invokes cooking with garden produce and also focuses on the value of frugality. Early in the chapter that places “Italian Seasoning” beside recipes for dried onion soup and French herbs, Jardine tells readers that the seasoning “can be made in quantity for a fraction of the supermarket price and [is] excellent for seasoning food storage dinners.”

Here again the cook’s labor does not figure into a notion of economy. Why not just buy Lipton Onion Soup Mix or Italian Seasoning and keep those in your food storage? In part, the answer is that this recipe makes use of garden produce—fresh oregano, basil, sage, and thyme. However, this recipe is not for the garden purist, because it also requires industrial produce: lemon pepper and garlic powder. Frugality is a driving force behind this recipe—the benefit of money saved by making one’s own seasoning mix outweighs the output in labor. But the very existence of “Italian Seasoning” relies on the palate; this recipe exists solely to make food taste better. Despite utilitarian trappings, these recipes for rhubarb and seasonings explicitly serve ideals of celebration and physical pleasure (flavor).

During the period that Jardine served as food editor of the Deseret News (1943–84), collecting recipes that would make up Mormon Country Cooking, numerous individuals and collectives were also growing some of their own food and devising ways to consume and share it. An emphasis on celebration and flavor distinguishes Mormons from some of these groups.

The fact that Mormons were not purists about eating only garden produce sets them apart from people like Helen and Scott Nearing, who began the Vermont phase of their living off the land enterprise in the early 1930s and are often seen as the patron saints of back-to-the-landers in the sixties and seventies. The Nearings exerted substantial influence on the practice of twentieth-century homesteading. Though the Nearings had some common goals with the Mormons—growing their own food, limiting waste, portraying a moral approach to living and stewardship for the rest of the world to follow—an essential aspect of their program was the rejection of industrialized food products, which the Nearings saw as the literally poi-

7Ibid., 209.

sonous produce of craven capitalists. Additionally, the Nearings did not prioritize flavor or food that would appeal to diverse groups; their diet was not intended to foster community. They ate fruit for breakfast and simple grains, salads, and vegetarian stews for their other meals. The Nearings wished to minimize time spent in food-preparation and did not make dietary concessions for guests. Looking at recipes here provides a way to identify ideological distinctions among groups with similar praxis; and because recipes demonstrate actual practice, the distinctions transcend theoretical ideals.

Recipes shed light on theologizing processes because they reveal specific decisions that an individual has made regarding the body in a larger cultural and religious context. Recipes represent communication between group and individual, the way an individual mediates, weighs, interprets, accepts, and rejects group messages. Mormon Country Cooking, for example, simultaneously represents official perspectives (Jardine served on Church leadership boards, composed official Relief Society manuals, and alludes directly to the Word of Wisdom), collective consensus, since recipes were gathered from and voted on by readers of the Deseret News, and individual decisions. Handwritten notes in a woman’s cookbook show additional levels of decision-making, as people make their own negotiations in their own kitchens. Mary Ann Schofield noted how “food cooked, eaten, and thought about provides a metaphoric matrix, a language that allows us a way to get at the uncertainty, the ineffable qualities of life. . . . To write about food is to deal with the most important and the most basic human needs and desires.” Recipes are a language composed with an eye on the ineffable; they reveal both individual and collective human responses to life’s uncertainty.

CONCLUSION

Rachel Cope

The oft-posed question—“What do we do now that the New Mormon


10Mary Anne Schofield, Cooking by the Book: Food in Literature and Culture (Bowling Green, Ky.: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1989), 1.
History is old?—continues to haunt. In this roundtable response, six young scholars have explored possible approaches by considering the importance of contextualization, the need to look through a variety of interdisciplinary lenses, and, perhaps most important, ways to make the personal religious experiences of men, women, and children with such topics as conversion, spiritual journeys, theology, and lived religion as subjects of inquiry. We argue that it is essential to focus on the personal and collective pilgrimages of the Mormon people and to consider how they viewed their relationships with God and others as they embraced their quests for salvation.

Indeed, each essay suggests that historians must consider how those in the past understood what they believed to be true, and then explore how this understanding influenced their spiritual and secular lives. It is our hope that we can build on the work of our predecessors by asking (and hopefully begin to answer) the kinds of questions we have posed. May such conversations occur in a multitude of venues and settings, so that we can all continue to move Mormon history into the larger spheres of American religious history—and beyond.
ELEVEN WITNESSES
BEHOLD THE PLATES

Gale Yancey Anderson

INTRODUCTION

In all, there are literally hundreds of known original historical statements of the reality of the existence of the plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated. They range from powerful declarations uttered even under threat of death to very simple recollections included in second- or third-party accounts. Ironically, some who did not even believe in the existence of the plates were among those who made “the most strenuous exertions . . . to get them” from the Prophet. The Book of Mormon tells of their motivation: “Because of the glory of the world and to get gain will they

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The most obvious statements are the testimonies of Three and Eight Witnesses recorded in the Book of Mormon itself. This article adds import to those testimonies by defining the precise day each set of witnesses beheld the plates.

**The Three Witnesses**

It is only natural that those who assisted Joseph Smith in the translation of the plates, and also those who simply “were present” from time to time or even just believed in the work, would have a desire to see and examine the ancient record. The prospect of such a privilege greatly increased during the concluding days of the transla-

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[do] this” (2 Ne. 27:16).


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tion process at the Peter Whitmer Sr. home in Fayette Township,\textsuperscript{4} New York, when a description of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon was revealed in 2 Nephi 27:6–22, which specified: “The eyes of none shall behold [the book of plates] save it be that three witnesses shall behold it” (2 Ne. 27:12).

Joseph Smith recorded that “almost immediately after we had made this discovery . . . Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and . . . Martin Harris\textsuperscript{5} . . . [asked me to] inquire of the Lord, to know if they might . . . be these three special witnesses.”\textsuperscript{6} After “some time . . . [Joseph] at length complied”\textsuperscript{7} with their request, and the Lord gave a revelation promising that “you shall have a view of the plates” (D&C 17:1). The revelation does not specify the number or identity of the witnesses nor when they should see the plates. Doctrine and Covenants 17:6 states that the translation of the plates had been completed.

Following is a review of events leading up to and culminating with that experience.

\textsuperscript{4}For the location, see Larry C. Porter, New York and Pennsylvania, Vol. 2 of Sacred Places, general editor, LaMar C. Berrett (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2000), 133. For ease of reference, I use the chapter and verse of the modern edition of the Book of Mormon although, of course, versification was a later addition.

\textsuperscript{5}The parenthetical phrase in the various histories, such as in History of the Church, 1:53–54, “(who had come to inquire after our progress in the work)” was included because Martin Harris was not part of the events enumerated immediately after this phrase. That is, Martin Harris was not initially part of “they would have me inquire,” “if they might not obtain,” “they became so very solicitous, and urged me so much,” and “I obtained of the Lord for them” (emphasis mine). Harris was not then at Fayette but arrived later with Father and Mother Smith. He became implicated only after becoming a party to the events that occurred “not many days after the . . . commandment [D&C 17] was given.”

\textsuperscript{6}Manuscript History, A-2:25, in Selected Collections, Vol. 1, DVD #1, MH8_28; also History of the Church, 1:52–53. History of the Church erroneously references “this discovery” to Ether 5:2–4 and 2 Nephi 11:3. In fact, the scripture actually cited in Volume A-1 and also in Volume A-2 is part of 2 Nephi 27. I called this correction to the attention of the LDS Church Curriculum Department on July 21, 2008. (See Appendix A and Appendix B.)

Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery had been working diligently for two months at the home of Joseph and Emma in Harmony Township, Pennsylvania, on the translation of the Book of Mormon, but they were frequently harassed by “persecution” and threats of “being mobbed.” In order for them to finish their work, David Whitmer helped move them to the Whitmer home in early June 1829. Having essentially finished the translation of the “Plates of Mormon,” which included the title page, they started working on the translation of the small plates of Nephi. By about “20 June, they had reached 2 Nephi 27:12” and, assuming the same rate, would have completed the translation about June 25, 1829. This timetable agrees with David Whitmer’s statements that part of the book “was translated in my father’s house in Fayette, Seneca County, N. Y.,” that “the translation at


9Manuscript History, A-2:24, in Selected Collections, Vol. 1, DVD #1, MH8_27; also History of the Church, 1:48–49. David Whitmer describes this move to Fayette with additional details in an interview published as “Mormonism,” Kansas City Journal, June 5, 1881, 1 cols. 2–3, and June 19, 1881; also reprinted in “Mormonism,” Saints’ Herald 28 (July 1, 1881): 198/1; and Cook, David Whitmer Interviews, 61–62, 71–72, 241–42. Describing the Joseph Smith Papers Project, Mark Ashurst-McGee and Alex Smith, “The Joseph Smith Journals,” Ensign, December 2007, 34–35, caution that “not all of the entries [in the journals of Joseph Smith] appear in chronological order.” Indeed, some of the events recorded in the histories, such as in History of the Church, 47–75, also do not follow strict chronological order. Additional confusion is caused by chapter breaks in History of the Church since no chapter divisions exist in the Manuscript History.


11John W. Welch, “I Have a Question: How long did it take Joseph Smith to translate the Book of Mormon?,” Ensign, January 1988, 46. Seventeen years later, John W. Welch with Erick B. Carlson, eds., Opening the Heavens: Accounts of Divine Manifestations, 1820–1844 (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 2005), 101, estimated that Joseph and Oliver would have translated as far as 2 Nephi 27:12 “around June 20,” and that “the last block of translation . . . would have taken about 4 days.” Omitting Sunday, June 21, that date would have been June 25.
my father’s occupied about one month,” and that “in June 1829, the translation of the Book of Mormon was finished.”

Joseph sent word to Palmyra Township to notify his “family of the accomplishment [sic] of this very important duty.” His parents informed Martin Harris of the news, and Harris “determined to go straightway to Waterloo [Fayette] as soon as he could get away the next morning.”

Joseph Sr., Lucy, and Martin left together on their journey of about twenty-five miles and arrived “before sunset” at the Whitmer home. At this time, Father and Mother Smith with their “five unmarried children” had moved from their new frame home into the small original log house already occupied by their son Hyrum, his wife Jerusha, and their little daughter Lovina. Hyrum, the brother who was close to and supportive of Joseph, did not go to Fayette, remaining with Jerusha, who gave birth to their daughter Mary on Saturday, June 27. In Fayette, according to Lucy, “the evening was spent in reading the manuscript.” Perhaps one of the passages they read that night was the promise of witnesses found in 2 Nephi.

Lucy specifically remembered that “the next morning after breakfast” and after “Morning service” in the Whitmers’ parlor, Jo-


14 Ibid.; see also History of the Church, 1:49.


16 Anderson, Lucy’s Book, 268.

17 Ibid., 452.

18 Several small fragments of this section of the holograph manuscript are part of the Wilford C. Wood Collection, restored and conserved at the Harold B. Lee Library’s laboratory, Brigham Young University, in September and October 1991. See Robert J. Espinosa, “Fragments of the Original Manuscript,” in M. Gerald Bradford and Alison V. P. Coutts, eds.,
Joseph told Martin Harris he could be one of the Three Witnesses if he humbled himself “before your God this day and obtain if possible a forgiveness of your sins.”

He likely spent the morning in this effort for David Whitmer was engaged in “plowing in the field” at “about 11 o’clock in the morning,” or “about noon,” when the others came to get him.

The men then went into the woods near the Whitmer home. Joseph specified that it was “a piece of woods convenient to Mr. Whitmer’s house.” David is quoted as saying that “they went through a
clearing & into the edge of the Woods.”

Lucy called the location “a grove a short distance from the house.”

There Joseph with Oliver and David together, and then with Martin separately, were “engaged in prayer, when presently we beheld a light above us, in the air, of exceeding brightness, and behold an angel stood before us. In his hands he held the plates. . . . He turned over the leaves, one by one, so that we could see them, and discern the engravings thereon distinctly.”

“They returned to the house . . . between 3 & 4 o’clock,” and Joseph exclaimed to his waiting parents: “Father! Mother! . . . You do not know how happy I am. The Lord has caused the plates to be shown to 3 more besides me.”

In 1849, Oliver confirmed his testimony recorded in the Book of Mormon: “My eyes saw, my ears heard, and my understanding was touched, and I know that whereof I testified is true. It was no dream, no vain imagination of the mind—it was real.”

More than fifty years after the event, David reportedly said, “These hands handled the plates, these eyes saw the angel, and these ears heard his voice; and I know it was of God,” and in another interview that same year, affirmed: “I remember it very distinctly; and I never think of it, from that day to this but what that same spirit is present with me.”

Mother Smith recorded that Martin “seemed almost overcome with excess of joy. He then tes-

where the angel descended and showed them the plates.”


Edward Stevenson, Journal, February 9, 1886, MS 4806 Reel 3, item 34, LDS Church History Library; rpt. in Cook, David Whitmer Interviews, 181.

Anderson, Lucy’s Book, 452.

Manuscript History, A-2:26, in Selected Collections, Vol. 1, DVD #1, MH8_29; also History of the Church, 1:54.

Anderson, Lucy’s Book, 453.


J. W. Chatburn, Saints’ Herald 29 (June 15, 1882): 189/2; rpt. in Cook, David Whitmer Interviews, 92.

“Letter to Editor,” Saints’ Herald 29 (March 1, 1882): 68/3; rpt. in Cook, David Whitmer Interviews, 87.
tified to what he had seen and heard.”

Over the years, David Whitmer, the longest-lived of the Three Witnesses, was questioned many times about the experience of viewing the plates. In interviews, he reportedly dated the event as “in June, 1829, the very last part of the month,” and “in the latter part of June, 1829.”

In his own account, he wrote: “In June, 1829, the Lord called Oliver Cowdery, Martin Harris, and myself as the three witnesses, to behold the vision of the Angel.”

“The very last part of the month” defines it as being during the last few days of the month. It was after the translation was finished on approximately Thursday, June 25, and after the Smiths and Martin Harris had arrived, which would have been another one to three days later. David “remembered that it was a Sunday,” which, as determined by the sequence of events related above, would thus have been Sunday, June 28, 1829.

In their signed account, the Three Witnesses “declare with words of soberness” that they saw “an angel of God,” “saw the plates” from which the Book of Mormon was translated, saw “the engravings thereon,” and heard “the voice of the Lord” commanding them to “bear record of it.” This event occurred about midday at the edge of or in the woods near the Peter Whitmer Sr. home in Fayette Township, Seneca County, New York, on Sunday, June 28, 1829.

THE EIGHT WITNESSES

What excitement must have filled the Whitmer home that summer Sunday evening! Only a week earlier, they had learned from the


31Whitmer, *An Address to All Believers in Christ*, 32.


translation that Three Witnesses would be permitted to behold the plates. On Saturday evening, they probably read together the passage of promise recorded in the manuscript. Then the witnesses were identified, they presented themselves before the Lord, and they experienced the angelic visitation to which they bore the commanded witness.

It was logical, therefore, that the focus would have then shifted to the second promise: "And there is none other which shall view it, save it be a few according to the will of God . . . and in the mouth of as many witnesses as seemeth him good will he establish his word” (2 Ne. 27:13–14). It also seems logical that other members of the Whitmer family may now have requested the privilege of seeing the plates, if not "by the power of God" at least “according to the will of God” (2 Ne. 27:12, 13). Apparently Joseph again sought revelatory confirmation and was instructed that the party should go to Palmyra, since Mother Smith gave this explanation: The men later chosen to be the Eight Witnesses “repaired to a little grove [near the Smith home in Palmyra Township] where it was customary for the family to offer up their secret prayers—as Joseph had been instructed that the plates would be carried there by one of the ancient Nephites.”34

Joseph Sr., Lucy, and Martin Harris were the first to leave Fayette, returning “home the next day” after the Three Witnesses had seen the angel. They were, Lucy recalled, “a cheerful rejoicing little company,” and Martin must have articulated much of that rejoicing: “I have now seen an angel from Heaven who has of a surety testified of the truth of all that I have heard concerning the record, and my eyes have beheld him. I have also looked upon the plates and handled them with my hands. . . . I have received for myself a witness that words cannot express, that no tongue can describe, & I bless God in the sincerity of my soul that he has condescended to make me, even me, a witness of the greatness of his work and designs in behalf [of] the children of men.”35

The contrast is stark with his feelings one year earlier, almost to the day, when he confessed his negligence to Joseph who, in his anxiety about the first 116 pages of Book of Mormon manuscript, had left Emma in Pennsylvania recovering from childbirth and the death of their first child. Mother Smith poignantly described how Martin sat at the Smith family table, “pressed his hands upon his temples and cried

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34Anderson, Lucy’s Book, 455–56.
35Ibid., 455.
out in a tone of anguish, ‘Oh! I have lost my soul. I have lost my soul.’ Joseph . . . sprang from the table exclaiming, ‘Oh! Martin, have you lost that manuscript?’ . . . ‘Yes,’ replied Martin, ‘it is gone and I know not where.’”36 But now, a year later, they were returning home joyfully from Fayette.

“A few days” after Joseph Sr., Lucy, and Martin Harris had returned from Fayette, “Joseph and Oliver and the Whitmers . . . came to make us a visit and also to make some arrangements about getting the book printed. Soon after they came . . . the male part of the company,” accompanied by Joseph Sr. and two of Joseph’s brothers, twenty-nine-year-old Hyrum and twenty-one-year-old Samuel H., went to the grove where they “looked upon the plates and handled them.”37 The three Smiths modestly listed their names last in the signed statement, preceded by Christian, Jacob, Peter Jr., and John Whitmer and their brother-in-law Hiram Page. To receive this privilege—not just the social pleasures of “a visit”—was surely the main reason why the Whitmers left their duties on the farm for six days to travel to Fayette. I have calculated this chronology by Lucy’s statement that on “Monday the company went to” Palmyra, and “the next day returned home.”38 (Incidentally, Friday and Saturday, July 3 and 4, might have been spent in celebration—a very major holiday then, and important financial days for the Smiths with their business of light refreshments.) The Smith log home was in the Palmyra Township, but the little grove Lucy refers to could have been in any of three different townships—Palmyra, Macedon, or Manchester.

Like the Three Witnesses, these eight also expressed their sincere convictions individually as well as collectively. Hyrum Smith, for instance, wrote in Nauvoo: “I felt a determination to die, rather than deny the things which my eyes had seen, which my hands had handled, and which I had borne testimony to, wherever my lot had been cast.”39 John Whitmer wrote: “I desire to testify to all that will come to the knowledge of this address, that I have most assuredly seen the plates from whence the book of Mormon is translated, and that I have

36Ibid., 418.
37Ibid., 455, 456.
38Ibid., 457, 458.
39Hyrum Smith, “Communications: To the Saints Scattered Abroad,” Times and Seasons 1 (December 1839): 23.
handled these plates.”

According to Mother Smith, “the witnesses returned to the house,” apparently leaving Joseph in the grove where “the Angel again made his appearance to Joseph and received the plates from his hands. We commenced holding meetings that night in which we declared those facts that we knew to be true.” It is the last time in the documentary record that Joseph had possession of the plates.

Although all eight of this second group of witnesses always affirmed having seen the plates, I have found no viable record by any of them describing when or where they saw and handled the plates, nor does Joseph specify it in his history. An interview with John Whitmer, reported after his death, says he answered the question, “In what place did you see the plates?” with “In Joseph Smith’s house.” Since the witnesses were in a grove (and since Joseph Smith’s residence was then in Pennsylvania), he probably simply meant that the viewing occurred at the Smith family home.

In his 1887 booklet, An Address to All Believers in Christ, published when he was eighty-two, David Whitmer refers to the Eight Witnesses three times but gives no additional details of their experience. In an interview response, he reportedly said that the Eight Witnesses saw the plates “I think, the next day or the day after, that is one or two days” after the Three Witnesses’ experience. But he is obviously uncertain and probably was not personally present.

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41 Anderson, Lucy’s Book, 457.
44 Whitmer, An Address to All Believers in Christ, 13, 14, 28.
45 Joseph F. Smith, Letter to President John Taylor, September 17, 1878, MS 1325, Box 12, fd. 11, 8, LDS Church History Library, in Selected Collections, Vol. 1, DVD #27, MS1325_12_11_44; also “Report of Elders Orson Pratt and Joseph F. Smith,” Deseret News, November 27, 1878, 674/3; Journal History, September 17, 1878, 4; Cook, David Whitmer Interviews, 40.
contrast, Lucy Mack Smith’s account is definite that she, Joseph Sr., and Martin Harris returned home “the next day” and that the party including Joseph, Oliver Cowdery, and the Whitmers came on a later date. Furthermore, the fact that this location was a full day’s journey from Fayette and the fact that so many of the Whitmers—including some women—made the journey, suggests that there could have been more than just “one or two days” between the two events of the witnesses. Lucy mentions that the corroborating experience of the Eight Witnesses occurred “soon after [the Whitmers] came,” which I interpret to mean that it may have happened the evening of their arrival. She specifically stated, “This was Thursday,” and, “a few days” after the Sunday experience of the Three Witnesses, would therefore have been Thursday, July 2, 1829.

In the signed statement of the Eight Witnesses, they “bear record with words of soberness” that they “have seen and hefted” the plates “which have the appearance of gold; and as many of the leaves as the said Smith has translated we did handle with our hands; and we also saw the engravings thereon,” and “witness unto the world that which we have seen.” This event occurred, probably in the evening, in a little grove near the Smith log home located in Palmyra Township, Wayne County, New York, on Thursday, July 2, 1829.

**Testimonies**

A prerequisite for being one of these witnesses was that each accepted the responsibility of testifying publicly about the reality of their experience. The Three Witnesses were informed that “they shall testify to the truth of the book and the things therein,” and the “other . . . few” witnesses were directed “to bear testimony of [this word of God] unto the children of men” (2 Ne. 27:12, 13).

Anticipating the selection of Three Witnesses, the revelation given through Joseph Smith instructed that, after they had “seen [the

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46 Anderson, *Lucy’s Book*, 455. I deduce that Whitmer women accompanied the party since Lucy says that “they all, that is the male part of the company” went to the grove.

47 Ibid.

48 Ibid., 457.

plates] with your eyes, you shall testify of them . . . and ye shall testify that you have seen them” (D&C 17:3–5). Joseph, who was present during the Three Witnesses’ experience, recorded that “we heard a voice from out of the bright light above us, saying, ‘These plates have been revealed by the power of God, and they have been translated by the power of God; the translation of them which you have seen is correct, and I command you to bear record of what you now see and hear.’”50

A few months earlier, in March 1829, a previous revelation specified that the promised testimony was to “go forth with my words that are given through [Joseph]” (D&C 5:1).51

In the recorded history, the testimony of the Three Witnesses is prefaced with this introduction: “Having thus through the mercy of God, obtained these glorious manifestations, it now remained for these three individuals to fulfil the commandment which they had received, namely: to bear record of these things; in order to accomplish which, they drew up and subscribed the following document. The Testimony of Three Witnesses.”52 The Eight Witnesses had the same responsibility and signed a parallel The Testimony of Eight Witnesses. When interviewed in September 1878 by Orson Pratt and Joseph F. Smith, and asked about the signatures on the manuscript, “Father Whitmer unhesitatingly replied with emphasis” that on the original documents all the witnesses signed “their own names to the respective testimonies.”53 It seems plausible that the witnesses might first have made one or more preliminary drafts, and then signed the final versions; but such documents do not exist, nor does a holograph of the final version. Possibly, this holograph was inscribed on the last, and otherwise blank, leaf of the last.

50Manuscript History, A-2:26, in Selected Collections, Vol. 1, DVD #1, MH8_29; also History of the Church, 1:54–55.

51Similar wording was given in the earliest publication of this revelation in A Book of Commandments, for the Government of the Church of Christ, 1833, Chapter IV, verse 4, pp. 10–11: “The testimony of three of my servants shall go forth with my words.”

52Manuscript History, A-2:27, in Selected Collections, Vol. 1: DVD #1, MH8_30; also History of the Church, 1:56.

quire (gathering) of the translation of the small plates of the original manuscript; but apparently these pages do not exist either.\textsuperscript{54} 

Later, Oliver Cowdery, probably during the first week of March 1830,\textsuperscript{55} copied the testimonies and witness signatures onto the printer’s manuscript immediately following the end of the text of the book of Moroni.\textsuperscript{56} In this way they became part of the manuscript used for typesetting by John H. Gilbert in the E. B. Grandin print shop of Palmyra. Thus, in the 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon the testimonies were printed at the end of the book.

Modern publication of these testimonies has evolved such that they are now presented more as an introduction to the Book of Mormon than as a concluding statement, and therefore are printed at the beginning of the book. The 1966 Revised Authorized Edition by Community of Christ (copyright 1994) includes the testimonies worded precisely as they appeared in the 1837 second edition, published in Kirtland, Ohio, by O. Cowdery & Co. Having had access to the printer’s manuscript, an 1830 edition, and a 1908 edition, the Church of Christ (Temple Lot) published its own Book of Mormon including

\textsuperscript{54}Skousen, \textit{The Original Manuscript of the Book of Mormon}, 1:36–37, 42. Herein this gathering is designated as B6. 

\textsuperscript{55}Royal Skousen, ed., \textit{The Printer’s Manuscript of the Book of Mormon} (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2001), Volume 2, Two Parts, 2:4, 46. Skousen made a thorough examination of the known extant pages and fragments of the original manuscript and the complete extant printer’s manuscript, concluding that from Helaman 13 through Mormon 9 the typesetter typeset from the original manuscript because “Cowdery apparently fell behind in his copywork.” Meanwhile, Oliver “jumped ahead to start copying from the beginning of the book of Ether” to the end (p. 46). A timeline of the typesetting for the 1830 Book of Mormon, from the last part of August 1829 through the first part of March 1830, shows that the printer would have thus used the original manuscript during most of February 1830. If Oliver were producing the last two quires of the printer’s manuscript at that same time, he would have finished doing so during the first week of March 1830. 

the testimonies of the eleven witnesses. Some editions, such as The Bible II and The Book of Mormon: The Restored Covenant Edition, do not include the testimonies of the witnesses.57

All LDS editions of the Book of Mormon have included the testimonies of both the Three and the Eight Witnesses declaring "unto all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people" that they had seen "the plates." As stated at the beginning, this article adds import to these testimonies by defining the precise days that "Eleven Witnesses Behold the Plates." “And,” emphasized the Eight Witnesses, “We lie not, God bearing witness of it.”58

APPENDIX A:
THE SCRIPTURE SPECIFYING THREE WITNESSES

When this part of the manuscript history was composed in 1839, it referred to both the first (1830) and second (Kirtland, 1837) editions of the Book of Mormon, leaving blanks in the text so that the appropriate page numbers could be added.

On July 21, 2008, I wrote a five-page report to the LDS Church Curriculum Department expressing concern about the scriptural references given in Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2007), 125, which served as the lesson manual for the Melchizedek Priesthood and Relief Society classes (2008–9). It states: “However, he [Joseph Smith] had discovered from the record itself that the Lord would provide three special witnesses who would testify to the world that the Book of Mormon was true (see 2 Nephi 11:3; Ether 5:2–4).”

In my report, I stated:

I am aware of only one original source where these two scriptures are suggested in the context of the gospel subject presented at this point in the manual, namely, the specific desire of Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris “to be these three special witnesses.” That source is, as included in note #1 [of the manual], History of the Church, Vol. 1, pages 52–53, with notes by Elder B. H. Roberts. With all due respect to the fine and wonderful work of Elder Roberts, I will present evidence that these references are incorrect in this regard, and therefore should not be indicated as such. (1)

My report then quoted the successive chronological versions of the an-

57William Sheldon, email to Gale Y. Anderson, November 1, 2011; Royal Skousen, email to Gale Y. Anderson, October 25 and 26, 2011.
58Statements in unpaginated front matter of 1979+ editions of the LDS Book of Mormon.

According to my reconstruction of the probable timing of the translation of 2 Nephi chapter 11 and Ether, neither one could have “almost immediately” motivated the witnesses to make the request spoken of to see the plates.

In my report, I then explain:

It appears that the confusion may have come about as follows:

In Comprehensive History of the Church, [Vol I] page 33, referring to his earlier work in 1902 of publishing the History of the Church, Elder Roberts stated: “This highly valuable journal and documentary history scattered through these periodicals, was finally published by the church . . .” Thus he seems to imply that his 1902 editing of the history was essentially taken from that published in the Times and Seasons, Deseret News, and Millennium Star, rather than from the manuscript history itself. These sources gave no indication of the appropriate scripture, so he supplied his own, even though many years earlier the correct scripture had already been added to the manuscript history itself.

Then in the following years, Elder Roberts seems to have become aware of this. In 1930 when he published the Comprehensive History of the Church, Vol I, pages 134–5, he wrote: “According to statements in the Book of Mormon itself, there were to be three witnesses who were to be granted the privilege of beholding the plates from which the book was translated.” He then quotes 2 Nephi 27:12-14. (4)

In response, I received a letter from David B. Marsh dated September 9, 2008: “Thank you for your letter. . . . Rest assured that we will keep your letter on file for review when this book is reprinted.”

APPENDIX B:
PREPARATION OF “MANUSCRIPT HISTORY” A-2

The writing of the “Manuscript History” in Volume A-1, mentioned in Appendix A above, continued sporadically until the summer of 1843, with Willard Richards acting as the concluding scribe. On August 24, 1843, he
noted in his diary: “Commened [sic] on the 2d vol of the history”59 (Volume B-1) at the bottom of page 553. The project continued well for a few months but was interrupted by intensifying tensions with the Saints’ neighbors and the assassinations of Joseph and Hyrum Smith in June 1844.

According to the office journals of Thomas Bullock, Charles Wesley Wandell, and Wilmer Benjamin Benson, who worked in the Church Historian’s Office in Nauvoo, throughout 1845 Brigham Young and several other members of the Twelve, including Heber C. Kimball, Orson Hyde, Orson Pratt, John E. Page, John Taylor, George A. Smith, and Willard Richards, made a concerted effort to have the Church history brought up to date and prepared for publication as Joseph Smith had requested.60 On April 1, 1845, Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, and George A. Smith spent the “afternoon correcting history for Printing” and “revising the History” in Volume A-1. Two days later Wandell “commenced writing in new book” (A-2). On April 12 he copied the statement about the first (1830) and second (1837) editions of the Book of Mormon referenced in Appendix A from page 23 of the old book onto page 25 of the new book, including the blanks mentioned.62 By June, Wandell had written about three hundred pages.

During the forepart of July, still under the supervision of the Twelve, these scribes spent several days “examining” (proofreading) Volume A-2 as far as it had been written. Thus, the revised, corrected, updated, and proofread account of the beginning years of the history of the Church is recorded in Volume A-2.

After a meeting in the office on July 16, Orson Pratt “remained till five examining Book A.”63 Orson was the only one of the apostles listed above who had joined the Church in 1830, and thus may have been the only one

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59Willard Richards, Papers, 1821–54, August 24, 1843, MS 1490, Box 1, Vol. 9, LDS Church History Library, in Selected Collections, Vol. 1, DVD #31, MS1490_1_9_47.
61Church Historian’s Office, Journals, 1844–79, April 1, 1845, CR 100 1, Vol. 2, in Selected Collections, Vol. 1, DVD #17, CR100 1_1_2_12a; Manuscript History, 1845, 13:42, in Selected Collections, Vol. 1, DVD #2, mh13_151; also History of the Church, 7:389.
62Historian’s Office Journals, April 3, 1845, Vol. 3; April 12, 1845, Vol. 4, in Selected Collections, Vol. 1, DVD #17, CR100 1_1_3_3, and 1_1_4_5.
63Historian’s Office Journals, July 16, 1845, Vol. 5, in Selected Collections, Vol.1, DVD#17, CR100 1_1_5_5.
who had been to the Whitmer farm in Fayette before the move to Ohio in May 1831. He had personal knowledge of some of the early events relating to the Book of Mormon. The blanks pertaining to the first edition have been filled in so that the text reads: “First edition second book of Nephi, chap 11, Page 110” in Volume A-1, and “1st ed, second book of Nephi, chapter 11th page 110”64 in Volume A-2. Perhaps the insertions were made during this period of examination. Page 110 of the 1830 Book of Mormon includes what is now 2 Nephi 27:12.

Therefore, it was the engravings on the plates corresponding to 2 Nephi 27 that were being translated when they made “this discovery” that there would be “three special witnesses.”65


65History of the Church, 1:52–53.
JOSPEH SMITH’S PERSONAL POLYGAMY

Brian C. Hales

As a personality of the nineteenth century, Joseph Smith stands out as extraordinary. While many writers have been critical of him and his teachings, most historians are impressed with at least some of his accomplishments, even those who believe he was a charlatan. He published a 500-page book of scripture, organized a new religion, dictated more than a hundred revelations, founded at least three cities, built one temple and began several more, and produced a remarkable theological framework that both expanded and contradicted Christian thinking of the era.1

Of all of Joseph Smith’s teachings and practices, none has been more controversial than his introduction of the practice of plural marriage among his followers. He reported that an angel commanded him not only to establish it but also to teach it as a doctrinal mandate to other Church members.2 In the decades that followed, most writers criticized him and the practice using the harshest of terms. According to George T. M. Davis, author of the 1844 An Authentic Account of the Massacre of Joseph Smith, Joseph Smith’s involvement with plural mar-

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riage “outraged every feeling of decency and humanity, in the gratification of his beastly propensities.” Marcus Whitman Montgomery, a Congregational clergyman and instructor in the Chicago Theological seminary, condemned “Smith’s shocking immoralities.”

Scores of nineteenth-century writers saw Joseph Smith’s libido as the sole driving force pushing the establishment of plural marriage forward. Benjamin G. Ferris, a political appointee in Utah for the winter of 1852 but who never knew Joseph personally, asserted that polygamy “grew out of the polluted mind of the prophet, who established it as an institution of the Church to legalize his own licentiousness.” In his 1857 history, *Illinois As It Is*, Fred Gerhard condemned Joseph Smith: “The animal nature largely preponderating in the man, he had not the genius to form a vast and comprehensive plans for the future; but whatever he did, was merely intended for present convenience, and gratification of his beastly lusts and desires.”

John C. Bennett, briefly Joseph’s associate and a political power in Nauvoo, vigorously denounced him as “an unprincipled libertine, unequalled in the history of civilized man” and lamented that Joseph “should so deliberately and shamelessly have gone to work to gratify, in so monstrous a manner, his abominable lusts.” Political writer and analyst of Utah polygamy, Ballard S. Dunn claimed that Joseph Smith “desired many wives; because, to a sensual, fanatical, emotional nature like his, sexuality was the chief good.” A. Theodore Schroeder, a sociologist in the late nineteenth century, reasoned: “The natural weakness of the flesh probably made it easy for him [Joseph Smith] to

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3George T. M. Davis, *An Authentic Account of the Massacre of Joseph Smith* (St. Louis, Mo.: Chambers and Knapp, 1844), 47.


accept the teachings and spirit of free love.”

John Hanson Beadle, who made an excellent living writing sensational fiction and quasi-factual histories, claimed: “It is a notorious fact, that almost from the first, the Prophet had used his powers of fascination to triumph over the virtue of his female devotees.” Swedenborgian and English author Edward Brotherton accused Joseph of establishing “a system of universal female prostitution” at Nauvoo. Henry Howe who authored the 1847 best-seller Historical Collections of Ohio, alleged: “In order to more readily gratify his passion and to make his very lusts minister to the advancement of his power [Joseph Smith] proclaimed that he had received a revelation from heaven.” Joseph H. Jackson, who made literary hay out of a very brief association with Joseph in Nauvoo that he turned into an exposé wrote: “Joe Smith boasted to me that he . . . from the commencement of his career had seduced 400 women.” Other authors wrote of “harems” and “debaucheries.”

In addition to these general condemnations, some specific po-

9 A. T[heodore]. Schroeder, Some Facts Concerning Polygamy (Salt Lake City: n.pub., 1898), 3.
12 Henry Howe, Historical Collection of the Great West (1851; 2d ed., Cincinnati, Ohio: H. Howe, 1873), 542.
14 Harry M. Beardsley, Joseph Smith and His Mormon Empire (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1931), 390–91; Edward John Bell, Latter-day Delusions or the Inconsistencies of Mormonism (Norwich, England: Thomas Priest, 1853), 14; Clark Braden, Public Discussion of the Issues between the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and the Church of Christ (Disciples) Held in Kirtland, Ohio, Beginning February 12, and Closing March 8, 1884, between E. L. Kelley, of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and Clark Braden, of the Church of Christ (St. Louis: Clark Braden, 1884), 206.
15 John C. Bennett, “Letter from John C. Bennett,” Illinois Republican, July 20, 1842; John C. Van Tramp, Prairie and Rocky Mountain Adventures
lygamy-related accusations were also alleged. John C. Bennett ostensibly quoted Sarah Pratt and Sarah Fuller as claiming that Joseph Smith would destroy the reputation of any woman who rejected him. 16 Anglican clergyman and avid anti-Mormon, Henry Caswall wrote that “many English and American women, whose husbands or fathers had been sent by the prophet on distant missions, were induced to become his ‘spiritual wives.’”17 Another Englishman, Joseph Johnson, alleged that Joseph Smith’s plural wives were also “evilly disposed” saying, “When the Prophet Smith desired to take a second and many wives, and when his companions were similarly evilly disposed, he had a convenient revelation, his usual custom when purposing any wrong, or immoral indulgence.”18 Excommunicated Mormon and Nauvoo resident Oliver Olney claimed that plural wives were neglected, having “no means with which to get away, and scarce any means of subsistence there.”19 Joseph H. Jackson seemed to agree, writing in 1844: “I have visited frequently, those women whom Joe supported for the gratification of his lust—I have found them subsisting on the coarsest food, and not daring to utter a word of complaint, for they feared Joe Smith more than they did their God.”20 Church of Christ minister Clark Braden, in a “debate” with future RLDS Presiding Bishop Edmund Levi Kelley, stated that “Joe had had scores of spiritual wives before this [1842], but without the farce of a ceremony of marriage.”21 These quotations are but a small sample of the ireful accusations leveled at Joseph Smith and the practice of plural

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16 Bennett, The History of the Saints, 231 (Sarah Pratt) and 253 (Widow Fuller).


19 Oliver Olney, The Absurdities of Mormonism Portrayed: A Brief Sketch, pamphlet (Hancock County, Ill.: March 3, 1843), 7.

20 Jackson, A Narrative of the Adventures and Experiences, 25.

21 Braden, Public Discussion of the Issues, 202–6. The Church of Christ (Disciples), also known as the Campbellites, should not be confused with the Mormon offshoot, the Church of Christ (Temple Lot).
marriage in the decades following his death.

Providing a contrasting view to the abundant anti-polygamy vitriol are reports from Nauvoo polygamists themselves. While those accounts contain many more details, they are not nearly so numerous. The best source of information would be Joseph Smith; however, he left only one document specifically discussing the subject: his revelation recorded on July 12, 1843, on celestial marriage, now LDS Doctrine and Covenants 132. He dictated two other statements in conjunction with the expansion of polygamy, but neither actually mentions plural marriage. The first is a letter from Joseph to Nancy Rigdon written in the spring of 1842 and first published by John C. Bennett on August 19, 1842. The second is a revelation that Joseph Smith received on behalf of Newel K. Whitney, July 27, 1842. Researchers today seeking to understand the details surrounding Joseph Smith’s personal practice of plural marriage must acknowledge that the only individual who knew personally about his motives, intentions, and practice of polygamy left no record about these central matters. The only additional pertinent contemporaneous statements are found in William Clayton’s journal. Beyond these historical sources, everything learned about Joseph Smith’s polygamy is second-hand, coming from later recollections and reminiscences and possi-

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22 John C. Bennett, “Sixth Letter from John C. Bennett,” Sangamo Journal (Springfield, Illinois), August 19, 1842; rpt. in Bennett, The History of the Saints, 243-44. Some historians question whether Joseph Smith was the author. However, I believe that Joseph Smith’s decision to approach Nancy Rigdon in the spring of 1842 was partly motivated by the desire to capture the support of Sidney Rigdon, her father and Joseph’s first counselor in the First Presidency, for the establishment of plural marriage. I also believe that the letter was written as much to Sidney as to Nancy. See Brian C. Hales, “The First Year of Nauvoo Polygamy: Events Leading to Joseph Smith’s Plural Proposal to Nancy Rigdon,” Mormon Historical Studies (forthcoming).


24 William Clayton’s journal is restricted and held in the First Presidency’s vault, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Administration Building, Salt Lake City. The most widely distributed copy is probably...
bly suffering from their own credibility problems.

Given the plethora of accusations from antagonistic writers and the paucity of contemporary documents from participants, authors have been challenged in their attempts to reconstruct the process through which Joseph Smith established the practice of plural marriage. Historians and investigators who have made the attempt include Andrew Jenson (1887), the Temple Lot prosecutors (1892), Joseph Fielding Smith (1905), Charles A. Shook (1914), Fawn Brodie (1945), Kimball Young (1954), Jerald and Sandra Tanner (1967), Danel Bachman (1975), Lawrence Foster (1976, 1981), Richard S. Van Wagoner (1986), Todd Compton (1997), H. Michael Marquardt (2005), and George D. Smith (2008). Useful studies and publications have resulted that attempt to characterize and chronicle the unfolding of the practice. Different opinions have been proposed about


Andrew Jenson, “Plural Marriage,” Historical Record 6 (May 1887): 219–34; Eighth District Court, Kansas City, Kansas, with a carbon copy at the Community of Christ Archives; a microfilm and digitized microfilm are held at the LDS Church History Library. See also Joseph Fielding Smith, Blood Atonement and the Origin of Plural Marriage (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1905; Charles A. Shook, The True Origin of Mormon Polygamy (Cincinnati, Ohio: Standard Publishing, 1914); Fawn Brodie, No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith, the Mormon Prophet (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1945); Kimball Young, Isn’t One Wife Enough? (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1954); Jerald Tanner and Sandra Tanner, Joseph Smith and Polygamy (Salt Lake City: Modern Microfilm, 1967); Danel W. Bachman, “A Study of the Mormon Practice of Plural Marriage before the Death of Joseph Smith” (M.A. thesis, Purdue University, 1975); W. Lawrence Foster,
Joseph Smith’s motivations and private tendencies as he married polygamously. This article will attempt to examine the historical record to discern which of those personal behaviors are consistent with the critical assessments penned by numerous cynics and skeptics.

In approaching this task, I acknowledge that indisputable conclusions are probably impossible to draw without additional documentation—documentation that may never have existed or has not survived the decades since the 1840s. However, the number of available documents dealing with Joseph Smith’s polygamy is finite, and most of them can be consulted today with less effort than was required even a quarter century ago.

**Plural Marriage Was Difficult for Joseph Smith to Accept**

Numerous narratives support that Joseph Smith initially resisted an angel who commanded him to marry plural wives. Benjamin F. Johnson remembered that Joseph “put it off” and “waited until an Angel with a drawn Sword Stood before him and declared that if he longer delayed fulfilling that Command he would Slay him.”26 Lorenzo Snow recalled that the Prophet “hesitated and deferred from time to time” and that he “foresaw the trouble that would follow and sought to turn away from the commandment.”27 Erastus Snow reported that the angel accused the Prophet of “being neglectful in the discharges

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of his duties” and spoke “of Joseph having to plead on his knees before the Angel for his Life.”²⁸ According to Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner, the angel was required to visit Joseph three times between 1834 and 1842 before he fully complied:

An angel came to him [Joseph Smith] and the last time he came with a drawn sword in his hand and told Joseph if he did not go into that principle, he would slay him. Joseph said he talked to him soberly about it, and told him it was an abomination and quoted scripture to him. He said in the Book of Mormon it was an abomination in the eyes of the Lord, and they were to adhere to these things except the Lord speak... [The Prophet reported that] the angel came to me three times between the years of 1834 and 1842 and said I was to obey that principle or he would slay me.²⁹

Three of Joseph Smith’s other plural wives recalled similar reluctance. Eliza R. Snow described Joseph as “afraid to promulgate it.”³⁰ Helen Mar Kimball Whitney remembered: “Had it not been for the fear of His displeasure, Joseph would have shrunk from the undertaking and would have continued silent, as he did for years, until

²⁷Lorenzo Snow, quoted by Eliza R. Snow in Biography and Family Record of Lorenzo Snow (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Company, 1884), 69–70; Lorenzo Snow, Affidavit, August 18, 1869, in Joseph F. Smith Affidavit Books, 2:19, MS 3423, fd. 5, LDS Church History Library.


²⁹Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner Smith, “Remarks” at Brigham Young University, April 14, 1905, Vault MSS 363, fd. 6, 2–3. See also Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner Smith, “Statement,” February 8, 1902, Vesta Crawford Papers, University of Utah, Marriott Library, MS 125, Box 1, fd. 11; original owned by Mrs. Nell Osborne; see also Juanita Brooks Papers, Utah State Historical Society, MS B103, Box 16, fd. 13; Mary E. Lightner, Letter to A. M. Chase, April 20, 1904, quoted in J. D. Stead, Doctrines and Dogmas of Brighamism Exposed ([Lamoni, Iowa]: RLDS Church, 1911), 218–19; Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner, Letter to Emmeline B. Wells, Summer 1905, MS 282; copy of holograph in Linda King Newell Collection, MS 447, Box 9, fd. 2.

³⁰Eliza R. Snow, quoted in J.J.J., “Two Prophets’ Widows: A Visit to the Relicts of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young,” St. Louis Globe-Democrat, August 18, 1887, 6/E.
an angel of the Lord threatened to slay him if he did not reveal and establish this celestial principle." 31 She also said that “Joseph put off the dreaded day as long as he dared.” 32 Lucy Walker reported that Joseph “had his doubts about it for he debated it in his own mind.” 33

Accounts from those who personally heard the Prophet’s teachings concerning plural marriage consistently relate that his initial response to the practice was revulsion—a response similar to that of most Mormons in the 1840s. The revelation on celestial and plural marriage seems to anticipate his reluctance as it admonishes him to “prepare thy heart” for the instructions that follow (LDS D&C 132:3). Such language is found in other revelations that discuss difficult challenges (D&C 29:8, 58:6, 109:38).

Additional evidence corroborates that Joseph Smith understood plural marriage as a difficult principle for his followers to accept, especially women. Polygamy on earth expands the man’s emotional and sexual relationships (as a husband) as it simultaneously diminishes the woman’s emotional and sexual relationship (as a wife). Bathsheba Wilson Bigler Smith remembered that he [Joseph Smith] recognized that it would be a “troubling” doctrine: “I heard the Prophet give instructions concerning plural marriage; he counselled the sisters not to trouble themselves in consequence of it, that all would be right.” Then he promised them that “the result would be for their glory and exaltation.” Bathsheba also related: “I heard him [Joseph Smith] tell the sisters one time not to feel worried,—that all was right . . . all will be well in the end.” 34 The Prophet apparently realized that plural marriage would create anxiety in participants and

31Helen Mar Kimball Whitney, *Why We Practice Plural Marriage* (Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor Office, 1884), 53.


33Lucy Walker, Deposition, in *Church of Christ in Missouri v. Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints*, 70 F. 179 (8th Cir. 1895), respondent’s testimony, Part 3, p. 474, questions 600; copy in my possession; hereafter cited as Temple Lot Transcript.

34Bathsheba Wilson Bigler Smith, Autobiography, holograph: MS 8606; typescript: MS 16633, LDS Church History Library; Bathsheba B. Smith, Deposition, Temple Lot Transcript, Respondent’s Testimony, Part
sought to assuage those concerns.

To help his potential plural brides overcome their initial disgust at the thought of polygamy, the Prophet promised at least two of them that they could receive their own “spiritual” confirmation that polygamy was right.\(^{35}\) Whether he approached other potential plural wives with similar promises is unknown. Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner wrote: “I did not believe. If God told him so, why did he not come and tell me? The angel told him I should have a witness. An angel came to me.”\(^{36}\) Similarly, Lucy Walker recalled: “He [Joseph Smith] assured me that this doctrine had been revealed to him of the Lord, and that I was entitled to receive a testimony of its divine origin for myself. He counselled me to pray to the Lord, which I did, and thereupon received from him a powerful and irresistible testimony of the truthfulness and divinity of plural marriage.”\(^{37}\)

Available documents support the view that Joseph Smith re-


\(^{35}\) See, for example, Desdemona Fullmer, Autobiography, excerpted in D. Michael Quinn Papers, Addition, Uncat WA MS 244, Box 1, Special Collections, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, Ithaca, New York; hereafter Quinn Papers. This source should not be confused with the Desdemona Fullmer autobiography catalogued as MS 734 in the LDS Church History Library. See also Helen [Mar Kimball Whitney], Letter to Mary Bond, n.d., 3–4, Biographical Folder Collection, P21, f11 [Myron H. Bond], item 22, 23, 24, Community of Christ Archives. Fawn Brodie, No Man Knows My History, 74, observed: “At an early age [Joseph Smith] had what only the most gifted revivalist preachers could boast of—the talent for making men see visions.”

\(^{36}\) Rollins Lightner, “Statement,” February 8, 1902.

\(^{37}\) Lucy Walker, Affidavit, December 17, 1902, MS 3423, fd. 2; in Joseph F. Smith, Affidavit Books, 1:66; 4:68, MS 3423, fds. 5–6, LDS Church History Library. See also Journal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (chronological scrapbook of typed entries and newspaper clippings, 1830–present), May 1, 1843, LDS Church History Library. It is printed in Joseph Fielding Smith, Blood Atonement and the Origin of Plural Marriage, 68–69. A second affidavit containing identical wording is dated October 24, 1902, and headed: “Oath of Lucy Walker Smith: Wife of Joseph Smith, Jr.,” photocopy in my possession.
acted to the command to practice polygamy with dismay and that he afterwards sympathized with the challenge that plural marriage represented to Church members, especially sisters.

**Joseph Smith Declined Opportunities to Marry Additional Plural Wives**

During Joseph Smith’s life, he was sealed to thirty-four women. (See discussion below.) Evidence is available suggesting that he probably could have been sealed to several more women if he had desired. For example, Benjamin F. Johnson wrote: “The orphan girl—Mary Ann Hale—that my mother had raised from a child, was now living with us . . . and I asked him [Joseph] if he would not like her, as well as Almira [Johnson, Benjamin’s sister whom Joseph had already married]. He said, ‘No, but she is for you. You keep her and take her for your wife and you will be blessed.’”

Benjamin was sealed to Hale on May 17, 1843.

In addition, both Lucy Walker (b. 1826) and her older sister, Catherine (b. 1824), lived with the Prophet in his home. In 1892, Lucy testified that Catherine, who stayed there longer than Lucy, was never married to Joseph Smith and knew nothing of Lucy’s own sealing to the Prophet. Either Joseph refrained from approaching her or he proposed and was rejected without any repercussions to Catherine who continued to stay at the Smith home.

Evidence indicates that Joseph Smith used plural marriage as a test for several of the apostles. Included were Heber C. Kimball and John Taylor who, after a period of turmoil, were willing to give their legal wives to the Prophet, if it were required. In both cases, Joseph Smith declined such marriages and sealed the apostle and his wife for

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40 Lucy Walker, Deposition, Temple Lot Transcript, Respondent’s testimony, Part 3, pp. 458, 461, questions 207–9, 283.

41 Franklin D. Richards, Diary, quoted in *Minutes of the Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1894–1899* (Salt Lake City: Privately Published, 2010), 116.

time and eternity. To date, no historical documentation has been located showing that the Prophet followed through on a demand that a male follower give his wife to become Joseph’s plural spouse, even though some were sufficiently devoted that they reluctantly but sincerely expressed willingness to do so, had the experience not been only a “test.”

Two accounts describe how the Prophet sought plural marriages for his brothers Hyrum and William, rather than seeking to marry the women himself. In 1908, Hyrum Belnap approached his mother’s sister, Almira Knight Hanscom, to learn if she “had been asked by Hyrum Smith to be his 2nd wife”?:

She looked startled and answered, “Yes and No.” She said, “One day mother and I were in the front room and Joseph Smith came walking down the street and turned in at our gate. I had a hunch and as he entered the front door I went out the back and remained until he left. When I returned my Mother told me that Joseph had come at the request of his brother, Hyrum, to ask me to be his wife. And also asked Mother to ask me, seeing I wasn’t in. So when my mother said, [“]Almira what do you say about it?” I said, “No.”

This account demonstrates that, instead of seeking Almira for

1883–1960, November 1, 1890, MS 1356, Reel 1, LDS Church History Library. Whitaker’s typed version was apparently based on his shorthand original. See also Samuel W. Taylor, *The Kingdom or Nothing: The Life of John Taylor, Militant Mormon* (New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1976), 80–83, 87–89.

Almira Hanscom, Statement, 1908, in “Autobiography of Hyrum Belnap,” from a compilation by Della Belnap, “Biographies of the Belnap and Knight Families” (typescript), copied by BYU Library Staff, 1958; photocopy, L. Tom Perry Special Collections and Manuscripts Division, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, Amer BX 8670.1/B41. This statement is found on p. 55 of the Della Belnap compilation or p. 20 of the Hyrum Belnap Autobiography.


Hanscom, Statement, 1908.
himself, Joseph Smith sought to facilitate a plural marriage between her and his brother Hyrum. The marriage never took place, and Almira later left the Church.

In another example, Mary Ann Covington (Sheffield Smith Stratton West) recalled her experience in Nauvoo:

I went to live at Orson Hyde’s and soon after that time Joseph Smith wished to have an interview with me at Orson Hyde’s. He had the interview with me, and then asked me if I had ever heard of a man’s having more wives than one, and I said I had not. He then told me that he had received a revelation from God that [a] man could have more wives than one, and that men were now being married in plural marriage. He told me soon after that his brother William wished to marry me as a wife in plural marriage if I felt willing to consent to it. . . . He said that there was power on earth to seal wives in plural marriages.46

Mary Ann was sealed to William Smith by the fall of 1843.47 It seems likely that she would have been equally willing if Joseph had sought Mary Ann as his own plural wife.

To summarize, while available details are sometimes scant, the historical record cited above indicates that Joseph Smith might have been sealed to these six women; but for reasons he never explained, he declined some plural marriages, accepted others, and arranged polygamous unions for family members and friends.48

**Joseph Smith Cautiously Approached Potential New Wives**

The recollections of Joseph Smith’s plural wives are several descriptions of how cautiously he introduced the subject to them, allow-

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46Mary Ann West, Deposition, Temple Lot Transcript, Respondent’s Testimony, Part 3, pp. 495–96, 504, questions 13, 272. According to West’s testimony, this was the only time she discussed plural marriage with the Prophet. Ibid., p. 503, questions 264–65.


48Joseph Smith also facilitated the plural marriages of Parley P. Pratt to Elizabeth Brotherton (“Affidavit of Mary Ann Pratt,” MS 3423, LDS Church History Library) and Heber C. Kimball to Sarah Noon (Helen Mar Kimball Whitney, “Scenes and Incidents in Nauvoo,” *Woman’s Exponent* 10 [October 15, 1881]: 74).
ing them time to ponder his proposal and pray for guidance. Emily Dow Partridge recalled in 1892 that Joseph Smith approached her when they were alone “and asked me if I could keep a secret, and I told him I thought I could, and then he told me that he would some time if he had an opportunity,—he would tell me something that would be for my benefit, if I would not betray him, and I told him I wouldn’t.” Despite this introduction, time passed without more developments. Emily continued:

Well it run along for a good while,—I don’t know just how long, and there was no opportunity of saying anything to me more than he had, and one day he sat in the room alone, and I passed through it and he called to me or spoke to me, and called me to him, and then he said that he had intended to tell me something, but he had no opportunity to do so, and so he would write me a letter, if I would agree to burn it as soon as I read it, and with that I looked frightened, for I thought there was something about it that was not just right, and so I told him that I would rather that he would not write to me,—that he would not write me any letter, and then he asked me if I wanted him to say any more, and I said yes, that I did not want to hear anything more about it at all, for I had got a little frightened about it.

Although Emily does not state the reason for her fears, she un-

49A exception may be Helen Mar Kimball whose father, Heber, initiated her introduction to plural marriage and her sealing to the Prophet when she was fourteen. Joseph participated, but his role, if any, in initiating the proceedings is unknown. I conclude, based on my reading of the available evidence, that this plural marriage did not include conjugality. Helen Mar Kimball Whitney, “Scenes in Nauvoo,” Woman’s Exponent 11, no. 5, (August 1, 1882): 39; and her “Scenes in Nauvoo after the Martyrdom of the Prophet and Patriarch,” Woman’s Exponent 11, no. 19 (March 1, 1883): 146; Helen [Mar Kimball Whitney], Letter to Mary Bond, n.d., 3–4, Biographical Folder Collection, P21, f11 [Myron H. Bond], item 22, 23, 24, Community of Christ Archives; Helen Mar Kimball Whitney, “Autobiography, March 30, 1881, MS 744, LDS Church History Library; typescript and copy of holograph reproduced in Holzapfel and Holzapfel, A Woman’s View, 482–87. See also Stanley B. Kimball, Heber C. Kimball: Mormon Patriarch and Pioneer (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981), 98.

50Emily D. P. Young, Deposition, Temple Lot Transcript, Respondent’s Testimony, Part 3, p. 350, question 22.

51Ibid., question 22.
doubtedly knew that the subject of the letter was plural marriage, even though rumors of Joseph’s personal involvement were not then widespread. Over the ensuing months, Emily’s feelings changed:

Well it went in that condition and there was not anything more said about it for several months, not until 1843 I think,—some time in ’43, for he had no other opportunity until then and I did not think he would ever say anything more about it until then, but I had thought a great deal about it in that time, and I had prayed for it to know what it was, and if it was my duty. I thought I ought to have listened to it, that is, to what he was going to tell me or write to me, for I was greatly troubled over it, as I feared I had done wrong in not listening to it,—and so I prayed to be enlightened in regard to what I should have done. Well, in time I became convinced that there was nothing wrong about it, and that it would be right for me to hear what he had to say, but there was nothing more said for a good while after I came to that conclusion. I think it was months before there was anything more said about it, but I don’t know just how long it was.52

Perhaps sensing Emily’s change of heart, the Prophet approached her asking for another “opportunity to speak” and she “granted it. . . . He told me then what he wanted to say to me, and he taught me this principle of plural marriage called polygamy now, but we called it celestial marriage, and he told me that this principle had been revealed to him but it was not generally known; and he went on and said that the Lord had given me to him, and he wanted to know if I would consent to a marriage, and I consented.”53

Elsewhere Emily recalled that the sealing was performed at the Kimball home quickly at the end of a workday, then “Joseph went home his way, and I going my way alone.” She added: “A strange way of getting married, wasn’t it?”54

In 1883, Almera W. Johnson remembered her own protracted experience in learning about plural marriage “in the years 1842 and 1843”:

52Ibid.


54Emily D. P. Young, Autobiographical Sketch, “Written Especially for My Children, January 7, 1877,” Marriott Library, manuscript owned by Emily Young Knopp, copy of typescript in my possession.
During that time the Prophet Joseph Smith taught me the principle of Celestial Marriage including plurality of wives and asked me to become his wife. He first spoke to me on this subject at the house of my brother Benjamin F. I also lived a portion of the time at Brother Joseph Smith’s in Nauvoo, when many conversations passed between him and myself on this subject. . . . At the time this [plural marriage] took place Hyrum Smith, Joseph’s brother, came to me and said, I need not be afraid. I had been fearing and doubting about the principle and so had he, but he now knew it was true.55

Almera lived several miles east of Nauvoo in Ramus, which would have presented limited opportunities to discuss the principle with Joseph; so the “many conversations” prior to their sealing would have required perhaps many months.

Another account from Lucy Walker is important because it is sometimes misquoted to make it appear that Joseph Smith proposed to her and then immediately imposed a twenty-four-hour ultimatum.56 Lucy recalled Joseph’s telling her: “I have no flattering words to offer. It is a command of God to you. I will give you until tomorrow to decide this matter. If you reject this message the gate will be closed forever against you.”57

This time limitation was imposed only after Lucy had wavered for many months, possibly as long as a year. She related: “In the year 1842, President Joseph Smith sought an interview with me, and said: ‘I have a message for you. I have been commanded of God to take an-

56See, for example, George D. Smith, “The Forgotten Story of Nauvoo Celestial Marriage,” Journal of Mormon History 36, no. 4 (Fall 2010): 157. By selectively quoting Lucy Walker’s account, George D. Smith makes it appear that Joseph proposed plural marriage to the young woman and immediately gave her a twenty-four-hour ultimatum in which to make her decision; in reality, many months passed between the two events.
other wife, and you are the woman.’ My astonishment knew no bounds. This announcement was indeed a thunderbolt to me. He asked me if I believed him to be a prophet of God. ‘Most assuredly I do,’ I replied. He fully explained to me the principle of plural or celestial marriage.”

After this initial introduction, Lucy agonized for many months as the Prophet waited. Although Lucy does not give the actual date in 1842 when Joseph gave his original teachings, it was not until April of 1843 that the ultimatum was given so the span of time was at least four months. Lucy related that, during that interim of between four and sixteen months, “I was tempted and tortured beyond endurance until life was not desirable. Oh that the grave would kindly receive me, that I might find rest . . . Oh, let this bitter cup pass. And thus I prayed in the agony of my soul. The Prophet discerned my sorrow. He saw how unhappy I was.” Lucy does not assign a time period to her agitation, but it seems likely that it lasted for a protracted period. It was after witnessing Lucy’s distress that Joseph gave Lucy a time limit. Hours after their conversation, she prayed and just before dawn her “room was lighted up by a heavenly influence . . . like the brilliant sun bursting through the darkest cloud. . . . My soul was filled with a calm.”

She was sealed to Joseph Smith on May 1, 1843.

At least some extant accounts suggest that premarriage interactions between the Prophet and his prospective plural wives usually involved instructions concerning the underlying theological principles either from Joseph or an intermediary. Although no account specifically describes a number of times such instructional visits occurred, it seems likely that understanding the topic would have required several conversations over time. Typical “courting” behaviors such as walks, buggy rides, the exchange of physical affection, or flirtatious conver-

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58 Littlefield, Reminiscences of Latter-day Saints, 46.


60 George D. Smith, An Intimate Chronicle, 100. See also William Clayton, Statement, February 16, 1874, MS 3423, fd. 1, images 30–36, LDS Church History Library. Lucy Walker testified that the marriage took place in her family’s home. Lucy Walker, Deposition, Temple Lot Transcript, Respondent’s Testimony, Part 3, p. 462, questions 321–25.
sations, whether publicly or privately, did not occur. In no cases, is there evidence of a quick sealing as a result of mounting passion or attraction.

**REJECTIONS OF JOSEPH SMITH’S PLURAL MARRIAGE PROPOSALS**

Lucy Walker remembered the Prophet’s emphasis that plural wives should not be coerced or manipulated: “A woman would have her choice, this was a privilege that could not be denied her.”61 When arranging a marriage for his brother William Smith, Joseph apparently respected this ideal by inviting the woman, Mary Ann Covington, to participate only if she “felt willing to consent to it.”62 Later sealing ceremonies in the Nauvoo Temple required the acknowledgement that all participants were there by their free will and choice, a requirement that likely began with Joseph. The only recorded ceremony sealing Joseph Smith to a plural wife was dictated by revelation to Bishop Newel K. Whitney who pronounced the ceremony marrying his daughter, Sarah Ann Whitney, to the Prophet. It provided the opportunity for her to decline: “You both mutu[al]ly agree calling them by name to be each others companion so long as you both shall live.”63

Joseph Smith’s offers of plural marriage were apparently turned down by at least seven women. The historical record indicates that his preferred response to these rebuffs was to let the matter rest. No evidence of retaliatory excommunications or other vengeful reactions has been found, although twice he sought to counteract allegations he considered untrue.

Benjamin F. Johnson recorded that, when the Prophet “asked me for my youngest sister, Esther M. I told him she was promised in marriage to my wife’s brother. He said, ‘Well, let them marry, for it

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In another version of this incident, Johnson recalled that Joseph said: “If your Sister is engaged, it is all right” and then added “in the presence of my family he talked to her on the Subject, but as I had Suspected, She was promised to be married.”

The counsel Joseph Smith gave to Esther in the family setting is not mentioned, but it appears that there the matter ended. Esther and her future husband were married by Almon Babbit in Nauvoo on April 4, 1844.

In another case, on September 15, 1843, William Clayton recorded an incident regarding Lydia Moon: “He [Joseph Smith] finally asked if I would not give Lydia Moon to him I said I would so far as I had any thing to do in it. He requested me to talk to her.” Two days later, Clayton wrote: “I had some talk with Lydia. She seems to receive it kindly but says she has promised her mother not to marry while her mother lives and she thinks she won’t.” Lydia was not sealed to Joseph.

Another unsuccessful proposal occurred with Sarah Granger Kimball, who was legally married to non-Mormon Hiram Kimball:

Early in 1842, Joseph Smith taught me the principle of marriage for eternity, and the doctrine of plural marriage. He said that in teaching this he realized that he jeopardized his life; but God had revealed it to him many years before as a privilege with blessings, now God had revealed it again and instructed him to teach with commandment, as the Church could travel (progress) no further without the introduction of this principle. I asked him to teach it to some one else. He looked at me reprovingly and said, “Will you tell me who to teach it to? God required me to teach it to you, and leave you with the responsibility of believing or disbelieving.” He said, “I will not cease to pray for you, and if you will seek unto God in prayer, you will not be led into temptation.”

Sarah Kimball’s reaction certainly snubbed any further action, but Jo-

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67George D. Smith, *An Intimate Chronicle*, 120.
68Ibid., 120.
Joseph Smith’s response was to encourage her and pray for her.

Cordelia C. Morley recounted a similar situation: “In the spring of forty-four, plural marriage was introduced to me by my parents from Joseph Smith, asking their consent and a request to me to be his wife. Imagine if you can my feelings, to be a plural wife, something I never thought I ever could. I knew nothing of such religion and could not accept it. Neither did I.” However, Cordelia had second thoughts and was sealed to the Prophet after his death.\(^\text{70}\)

Rachel Ivins Grant’s biographer records her response to Joseph’s request for “an interview. . . . She believed he wished to ask for her hand in plural marriage. Her personal turmoil over this prospect must have been excruciating. . . . Her initial response was offended outrage, and she vowed with untypical shrillness that she would ‘sooner go to hell as a virtuous woman than to heaven as a whore.’ . . . She refused to meet with Joseph Smith, yet years later she insisted that her faith in Mormonism never wavered.”\(^\text{71}\) After Joseph’s death, Rachel was sealed to Joseph Smith by proxy in the Endowment House in Salt Lake City, on November 29, 1855.\(^\text{72}\)

None of these five rejections resulted in any direct or indirect retaliation from Joseph Smith. Had the woman herself not recounted the episode, knowledge about it would have been lost to later generations. This observation is important because John C. Bennett claimed that Joseph Smith would seek to destroy the reputation of any woman who rejected him, an accusation that is commonly repeated.\(^\text{73}\) However, he would defend himself against claims he considered to be

\(^\text{70}\) Cordelia Morley Cox, Autobiography, March 17, 1909, 4, holograph, Perry Special Collections.


\(^\text{72}\) Thomas Milton Tinney, *The Royal Family of the Prophet Joseph Smith, Jr.* (Salt Lake City: Tinney-Greene Family Organization, 1973), 12; handwritten entry.

false, as the cases of Nancy Rigdon and Sarah Bates Pratt demonstrate. My research suggests that Joseph Smith approached Nancy Rigdon in early 1842 with the hope that she would respond favorably. I hypothesize that, through the process, Joseph hoped that Nancy’s father, Sidney (Joseph’s counselor in the First Presidency), would also accept and support the practice. I suggest that his dictated letter to Nancy beginning “Happiness is the object and design of our existence” may have been written to influence and teach Sidney as much as to convince Nancy. While she did not publicly accuse the Prophet, her brother, writing in 1904, disgustedly told a correspondent that “she like a fool had to go & blab it.” Immediately thereafter, Joseph met with the Rigdon family twice. “Matters were satisfactorily adjusted between them and there the matter ended.”

However, months later during the summer of 1842, Joseph Smith’s estranged counselor, John C. Bennett, published a letter encouraging Nancy “to come out and tell boldly the base attempt on her virtue” in the Sangamo Journal, printed in Springfield, Illinois. He reprinted the letter in a book he published later that same year, based on his newspaper letters, in which he dramatically portrayed himself as saving Nancy from being “ensnared by the Cyprian

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75John C. Bennett, “Sixth letter from John C. Bennett,” Sangamo Journal (Springfield Ill.), August 19, 1842. This letter has been reprinted in Bennett, The History of the Saints, 243–45; History of the Church, 5:134; and Joseph Fielding Smith, comp. and ed., Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976 printing), 256.

76John W. Rigdon, Letter to Arthur Willing, Elder, February 20, 1904, Brooklyn, New York, 7–8, MS 14595, LDS Church History Library.


Saints . . . taken in the net of the chambered Sisters of Charity . . . [and avoiding] the poisoned arrows of the Consecratees of the Cloister.”79 Joseph publicly denied the Bennett version and his imaginary groups of plural wives.80 Within weeks, Nancy also denounced Bennett’s claims through a statement issued by her father, Sidney Rigdon.81

The second case concerns Sarah Bates Pratt, the young wife of missionary Orson Pratt. It is not entirely clear what happened; but it seems probable that Joseph discussed plural marriage with her as he had done with others, possibly including the option of being sealed to him. Rather than quietly declining, Sarah made inflammatory accusations that Joseph flatly denied.82 A review of available manuscripts demonstrates that two stories were then being promoted. The first version, voiced by John C. Bennett and Sarah Pratt, claimed that Joseph tried to seduce her.83 In the second, voiced by Joseph Smith and other witnesses, Bennett and Sarah were sexually involved and their allegations against Joseph were an attempt to cover up their own im-

80 Joseph Smith, in Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph Smith (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1980), 125; see also Affidavits and Certificates, Disproving the Statements and Affidavits Contained in John C. Bennett’s Letters (Nauvoo, Ill.: n.pub., August 31, 1842).
83 Bennett, “Bennett’s Second and Third Letters,” in his The History of the Saints, 228–31. See also W. Wyl (pseud. of Wilhelm Ritter von Wymetal), Mormon Portraits: or the Truth about Mormon Leaders from 1830 to 1886 (Salt Lake City: Tribune Printing and Publishing, 1886), 61. See also [unidentified author], “Workings of Mormonism related by Mrs. Orson Pratt,” holograph, 1–3, Ms 4048, LDS Church History Library. The level of input given by Sarah Pratt, if she was involved at all, is unclear. The writer mistakenly substitutes the surname “Hyde” for “Pratt” in six different places, three times correcting it and three times not, an error Pratt herself would not have made and would have quickly corrected if she had read the document.
morality. Affidavits were printed by both sides, with charges and counter-charges being launched in multiple volleys. Joseph later confided to Orson Pratt, Sarah’s husband, that Sarah “lied about me,” adding “I never made the offer which she said I did.” Orson later testified that Joseph had told the truth.

Reviewing Joseph Smith’s actions in the cases of Nancy Rigdon and Sarah Pratt and comparing them to his calm response when he was rebuffed by Esther M. Johnson, Lydia Moon, Sarah Granger Kimball, Cordelia C. Morley, and Rachel Ivins suggests that, if Nancy and Sarah had kept silent concerning their interviews with Joseph Smith, the public scandals that followed would have been avoided.

**JOSEPH SMITH QUIETLY ALLOWED FOR ONE DIVORCE**

In the spring of 1843 Joseph Smith was sealed to Flora Ann Woodruff and thereafter presented her with a gold watch. On August 23, 1843, William Clayton reported in his journal a conflict between Emma and Flora Ann: “President Joseph told me that he had...
difficulty with Emma yesterday. She rode up to Woodworths with him and called while he came to the Temple. When he returned she was demanding the gold watch of Flora [Woodworth]. He reproved her for her evil treatment. On their return home she abused him much."88 Seymour B. Young, a member of the First Council of Seventy in 1883 and the son of Joseph Young, brother to Brigham, recorded a second-hand account in 1912 that Joseph Smith had “given a gold locket or watch [to Flora] which was stamped under foot by Emma.” If this foot-stamping incident actually occurred, it was probably during the better-documented confrontation.89 Flora reacted radically to the quarrel by marrying Carlos Gove, a nonmember, the very next day.90

Malissa Lott recalled in 1887: “Flora Ann Woodworth . . . mar-

88George D. Smith, An Intimate Chronicle, 119.
89Seymour B. Young, Journal, April 2, 1912, LDS Church History Library, restricted; excerpt in D. Michael Quinn Papers, Addition, Uncat WA MS 244 (Accession:19990209-c), Box 1, Card file, Topic: Polygamy, Joseph Smith’s.
90Flora Woodworth, Marriage to Carlos Gove, August 23, 1843, in Tri-County Genealogical Society, comp., Hancock County, Marriage Index, 1829–49 (Augusta, Ill.: Tri-County Genealogical Society, 1983), 19. Helen Mar Kimball recounted a different sequence: “A young man boarding at her father’s after the death of Joseph not a member of the Church had sought her hand, in time won her heart, and in a reckless moment she was induced to accept his offer and they eloped to Carthage, accompanied by a young lady friend, and were there married by a Justice of the Peace.” Helen Mar [Kimball] Whitney, “Travels beyond the Mississippi,” Woman’s Exponent 13, no. 11 (November 1, 1884): 87; emphasis mine. This marriage is not listed in Lyndon Cook, Nauvoo Deaths and Marriages, 1839–1845 (Orem, Utah: Grandin Book, 1994), possibly because his marriage records are extracted.
ried Carlos Gove at Nauvoo with the consent of the Prophet.” Malissa does not specify whether the “consent” was granted before or after Flora’s legal marriage to Gove; but after witnessing Emma’s confrontation with Flora, Joseph may have returned to the Woodworth home that very evening to discuss the situation. Regardless, he allowed Flora to separate from him without any public repercussions. It seems unlikely but not impossible that Joseph Smith dissolved their plural marriage before Flora legally married Gove. Years earlier in Kirtland, Fanny Alger, whom I see as Joseph’s only pre-Nauvoo plural wife, had married a nonmember; but whether Joseph authorized the termination of their marriage is unknown. Flora’s eternal sealing to the Prophet may also have been cancelled. She was not one of the twenty-nine women who were sealed by proxy to Joseph Smith in the Nauvoo Temple in 1846.

On a sheet of notes that Jenson created in late 1886 or early 1887, he recorded: “She [Flora Ann Woodworth] regretted her last marriage, her husband being an unbeliever, and intended to cling to the Prophet.” Helen Mar Kimball Whitney had earlier chronicled: “Flora was never happy with him [Gove] as he hated the Mormons, and she felt condemned for the rash step she had taken. She made this confession to me while I was nursing her, and said she desired to cling to Joseph hereafter. . . . She still expressed herself as strong in the faith of the Gospel, also her great desire to cleave to the Prophet. I never saw her again as she died at that place [Winter from Church publications and records.

91Letter of Malissa Willis to Andrew Jenson, June 27, 1887, in Andrew Jenson Papers (ca. 1871–1942), MS 17956, Document #14, Box 49, fd. 16, LDS Church History Library (hereafter cited by title, document, box, and folder number).


93Tinney, The Royal Family of the Prophet Joseph Smith, Jr., 8–12. A proxy sealing was performed for her and Joseph Smith in the Salt Lake Temple in 1899 under the direction of Lorenzo Snow. Ibid., 41.

Written on the letterhead of “Trane & Powell, Dealers in General Merchandise,” Lehi, and dated June 27, 1887, certainly a bittersweet date, this letter from Malissa Lott Willes to Andrew Jensen reads: “... Andrew Jenson Esq.

Dear Sir:[ ] Your card at hand and noted. Flora Ann Woodworth died at Sarps’s [?] Trading Point ^below Florence^, left ^two^ 1 child^ren^ when she died. Married Carlos Gove at Navoo [sic] with the consent of the Prophet. [W]ould think she was 2 or 3 years younger than me when she was sealed to the Prophet, but never conversed with her on the subject. I doo not know annything more about her. Please send me back my Paper that I let you have, and you alls [sic] promised me a copy of your Record. [signed] Malissa Willes.” Courtesy of the LDS Church History Library.
Quarters], leaving two or three children. Flora Ann’s desire to “cling” and “cleave” to the Prophet could be references to an eternal sealing.

These newly discovered evidences concerning Flora Ann Woodworth’s plural marriage with Joseph Smith and subsequent separation from him seem to describe real people stumbling as they confront a very difficult religious principle. Emma’s frustrations and Flora’s apparent hasty reaction no doubt brought sorrow to the Prophet who sought a private resolution, even if a religious divorce (or “cancellation” in modern terminology) was required. No additional evidence has been found to support other divorces in Joseph Smith’s plural marriages.

JOSEPH SMITH CONSIDERED HIMSELF A GENUINE HUSBAND TO HIS PLURAL WIVES

In Nauvoo in 1841, John C. Bennett secretly promoted his “spiritual wifery” (actually adultery) at the same time that Joseph Smith was introducing eternal and plural marriage. The two systems differed in many ways, but one significant difference was that “spiritual wifery” did not create genuine married couples. Bennett performed no ceremonies; neither did he teach that marriage vows were needed prior to conjugal relations. It seems that Bennett’s “spiritual wives” were “wives” primarily in the sense that they had shared a bed with their spiritual husband, but afterwards, no marital obligations or responsibilities existed. Catherine Fuller testified to the Nauvoo High Council that Bennett propositioned her for sex in May of 1841, only a week after they first met, and that she yielded; but after the sexual act, no commitment existed between them. She also testified that another of Bennett’s followers, nonmember “J. B. Backenstos has also been at my house . . . gave me two dollars.”

In contrast, existing documents support the view that Joseph

95Whitney, “Travels beyond the Mississippi,” 87.
97Catherine Fuller, Testimony before the Nauvoo High Council, May 25, 1842, copy of holograph, in Valeen Tippetts Avery Collection, MSS 316, Box 24, fd. 14, Merrill-Cazier Library, Utah State University.
Smith always required a priesthood sealing ordinance to create an eternal marriage, either monogamous or polygamous. Thereafter, the man and the woman were married with all the obligations incumbent upon husbands and wives including the revelation that specified: “Women have claim on their husbands for their maintenance” (D&C 83:2).

While little is known concerning Joseph Smith’s day-to-day interactions with his plural wives, the historical record indicates that he treated them as genuine spouses and that they viewed him as their eternal husband. Detailed analysis of the living conditions experienced by all thirty-four of Joseph Smith’s plural wives in Nauvoo is impossible due to a lack of documentation. However, available evidence indicates that the Prophet accepted his husbandly responsibilities seriously. Historians Linda King Newell and Valeen Tippettts Avery wrote: “No evidence exists that [Joseph Smith] assumed the support of his wives in the traditional sense of providing them with food, clothing, and shelter, except for the young women in his house.” That is, Joseph’s plural wives did not all live together either in his house or in a harem-like setting. However, Newell and Avery also note that their material needs were met: “Some remained with their parents; others lived with other plural wives; a few lived with other families where plural marriage was also practiced. Their personal accounts attest that, for the most part, they felt Joseph cared for them deeply and they felt important to him.”

Typically the Prophet would arrange for the woman to live with a friend, relative, or other provider, thus allowing their material needs to be met. His friends were willing to lend support and keep secrets.

Reportedly, Joseph asked members of the Quorum of the Twelve to marry and care for his widows in the event of his death. Oa J. Cannon, a descendant of Zina D. H. Young and her first husband, Henry Jacobs, and an energetic family historian, wrote: “There is a family tradition that Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, and the rest of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles approached the widows of Joseph Smith and offered themselves as husbands. Smith reportedly had asked the apos-

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99Brigham Young told Amanda Barnes (who had married two men, both named Warren Smith) that if she had been a plural wife of Joseph Smith, “in Nauvoo, I would have taken you into my family as I did others of
tles to do this if he should die.” Cannon added, “Thus Young and Kimball, in approaching Smith’s wives, were not simply adding numerous wives to their own polygamous families as quickly as possible; they may have been acting out of a sense of responsibility to their fallen leader.” If this tradition is true, it would constitute additional evidence that the Prophet considered his plural wives to be genuine spouses for whom he felt real concern and obligation.

JOSEPH SMITH’S POSSIBLE MOTIVATIONS FOR MARRYING PLURAL WIVES

It appears that during the thirty-one months between April 1841 and November of 1843, Joseph Smith was sealed to thirty-three plural wives; including Fanny Alger married in Kirtland, most probably in 1835, the total is thirty-four. Todd Compton, who wrote biographies of most of those wives, asks a logical question: “One may won-

the Prophet’s wives.” Amanda Barnes Smith, quoted in Hulda Cordelia Thurston Smith, “O My Children and Grandchildren,” Nauvoo Journal, 4 (1992) 7. Catherine Lewis recalled: “The Apostles said they only took Joseph’s wives to raise up children, carry them through to the next world, there deliver them up to him, by so doing they should gain his approbation, &c.” Catherine Lewis, Narrative of Some of the Proceedings of the Mormons; Giving an Account of Their Iniquities (Lynn, Mass: Catherine Lewis, 1848), 19.


der why Smith married so many women when two or three wives would have complied with the reported divine command to enter polygamy.”

As discussed above, several witnesses recorded Joseph Smith’s references to a sword-bearing angel commanding him to practice plural marriage. However, these accounts include no specific details about the angelic requirement. Did the angel give a specific or desired number of wives (at least five? at least ten?)? Would “eternity-only” sealings suffice? Was Joseph expected to have children with his plural wives (or at least to try)? Precise answers to these questions are unavailable. The various recollections state that the angel demanded the Prophet to “establish that principle upon the earth,” to be “obedient,” to “proceed to fulfill the law that had been given to him,” to no “longer delay fulfilling that Command,” to “move forward and establish plural marriage,” “to have women sealed to him as wives . . . and obey the commandment.” Apparently, specific instructions were not included regarding the number and possible advantages of more wives. If the angel imparted such information, the Prophet apparently did not share it with his associates and wives.

Besides an angelic admonition, several other motivations have been hypothesized:

1. Joseph’s libido required expanded sexual license.

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105 Benjamin F. Johnson, Affidavit, March 4, 1870, Joseph F. Smith, Affidavit Books, 2:8; MS 3423, fd 5. See also Jenson, “Plural Marriage,” 222.
107 Eliza R. Snow Smith, *Biography and Family Record of Lorenzo Snow*, 69–70.
108 Lorenzo Snow, Affidavit, August 18, 1869, Joseph F. Smith, Affidavit Books, 2:19, MS 3423, fd. 5; see also Jenson, “Plural Marriage,” 222.
2. He felt physical attraction and/or romantic love for these women.
3. More wives would bring greater exaltation.
4. Such sealings would create dynastic connections with an expanding circle of male believers.
5. He would serve as a proxy husband for women whose husbands were on missions or who preferred Joseph to their legal spouses.
6. He had made premortal promises with some of these women to marry them in mortality.
7. Women sought to be sealed to him and he did not refuse.

**Libido and Expanded Sexual License**

Although I have not made an actual count, in my reading of historical treatises that mention Joseph Smith’s polygamy, the overwhelming majority of the authors assume that his libido was the primary motivator. These authors usually assume that either consciously or unconsciously, Joseph desired to expand his sexual opportunities and employed plural marriage as a doctrinal means to that end.

My current research identifies only four plural marriages (Emily D. Partridge, Almera Johnson, Lucy Walker, and Malissa Lott) that provide first-hand accounts of a sexual component.\(^{109}\) Credible second-hand evidence exists for an additional seven (Fanny Alger, Louisa Beaman, Eliza D. Partridge, Sylvia Sessions, Olive Frost, and Maria and Sarah Lawrence), for a total of eleven. Ambiguous documentation is available for another three, but credible evidence is lacking or unpersuasive for the remaining twenty, who can be grouped as follows: (1) women sealed for the next life only; (2) sealings to two fourteen-year-olds; and (3) sealings to women who were civilly married and experiencing connubial relations.

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\(^{109}\)Zina Huntington is sometimes misquoted as saying she was Joseph Smith’s wife “in very deed.” Martha Sonntag Bradley and Mary Brown Firmage Woodward, *Four Zinas: A Story of Mothers and Daughters on the Mormon Frontier* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2000), 114–15. In fact, no documentary evidence exists attributing this quotation to Zina. It apparently has been confused with the testimony of Malissa Lott, who, when asked if she were Joseph Smith’s wife “in very deed,” responded in the affirmative. See Malissa Willes, Notarized Statement, August 4, 1893, in possession of Myrtle Willes Bailey (granddaughter of Malissa Lott Smith Willes), typescript sent to Raymond Bailey on December 11, 1949, and qtd. in Raymond T. Bailey, “Emma Hale: Wife of the Prophet Joseph Smith” (M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1952), 99–100.
with their legal husbands. Evidence for sexual relations with women to whom he was not married is also lacking.

Even though Joseph Smith taught that sexual relations were justified and expected in polygamous unions “to multiply and replenish the earth” (D&C 132:63), having children was not the primary reason for plurality in his theology. Rather, he gave three reasons for plurality: (1) to restore Old Testament plural marriage as part of the “restitution of all things” (Acts 3:19);110 (2) to provide physical bodies for noble premortal spirits;111 and (3) to allow all worthy women to be sealed to a worthy spouse, making them candidates for exaltation (D&C 132:15–17, 19–20). This final reason is the one with the greatest eternal significance. Under other circumstances, the importance of having children may have expanded; but it does not appear that conjugal interactions were a common occurrence in the Prophet’s life in Nauvoo. Opportunities to spend intimate time with his plural wives would have been limited by many factors, including his parenting responsibilities at the Homestead and the Nauvoo Mansion, his care for his widowed mother, his duties as Church president, his obligations as mayor and chief judge of the Nauvoo Municipal Court, his role as lieutenant general of the Nauvoo Legion, the constant need for secrecy, and the scrutiny of dissenters and unbelievers. Emma’s vigilant and mostly intolerant eyes would have been another significant deterrent. Emily Partridge recalled:

We [Emily and Eliza Partridge] were sealed in her [Emma’s] presence with her full and free consent. It was the 11th of May, [1842?] but before the day was over she turned around or repented of what she had done and kept Joseph up till very late in the night talking to him. She kept close watch of us. If we were missing for a few minutes, and Joseph was not at home, the house was searched from top to bottom and from one end to the other, and if we were not found, the neighborhood was


searched until we were found.  

In a recollection probably penned in 1853, Joseph Lee Robinson recorded:

Ebenezer [Robinson’s] wife, [Angeline], had some time before this . . . watched Brother Joseph the prophet and had seen him go into some house and that she had reported to Sister Emma, the wife of the prophet. It was at a time when she was very suspicious and jealous of him for fear he would get another wife, for she knew the prophet had a revelation on that subject. She (Emma) was determined he should not get another, if he did she was determined to leave and when she heard this, she, Emma, became very angry and said she would leave.

I interpret the available evidence as demonstrating that Joseph and Emma lived an outwardly monogamous lifestyle, especially during the last eight months of his life. That sexual relations with plural wives were uncommon is supported by the fact that only Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner, speaking late in life when she was eighty-two, reported about Joseph’s children conceived with plural wives: “I know he [Joseph Smith] had three children. They told me. I think two are living today but they are not known as his children as they go by other names.”

On another occasion, she declared: “I don’t know about his having children, but I heard of three that he was the father of.”

Assuming that Mary Elizabeth had been correctly informed and, furthermore, was reporting her information correctly, who were these two or possibly three children? The first and, at this point, most probable is Josephine Lyon Fisher. Sylvia Sessions Lyon, one of Joseph’s plural wives, was legally married to Windsor

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112Emily Dow Partridge Young, “Incidents in the Early Life of Emily Dow Partridge,” 5, MS d 2845, fd. 1, typescript in my possession; also in Marriott Library, Special Collections. See also Emily D. P. Young, autobiographical sketch, “Written Especially for My Children, January 7, 1877.”


114Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner, “Remarks at Brigham Young University, April 14, 1905,” Vault, MSS 363, fd. 6, Perry Special Collections. Mary Ann Barzee Boice stated in her “History,” that “some” of Joseph Smith’s plural wives “had children.” Excerpt in Quinn Papers, WA MS 244 [Accession:19990209-c] box 1.)

115Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner, quoted in J. D. Stead, Doctrines and Dogmas of Brighamism Exposed (Lamoni, Iowa: RLDS Church, 1911), 218.
Lyon in Nauvoo. She gave birth to a daughter, Josephine, on February 8, 1844. In 1905, Angus Cannon, president of Salt Lake Stake and a brother of George Q. Cannon, received a visit from Joseph Smith III, oldest surviving son of Joseph and Emma and president of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints:

Before we parted... I said, "Joseph, you have asked where is the issue in evidence of your father's having married plural wives." I will now refer you to one case where it was said by the girl's grandmother that your father has a daughter born of a plural wife. The girl's grandmother was Mother [Patty Bartlett] Sessions, who lived in Nauvoo and died here in the valley. She [Josephine] was the grand-daughter of Mother Sessions. That girl, I believe, is living today in Bountiful, north of this city. I heard Prest. Young, a short time before his death, refer to the report and remark that he had never seen the girl, but he would like to see her for himself, that he might determine if she bore any likeness to your father. Joseph hereupon said, "Did you ever go and see her?" "No sir, I did not." "Then there is where you have not done what you ought to have done. You should have gone to see her for yourself, and so satisfied your own mind." 117

The second possible child was born to Olive Frost and either did not live long or may possibly have been born too prematurely to survive. 118 The identity of a third child remains unknown, if in fact a third child fathered by Joseph was born. 119

The Prophet was virile, having fathered nine children with Emma despite their long periods of separation and challenging sched-

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117 Angus Munn Cannon, "Statement of an Interview with Joseph Smith, III, 1905," regarding a conversation on October 12, 1905, MS 3166, LDS Church History Library.

118 Joseph E. Robinson, Diary, October 26, 1902, MS 7866, LDS Church History Library; see also James Whitehead, interviewed by Joseph Smith III, April 20, 1885, handwritten notes in possession of John Hajicek. Olive Frost died October 6, 1845.
ules. Most of Joseph Smith’s plural wives were young and most had children with their other husbands; therefore, they were capable of conception if the timing was right. A review of their childbearing chronology after his death and their remarriages demonstrates impressive fertility in several of the women. Most of them married within two years after the martyrdom and prior to the Saints leaving for the West. Three of the women became pregnant within weeks after remarrying. Sarah Ann Whitney who was sealed to Joseph Smith for twenty-three months (before his death), remarried Heber C. Kimball on March 17, 1845, and, based on the birth date of their first child (David Kimball, born March 8, 1846), became pregnant approximately June 15. She bore Heber Kimball seven children between 1846 and 1858. Lucy Walker who was sealed to the Prophet for fourteen months also married Kimball. About three months after their February 8, 1845, marriage, she became pregnant.

119My research has identified eighteen additional alleged children of Joseph Smith, but evidence is in each case is problematic. See http://www.josephsmithpolygamy.com/images/ChartJSPossibleChildren.html (accessed February 13, 2011). See also Ugo A. Perego, “Joseph Smith, the Question of Polygamous Offspring, and DNA Analysis,” in Newell G. Bringhurst and Craig L. Foster, eds., The Persistence of Polygamy: Joseph Smith and the Origins of Mormon Polygamy (Independence, Mo.: John Whitmer Books, 2010), 233–56. Charges that Joseph Smith used contraceptives or abortion to limit plural pregnancies have been made by Brodie, No Man Knows My History, 346, and Wyl, Mormon Portraits, 59; but I have found no evidence to support these suppositions.

120Alvin (June 15, 1828–June 15, 1828); twins Thaddeus and Louisa (April 30, 1831–April 30, 1831); Joseph III (November 6, 1832–December 10, 1914); Frederick Granger Williams (June 29, 1836–April 13, 1862); Alexander Hale (June 2, 1838–August 12, 1909); Don Carlos Smith (1840, died at fourteen months); David Hyrum Smith (November 17, 1844–August 29, 1904). A misreading of Joseph Smith’s journal for December 26, 1842, has resulted in the interpretation that Emma suffered a miscarriage that day. The History of the Church, 5:209, records: “I found my wife Emma sick. She was delivered of a son, which did not survive its birth.” The original text indicates that this passage should read: “Sister Emma sick, had another chill.” Faulring, An American Prophet’s Record, 258.
pregnant. She gave birth to nine of Kimball’s children between 1846 and 1864. Malissa Lott who was sealed to Joseph Smith in September 1843 married Ira Jones Willes on May 13, 1849. Their first child was born April 22, 1850, with conception approximately July 30, 1849 (or eleven weeks after the wedding ceremony). Seven Willes children were born between 1850 and 1863. Emily Partridge bore Brigham Young seven offspring between 1845 and 1862. Her sister Eliza married Amasa Lyman, and together they had five children between 1844 and 1860. Several other plural wives like Louisa Beaman, Martha McBride, and Nancy Winchester also remarried and became pregnant. In light of the obvious ability of many of Joseph Smith’s plural wives to conceive, it seems that either they bore him children who are unknown today or that sexual relations in the marriages did not occur often.

Both defenders and critics of Joseph Smith’s plural marriages have affirmed sexual relations were included and therefore that the birth of children was a possibility. They hypothesized that such children may have been kept secret because of the obvious dangers to Joseph if the existence of the practice were known because it violated state anti-bigamy laws and he may have been incarcerated. Decades after the martyrdom when RLDS Church missionaries were claiming that Joseph Smith was not a polygamist, Utah Church authorities aggressively combatted their claims. It seems likely that, had they known of any children fathered by the Prophet with his plural wives, they would have publicly acknowledged these children to refute RLDS denials; but except for Angus Cannon’s conversation with Joseph III quoted above, such efforts are virtually nonexistent.

Polygamous husbands, living when polygamy is illegal and/or unacceptable, face unique challenges as they try to have children with their plural wives. A point arrives at which adding new plural wives does not increase sexual opportunities, because the limiting factor is the man’s ability to safely schedule an intimate rendezvous. Such dynamics were almost certainly present in the Prophet’s complicated life, so additional sealings beyond a certain point would

\[\text{121}\] Rachel Sylvia Kimball was born January 28, 1846, with conception approximately May 7, 1845.

\[\text{122}\] Joseph F. Smith, Affidavits, fds. 1–2, Ms 3423, and Affidavit Books 1–4, LDS Church History Library; “Our Own Correspondent,” “The Mormon Church War,” Daily Evening Bulletin (San Francisco), September 1, 1869.
have brought only minimal increases in his sexual opportunities.

**Physical Attraction and/or Romantic Love?**

A reasonable question is whether romantic or physical attraction influenced Joseph’s decisions about identifying candidate wives; but like most detailed questions regarding Joseph’s plural marriages, documentation is skimpy to nonexistent. Lucy Walker recalled that Joseph “often referred to the feelings that should exist between husband and wives, that they, his wives, should be his bosom companions, the nearest and dearest objects on earth in every sense of the word. He said men must beware how they treat their wives.” However, Lucy also testified that her sealing to Joseph Smith “was not a love matter.” The Prophet . . . explained it to her, that it was not for voluptuous love.”

“Men did not take polygamous wives because they loved them or fancied them or because they were voluptuous, but because it was a command of God.”

It seems probable that emotional and physical attraction played a part in some of Joseph’s plural relationships. It would have been more surprising that such attractions were absent than that they were present. Within Joseph’s expanding understanding that God permitted and even commanded plural marriage, then loving feelings and/or physical attraction would have been an acceptable and moral component of such sealings.

**More Wives Brings Greater Exaltation**

Another possible motive compelling Joseph Smith to marry more wives than two or three is the idea that having more wives brings

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124Lucy Walker, Deposition, Temple Lot Transcript, Respondent’s Testimony, Part 3, pp. 450, 470, questions 29, 528. William Smith’s plural wife Mary Ann West declared that there was no courtship prior to her polygamous marriage. Mary Ann West, Deposition, Temple Lot Transcript, Respondent’s Testimony, Part 3, pp. 506, question 333.


an eternal benefit. That is, after the resurrection, the man with the most wives will possess more glory, or more exaltation, or more blessings, or will enjoy an advantage over all men with fewer wives. Many different authors have declared or implied that this was an official teaching of the Prophet. For example, in 1849, John Thomas, M.D., President of the South and East Medical College of Virginia, published Sketch of the Rise, Progress, and Dispersion of the Mormons, and concluded: “Here is the secret of the Spiritual Wife Doctrine: Their kingdom is to consist in their own posterity, and the more wives the greater opportunity of getting a large kingdom.”

Eight years later, excommunicated Church member John Hyde Jr. claimed: “Mormonism teaches . . . that men’s positions here determine their stations hereafter, and as a man can only rule over his family, then, no wife, no family; many wives, much family; much family, much glory; therefore, many wives, much glory and as the selfish desire for glory is the only incentive of Mormon action, so, therefore, he tries to get as many wives as he can.”

In an attempt to write an “unbiased” history of the Latter-day Saints, author James H. Kennedy asserted in 1888: “A man’s or woman’s glory in eternity, is to depend upon the size of . . . her husband’s rank in eternity [which] must greatly depend upon the number of his wives, and she will share in that glory whatever it is.”

Harry M. Beardsley, in his 1931 Joseph Smith and His Mormon Empire, commented that a “man’s ‘kingdom’ or celestial glory depended upon the size of his family.”

Some Church members also accepted this belief. The most commonly quoted statement is from Benjamin F. Johnson who wrote in

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1903: “The Prophet taught us that Dominion & powr in the great Future would be Comensurate with the no of ‘Wives Childin & Friends’ that we inheret here and that our great mission to earth was to Organize a Neculi of Heaven to take with us. To the increase of which there would be no end.”131 This quotation is very late, made when he was eighty-five, and the term “inheret here” is somewhat ambiguous. Similarly, Joseph Fielding recorded in his Nauvoo diary: “I understand that a man’s dominion will be as God’s is, over his own creatures and the more numerous they, the greater his dominion.”132 Fielding’s reference to “his own creatures” might also include the number of a man’s plural wives. Another example is John Smith (1832–1911), fifth presiding patriarch to the Church (1855–1911). Neither he nor his wife, Hellen Fisher Smith, had any desire to enter plural marriage. Nevertheless, John eventually married a second wife, twenty-three-year-old Nancy Melissa Lemmon, on February 18, 1857. By letter, Hellen expressed her distaste for polygamy to her brother-in-law: “Well, John has got another wife, perhaps you know her, her name is Milisa Lemins. Dear Joseph it was a trial to me but thank the Lord it is over with. . . . I care not how many he gits now, the ice is broke as the old saing is, the more the greater glory.”133

Besides these individuals, “Mormon fundamentalist” polygamists have also promoted this concept since the 1930s.134 Some historians have also accepted this interpretation. Martha Sonntag Bradley

134 Lorin C. Woolley quoted in *Joseph W. Musser: Book of Remembrance*, edited by Drew Briney (Salt Lake City: Hindsight Publications, 2010),
and Mary Brown Firmage Woodward have concluded: “Each new woman brought into an eternal union increased not only the potential size of the family kingdom but the man’s exaltation as well.”135 According to Todd Compton, relying on Benjamin F. Johnson’s statement: “The greater the number of women married, the greater the man’s exaltation, according to nineteenth-century Mormon theology.”136 Recently Richard Abanes, author of several anti-Mormon publications, asserted that an accepted Church doctrine is that “the more wives acquired in this life, the better it would be in the next life.”137

However, there are no plain declarations from Joseph Smith or other Church leaders that this principle is true. That is, the Prophet did not teach that more wives brings a greater eternal benefit, even though a few quotations may be construed to have that meaning. For example, in February 1847, according to Wilford Woodruff, Brigham Young stated: “Say that I am ruling over 10 sons or subjects ownly & soon each one of them would have 10 men sealed to them & they would be ruler over them & that would make me ruler over 10 Presidents or Kings whereas I was ruler over 10 subjects ownly or in other words I ruled over one Kingdom but now I rule over 10. Then let each one get 10 more. Then I would be ruler over 100 Kingdoms & so on continued to all eternity & the more honor & glory that I could bestow upon my sons the more it would add to my exhaltations.”138 If more sons bring added “exhaltations,” then one might surmise that more wives would also. In short, an unambiguous statement from any pre-


siding leaders stating that men should marry as many wives as possible or that a man with five wives will have an eternal advantage over a man of equal worthiness who had married only three wives, does not exist.

The closest evidence supporting this concept that I have been able to locate is Apostle George A. Smith’s statement in 1869: “At one of the first interviews [after returning from England] with him [Joseph Smith], I was greatly astonished at hearing from his lips that doctrine of Patriarchal marriage, which he continued to preach to me from time to time. . . . In his last conversation he administered a little chastisement to me for not stepping forward as he had indicated in patriarchal marriage. He assured me that the man who had many virtuous wives had many great prizes, though he admitted that the man who had one virtuous wife had one great prize . . . and said to me ‘You should not be behind your privileges.’” However, George A. did not explain how these “prizes” might affect his eternal glory or exaltation—or even whether that was part of Joseph’s instructions.

In 1887 when he was seventy-three, William Clayton recalled a parallel but more general admonition from the Prophet: “[In October 1842] the Prophet Joseph talked with me on the subject of plural marriage. He informed me that the doctrine and principle was right in the sight of our Heavenly Father, and that it was a doctrine which pertained to celestial order and glory. After giving me lengthy instructions and informations concerning the doctrine of celestial or plural marriage, he concluded his remarks by the words, ‘It is your privilege to have all the wives you want.’” The wording is instructive; it was William’s privilege to marry the wives he wanted. Elizabeth Ann Whitney, first wife of Bishop Newel K. Whitney remembered

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139 George A. Smith, Letter to Joseph Smith III, October 9, 1869, in Journal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (chronological scrapbook of typed entries and newspaper clippings, 1830-present), in Turley, Selected Collections, Vol. 2, DVD #5; see also Raymond T. Bailey, “Emma Hale: Wife of the Prophet Joseph Smith” (M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1952), 83. George A. Smith’s first wife, Bathsheba W. Smith, recalled: “I believe that Joseph said that a man that had one wife had a jewel and a man that had more than one wife had more jewels.” Bathsheba Smith, Deposition, Temple Lot Transcript, Respondent’s Testimony, Part 3, p. 319, question 599.

140 William Clayton, quoted in Jenson, “Plural Marriage,” 225–26;
that Joseph Smith “repeatedly told him to take a wife, or wives.”\textsuperscript{141} If marrying more wives gave eternal benefit, it seems better counsel would have been for Bishop Whitney to take “wives” rather than “a wife.”

When asked by non-Mormon Horace Greeley in 1859: “How general is polygamy among you?” President Brigham Young responded: “I could not say. Some of those present (heads of the Church) have each but one wife; others have more. Each determines what is his individual duty.”\textsuperscript{142} The \textit{Millennial Star} reprinted this statement with the qualifying editorial note: “Although the wording of the conversation might not be exactly as spoken, on the whole, we have no hesitation in endorsing it by republication.”\textsuperscript{143} In Brigham Young’s numerous statements both private and public, he apparently maintained the same position. Phineas Cook recalled that Brigham “said he was ready to give me as many [plural wives] as I wanted.”\textsuperscript{144} Thus, Brigham apparently never espoused a “more is superior” position.

Nor do the scriptures support a concept that having more wives brings greater eternal glory. David and Solomon had many wives (D&C 132:38–39), Noah was a monogamist when he entered the ark (1 Pet. 3:20), and Abraham took Hagar as a plural wife only at the request of his first wife, Sarai (Gen. 16:1–3). Interestingly, Doctrine and Covenants 132:34–35 states that God “commanded” Abraham to marry Hagar; but in either case, the motivation for this marriage lay elsewhere than Abraham’s personal seeking. Similarly,
Jacob became a polygamist because his father-in-law deceived him into marrying, not his intended wife Rachel, but her sister Leah (Gen. 29:21–30). He became a polygamist a week later by marrying Rachel. He took two additional wives (Leah and Rachel’s maids) at their instigation rather than at his own initiative (Gen. 30:1–5, 9). From Jacob’s twelve sons by these four wives sprang the twelve tribes of Israel. If more wives brought eternal advantage, Noah’s monogamy, Abraham’s slow adoption of the practice, and Jacob’s stopping at four plural wives is puzzling. Joseph Smith saw himself as restoring Old Testament plural marriage (D&C 132:1–2), but Old Testament narratives provide little support for the argument that the ancient patriarchs believed that more wives were forever better than fewer.145

Also it is difficult to ascertain what eternal advantages more wives might bring in light of Joseph Smith’s other teachings. Among his Kirtland revelations are statements that inhabitants in the celestial kingdom receive “all that [the] Father hath” (D&C 84:38), even to be “equal in power, and in might, and in dominion” with Him (D&C 76:95, also D&C 88:107). The Prophet reiterated these ideas in Nauvoo in February 1843, suggesting that his beliefs had not changed by that point.146 Section 132 states that “if a man marry a wife” (monogamously) by proper authority, and they live worthily, “then shall they be gods . . . then shall they be above all, because all things are subject unto them. Then shall they be gods, because they have all power, and the angels are subject unto them” (vv. 19-20). The exalted monogamous couple is promised godhood and “all power.” Section 132 authorizes numerous plural wives but does not indicate that “more is better.”

Another concern stems from the apparent disadvantage the doctrine would place on righteous monogamists like those of the Book of Mormon or the New Testament. It would also appear to everlastingly compromise the wives themselves through no fault of their own. For example, would the second wife of a man with three plural spouses receive a lesser eternal reward than a woman who was the


fourth wife of a man with four?

It is true that Joseph Smith was sealed to numerous plural spouses and that some Mormon fundamentalists and scholars today may believe more is better. However, it is unclear that the Prophet was motivated by the idea that each new wife brought an eternal benefit, and persuasive evidence is lacking that any such doctrine has ever existed.

Dynastic Connections?

Several writers have suggested that another primary motive for Joseph Smith’s marriage to some of his wives was to form a “dynastic” connection between him and the woman’s family. D. Michael Quinn wrote: “The introduction of polygamy added a dimension unavailable to every other dynastic order of the western world. Through polygamy a Mormon general authority could himself marry the close relatives of his associates in the hierarchy, thus reinforcing preexisting kinship connections.”147 Martha Sonntag Bradley and Mary Brown Firmage Woodward observed: “Smith foresaw how plural marriage would connect the families of the most faithful.”148 Danel Bachman wrote: “In at least six cases Smith may have felt that there were good social reasons for his plural marriages.”149

Todd Compton agreed, labeling eight marriages as “dynastic.” (See Table, p. 207.) He calls Joseph’s plural marriage to the elderly Rhoda Richards “a pure example of dynastic matrimony,” conjecturing: “Willard perhaps, or Joseph, may have suggested that the Richards and Smith families become linked through Rhoda.”150 He also considers Joseph’s sealings to the much younger Zina Dianttha Huntington, Presendia Lathrop Huntington, Flora Ann Woodworth, and Melissa Lott as “dynastic.” In particular, according to Compton, Joseph’s sealing to seventeen-year-old Sarah Ann Whitney, “was clearly dynastic.

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150 Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, 568.
Joseph and Newel had a close friendship, and the sealing would link the families of Newel and Elizabeth Whitney in this life and in the next.”151 As corroboration, he quotes Orson Whitney, who wrote: “The bond of affection . . . was strengthened and intensified by the giving in marriage to [Joseph Smith], the Bishop’s eldest daughter.”152 Undoubtedly this is true, but concluding that creating a “dynastic” linkage was a primary or even secondary reason for Joseph, Newel, and/or Sarah to support the nuptial is an assumption for which direct evidence is lacking.153

Perhaps the strongest argument for dynastic motivations is the sealing of Joseph to Helen Mar Kimball, daughter of Heber C. Kimball.

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151Ibid., 347; see also 362, 500.
152Ibid., 347.
153As part of Joseph Smith’s plural marriage proposal to Sarah Ann Whitney on July 27, 1842, the Prophet dictated a revelation directed to Sarah’s father, Church Bishop Newel K. Whitney. A portion read: “Verily thus saith the Lord unto my servant N. K. Whitney the thing that my servant Joseph Smith has made known unto you and your family and which you have agreed upon is right in mine eyes and shall be crowned upon your heads

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**TABLE**

**POSSIBLE “DYNASTIC” MARRIAGES OF JOSEPH SMITH**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Woman</th>
<th>Relative: Focus of Dynamic Link</th>
<th>Relation to Woman</th>
<th>Significance to Joseph</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fanny Young</td>
<td>Brigham Young</td>
<td>brother</td>
<td>apostle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhoda Richards</td>
<td>Willard Richards</td>
<td>brother</td>
<td>apostle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helen Mar Kimball</td>
<td>Heber C. Kimball</td>
<td>father</td>
<td>apostle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zina Diantha Huntington</td>
<td>Dimick Huntington</td>
<td>brother</td>
<td>friend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presendia Huntington</td>
<td>Dimick Huntington</td>
<td>brother</td>
<td>friend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flora Ann Woodworth</td>
<td>Lucien Woodworth</td>
<td>father</td>
<td>friend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melissa Lott</td>
<td>Cornelius Lott</td>
<td>father</td>
<td>bodyguard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah Ann Whitney</td>
<td>Newel K. Whitney</td>
<td>father</td>
<td>bishop</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, 12, 81, 347, 388, 497, 500, 558, 595.
ball, which Compton describes as “almost purely dynastic.”\textsuperscript{154} In her 1881 autobiography, Helen Mar wrote that her father had “a great desire to be connected with the Prophet, Joseph, [so] he offered me to him.”\textsuperscript{155} Readers may assume that Joseph also desired to be “connected” to Heber and that such a connection would bring advantages with honor and immortality and eternal life to all your house both old and young because of the lineage of my priesthood saith the Lord it shall be upon you and upon your children after you from generation to generation By virtue of the Holy promise which I now make unto you saith the Lord.” Marquardt, \textit{The Joseph Smith Revelations}, 315. Some observers assume that “the thing” that would crown them “with honor and immortality . . . from generation to generation” was the polygamous union of Sarah Ann to Joseph Smith and that her family was eternally advantaged due to the union. As demonstrated historically in Nauvoo, the Prophet always described plural marriage in the context of the new and everlasting covenant of marriage and eternal sealings. He taught that sealing ordinances, not a polygamous marriage, can seal family lines (“lineages of the priesthood”) together “from generation to generation” bringing “honor and immortality.” Assuming that “the thing . . . agreed upon” was strictly plural marriage is inconsistent with the blessings promised. It is also important to learn that, after the sealing, the Whitneys did not see themselves as possessing a special tie to Joseph Smith (on earth or in heaven) or that Sarah’s plural marriage absolved her or her family of the need to continue to keep the commandments. In a special blessing given to Sarah eight months after her sealing, Joseph Smith declared: “Oh let it be sealed this day on high that she shall come forth in the first resurrection to receive the same and verily it shall be so saith the Lord if she remain in the Everlasting covenant to the end as also all her Fathers [sic] house shall be saved in the same Eternal glory”; emphasis mine. Joseph Smith, Blessing to Sarah Ann Whitney, March 23, 1843, typescript, MS 155, LDS Church History Library. A typescript of this blessing was originally part of the Joseph Smith Collection; but since it was not an original document, it was removed. The location of the original monograph is currently unknown, but is presumed to be uncatalogued at the LDS Church History Library. See also Marquardt, \textit{The Rise of Mormonism}, 586.

\textsuperscript{154}Compton, \textit{In Sacred Loneliness}, 497.

\textsuperscript{155}Helen Mar Kimball Whitney, “Helen Mar Kimball Whitney, Autobiography,” March 30, 1881, in Holzapfel and Holzapfel, \textit{A Woman’s View}, 482. She also recalled: “Had I not known [my father] loved me too tenderly to introduce anything that was not strictly pure and exalting in its tenden-
to either or both of them. However, it is only an assumption because Helen says it was her father who desired the “connection,” not Joseph. She also recalled that in May 1843 Joseph Smith, “said to me: If you will take this step, it will ensure your eternal salvation and exaltation and that of your father’s household and all of your kindred.”

Helen Mar’s statement is frequently cited as solid evidence that the Prophet promised exaltation to at least one of his plural wives and her family if she would submit to the marriage. Typically omitted from such accounts is the fact that one year later Helen Mar clarified that she may not have understood everything correctly: “I confess that I was too young or too ‘foolish’ to comprehend and appreciate all” that Joseph Smith then taught. And contemporaneous evidence from more mature family members who were better positioned to “comprehend and appreciate” the Prophet’s promises to Helen demonstrates that she did, in fact, misunderstand the blessings predicated on this sealing. None of them subsequently behaved or spoke as if Helen’s sealing to Joseph Smith affected their salvation in any way.158

The primary problem with “dynastic” plural marriage is that no documents or recollections have survived in which Joseph Smith unambiguously declares that a plural wife’s extended family would receive special blessings by virtue of her sealing to him. While some authors have concluded that the families of the women sealed to Joseph

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156 Typescript and copy of holograph reproduced in Holzapfel and Holzapfel, A Woman’s View, 482–87.
157 Helen Mar Whitney, Plural Marriage as Taught by the Prophet Joseph.
Smith received special benefits in eternity, a close reading of the plural marriage accounts demonstrates that blessings flowed, not from Joseph’s sealing to the woman, but from the sealing ordinance itself as those family members implemented it in their own lives as husbands and wives and parents and children, forming a family chain back to Adam.

Another important qualifier of the dynastic argument is that nothing beyond the observation that some of Joseph Smith’s plural wives were also relatives of his close friends supports the hypothesis that he desired to create a “dynasty.” Compton also acknowledges: “There were complex reasons for these marriages, in which spiritual attraction, sexual attraction, and desired dynastic links all combined. Joseph would have been attracted to the women he knew well, and he simply knew the Mormon elite better than other Mormons.” Quinn likewise observed: “Marriages between children of General Authorities . . . were in some ways an inevitable result of the social interaction which occurred between the families of General Authorities.”

Undoubtedly Joseph Smith enjoyed the familial relations that resulted from his polygamous marriages. He was not a somber, solitary prophet, but outgoing and social, always desiring to have people around him. Fawn Brodie accurately describes him as “gregarious, ex-

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pansive, and genuinely fond of people.”\(^{163}\) Notwithstanding, portraying the Prophet as marrying women in order to create “dynastic” connections thrusts the women into the roles of pawns in a religious chess game played by an egotistical Joseph with the women’s male relatives. Such a view counters Joseph’s serious warning that exercising “control or dominion or compulsion upon the souls of the children of men”—for example, treating women as chattel or objects—would constitute “unrighteous dominion” (D&C 121:37, 39). No accounts from Joseph Smith’s wives have survived, complaining that he abused them or treated them as objects.

To sum up, then, it appears that besides observing that these women’s male relatives were close friends of the Prophet, there is little evidence to support the idea that he was motivated by a desire to form a dynastic link or to create a dynasty. Nor am I aware that Joseph indicated that any of his marriages were chiefly or partially designed to produce a special connection to a specific family. The theory of dynastic connections as a motivation for Joseph Smith’s plural marriages would benefit from additional corroborating historical or theological evidence demonstrating its reliability.

To Serve as a Proxy Husband?

An accusation against Joseph Smith that began during the Nauvoo period is that he sent men on missions so he could marry their wives or possibly assume the role of a “proxy husband” for the missionary while he was away. In 1843, Henry Caswall claimed: “Many English and American women, whose husbands or fathers had been sent by the prophet on distant missions, were induced to become his ‘spiritual wives,’ believing it to be the will of God.”\(^{164}\) Eight years later, the Rev. F. B. Ashley, the Vicar of Wooburn, Bucks, England, repeated the charge: “He [Joseph Smith] induced several American and English women whose husbands or fathers he had sent on distant missions to become his spiritual wives, or ‘ladies of the white veil.’”\(^{165}\)

In 1889, excommunicated Mormon Benjamin Winchester echoed: “It was a subject of common talk among many good people in

\(^{163}\)Brodie, *No Man Knows My History*, 294.


\(^{165}\)F. B. Ashley, *Mormonism: An Exposure of the Impositions* (London:
Nauvoo that many of the elders were sent off on missions merely to get them out of the way, and that Joseph Smith, John C. Bennett and other prominent Church lights had illicit intercourse with the wives of a number of the missionaries, and that the revelation on spiritual marriage, i.e. polygamy, was gotten up to protect themselves from scandal.”

Harry M. Beardsley wrote in 1931: "Joe remained in hiding in Nauvoo for several months, dividing his time between a dozen hideouts—among them homes of Mormons where there were attractive daughters, or where the husbands were away on missionary tours." 

Despite the accusations, available historical data fail to support the theory that the Prophet deliberately dispatched men as missionaries to create “Church widows,” whom he could then approach with plural marriage proposals. Of the eleven “polyandrous” husbands identified by Todd Compton, nine were not on missions at the time Joseph was sealed to their legal wives. Of the remaining two, only Orson Hyde may be a candidate. Orson departed on his mission to dedicate the land of Palestine for the return of the Jews on April 15, 1840. Evidently, two years later, his civil wife, Marinda Nancy Johnson, was sealed to Joseph in Nauvoo, although records exist of two sealing dates, further complicating the reported timeline. Orson returned home December 7, 1842. No other information about this sealing or about Joseph and Marinda’s relationship is available. Draw-
ing further conclusions would be to go beyond the evidence.

The second possible case involves George Harris, who left on his fourteen-month mission in July 1840. However, evidence of a plural sealing between his legal wife, Lucinda Pendleton, and the Prophet is perhaps the least persuasive of all thirty-four polygamous marriages. Importantly, the date of their possible sealing is only conjectural and is disputed.170

An additional possible case of proxy husbands involved Albert Smith, whose legal wife, Esther Dutcher, was sealed to Joseph Smith.171 Albert’s son, Azariah, wrote: “Father taking [sic] an active part in building up the city [Nauvoo] and also being called upon, he went on a mission back East.”172 Azariah does not specify either the dates or duration of Albert’s mission, and the date of Esther’s sealing to Joseph Smith is not known. Thus, no further conclusions are possible.

Non-LDS writer Lawrence Foster conjectured thirty years ago that Joseph Smith or other early polygamists might have served as “proxy husbands” (a form of full polyandry), a view he has continued to argue:

170Fawn Brodie and Todd Compton speculate that a relationship or plural marriage occurred in 1838. Brodie, No Man Knows My History, 335; Compton, In Sacred Loneliness, 4. Brodie’s chronological reconstruction is in error. I argue that Joseph Smith would not have attempted a plural relationship at the peak of Oliver Cowdery’s criticism of him, in part for committing “adultery” with Fanny Alger in Kirtland, Ohio, a few years earlier. See Brian C. Hales, “Fanny Alger and Joseph Smith’s Pre-Nauvoo Reputation,” Journal of Mormon History 35, no. 4 (Fall 2009): 112–90.


172Azariah Smith, Journal [and Autobiography], 1, quoted section probably penned in 1846. In 1846 his journal turns from recollections to daily entries. MS 1834, LDS Church History Library. Esther’s status as a Joseph Smith plural wife is mentioned, but without a date, in Daniel H. Wells, Letter to Joseph F. Smith, June 25, 1888, MS 1325, Box 16, fd. 9, LDS Church History Library.
It may have been possible in some cases for a proxy husband to be assigned by the president of the Mormon church, through the power of the holy anointing, to serve the part of a temporary husband for wives of men absent on long missionary assignments or otherwise unable to have children. The children born under such arrangements could be viewed as belonging to the original husband, who was considered in some sense to have been temporarily “dead.” Thus, while a man was absent in the service of his church, his patriarchal “kingdom,” which was heavily dependent on the number of his children, would not suffer loss.173

As support, Foster quotes excommunicated Church member John Hyde Jr, who wrote in his 1857 exposé:

As a man’s family constitutes his glory, to go on a mission for several years, leaving from two to a dozen wives at home, necessarily causes some loss of family, and consequently, according to Mormon notions, much sacrifice of salvation. This difficulty is however obviated by the appointment of an agent or proxy, who shall stand to themward [sic] in their husband’s stead. Many and many a little child has been thus issued into the Mormon World. This is one of the secret principles that as yet is only privately talked of in select circles, and darkly hinted at from their pulpits and in their works. They argue that the old Mosaic law of a “brother raising up seed to his dead brother” is now in force; and as death is only a temporary absence, so they contend a temporary absence is equivalent to death; and if in the case of death it is not only no crime, but proper; so also in this case it is equally lawful and extremely advantageous! This practice, commend ed by such sophistry, and commanded by such a Prophet was adopted as early as Nauvoo.

Much scandal was caused by others than Smith attempting to carry out this doctrine. Several, who thought that what was good for the Prophet should be good for the people, were crushed down by Smith’s heavy hand. Several of those have spoken out to the practices of the “Saints.” Much discussion occurred at Salt Lake as to the advisability of revealing the doctrine of polygamy in 1852, and that has caused Brigham to defer the public enunciation of this “proxy doctrine,” as it is familiarly called. Many have expected it repeatedly at the late conferences. Reasoning out their premises to their natural and

necessary consequences, this licentious and infamous dogma is their inevitable result.174

Hyde, a British convert in 1848, was in Utah for less than two years before being sent on his mission to Hawaii where he docked at Honolulu in a full state of apostasy. His sources for this claim are unknown, but the situation of expectation and "scandal" he describes in Utah has no other support.175 Nor is there any evidence that proxy husbands were called to father children on behalf of absent husbands. Such a practice contradicts Joseph Smith’s teachings that any form of sexual polyandry was adultery, that if a woman, “after she is espoused, shall be with another man, she has committed adultery, and shall be destroyed” (D&C 132:63).

Lawrence Foster cautiously suggests that an 1857 letter from Brigham Young to a Church member might have authorized her to have sexual relations with someone other than her husband. President Young wrote: “If I was imperfect [unable to father children] and had a good wife I would call on some good bror. to help me. that we might have increase; that a man of this character will have a place in the Temple, receive his endowments and in eternity will be as tho’ nothing had happened to him in time.”176 Foster seems to interpret this letter as authorizing sexual intercourse between the wife and “some good brother” not her husband.

Further research identifies this woman as Mary Ann Darrow who married Edmund Richardson on August 2, 1840, making her

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174Hyde, *Mormonism*, 87–88. Foster also quotes excommunicated Church member T.B.H. Stenhouse who wrote: “By many elders it has been believed that there was some foundation for the accusation that Joseph had taught some sisters in Nauvoo that it was their privilege to entertain other brethren as ‘proxy husbands’ during the absence of their liege lords on mission. One lady has informed the Author that Joseph so taught her. All such teaching has never been made public, and it is doubtful if it ever extended very far, if, indeed, at all beyond a momentary combination of passion and fanaticism. T.B.H. Stenhouse, *Rocky Mountain Saints* (New York: Appleton and Company, 1873), 301 note. This idea was echoed by Harry M. Beardsley, *Joseph Smith and His Mormon Empire* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1931), 298.


176Brigham Young, quoted in Foster, *Religion and Sexuality*, 313.
“Mrs. Mary Richardson.” Prior to their 1853 baptisms, they were members of a religious group that taught that only two children were permitted. So after their daughter Emma (b. 1841) and son George (b. 1846) were born, Edmund submitted to a surgical procedure rendering him sterile. After their 1857 marriage sealing by Brigham Young, he counseled them to have more children “in the covenant.”

Hearing of the importance of expanding their family, they approached President Young for counsel. He explained to Edmund that any added children for him would have to come by proxy. Edmund’s biographers quoted Brigham saying: “You will need to give Mary Ann a civil divorce and allow her to have a civil marriage with another man. Any issue from such a marriage,” he explained, “would belong to you because you and Mary Ann are sealed for eternity. This is possible only because the Lord has restored polygamy in time to help you.”

Next, “as governor of the State of Utah, Brigham Young granted Mary Ann Darrow Richardson a civil divorce from her husband Edmund Richardson. Then, on January 9, 1858, he performed a civil marriage between Mary Ann and Fredrick Walter Cox.” This civil marriage ended sexual relations between Edmund and Mary Ann. “Edmund voluntarily moved away but sent regular checks or alimony to support his family.”

Mary Ann gave birth to two children during the next three years. Shortly after the second child’s birth on January 26, 1861, Edmund returned to Mary Ann, Brigham Young divorced her and Cox, and remarried her to Edmund. Thus, Young’s counsel to “call on some good brot. to help” them have more children was describing consecutive marriages, not sexual polyandry with a proxy husband.

Importantly, on December 21, 1847, Heber C. Kimball condemned the idea of proxy husbands as “damnable”: “Adultery is perverting the right way of the Lord. . . . There has been doctrine taught that a man has can [sic.] act as Proxy for another when absent—It has

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178 Ibid., 32–34; see also Jeff Richins, After the Trial of Your Faith: The Story of Edmund and Mary Ann Richardson ([No city], Ore: Author, 2003), 267–326; Clare B. Christensen, Before and after Mt. Pisgah (Salt Lake City: n.pub., 1979), 233–34.

179 Brigham Young, quoted in Foster, Religion and Sexuality, 313.
been practiced & it is known—& its damnable."$^{180+}$

Reviewing historical documents fails to identify any specific evidence to support the practice of proxy husbands at Nauvoo or later in Utah; as a doctrine, it appears to contradict Joseph Smith’s teachings. The idea of proxy husbands is problematic in other ways. Men called on missions were undoubtedly daunted by the challenges confronting them as missionaries, traveling across the country and perhaps the world, enduring persecutions and deprivations, all to preach the gospel. How much greater would the sacrifices have been if, as the priesthood leader extended a missionary call, he also explained that a stay-at-home man would be providing maintenance for his wife and having children with her that would be part of the missionary’s family? It seems highly unlikely that either the missionary or his wife would have accepted, let alone welcomed, such a process or that, even if they had initially accepted it, the missionary could have seamlessly resumed family life upon his return home, that ward members and older children would not have remarked this odd arrangement, and that commentary would not have become part of the documentary record.

Premortal Promises?

One reason Joseph Smith might have married so many plural wives may be associated with premortal promises. Todd Compton wrote: “Sometimes these sacred marriages were felt to fulfill pre-mortal linkings and so justified a sacred marriage superimposed over a secular one.”$^{181}$ A teaching that has been popular in recent decades among some Latter-day Saints and which was given fictional form in Nephi Anderson’s best-selling *Added Upon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1898) is the concept that premortal spirits could experience romantic attractions and subsequently make premortal promises to “find each other” during mortal life. It took musical form in 1974 in *Saturday’s Warrior*, which has continued to be performed and

$^{180}$ *Minutes of the Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1835–1893*, 160, December 21, 1847; see also 157, December 21, 1847; initial capitals added.

$^{181}$ Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, 22. Anti-Mormon J. H. Beadle wrote in 1870: “In the pre-existent state souls are mated, male and female, as it is divinely intended they shall fill the marriage relation in this life; or, in more poetic phrase, ‘marriages are made in heaven.’” Beadle, *Life in Utah*, 340.
which has circulated to the present as a DVD. Singing, “I’ve seen that smile somewhere before. I’ve heard your voice before. It seems we’ve talked like this before,” Julie and Tod encounter each other on earth in a quintessential moment of *déjà vu*.182

It appears that certain Church leaders have also expressed this view. In 1857, Apostle John Taylor published a letter in the Church’s New York paper, *The Mormon*, written to a Latter-day Saint sister. In it he assured her: “You . . . chose a kindred spirit whom you loved in the spirit world (and who had permission to come to this planet and take a tabernacle), to be your head, stay, husband and protector on the earth and to exalt you in eternal worlds. . . . Thou hast chosen him you loved in the spirit world to be thy companion.”183 The actual source of the doctrine underlying John Taylor’s account is unknown, but he may have heard this concept from the Prophet in Nauvoo. Regardless, the idea of premortal marital promises is officially considered unorthodox today.184

The only example of this possible phenomenon among Joseph Smith’s plural wives is found in a recollection from Mary Elizabeth Lightner who remembered Joseph telling her: “I was created for him before the foundation of the Earth was laid.”185 She also recalled her own feelings that potentially could have been a reflection of a


184The official LDS Church position is likely articulated by Apostle Joseph Fielding Smith, *The Way to Perfection* (Salt Lake City: Genealogical Society of Utah, 1940), 44–45: “We have no scriptural justification, however, for the belief that we had the privilege of choosing our parents and our life companions in the spirit world. This belief has been advocated by some, and it is possible that in some instances it is true, but it would require too great a stretch of the imagination to believe it to be so in all, or even in the majority of cases. Most likely we came where those in authority decided to send us. Our agency may not have been exercised to the extent of making choice of parents and posterity.”

185Mary Elizabeth Lightner Rollins, Letter to Emmeline B. Wells, Summer 1905, Perry Special Collections; copy also at LDS Church History Library.
premortal promise: “I had been dreaming for a number of years I was his wife.” 186

Women May Have Sought to be Sealed to Joseph Smith

There is evidence that at least one woman sought to be sealed to Joseph Smith during his lifetime. (Scores more have been sealed to him posthumously.) At the time that eternal and plural marriage was being introduced in Nauvoo, apparently some women had a choice about the man to whom they would be sealed for eternity. John D. Lee recalled:

About the same time the doctrine of “sealing” for an eternal state was introduced [1842–43], and the Saints were given to understand that their marriage relations with each other were not valid. That those who had solemnized the rites of matrimony had no authority of God to do so. That the true priesthood was taken from the earth with the death of the Apostles and inspired men of God. That they were married to each other only by their own covenants, and that if their marriage relations had not been productive of blessings and peace, and they felt it oppressive to remain together, they were at liberty to make their own choice, as much as if they had not been married. 187

While Lee’s declarations cannot always be taken at face value, this situation of an eternal sealing to someone other than the woman’s legal husband may be accurate. As quoted above, Lucy Walker remembered Joseph’s general policy: “A woman would have her choice.” 188 Researcher Rex E. Cooper observed: “In some instances . . . women might have just preferred to be sealed eternally to Joseph Smith rather than to the man that they had married by civil authority.” 189

Andrew Jenson interviewed many Nauvoo polygamists in 1886–

186Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner, “Remarks at Brigham Young University, April 14, 1905,” 2.
187John D. Lee, Mormonism Unveiled (St. Louis: Bryan, Brand & Company, 1877), 146. Because Lee’s attorney edited this volume and was paid from the royalties, it may be unreliable on many points.
87 in preparation for his 1887 Historical Record article identifying Joseph Smith’s plural wives. In his collected papers at the LDS Church History Library is a scrawled note in his handwriting that one of the Prophet’s plural wives, Ruth Vose Sayers, initiated her sealing to Joseph.\textsuperscript{190} Ruth had died three years earlier and Jenson did not identify his informant, so the information is obviously secondhand. Ruth Vose Sayers’s husband, Edward, was not a member of the Church, which may be why the Prophet hid from Missouri lawmen at their home August 13–17, 1842.\textsuperscript{191} Ruth apparently learned that she would need to be sealed to an eternal husband to be exalted; the account indicates that Edward was supportive of her approaching Joseph Smith. On May 1, 1869, she signed an affidavit that she was sealed to Joseph Smith on “February 1843,”\textsuperscript{192} but the dating is problematic because she stated that Hyrum Smith performed the sealing, and he did not accept plural marriage until the following May.\textsuperscript{193}

Another document apparently dating to 1843 appears to be in the hand of excommunicated Mormon Oliver Olney whose wife, Phebe Wheeler, worked as a domestic in Hyrum Smith’s home: “What motive has [S]ayers in it—it is the desire of his heart. . . . Joseph did not pick that woman [Ruth Vose Sayers].”\textsuperscript{194} She went to see whether she should marry her husband for eternity.”\textsuperscript{195} Despite the badly composed and garbled sentences, Olney was evidently gathering information through his wife regarding the event involving the Sayerses and Joseph Smith. The next sentence, transcribed by Michael Quinn, is completely perplexing: “The tribe Astumma [?] is coming on earth—10,000 years ago.” However, it is noteworthy, in my view, because of the 1843 date and the fact that he names Sayers explicitly. It thus corroborates the later account, even though it fails to conclude logically

\textsuperscript{190}Ruth Vose Sayers Biographical Sketch,” Andrew Jenson Papers, Box 49, fd. 16, Document 5, transcribed by Don Bradley.
\textsuperscript{192}Joseph F. Smith, Affidavit Books, 1:9.
\textsuperscript{193}George D. Smith, An Intimate Chronicle, 106.
\textsuperscript{194}Jenson, “Plural Marriage,” 219–40.
\textsuperscript{195}[Oliver Olney], typescript excerpt in Quinn Papers, WA MS 244 (Accession:19990209-c) Box 1. I have been unable to identify the primary document to verify this quotation.
Andrew Jenson hastily wrote this note on the back of torn pieces of the uncut galleys (containing insertions and proofing marks) of pages from the published May-July 1887 Historical Record. Part of the handwritten note reads: “While there the strongest affection sprang up between the Prophet Joseph and Mr. Sayers. The latter not attaching much importance to the theory of a future life insisted that his wife ^Ruth^ should be sealed to the prophet for eternity, as he himself should only claim her in this life. She ^was^ accordingly sealed to the Prophet in Emma Smith’s presence and thus became numbered among the Prophets [sic] plural wives. ^though she^ She however continued to live with Mr. Sayers remained with her husband until his death.” Jenson Papers, Box 49, fd. 16, Document 5, transcribed by Don Bradley. Courtesy LDS Church History Library.
by, for example, saying something like: Joseph resolved her dilemma by having Brigham Young seal her to him (Joseph).

It is apparent from this documentary record that at least one of Joseph Smith’s plural marriages was for “eternity” only—that is, without sexual relations during mortality. Historical data that are quoted to support the practice of sexual polyandry in any of Joseph Smith’s plural marriages are problematic, and the contradictory evidence is compelling. With one exception, the exact wording used to perform any of Joseph Smith’s thirty-four plural ceremonies was not recorded. Therefore, it is not possible to confirm or deny that ceremonies were performed during Joseph’s lifetime using the language “eternity only.” In addition, none of the participants claimed to recall the exact phrasing. Andrew Jenson’s notes regarding Ruth Vose Sayers’s sealing to the Prophet suggest that it was a union operational only for the next life and would not include conjugality on earth. That some of Joseph’s other plural sealings may have been similar is also very likely.

For several reasons, women may have considered the Prophet attractive as an eternal mate, even if they remained with their legal husbands “until death.” In light of the documented case of Ruth Vose

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199 See for example, Malissa Lott, Deposition, Temple Lot Transcript, Respondent’s Testimony, Part 3, pp. 95–96, questions 54, 70; Emily Partridge, Deposition, Temple Lot Transcript, Respondent’s Testimony, Part 3, p. 359, question 198.
Sayers, assuming that the Prophet initiated every plural marriage proposal may not be justified.

The precise dynamics underlying Joseph Smith’s incentives for being sealed to thirty-four plural wives remain unclear. To identify only a single motivation would be reductionistic and oversimplified, especially since he left no record concerning his personal thoughts and feelings regarding plural marriage.

**Sealings after July 1843**

Available evidence suggests that Emma tried desperately to accept the principle and uphold Joseph in its practice. She participated in four plural sealings in May of 1843 by approving the candidate wives and placing the woman’s hand upon Joseph’s during the ceremony. However within weeks, her experiences in a plural household became unbearable to her, and she withdrew her support. In response, Hyrum asked Joseph to dictate a revelation justifying the practice. Sure that the infusion of prophetic clarity would assuage Emma’s concerns, Hyrum brought her the written document (now LDS D&C 132) on July 12, 1843, and either read it to her or gave it to her to read. Her reaction was not the reconciliation he had hoped for but an outburst of frustration and bitterness.

While some details in the different versions of this episode are contradictory, Emma apparently insisted that the original revelation be burned, although a copy had already been made. Furthermore, she apparently confronted Joseph with an ultimatum that included

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201 Emily Dow Partridge Young, “Incidents in the Early Life of Emily Dow Partridge,” MS 2845, fd. 1, LDS Church History Library; see also her “Autobiographical Sketch, Written Especially for My Children”; and her Deposition, Temple Lot Transcript, Respondent’s Testimony, Part 3, pp. 366, 384, questions 363, 747.

the threat of divorce and/or exposure. On July 13, the day after her explosive meeting with Hyrum, Joseph and Emma came to an agreement that included the transfer of property and other resources into Emma’s name, so that if anything happened to him or to their marriage, she could support herself and their children. Joseph Lee Robinson recalled those tensions, although he does not explain how he was privy to the details he declared:

[There] was a time when she [Emma] was very suspicious and jealous of him [Joseph] for fear he would get another wife, for she knew the prophet had a revelation on that subject. She (Emma) was determined he should not get another, if he did she was determined to leave and when she heard this, she, Emma, became very angry and said she would leave and was making preparations to go to her people in the State of New York. It came close to breaking up his family. However, he succeeded in saving her at that time but the prophet felt dreadfully bad over it.

An additional condition of their agreement was apparently Joseph’s concession not to marry any more plural wives without Emma’s permission. He was, in fact, sealed to two additional women after this episode, but each was a special circumstance. Two months

Shook, The True Origin of Mormon Polygamy (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing, 1914, 153; William E. McLellan, M.D., to President Joseph Smith [III], Independence, Jackson Co., Mo., July 1872, original in Community of Christ Archives, copy at LDS Church History Library, MS 9090. See also Mary B. (Smith) Norman, Idaho Falls, Idaho, to Ina (Smith) Coolbrith, March 27, 1908, original and typescript, Miscellaneous Letters and Papers, P13, f951, Community of Christ Archives.

Emily Dow Partridge recalled that, at one point in 1843, Emma threatened Joseph, saying that he should “give up” his plural wives or “blood should flow.” Emma said that “she would rather her blood would run pure than be polluted in this manner.” Emily D. Partridge Young, Statement beginning “When I was eighteen,” 2, n.d., Ms 2845, LDS Church History Library. See also Boice and Boice “Record,” 174; George D. Smith, An Intimate Chronicle, 110.


D&C 132:64–65 specifies that once the holder of the priesthood keys (then Joseph Smith) teaches his wife concerning plural marriage, she
after this agreement, at the end of September, Joseph was sealed to Malissa Lott, the nineteen-year-old daughter of Cornelius Lott, the caretaker of Joseph’s farm outside of Nauvoo. In 1892, Malissa explained that Joseph “was the one that preached it [plural marriage], and taught it to me.”  

If Malissa is correct, Emma apparently permitted this new union after the July 13, 1843, agreement. Therefore, she must have experienced a resurgence of faith in September and early October of 1843. During that time, she received her entire temple ordinances and began administering them to other sisters in the Church. However, her ability to sincerely support polygamy was still shaky. Born in 1824 and working as a domestic in the Nauvoo Mansion, Maria Jane Woodward, recalled her conversation with Emma during this period:

She looked very sad and cast down, and there she said to me, “The principle of plural marriage is right, but I am like other women, I am naturally jealous hearted and can talk back to Joseph as long as any wife can talk back to her husband, but what I want to say to you is this. You heard me finding fault with the principle. I want to say that that principle is right, it is from our Father in Heaven,” and then she again spoke of her jealousy.

Then she continued, “What I said I have got to repent of. The principle is right but I am jealous hearted. Now never tell anybody that you heard me find fault with Joseph of that principle. The principle is right and if I or you or anyone else find fault with that principle we have got to humble ourselves and repent of it.”

The second sealing, apparently without Emma’s consent, oc-

must approve future plural marriages.

207 Malissa Lott, Deposition, Temple Lot Transcript, Respondent’s Testimony, Part 3, pp. 102, question 181.

208 Ibid., pp. 97, 100, questions 102, 156. Rather confusingly, Joseph Smith III, president of the RLDS Church, recalled that he interviewed Malissa in 1885 and she denied that Emma knew anything about plural marriage “before or after.” Mary Audentia Smith Anderson, ed., Joseph Smith III and the Restoration (Independence, Mo.: Herald House, 1952), 374.

curred a month and a half later on November 2, when the thirty-seven-year-old Joseph was sealed to Brigham Young’s fifty-six-year-old sister, Fanny, who had never married. Brigham recalled:

I recollect a sister conversing with Joseph Smith on this subject. She told him: “Now, don’t talk to me; when I get into the celestial kingdom, if I ever do get there, I shall request the privilege of being a ministering angel; that is the labor that I wish to perform. I don’t want any companion in that world; and if the Lord will make me a ministering angel, it is all I want.” Joseph said, “Sister, you talk very foolishly, you do not know what you will want.” He then said to me: “Here, brother Brigham, you seal this lady to me.” I sealed her to him. This was my own sister according to the flesh.210

This sealing provided Fanny with a worthy husband in “the celestial kingdom,” with no conjugality on earth. Consequently, it may not have been a concern to Emma. According to available historical manuscripts, Joseph Smith did not marry any additional plural wives during the remaining eight months of his life.

**Summary**

A review of Joseph Smith’s personal practice of plural marriage indicates that he was sealed to almost three dozen women but could have been sealed to several more if he had desired. In teaching potential brides, the Prophet manifested awkwardness and concern, along with patience and perseverance, waiting months or longer, as the processes unfolded. His instructions often involved multiple visits to explain the new doctrines. Only in one instance (Lucy Walker) do we hear of an ultimatum and that followed at least four months—and possibly as long as a year—of vacillation on her part.

On several occasions, the prospective wife rejected Joseph Smith’s proposal. In those cases, he quietly respected the woman’s decision except when she accused him of immoral conduct and made her complaint public. In such cases, he vigorously defended himself. In at least one instance, the Prophet allowed one of his plural wives to divorce him to become the legal wife of a non-Mormon.

Furthermore, Joseph Smith considered himself to be a genuine husband to his plural wives; as far as the limited historical record shows, all of these women received sufficient material support from

him, either directly or through his friends and other assistants.

Several motivations have been suggested to explain why Joseph Smith was sealed to so many plural wives. Numerous authors have claimed that libido drove his actions, although evidence supporting this theory ignores Joseph’s complex theological teachings upon which eternal plural marriage is based and the fact that only two children have been documented as born from all of his plural unions. Another problematic theory is the concept of exaltation being greater in proportion to the number of wives a man married. Other hypotheses are that Joseph sought to create dynastic connections or to serve as a proxy husband after dispatching the husband on a mission. The historical record shows that at least one woman sought to be sealed to him and that one plural marriage may have been to fulfill some kind of a premortal attachment.

Physical attraction and even Joseph Smith’s romantic drive may have been factors. He believed plural marriage had been restored to the earth and was a valid—even commanded—practice in the eyes of God. Under such circumstances, he seemed to have experienced no moral qualms about contracting new polygamous unions for the same reasons that monogamists choose to marry.

All of Joseph Smith’s Nauvoo sealings occurred during a thirty-one-month period. Such marriages ended in November of 1843, evidently due to an arrangement negotiated between Joseph and Emma by mutual consent.

Numerous authors over the past 170 years have accused Joseph Smith of immorality and debauchery in conjunction with the introduction of plural marriage. In contrast, statements from participants describe him as a hesitant polygamist who eventually embraced plural marriage as a privilege, but also as a commandment. Just weeks before the martyrdom, the Prophet exclaimed: “I never told you I was perfect.”211 His actions implementing the practice personally and among his followers might have been less than idyllic. However, they appear to be the efforts of a sincere man earnestly attempting to follow instructions that he reportedly received from an angel who had

ordered him—even with threats of death—to set the example, despite resistance from his closest relatives and distant strangers. As if to answer the unbelieving critic, a late second-hand account quotes Joseph Smith saying: “They accuse me of polygamy, and of being a false Prophet, and many other things which I do not remember; but I am no false Prophet; I am no impostor; I have had no dark revelations; I have had no revelations from the devil; I made no revelations; I have got nothing up of myself. The same God that thus far dictated me and directed me and strengthened me in this work, gave me this revelation and commandment on celestial and plural marriage and the same God commanded me to obey it. He said to me that unless I accepted it and introduced it, and practiced it, I, together with my people would be damned and cut off from this time henceforth. And they say if I do so, they will kill me! Oh, what shall I do? If I do not practice it, I shall be damned with my people. If I do teach it, and practice it, and urge it, they say they will kill me, and I know they will.”

Horace Cummings, “Conspiracy of Nauvoo,” The Contributor 5 (April 1884): 259. This quotation is from a late second-hand account that has been discounted by some researchers. Concerning the article’s origin, Cummings wrote on August 8, 1932: “The incidents related in that article were related to my parents [and me] by Dennison L. Harris [one of the two participants], who was Bishop of Monroe, Sevier County, at that time, at our home during the spring conference of 1883, Brother Harris stopping at our home as our guest. The incidents seemed so important and so intensely interesting that I wrote them in my journal in detail. As the Contributor was offering a prize for a Christmas Story [in 1884], I extended my journal account somewhat and wrote that article in competition for the prize. Before submitting the article to the press, however, at the request of President John Taylor, I read it to him line by line as he was in Nauvoo at the time the narration deals with and the incidents happened and of course was with the Prophet at the time he was killed. He was familiar with many of the things to which the article refers and added certain elements to the story. When completed, President Taylor gave it his hearty approval for publication as a valuable document concerning Church history which had never been previously published.” Horace Cummings, Statement on Council of the Seventy letterhead, August 8, 1932, LDS Church History Library; copy in Alan H. Gerber, comp., “Church Manuscripts,” Vol. 11, p. 175, Perry Special Collections.
Peculiar Portrayals: Mormons on the Page, Stage, and Screen is an edited anthology addressing how the LDS Church is situated in contemporary U.S. culture. Edited by Mark T. Decker and Michael Austin, this volume brings together an array of Mormon representations in disparate cultural venues ranging from the serious and influential political discourse of Kushner’s Tony Award-winning Angels in America to the less serious Trey Parker and Matt Stone’s movie Orgazmo about a Mormon missionary acting in the adult-film industry to pay for his upcoming temple wedding.

The book has eight essays. Four examine how presentations of Mormon-ism are riddled with stereotypes that at times indicate the paradoxical nature of contemporary “mainstream” Mormonism given its less-than-mainstream past. These four are Christine Hutchinson-Jones’s “Center and Periphery: Mormons and American Culture in Tony Kushner’s Angels in America,” Michael Austin’s “Four Consenting Adults in the Privacy of Their Own Suburb: Big Love and the Cultural Significance of Mormon Polygamy,” John-Charles Duffy’s “Elders on the Big Screen: Film and the Globalized Circulation of Mormon Missionary Images,” and Karen D. Austin’s “Reality Corrupts; Reality Television Corrupts Absolutely.”

Three of the remaining articles present some historical explanations for contemporary manifestations of Mormonism in literature and popular culture: J. Aaron Sanders’s “Avenging Angels: The Nephi Archetype and Blood Atonement in Neil LaBute, Brian Evenson, and Levi Peterson, and the Making of the Mormon American Writer”; Mark T. Decker’s “I Constructed in My Mind a Vast, Panoramic Picture: The Miracle Life of Edgar Mint” and Postmod-
ern, Postdenominational Mormonism”; and Juliette Wells’s “Jane Austen in Mollywood: Mainstreaming Mormonism in Andrew Black’s Pride & Prejudice.” The eighth essay is “Teaching Under the Banner of Heaven: Testing the Limits of Tolerance in America,” by Kevin Kolkmeyer, a long-awaited explication of how Jon Krakauer’s Under the Banner of Heaven (New York: Doubleday, 2003) can be used to help disfranchised students recognize the dialectic struggle of maintaining identity while assimilating into the mainstream.

While insightful, the scholarship and historical relevance of this text are as eclectic and varied as the subject matter within. The editors attempt to weave them together in the introduction, noting:

Most people simply don’t have time to think deeply about a group of people who try to present themselves as neat and orderly members of the American mainstream while they are simultaneously haunted by the specter of their nineteenth-century eccentricities. Instead, most people when they think of Mormons at all, take at face value a conflicted public image with a long history. . . . Many unsavory Mormons populated pulp novels of the nineteenth century, and more respectable authors like Mark Twain crafted critical depictions of Mormon customs and theology. Silent film audiences were sometimes treated to the spectacle of beautiful women entrapped by scheming Mormon polygamists. Contemporary portrayals of Latter-day Saints have been no less problematic. (2)

This idea of the struggle that Ladder-day Saints face in reconciling the cultural and theological identities of the past (especially polygamy, blood atonement, and the deeply theocratic nature of early Utah Territory) with the clean-cut identity of contemporary Mormons (think white-shirt-and-tie IBM-esque male missionaries, Utah Republicanism, and Mitt Romney) is a trope that emerges at varying levels throughout the book. If there is a consensus to be made from the somewhat disparate articles offered, it is that the Church—from both a cultural and theological aspect—is still beholden to the politics, criticism, and theology of its past when represented in contemporary culture.

However, despite this introductory assessment, the essays do not all seem to fit quite so precisely into this mold—leaving me, as a reader, wanting a little more by way of historical ties that make relevant popular portrayals of contemporary Mormonism. For example, in “Avenging Angels,” Aaron Sanders rejects the suggestion that the violence inherent in LaBute, Evenson, and Peterson’s stories are their way of rebelling against contemporary images of clean-cut Mormons, opining instead that “these authors are writing from within a Mormon tradition that is drenched in violence, one rooted in Mormon scripture and history” (105). Yet other than a short reference to Banner of Heaven and a few sentences about the flaws of Christopher Cain’s 2007 film September Dawn, we see little by way of analysis in a historical context that gives rise to such a claim.

Another example of a passing reference to historical context is in Karen
Austin’s essay (“Reality Corrupts”) that offers an insightful analysis of why Mormons have had such a relevant role in reality television programming of recent years. Among other things, she notes the value of conflict and drama as stereotypical Mormons—“straitlaced, friendly, repressed, and naive” (186)—often represent the Other who is pitted against participants more typical of the mainstream values, culture, and rugged American individualism in these reality programs. Yet the historical context is limited to a brief note that nineteenth-century stereotypes of Mormons—the Mormon man as a sinister, theocratic, polygamist Svengali; and the Mormon woman as a put-upon not-too-bright victim of ultimate patriarchy” (187)—is still prevalent in popular culture. Both these essays, like many that are offered in this book, are insightful at demonstrating some contemporary elements of Mormonism in popular culture. But for readers seeking a historical bent, what is offered only whets one’s appetite for more.

However, many of the essays are particularly adept at deconstructing modern representations of the faith to show how Mormonism represents a contested struggle for relevance that is equally viable with other disfranchised groups. In Chapter 1 (“Center and Periphery”) Hutchinson-Jones delves into Kushner’s use of LDS theology, highlighting how the Republican bent of modern LDS politics, rather than LDS theology, is the subtext that carries the play’s message. As such, the play brings to the surface the “Mormon Problem” (to use Terryl L. Givens’s words) of assimilation into mainstream conservatism with its unusual beginnings—a challenge faced by those within the gay community, especially in the 1980s when the discovery of AIDS coincided with the Republicanism of the Reagan era.

Similarly, Michael Austin argues in Chapter 2 (“Four Consenting Adults”) that Big Love juxtaposes “good polygamists” with “bad polygamists” to shift viewers away from the stereotypical discourse that all polygamy is harmful or threatening to family values. Austin finds evidence that the creators of Big Love use this story to advance political arguments supporting same-sex marriage, namely, that just as all polygamists are not like Warren Jeffs, all same-sex marriages do not carry with them the stereotyped harm to society that is often suggested by LDS Church leaders.

In “Elders on the Big Screen,” Duffy juxtaposes the postmodern variant of a Mormon missionary with corporate identity. He notes that just as the

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Church has succeeded in branding itself with the missionary uniform, others have co-opted that image to represent other evangelical “missionaries” and also as a symbol of institutional Mormonism. Finally, Karen Austin’s chapter (“Reality Corrupts”) articulates how the emphasis on conflict in reality television programs leads to narratives that highlight the Mormonism of various contestants. In such programming, the contemporary stereotype of Mormons as clean-cut, naive, do-gooders is strategically juxtaposed against the street smarts of other contestants, not only as a means of elevating the needed conflict present in such programming, but also as a means of allowing non-Mormons to gaze at the peculiarities of Mormons in much the same way they would as oppositional to the “lived experience” of these individuals when placed in these competitive environments.

Despite the editors’ introduction suggesting that the dominant theme of this book is to offer examples of the thread tying early Mormon history and culture with contemporary representations of Mormons in various entertainment media, I found the articles that address historical Mormon conundrums (especially blood atonement and polygamy) to be somewhat less than convincing. My criticism, while general, is that these essays added little to our understanding of the historical nature of the Church’s culture and doctrine, while at the same time attempting to tie contemporary issues with the past without much more than unqualified assertions.

For example, the one chapter that most fully delved into the Mormon past seemed to me the least convincing in its arguments. In Chapter 4, (“Avenging Angels”), Sanders argues that the historic concept of “blood atonement” (that some sins require shedding one’s own blood to achieve forgiveness) is linked to the prevalence of violence in the Book of Mormon, especially the story of the prophet Nephi some 600 years B.C. whom God commanded to kill Laban and thus acquire Laban’s sacred records. Sanders alleges that Nephi is thus “...an archetypal Mormon hero” and that contemporary Mormon mythos includes the idea that such a hero commits “righteous murder...or blood atonement...” (89). Sanders uses this mythos to connect the violence in the books of LaBute, Evenson, and Levi Peterson with the blood atonement concept. Sanders argues that the “blood atonement” concept is practically unknown among ordinary Mormons, yet for these three authors, it resonates with a culture of Mormonism that is difficult to ignore.

Furthermore, the argument that the violent stories from the Book of Mormon and early LDS beliefs of blood atonement influence the violence of these LDS writers (based on a reading of their books) is in danger of the post-hoc ergo propter hoc fallacy of assuming that A caused B just because A occurred earlier. Furthermore, Sanders makes some keen observations about parallels between violence in the Book of Mormon, Brigham Young’s blood atonement doctrine, and contemporary novels; but these same similarities
could be found in much of the violent fodder used for contemporary fiction
and the movie scripts written by non-Mormons.

Yet despite the possible parallels with violent movies like Pulp Fiction or
The Godfather, I doubt that Sanders would find Mormonism’s past influencing
these non-Mormon works to the same degree. While Sanders’s argument is in-
teresting, I think historians might seek less tenuous links (and assumptions)
about the supposed mythos of the Mormon hero and the influence of the
blood atonement doctrine with the idea of a “righteous” murder.

Is Peculiar Portrayals insightful and worth a look? Certainly. Especially be-
cause it brings together an array of strategies available to analyze representa-
tions of Mormons in today’s mediated environment. But for the historian who
seeks a deeper analysis of the Mormon paradox arising from its past “peculiar
status” vis-à-vis its contemporary public relations approach to appear more
mainstream, I would perhaps suggest perhaps sticking with Terryl Givens’s
People of Paradox.

DAVID W. SCOTT {scotdw@uvu.edu} researches and publishes articles
investigating the interplay of religion, media, and culture in the United
States. Much of his work focuses on representations of Mormons by
members, nonmembers, and official sources in the media and how the
religiosity of Latter-day Saints impacts their media use.

David L. Bigler and Will Bagley. The Mormon Rebellion: America’s First
pp., illustrations, map, notes, bibliography, index. Hardcover: $34.95;
ISBN: 9780806141350

Reviewed by Polly Aird

Authors David L. Bigler and Will Bagley explain early in The Mormon Re-
bellion: America’s First Civil War, 1857–1858 what brought them to write
the book and what they hope to accomplish by it. Brought up in Utah in
the 1950s, the authors were taught about the “state’s glorious history”:

This storied mix of legend and fact celebrated their pioneer ancestors
who built the bridges, killed snakes, and fought the Indians, who they
learned were the descendants of an ancient branch of the Children of Is-
rael called the Lamanites. A key element of this tale was how the United
States in 1857 sent an army to persecute their long-suffering Mormon
progenitors, based on nothing more than the malicious reports of cor-
rupt carpetbaggers. Valiant forebears rallied under their inspired leader,
Brigham Young, to defeat an invading army using guerrilla tactics that
shed not a drop of blood. This brought America to its senses, and the
president sent commissioners to negotiate an end to what will be forever
This, the authors say, was part “of a much larger mythology calculated to educate and inspire with an appreciation of a noble heritage” (ix). But instead, Bigler and Bagley found the stories improbable; and it was only much later, when they learned about their ancestors “burning an army supply train and murdering a band of passing gamblers” (ix), that they became fascinated with Utah’s history. It took the opening of new archival sources—particularly the territorial militia records and the Brigham Young papers—plus the recognition by William P. MacKinnon of the importance of this little-known episode in U.S. history to convince them to study the Mormon side of the Utah War.

“This volume,” the authors write, “seeks to correct that [mythical] record and provide a new factual basis for considering the causes and consequences of this largely unknown confrontation. . . . Readers will draw conclusions about the meaning of this story as dramatically different as we have, but we hope our work will shed new light on an important, colorful, and largely forgotten episode in America’s past” (9). And in another place: “The evidence that anyone ever learns anything from history is scant indeed, but we hope that some good will come from an honest look at the Utah rebellion of 1857–58, and at the problems the American republic faced and the mistakes it made when it first wrestled with theocracy” (xi).

But Bigler and Bagley make a comparison that initially struck me as gratuitous and unnecessarily offensive to LDS readers: “While we have spent decades seeking out new sources to better understand this conflict, not until the events of 11 September 2001 did we fully realize the present need for a balanced and accurate reinterpretation of this forgotten struggle. The United States finds itself engaged in a battle with theocrats, engaging fanatics who are much more dangerous and perhaps even more committed than the [Mormon] religious rulers who had imposed what President James Buchanan called ‘a strange system of terrorism’ on the people of Utah Territory” (xi).

The analogy has some merit: Both events came out of zealous, theocratic worldviews, and both resulted in the violent deaths of innocents. But compared to the 120 killed at Mountain Meadows on 9/11/1857, the attack on 9/11/2001 was dramatically more horrendous in scale, in international scope, in duration of the counterinsurgency, and in the resulting restrictions on American liberties. Perhaps I’ve made too much of this and the authors only meant that it spurred them to write the book. The vivid and memorable comparison, however, may well repel some and keep them from reading further. That would be a shame, for this is a fascinating, well-documented story.

It was President James Buchanan who first applied the term “rebellion” to Brigham Young’s belligerent declarations of independence for Utah. In Buchanan’s address to Congress on December 8, 1857, he explained why he had sent the troops to Utah, “This is the first rebellion which has existed in our
Territories and humanity itself requires that we should put it down in such a manner that it shall be our last” (3). The authors, in adding the subtitle “America’s First Civil War,” note that it was “a teapot version of the one that would open in Charleston harbor four years later” (11). They also point out that this was “America’s longest struggle between church and state” (9). Young’s claims to independence came out of a religious conception of the world that had developed in the early days of Mormonism. He saw his defiance—his rebellion—against the government as the first step toward God’s rule on earth.

In Chapter 1, Bigler and Bagley review the theocracy instituted by Joseph Smith which led to conflicts in Missouri and Illinois, and those battles, in turn, to the Utah War. This new millennial-minded religion found it could not live peacefully with its neighbors, and the reason was not simply the oft-repeated story of the persecution of God’s people. The authors show that it was much more complicated and related to the Mormon beliefs of how the Lord intended them to live. In every way, these beliefs clashed with those of their neighbors. Instead of the typical frontier homesteading approach to land ownership, the Mormons saw the land as belonging to the Lord as revealed to Joseph Smith in the plan for the City of Zion, “a place of refuge prior to the Lord’s imminent arrival and a place of peace and divine rule afterward. In the meantime, however, the concept was coercive and hostile toward neighboring landowners, who depended on their property to survive” (13). Although the City of Zion plan was never carried out in Missouri or even Illinois, it served as the inspiration for future city and town development in Utah.

Bigler and Bagley continue, “If the Mormons’ early beliefs about land ownership made nearby residents uneasy and nervous, their doctrines regarding American Indians made their frontier neighbors’ hair stand on end” (13). Joseph Smith believed that the American Indians, the Lamanites, would join their Mormon brothers in building the kingdom of God. Reaffirming this idea in 1857, Brigham Young, in one of several instances that could be cited, instructed one of his trusted men to tell the Indians “that if they permit our enemies to kill us they will kill them also” and that the Indians and the Mormon faithful will both “be needed to carry on the work of the last days” (14; emphasis in original Young letter; see also 142–43). Other sources of clashes between the Mormons and their neighbors came from the faith’s view of revealed law versus “man’s law,” the organization of a large militia, bloc voting, and Smith’s announcement of his intent to run for U.S. president.

The authors do not discount the sufferings of the Mormon people in Missouri, especially at Haun’s Mill and when Governor Lilburn W. Boggs’s extermination order drove them from the state in winter: “The maltreated Saints meticulously cataloged their grievances in 678 individual affidavits and on a petition signed by 3,419 citizens, which told ‘the story of a people wrongfully deprived of their rights as free men and women.’ . . . They itemized losses in
land and personal property totaling more than $395,000, while Joseph and Hyrum Smith each claimed $100,000 in damages, in part to cover more than $50,000 in fees paid to Missouri lawyers” (17). The authors see the Nauvoo events as a “replay of Missouri—and for the same reasons” (22), forcing the faithful to flee Illinois, once more in winter.

They also point out that, in spite of Mormon appeals to the government for help in moving west and President Polk’s subsequent approval for enlisting 500 Mormons in 1846 “to serve in the Mexican War and keep the faith loyal to the United States” (26), Brigham Young later claimed that the Mormon Battalion was “recruited at the behest of the federal government; it was a ploy to deplete the Saints and further the destruction of the church. . . . The revisionist account reveals a resentful, if not hostile, attitude toward the U.S. government that affected Young’s leadership over his thirty-year career in the West and influenced his decision to throw off the federal yoke in 1857” (27). The authors also quote from Wilford Woodruff’s journal while the Saints were in Winter Quarters on the Missouri River after their exodus from Nauvoo. Woodruff wrote that Young said many in the U.S. government had “a hand in the death of Joseph & Hyram [sic] Smith & they should be damned for these things & if they ever sent any men to interfere with us here they shall have there throats cut & sent to hell” (29).

Before leading the pioneer company west, Young and the Council of the Twelve issued a proclamation “that displayed how little they had learned from the Mormon wars in Missouri and Illinois” (23) and that made the conflict in Utah predictable. The authors write, “This remarkable document sets forth the revolutionary beliefs that compelled an expansionist millennial movement to establish divine rule prior to Christ’s return and to do so within their own lifetimes” (23). Addressed “To all the Kings of the World; To the President of the United States of America; To the Governors of the several states; And to the Rulers and People of all Nations,” it stated that “the kingdom of God has come” with its aim “to reduce all nations and creeds to one political and religious standard.” If the Gentiles (non-Mormons) did not repent and join them, the Lamanites would come among them to “tear them in pieces, like a lion among the flocks of sheep” and effect “an utter overthrow, and desolation of all our Cities, Forts, and Strong Holds—an entire annihilation of our race” (23–25; emphasis in original proclamation).

This bellicose proclamation, “with the possible exception of Buchanan’s 1858 report to Congress,” Bigler and Bagley write, “stands alone as the most important source on the causes of the Mormon rebellion. Yet it is also the most ignored” (23). Its basic principle “rested on the belief that God had inspired the framers of the U.S. Constitution to create a land of religious freedom where His Kingdom could be restored and supersede . . . all earthly realms” (24).
The California gold rush of 1849 and the purchase of most of the American Southwest from Mexico in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ended the isolation that Brigham Young had sought. The Mormons found themselves squatters on federal land. President Buchanan wrote, “You have settled upon territory which lies geographically in the heart of the Union. The land you live upon was purchased by the United States and paid for out of their treasury. The proprietary right and title to it is in them, and not in you” (31). Here was a frontal threat to divine land ownership. Year after year, Young directed efforts toward Washington, D.C., to create Utah as a government independent of the U.S.—it was to be either a sovereign state or an independent entity. In addition Young and the territorial legislature ruled that any law based on legal precedent or on common law was illegal, for “in a society where perfect justice was divinely revealed, one did not place one’s trust in manmade law” (48).

This background of how Mormon millennialist thinking shaped the actions of the Church leaders distinguishes The Mormon Rebellion from other treatments of the Utah War and gives a framework for understanding the events that took place. William P. MacKinnon’s At Sword’s Point, Part 1 (Norman: Arthur H. Clark, an imprint of the University of Oklahoma Press, 2008), a documentary history of the Utah War, divides its coverage almost equally between the federal government and the Mormons. The Mormon Rebellion, on the other hand, focuses primarily on understanding the Mormon perspective of the world and thereby adds depth to that part of MacKinnon’s account. Although Bigler and Bagley mostly lay the blame for the conflict on Mormon theocratic, millennialist views, they acknowledge that the government provided its share of blundering. Additionally, it is well to point out that the beliefs of this period are no longer part of Mormon thought.

Besides setting the theological stage of Mormon belief at the time, Bigler and Bagley survey the incidents that led up to the actual conflict. What caused President Buchanan to send the army west was about “six dozen reports, mainly written by U.S. officials from 1851 to 1857, alleging treason, duplicity, disloyalty, and other serious offenses” (11). These documents are discussed in detail in MacKinnon’s volume. The so-called “runaway” federal appointees reported fear for their lives and frustration at not being able to carry out their duties. The Mormon leaders were quick to challenge their allegations. The authors comment, “As usually happened in public fights between the Mormons and their neighbors of whatever station, it was impossible for an impartial observer to figure out where the fault lay” (48).

Other events helped escalate tensions with the government, including Young’s efforts to forge alliances with Indian tribes; the Mormon campaign in Congress to establish independence; policies to increase the population (including the Perpetual Emigrating Fund, the handcart scheme, polygamy, and falsifying the 1850 federal census) and thereby qualify for statehood; and the
start of the Reformation. “Affronted by Washington’s hostility [to the Mormon efforts for statehood], Young crossed the Rubicon and moved to fulfill this vision [of God’s kingdom]. On 14 September [1856] he touched off a fiery revival...to sanctify the body of Israel and present to the Lord a righteous people worthy of divine favor in the impending conflict with the American republic, which he foresaw and even encouraged” (91).

Chapter 5 on the Reformation, Chapter 7 on the Mountain Meadows Massacre, and Chapter 14 on the efforts of U.S. Judge John Cradlebaugh to bring the perpetrators of the massacre and other crimes to justice are particularly succinct and illuminating. Although much of this ground will be familiar to readers of the *Journal of Mormon History*, a few items will be of particular interest: First, the authors have modified the position Bagley took in his *The Blood of the Prophets: Brigham Young and the Massacre at Mountain Meadows* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002) about the September 1, 1857, meeting of Brigham Young with the Indian chiefs from the south. Previously Bagley had written that, when Young promised emigrant cattle to the chiefs, they rushed south and were the Indians involved in the massacre. In *The Mormon Rebellion*, Bigler and Bagley conclude that “whether any of the Indians who met with Young in Salt Lake were on hand six days later at Mountain Meadows to fire the opening volley is uncertain” (171). But whatever the case, they point out that, by presumptuously and illegally giving the Indian leaders other people’s property, Young was endangering the lives of emigrants on all the roads that passed through Utah.

Second, did William H. Dame or Isaac C. Haight have orders from Salt Lake City’s religious leaders? Bigler and Bagley quote emigrant George Powers who met Col. Dame on Wednesday, September 9, and asked why Dame did not rescue the Fancher and Baker trains. Dame answered that he “could go out and take them away in safety, but he dared not; he dared not disobey counsel” (174). Since Dame and Haight were the senior priesthood authorities in southern Utah, the authors see this reported statement as evidence that they had orders, perhaps from George A. Smith, the most recent apostle with whom they had met. Ronald W. Walker, Richard E. Turley Jr., and Glen M. Leonard, authors of *Massacre at Mountain Meadows: An American Tragedy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), give this same quotation but interpret the counsel Dame referred to as the decision of the Parowan council on Monday night to help only if the emigrants should call for assistance (176).

Bigler and Bagley also raise a central question in regard to the frantic horseback ride of James Haslam to ask Brigham Young what should be done about the Arkansas emigrants: Why did the southern Utah leaders not wait for his answer? “The emigrants trapped at Mountain Meadows were not going anywhere. What made it imperative to kill them rather than wait for Haslam’s return with the purported orders? These men acted as if they already had
their orders and hesitated to delay in executing them” (174). Walker, Turley, and Leonard do not address this question directly but suggest that Haight made the fatal decision to finish off the Arkansas companies to cover up the initial attacks, for if the remaining emigrants reached California and told what had happened, there would be retribution indeed for the Mormons (Walker, Turley, and Leonard, 179, 189).

Other salient parts of the volume include the authors’ description of Young’s plan to move his people north, possibly to Vancouver Island or even Alaska. The Indian attack on Fort Limhi on the Salmon River put an abrupt end to such ideas and made Young realize that not all the Lamanites would join forces with them. The authors also skillfully treat Young’s declaration of martial law on September 15, 1857. Taking the law into his own hands in an effort to stop the army from coming into the Salt Lake Valley, Young—who by then knew he was no longer Utah’s governor—forbade travel through the western center of the country unless one had a permit from him. The inflammatory act cut off the growing state of California from the rest of the country, escalated tensions between the federal government and the Mormon leaders, and was viewed in Washington as another order of rebellion.

In spite of holding Brigham Young’s theocratic ideas as ultimately responsible for the conflict, the authors also give credit where it is due to Young and the Mormons:

The stalwarts who made up what they called “The Camp of Israel” were almost all as remarkable as their formidable leader. They were mostly farmers, but the band included architects, blacksmiths, carpenters, mathematicians, musicians, former Indian agents, politicians, potters, printers, slaves, and wagonwrights. They came from England, Scotland, Ireland, Germany, Denmark, Norway, and virtually every state in the Union. Men of such caliber were responsible for the success of the Latter-day Saints in settling the Great Basin, where they founded and built more than three hundred villages, towns, and cities. As far as possible in a harsh and arid region where only 4 percent of the land was arable, they made “the desert blossom as a rose.” Brigham Young was one of the greatest leaders in American history, but such men and women formed the bedrock of his astonishing success: without them, he could have accomplished nothing. (26)

When it came to the skill of the Utah militia, the authors write, “Adding to the Mormons’ advantage of terrain was the quality of officers and men in the Nauvoo Legion. Some of them had marched two thousand miles in 1846 from Fort Leavenworth to Los Angeles as members of the Mormon Battalion to occupy Mexico’s northernmost province during the War with Mexico. What most lacked in military training, they made up for in leadership skills gained from building settlements and leading closely organized overland companies to Salt Lake Valley, some from as far away as Denmark. They knew the land
they defended and were hardened to the conditions it imposed” (192).

Bigler and Bagley write that Brigham Young’s loyalty “first, last, and always, was to God’s Kingdom, the theocratic system Joseph Smith had envisioned as a prerequisite of Christ’s return in the latter days, which were then at hand.” Young believed “that the U.S. Constitution was inspired by God to prepare a land of religious freedom where His kingdom would be established as an earthly entity that would supersede all other earthly realms within Young’s lifetime” (356). As the authors point out earlier in the book, “Prior to the millennium, a theocracy, ruled by God from the heavens above, cannot live within a democratic republic, governed by its people from earth below, without civil warfare. By nature, the two governing systems are incompatible and cannot exist side by side, or one within the other, without conflict” (8–9). The authors conclude that the conflict did not end until “the death of Brigham Young brought to a close a thirty-year struggle to establish the primacy of God’s Kingdom over the United States and all earthly realms. . . . It was always his [Young’s] war. . . . Instead he went to his death believing that he would lead his people back to Missouri and live to see [Joseph] Smith return with Jesus Christ” (362–63).

I do have a few quibbles: The index should have been more comprehensive and has led me to note all kinds of additional entries or subentries as I read the book. Grasshoppers mentioned on pages 85, 194, and 260 were actually the Rocky Mountain locust (*Melanoplus sculptus*), a now-extinct species. The map on page 2 is much too small; it should have been turned upright and spread across two pages. Still, this is altogether a remarkable book, one I highly recommend.

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J. Kenneth Davies and Lorin K. Hansen, *Mormon Gold: Mormons in the California Gold Rush Contributing to the Development of California and the*

Reviewed by Edward Leo Lyman

As J. Kenneth Davies, retired Brigham Young University economics professor, stated in his preface to this book, which he calls its second edition, it has been over twenty-five years since he published the first edition of Mormon Gold: The Story of California’s Mormon Argonauts (Salt Lake City: Olympus Publishing, 1984). That book was a “detailed account of the Mormon participation in the [major] nineteenth century California gold rush” (xiii). In this even more important second book, Davies, who has a long-standing interest in Mormon mining ventures and working miners, has gathered an amazingly extensive and detailed account of the almost-unknown yet important role of perhaps up to a thousand Latter-day Saint participants (some of whom never returned to Church activity) in the California mother lode country mining operations—particularly its southern half—during the first four years of the gold rush.

Davies probably made an equally significant contribution, which was never adequately recognized nor acknowledged, regarding the essential role that the gold carried back to Utah played in establishing literally the first monetary exchange system in the fledgling Great Basin kingdom then being established. Davies’s careful explanation of the activity, adding his professional expertise to his good grasp of the effectively interpreted relevant historical material, offered an unprecedented and invaluable body of knowledge to what Leonard J. Arrington had only begun in his study, Great Basin Kingdom: An Economic History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830–1900 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1958). In Davies’s new edition, co-authored by Lorin K. Hansen, this subject has been further expanded as Chapter 7, “Mormon Valley Currency.” Similarly, his discussion of Brigham Young’s much-misunderstood, but equally crucial, role in promoting LDS gold mining endeavors, including calling gold-mining missionaries, is also most significant.

However, the first edition of Mormon Gold also had several important limitations. A number of individuals were not properly identified, and Davies sometimes posited hypotheses and propositions which could not be properly documented. Therefore, the new edition, featuring a great deal of additional research, and some corrections by Lorin K. Hansen, a well-respected historian with particular expertise in the successful Mormon agricultural operations in the east San Francisco Bay region during the gold rush period. (Davies’s health necessitated this assistance.) In short, I consider this “second edition,” to be in reality, a virtually new and superior book on Mormon Gold.

In the new edition, Hansen fully utilizes the great many items of additional
research and writing accumulated in the generation since the first work appeared, including a companion work by Kenneth N. Owens, *Gold Rush Saints: California Mormons and the Great Rush for Riches* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004). Together, these two books are the best works presently available on the subject.

Hansen included some particularly good treatment of the Mormon contribution to blazing trails across the Sierra Nevada Mountains, transportation, settlement on the Nevada side of the mountains, and mining activities there. Besides this, a great deal of new material describes inns, trading posts, and even saloons operated by Church members on both sides of the mountains.

The larger-page format (8.5x11) allowed gathering some of Davies’s biographical material from previously separate publications and including them in *Mormon Gold* as appendices scattered throughout the book. In fact, this is an unusually important portion of the entire work, with some forty lists of individuals and families in various emigration companies and mining camps at various points in time. One of the most outstanding features of the larger work is the massive number of good illustrations, including at least sixty portraits of individual participants in the saga (naturally, their importance varies widely), along with many images of mining and business locations and enterprises. I have written at least four times about Thomas Tomkins and had never seen a photograph of him, but Hansen located and published one and another of his wife (220).

As a fellow historian of the Mormons in California, I have long regretted that LDS history after 1847 almost always focuses primarily on northern Utah. Yet it is difficult to find a more interesting Mormon story than Latter-day Saints in the gold rush. A specific case in point might be that of Mormon Island, its Mormon Battalion veteran discoverers, and the huge community of up to three hundred Church members laboring there. For half a year, they served under the leadership of Mormon apostle Amasa M. Lyman, a situation first recounted in the original edition of *Mormon Gold*. Davies was also the first to cite non-Mormon contemporary author J. M. Letts for Lyman’s domination and leadership in that camp. Some have called Mormon Island the richest of all placer gold-producing locations in the entire region. In fact, one of the few minor omissions of both editions might be the failure to utilize or acknowledge early El Dorado County historian Paolo Sioli’s *History of El Dorado County, California* (1883; rpt., Georgetown, Calif.: Cedar Ridge Publishing, 1998), who called Mormon Island “the richest placers on earth” (p. 69). Many of the first miners from outside California actually initially flocked to that camp.

Well-circulated maps from the era label at least ten major mining locations with “Mormon” as part of their name. Other important Mormon-dominated camps include Salmon Falls and Greenwood Valley. This work recounts the
history and discusses the involvement of many individual Latter-day Saints in all of these locations.

There are probably arguments both pro and con about dividing the text into twenty-five small chapters and four additional appendices. But for certain, it makes the contents of the book easier to assess and enables the effective location of particular subjects. Chapter 1 treats the arrival of the *Brooklyn* Saints and the Mormon Battalion, along with several others traveling to California earlier than the discovery of gold. Chapter 2, “Gold at Coloma,” recounts the momentous initial gold discovery, while Chapter 3 describes activities at “Mormon Island.” In Chapter 4, Davies and Hansen describe “The Mormon-Carson Pass Emigrant Trail,” which became one of the major routes across the Sierras—located, cleared, and publicized by Church members. Chapter 5 takes “A Message of Gold to Brigham Young,” followed by a chapter on “The Mormon ’48ers” who traveled from Utah to the gold fields often authorized to do so by Church leaders. Chapter 7, as mentioned above, treats the coining, printing, and even hand writing of money backed by gold.

The next four chapters describe, respectively, “Mormon Guides to the Gold Mines,” Amasa M. Lyman’s tithing-gathering mission, the arrival of Mormon converts from the American South, and the experiences of Thomas Rhoades, perhaps the most successful Mormon goldminer. Chapter 12 deals with Charles C. Rich in California; Chapter 13 with “The Gentle Pomeroy Wagon Train,” a freight wagon company traveling south accompanied by some Mormons; “The Huffaker Company” (Chapter 14), a primarily Mormon emigrant group also traveling south in late 1849; Howard Egan’s important “Salt Lake Trading Company” in California (15); and Lyman and Rich’s “Joint Apostolic Gold Mission,” including activities at San Francisco and Sacramento (16). Chapter 17 describes Mormon gold-miners sent on missions to the Society Islands. Chapter 18 documents Mormon companies California-bound in the spring of 1850, then Lyman’s successful transporting a substantial amount of gold to Utah.

Chapter 20 describes “maverick Mormon” Abner Blackburn. Chapter 21 depicts activities at Mormon Station and Carson Valley in the Nevada region, followed by a chapter on “San Bernardino Saints,” “Proselyting the Gold Fields,” and a missionary effort to encourage members to relocate to where the Church was functioning more effectively than in northern California. The final chapter includes some “Reflections” on the significance of Church participation in these momentous historical events.

The four additional appendices are actually seventy pages of supplementary text. Appendix A describes over forty gold-mining communities with substantial Mormon populations; Appendix B analyzes the 1850 census for probable Mormons located in the mother lode counties; Appendix C offers a useful 1845–60 time line, and Appendix D makes a major contribution by
Hansen on “Transportation and Agriculture as Historical Background for the Mormon Gold Story.”

This fine book deserves much attention for its content and excellent visual appearance and will likely be the last word on its truly fascinating array of topics for years to come.

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Reviewed by Todd M. Compton

From 1999 to 2009, William Hebner (with photographer Michael Plyler) recorded thirty wide-ranging oral histories of leading, often older, Southern Paiutes. He had noticed that sometimes Paiutes had been interviewed about specific anthropological details of Paiute culture but not about their life experiences. He decided to try to record life histories and, surmounting considerable difficulties, succeeded in creating this book, which allows thirty Paiutes to speak for themselves. Plyler’s photographs are haunting, and the oral histories are wonderful documents, priceless historical records, and moving, involving life stories.

Seventeen women and twelve men were interviewed, grouped in eight sections: San Juan Paiute (three interviews), Kaibab Paiute Tribe (two interviews), Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah (eleven interviews), Caliente Paiute (two interviews), Moapa Band of Paiute Indians (four interviews), Las Vegas Paiute Tribe (one interview), Chemehuevi Indian Tribe (two interviews), and Pahrump Band of Paiutes (two interviews). Thus the book is organized geographically, proceeding from eastern Utah to Nevada. Since Hebner began doing the interviews, ten of these interviewees, Paiute elders, have passed away.
Hebner’s general introduction and his introductions to the various Paiute bands give an excellent impressionistic overview of Paiute history, reinforced by historical events as recorded in the oral histories. If I were to make one slight criticism of Hebner’s introductions, I would put a bit more emphasis on Mormons, such as Jacob Hamblin, Ammon Tenney, Thales Haskell, William Bailey Maxwell, and Ira Hatch, who tried to help Paiutes, by their own lights, often at considerable sacrifice to themselves, and sometime working at cross purposes with Salt Lake City and local Church leaders.

One of the poignant themes that comes up repeatedly in this book (the histories of Eunice Tillahash Surveyor and Madelan Redfoot are examples) is that Paiute culture is gradually disappearing. There are fewer and fewer speakers of the Paiute language, and fewer who practice the old Paiute religious traditions, thanks to a number of contributing factors. Many Paiutes have intermarried with Indians of other tribes (such as Navajo or Shoshoni, to mention two cases from this book), or with whites, which leaves their children with mixed cultural allegiances. Conversion to Mormonism or other Christian groups, and white education and acculturation, have also been a factor in Paiutes departing from their ancestral culture, though sometimes they have mixed white and Indian beliefs and practices. Alvin Marble discusses the LDS Indian Placement Program in a few devastating sentences: “Most of the kids in the sixties went in the placement program, into the white foster homes. They’d come back home and wouldn’t speak Paiute. They’d just look at you” (p. 106.)

Given this constant cultural erosion, we are greatly indebted to Hebner and Plyler for these oral histories and photographs, which preserve the life histories of these Paiute leaders in their own words and also many aspects of Paiute culture, history, and religion. As one example of many historical, cultural parallels, Eleanor Tom, when growing up, remembered that her grandmother would hunt and cook porcupine. It is one example of how the Paiutes would use all elements of their environment—seeds, animals, large and small—for survival. When Thomas Brown, with the first major group of Mormons who came to Dixie in 1854, ate a stew that Paiutes had cooked, he found that one of its components was porcupine head.1

In my view, the history of Latter-day Saint interactions with Indians, especially in the nineteenth century, is one of the most important aspects of Utah history and is one of the under-reported aspects of Mormon history.2 The Book of Mormon, with its focus on the ancestors of the American Indians and its eschatological vision of the “restoration” of the Indians as converts to Mor-


2For example, Ronald W. Walker’s important “‘Seeking the ‘Remnant’: The Na-
monism, led early Church leaders—beginning with Joseph Smith in 1830–31—to actively pursue and encourage missions to the “Lamanites.” This idealistic missionary ardor continued among some Church leaders and Indian missionaries in Utah. However, while there are some individual conversions in the Mormon-Indian record, as a whole it is a tragic, sometimes violent, story.

There was a vast cultural chasm between the whites with their European heritage and the Indians, who had no background in Western science, Western law, biblical studies, etc. In fact, they could not speak English, or read or write, something Mormon missionaries usually took for granted when proselytizing. There were mass baptisms of Indians in early Utah and Arizona, but few real converts. Often early Mormon settlers changed their focus from missionary work among the Indians to surviving as farmers or ranchers in difficult territory. And with this change in focus, along with constantly increasing numbers of settlers sent south by Brigham Young, came competition for resources. Water was in short supply in arid Dixie, and Mormons had to use traditional Paiute water supplies for water-intensive cotton farming, while one of the staples of Paiute life, seeds from grasses, were increasingly cropped by Mormon cattle. Many Paiutes literally faced starvation. In addition, Paiutes fell victim in great numbers to epidemics brought by the whites, such as smallpox and measles. Partially as a result of these and other issues, they responded with thefts and raids on Mormon livestock. There were punitive raids in retaliation, and in the case of the Utes (sometime allied with Navajos and southern Utes/Paiutes), an open war, the Black Hawk War.

In addition, Paiutes were often relocated in reservations on land that whites did not want and were not integrated into LDS communities.

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3See, for example, Franklin H. Head, Letter to Dennis N. Cooley, August 4, 1866, Record Group 75, Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, 1824–80, M234, reel 902, frame 126, National Archives: “Many Indians have perished of starvation, within the past six or eight months... Some of these Indians, to save themselves from actual starvation, have occasionally stolen stock from the miners and settlers. This has led to acts of retaliation.” I would disagree with Stoffle and Evans who state that the Kaibab Paiutes “were primarily starved to death” (Southern Paiute, 5). I have not seen the evidence to support such a statement; and this statement underplays the contribution of Jacob Hamblin and some other Mormons, who tried to feed Kaibab Paiutes. In my judgment (and direct evidence is often lacking), more Paiutes were killed by epidemics in the nineteenth century than by starvation, though, as Head’s quotation above shows, along with other evidence, a significant number of Paiutes died of starvation. Sometimes epidemics spread more disastrously because the victims were suffering from malnutrition.

4John Alton Peterson, Utah’s Black Hawk War (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1999).
This is not the story of mass conversions along with an apocalyptic end-scene in which Indians played a prominent part for which Mormons hoped. After these tumultuous beginnings, the history of the Southern Paiute has continued to be difficult. For example, a number of Paiute bands were terminated in 1954, meaning that land and government aid were taken from them, largely because Utah’s senator Arthur Watkins, chair of the Senate Interior Committee Subcommittee on Indian Affairs and a devout Mormon, was under pressure to produce a termination candidate from his own state, and the Utes (the only logical candidates) were too politically powerful to submit to that process. The Paiutes were not suited for termination; but because they did not have the Utes’ political clout, they were forced to become Watkins’s example. Many of these oral histories (such as those by McKay Pikyavit and Gevene Savala) testify to the disastrous consequences of Watkins’s political action. Yet the senator always considered himself a sincere friend of Indians.

The relationship of the Southern Paiute with the LDS Church is varied and individual. Patrick Charles served a mission for the LDS Church; now, he says, “I feel I'm leaning more toward the Indian ways” (59). Eleanor Tom no longer attends church, says she believes in the “old Indian ways,” but still identifies herself as “also an LDS lady. I was a second counselor, did Relief Society” (80). Arthur Richards, who married in the temple and served in a bishopric, combines LDS beliefs and Paiute religion, arguing that they support each other (91–92). Madelan Redfoot pursues a similar fascinating synthesis of cultures (60–63). Lalovi Miller identifies herself as “a jack Mormon,” but “the LDS beliefs follow with ours. . . . Our religion follows a lot of the Bible” (138, 140). Eldene Snow Cervantes had orthodox parents who were married in the temple, but she has nothing to do with Mormonism and wonders why Paiutes who became Mormon “weren’t stronger” (98). Gertrude Hanks Leivas has three lucky rocks: “One for God, one for Jesus, one for the Holy Ghost. It helps me” (164). Clara Belle Jim rejects “white man religion” completely: “I stay with my own. But when earth was new, Coyote was our god. . . . Beasts were people before us” (183). Mary Ann Owl says that she and her husband Jack “turned to white Christianity,” and “Christianity made our prayers strong. Jesus is Shinawav [the Paiute creator-God], born by a woman” (28). Irene Benn identifies herself as a Mormon and describes the good feelings she gets when “blessed by the Mormons.” But she feels even better when she receives a Paiute blessing (129).

Some of these interviewees remember some individual white Mormons.

with fondness. Irene Benn, for example, recalls that Bishop Kenneth Jensen 
“was our friend” (131). Other white Mormons, such as Senator Watkins, are 
remembered with deep dislike.

One of the complexities of the Paiute and American Indian history is trou-
bled relations between tribes. San Juan Paiutes lost what they considered tra-
ditional Paiute land to the Navajos, a loss that still stings. Bessie Owl says, “It 
really bothers me sometimes, how we lost this land to the Navajos” (32). Here 
again, because the Paiutes had less political clout, they were not able to stand 
up for their rights and protect their land. Mary Ann and Jack Owl also tell of 
the constant influx of Navajos invading their land. On the other hand, tribes 
that sometimes fought each other have often intermarried. Margaret King 
had a Navajo father and a Paiute mother. Her daughter-in-law, a Navajo, trans-
lated for her during the interview. A prominent Indian in nineteenth-century 
southern Utah history was Patnish; reportedly a San Juan Paiute or Ute by 
birth, he was raised by Navajos (possibly as a captive after a raid), so was a Na-
vajo by culture. He led a mixed band of Utes/Paiutes and Navajos.6 Strict de-
marcations between tribes often did not exist at that time, and often they blur 
now. Richard Arnold feels that interrelationships between tribes are always 
difficult, but Indians nevertheless have “some common bond that will over-
shadow those differences” (176).

Historian Robert M. Utley, in his The Indian Frontier, 1846–1890, argues 
that whites and Indians were doomed to misunderstand each other in crucial 
ways on the frontier. Southern Paiute history certainly supports that general-
ization. On the other hand, Utley felt that the frontier could be a place of valu-
able cultural interchange, both for Indians and whites.7 While reading this 
book, I was attracted to a number of aspects of Paiute culture. One is rever-
ence for the earth. Lila Carter says, “I think our people are closer to the earth. 
We don’t like nothing destroyed” (153). According to Richard Arnold, the 
Paiutes’ communion with animals “gives us such a close relationship to the en-
vironment” (176). I was also impressed with the Paiute ideal of leadership 
through thorough discussion, then consensus, not through dictatorial, auto-
cratic fiat, a tradition that reaches back into the nineteenth century. While 
one could imagine situations where this process might break down in practi-
cial situations, it seems like a refreshing alternative to autocratic political mod-
els in our country and state.

This is a great book, full of treasures, and an important record of a genera-
tion of Paiutes that is already passing away. Lora Tom says, “Working with the 
white community, there are so many people who have no clue as to who I am,

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6 Anthony Ivins, Diary, October 29, 1875, Utah State Historical Society.
who I represent. They need to reach out to us. We need to reach out to them” (81). This book will help accomplish that ideal.

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Reviewed by Steven L. Shields

The story of the Church of Christ (Temple Lot) is a story of commitment, sacrifice, and perseverance—a story not well known by many readers of Latter Day Saint history. Remarkably, this small denomination was the first group of Latter Day Saints to return to the “land of Zion” since the members of the Church were expelled by angry mobs in 1833. This book briefly lays out the history of the founding of the Church of Christ (Temple Lot), its key leader Granville Hedrick, its return to Jackson County, Missouri, its remarkable efforts to build a temple at Independence—and its disappointment in having that dream derailed.

Addams has scoured thousands of pages of land records, census records, publications, and Church records; he also conducted numerous interviews. He has brought together in one concise volume a chronology and commentary on a denomination that has occupied one of the most highly contested spots of ground in all of Latter Day Saint history.

Addams tells the story of how leaders of the small denomination approached both the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, or RLDS Church (Community of Christ), and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, in the early years of the twentieth century. The Temple Lot leaders proposed that the three denominations unite their efforts to build the temple. Although not explained, I wonder if this was because Latter Day Saints of all denominations believed that the Second Coming would occur in 1929 or 1930—the countdown starting from the reported visit of John the Baptist in May 1829 or from the formal organization of the original church in 1830.

The story of how the Church of Christ (Temple Lot) and Community of Christ forged an agreement, adopted in 1918, permitting members to transfer
between denominations is most interesting but will be seen as rather curious by many readers. With one denomination numbering only a hundred or so members, and the other with tens of thousands, one wonders if the Community of Christ leaders hoped that most of the Temple Lot Church members would move in their direction and thus that Community of Christ would be able to lay claim to the sacred Temple Lot. Some Temple Lot members accused them of such motives (47). An unexpected reaction to Community of Christ President and Prophet Frederick M. Smith’s leadership style and policies in the mid-1920s did, in fact, result in two or three thousand Community of Christ members transferring to the Temple Lot Church. This development swelled its ranks from the almost static hundred members it had had for most of its history to the point that former Community of Christ members outnumbered the original Temple Lot membership twenty or thirty to one.

Addams describes for his readers the roller-coaster ride of the next few years of Temple Lot Church history. One of the new apostles and former Community of Christ high priest, Otto Fetting, announced early in 1927 (less than a year after he’d become an apostle) that John the Baptist had returned, visited him, and in subsequent messages, coming every few weeks, commanded the now-enlarged church to build the temple. In Addams’s words:

Fetting’s “Fifth Message” electrified the membership of the Church of Christ like nothing had before. The revelation was read on April 9, 1928, to the church at the annual April conference and affirmatively voted upon as “divine.” From the moment this message was broadcast throughout the church, the physical undertaking to build the House of the Lord would play a major and pivotal role within the church; both among the members and more especially among the men of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles. Furthermore, the Church of Christ’s relationship with the RLDS Church, as well as with other branches or divisions of the Restoration, would be directly affected. (70)

Ground was broken for the temple in April 1929, plans drawn and published (for a drawing of the projected building, see the cover of the Spring 2010 Journal of Mormon History), and fund-raising was in full swing. Then within weeks of the groundbreaking ceremony, Fetting reported that God commanded everyone to be rebaptized. The Church split; Fetting and at least a thousand supporters walked out and became their own, separate denomination.

Work on the temple came to a screeching halt, except for a few feeble efforts over the next decade to get the work going again. To make matters worse, as Addams reports, accusations of fiscal impropriety on the part of the Temple Lot bishop emerged in the early 1940s, causing the Church great distress. The “Trowbridge affair” is an important part of the history, and Addams has used sensitivity in dealing with it.

Unfortunately, the book suffers from a lack of editing, a failing of the pub-
lisher and not the author. There are several places in the book where leaders, offices held, and titles are confusing, especially to readers unfamiliar with the details of how the three denominations in the narrative use similar titles, but with different duties in each church. The book needs an explanation of the organizational structure, leadership offices, and priesthood offices of the Temple Lot Church.

There are some places where the reader may be confused. For example, Addams reports a “revelation by President Elbert A. Smith” (85). However, although referred to by the title “president,” Elbert A. Smith was not President of Community of Christ, but a counselor in the First Presidency. Readers need to have an explanation about the long-treasured Latter Day Saint tradition of “speaking in prophecy”—a tradition that has largely been lost in modern times. Addams reports another example of this tradition when he tells his readers of a “revelation” by RLDS Apostle Joseph Luff (100). To typify either pronouncement as a “revelation” confuses the revelatory role that is exclusive to the President of the Church.

“Common consent” as practiced by the Church of Christ (Temple Lot), modeled on Community of Christ’s practice due to the huge influx of members from that denomination in the 1920s, has unfortunately been confused with “consensus.” In several places (95, 96, 98), Addams declares that results of votes were “hardly a consensus,” by which he seems to imply that without unanimity the voting was somehow flawed. Common consent in both denominations has long been the norm, where negative votes are not only expected, but also cherished as expressions of democracy. “Consensus,” on the other hand, is a different style of decision-making. The reader needs a clear explanation of how the Church of Christ (Temple Lot) conducted its votes, who was eligible to vote, and how negative outcomes do not necessarily imply dissent.

The book has dozens of photos, many of which have never been published before and others that have not been seen for a half century or more. These illustrations are an important contribution of the book and speak well of Addams’s dogged research and sifting of source material. I would like to have had a bibliography to save wading through Addams’s extensive (but valuable) footnotes to track down books and periodicals quoted.

Despite these shortcomings, Upon the Temple Lot and its author, R. Jean Addams, make an important and valuable contribution to the historical task. Addams is to be congratulated for successfully bringing to fruition many years of research in libraries and court records, interviewing dozens of people, and traveling around the wilderness of Illinois and Missouri tracking down many of the places where this history occurred. This book is the first monograph-length study of the Church of Christ (Temple Lot) ever published by a writer who is not and never has been a member of that denomina-
tion. If only for that reason, this book is an important addition to the library of Latter Day Saint history.

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Reviewed by John J Hammond

Nathaniel R. Ricks, who earned an M.A. in history at Brigham Young University–Provo and currently teaches at Pikes Peak Community College and Falcon Middle School in Colorado Springs, has performed an admirable service for those interested in Mormon and Hawaiian history by publishing an annotated typescript of the Sandwich Islands diaries/journals of the teenage missionary Joseph F. Smith.

In a brief but informative eleven-page introduction, Ricks indicates that Joseph F. was the son of the martyred Hyrum Smith and Mary Fielding Smith. No doubt traumatized by his father’s violent death and funeral when he was about five, Joseph F. was further traumatized by the death of his mother in 1852 when he was thirteen: “Over the ensuing months and years Joseph F. struggled to find himself,” becoming “something of a troublemaker.” This difficult period involved “experimentation with both tobacco and alcohol,” as well as a physical assault on his male schoolteacher (vii–viii, 23 note 3).

Although Ricks does not mention it, by the spring of 1854 Brigham Young had been informed by leaders in the Hawaiian mission that older men found it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to learn the native language,¹ so fifteen-year-old Joseph F., sixteen-year-old John R. Young (Brigham’s nephew), and others in their early twenties, were dispatched to Hawaii—in Joseph F.’s

¹See, for example, Phillip B. Lewis, president of the Sandwich Islands Mission, Letter to the First Presidency, March 6, 1853, in Manuscript History of the Hawaiian
case, probably with the double hope that he could boost missionary work in the islands and get “reformed” in the process.

On the first page there is a wonderful photograph of Joseph F., taken just after his return to Utah from the Islands. Before beginning the typescript, Ricks provides six pages of brief but helpful biographical information on seventy-nine “Prominent Characters” whose names appear in the diaries, including Protestant missionaries and other “gentiles.” There is a good physical description of the six-volume diary, which consists of makeshift collections of pages sewn together by hand. Unfortunately, the first two volumes were destroyed when a cottage burned in early June 1856 at the mission “gathering place” on Lāna‘i. (Joseph F. was then on the Big Island of Hawai‘i.) These lost diaries apparently covered his journey to the islands, his arrival at Honolulu in September 1854, and roughly the first twenty months of his mission, which lasted until October 1857. Virtually all of Joseph F.’s personal possessions in the islands were consumed in the fire, including, he claims, “a daguerrian likeness of my father, uncle Joseph [Smith Jr.] and Brigham Young, a present and priceless to me.” After painfully listing all his many losses, he wrote: “Well these dear few things is gon[e] and not one saved, and now I am destitute, but with old Jobe exclaim: ‘The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away, blessed be the name of the Lord.’ I am confident that he has and will provide for his servants, so all is well.”

Ricks does not tell us much about those months before Joseph F.’s first surviving diary begins, failing to mention a point made by Joseph F.’s biographer Scott Kenney: “Other missionaries received mail routinely, but for six months, none came for him. Finally a letter arrived from [his cousin, once removed] George A. Smith, the first communication from home since he had arrived.” Joseph F. learned Hawaiian very quickly, and Ricks points out the fact—clearly evident in Joseph F.’s diaries—that during his mission “he worked to educate and improve himself,” reading “voraciously in history, philosophy, poetry, the classics, current events, [and] virtually anything he could acquire” (xiv), including light novels. From a negative standpoint, however, he spent an enormous amount of time on this non-missionary activity.

Joseph F. began his mission on Maui where, on July 24, 1855, he was ap-
pointed president of the “Maui Conference,” which did not then include the nearby islands of Moloka‘i and Lana‘i. In April 1856, he was called to preside over one of the two conferences on Hawai‘i and, on his way there on April 17, wrote the following grammatically imperfect but aesthetically sophisticated description of his voyage:

We ware soon left in a compleat callm, the sails flittering and flop-[p]ing at each rock of our appearantly or seemingly deserted and forsaken craft. We ware alone and in silence, the howling of the wind had seased, and and [sic] the swol[ll]en wave had sank to its level, and all was still, but now the luminary of midnight had arisen to a considerable higth, its silvery rays shone softly upon the unrippled sea, which threw around us the most loving, and majestic of all sceneries, on our left & right ware the riseing hills of Maui & Lanai towering far above the milky clouds that hung thickly beneath their sum[m]its, and yet a little farther on ware the towering peakes of Maumakea and Maunaloa of Hawaii, with their snowy mantles spread by the hand of nature never to be removed, standing, to defy the tempests of ages gone by and to come, and from it[s] bowels ware belching forth the liquid flames of everlasting torment as is made know by our good and self righteous priests of this progressive and enlightened age.

Doing missionary work in the Sandwich Islands in the 1850s was no easy task. Utah missionaries generally lived with the natives in thatched huts, ate their exotic food, and constantly complained of being bitten all night by ticks and fleas. For example, for “breckfast” on March 19, 1856, Joseph F. “feasted” on “one potatoe and a little salt, Dinner and supper was the same, I had many strong thoughts, but in a oath thanked the lord for the privelige I then enjoyed.” The next day he reported: “Last night my rest was disturbed by being bit 4 or 5 times by a centipede which had cralled in my bead [bed]. I sleept no more till morning, (this was about midnight) in the morning attended meeting, and pertook of my breckfast which consisted of one potatoe and salt, as before.” Ricks notes that “Hawaiian centipedes vary in size, color, and potency of sting; the largest can reach twelve inches in length.” (17 note 30)

Even more candidly, Joseph recorded:

I have seen whol[e] families who ware on sallid [solid] mass of scabes, (having the itch[]) and every sti[t]ch, or rag they had about them or on their premisis, ware alive with the itch. I have slept in these circumstances, I have shaken handes with those whos[e] body and hands ware a scab! I have eaten food mixed up like unto batter with such handes. . . . I have slept in places where should my hog sleep my stumache would forbid me eating of it. . . . I have slept with my bretheren on the same mat with those who ware rotten! And stunk with diseas! And I have seen more than this, the fact of it is, this nation is rot[t]en, and stink[s] because of, and with their own wickedness, and but fiew are exceptionable, with but fiew exceptions their hogs, doges and cates and they live together, and I have seen doges particularly besides other animals, completely covered with the itch so that their hair had all left their bodies in a scabe. . . . Once I en-
tered a house where several persons was eating and there was a huge dog [that] stood with his head over the calabash of Poi, his mouth and eyes were drooling & run[n]ing water, matter &c. he had some fiew heres [hairs] upon him, but scabes, running sores, some skin, no flesh, bones &c.... (July 4, 1856, 40–41)

The typescript Ricks provides is clearly presented and serviceable, native language words and phrases are helpfully translated, and much useful information is communicated in the footnotes. He seems to have relied a great deal for these annotations on material in the Joseph F. Smith Papers Collection (LDS Church History Library). In footnotes he includes summaries and quotations from almost all of the extensive correspondence Joseph F. received from friends and relatives during the latter part of his mission, although these quotations tend to move the focus of the narrative away from Hawaii and toward Utah.

Ricks sometimes engages in unjustifiable speculations concerning passages in the typescript. For example Joseph F. wrote that he and his companion, Thomas A. Dowell, stayed one night on Moloka‘i with “three persons who professed to be mormons. We had to go to bed with out supper after traveling as we did. The folks afforded us one old dirty sheet or Kikei to sleep under, my thoughts have been, curious, a long [while?] back.” Ricks comments: “It is unclear on what Joseph F.’s ‘curious’ thoughts focused. It is possible that he is simply referring to the physical and spiritual degeneracy of the natives, or something completely unrelated. Perhaps this is even a veiled reference to curiosity about sexuality, suggested by the emphasis he places on the phrase and its seeming disjointed [sic] from the previous phrase” (96 and note 8).

The major shortcoming of this work, however, is Ricks’s apparent failure to consult any of the numerous journals being kept by Joseph F.’s fellow missionaries. Thus, his knowledge of mission history oftentimes is inadequate. For example, Joseph F.’s long-term companion on the Big Island of Hawaii was Washington B. Rogers. Ricks is apparently unaware that Rogers, early in his mission, was extremely paranoid, convinced that the native brethren on the east coast of Maui were determined to kill him. This episode occurred while Joseph F. also was on Maui and is thoroughly documented in Francis (“Frank”) Asbury Hammond’s journal. Apparently Rogers had moved past this problem when Joseph F. was his companion on Hawaii, however, since he

4 He identifies these documents as being in Richard E. Turley Jr., ed., Selected Collections from the Archives of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2 vols., DVD (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, [December 2002] (viii note 3).

5 Francis A. Hammond, Journal, December 21–23, 1854–January 12, 1855. The nine-volume holograph diary of Hammond’s Hawaiian Mission is in the LDS Church History Library, Salt Lake City. Several years ago, I made typescripts of this
notes only that Rogers was a “somewhat deficient” preacher and lacked proficiency in Hawaiian (June 22, 1856; May 5, 1857; 36, 99).

As a second example, Ricks apparently does not know that the whaleboats which were the main means of travel between Maui, Lana‘i, and Moloka‘i were also powered by sails (23 note 1–2). Third, he states that the Lahainaluna Seminary above Lahaina was a “Methodist-run high school established in 1831.” In fact, the “American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions” had founded the school, and it was primarily “Congregationalist or Calvinist, but open to other denominations.”

Fourth, Ricks quotes from a letter Henry P. Richards on Maui wrote to Joseph F. complaining of the idleness and disobedience of “these infernal servants of Napela’s.” Ricks suggests that they were “probably native elders” (34–35 note 31); but in addition to being a lawyer, judge, and prominent Mormon convert, Jonathan Napela ran a profitable potato-growing operation at Kula. It seems more likely that Richards was complaining about Napela’s employees.

Fifth, on March 29, 1856, Joseph F. had an angry verbal and physical confrontation with another missionary whom he calls “Bro. Linn,” and “Bro. G. Linn.” Ricks identifies him as “Elder Gordon Linn” (xxii, notes 14, 18–20, 38), but there was no Utah Mormon missionary in the Sandwich Islands in the 1850s by that name. He actually was Gustaf (or maybe Gustov) Linn (or Lynn), whom Henry Bigler baptized on June 29, 1852, on O‘ahu. He was an elderly carpenter, married to a native woman, and fluent in Swedish, English, and native Hawaiian. He served a full-time mission on the Big Island of Hawaii with James Keeler and Reddick Allred, and worked with other Utah missionaries on Maui and O‘ahu.

The confrontation was over a pair of scissors that Linn had loaned to Joseph F. According to Ricks, the lengthy (page and a half) journal entry describing this event (18–19) is all in Joseph F.’s handwriting, though Joseph F. prefaced his description of the altercation by saying “a scene followed that I shall
leave for bro. [Simpson] Molen to describe, as he was a spectator.” Ricks speculates that “Molen [Joseph F.’s companion] dictated his version of events to Joseph” (19 note 35). According to this description—which is ambiguous and seemingly very contradictory—Linn asked for his scissors, Joseph F. failed to produce them immediately, Linn became angry, there was a heated verbal exchange, and Linn called him a rude name. At that point, “Linn drew up and struck him [Joseph Jr.] with his fist on the temple,” but everything that follows makes it fairly clear that it was Joseph F. who walked over and punched Linn while the latter was sitting down. Linn rubbed his head, complained about Joseph F.’s action, and threatened: “I will try the law for it and see if it will uphold you in imposing upon another like this. S[mith said] Go ahead and sue me if you wish.” Joseph F. had gotten into several conflicts with other Utah missionaries early in his mission—documented in Hammond’s journal—and clearly had a hot temper. The contradictory, problematic account of the altercation with Linn may be an indication that Joseph F. had an uneasy conscience and attempted to cover up his action.

One of the great values of Joseph F.’s diary is its documentation of the serious decline in the mission, especially in the period covered by his extant journals. On Hawaii as early as the summer of 1856, he noted that “we have been nine days on a stretch with out a morsel of meat, and as poor poi as I could eat!” (42) In 1856 and 1857, many of the Utah elders reported that the native Mormons throughout the mission became increasingly unwilling to feed them. On February 9, 1857, Joseph F. struggled to provide a just assessment: “Ware I to speak with Strict versatily I would call this people any thing but Saints, for indeed they are as destitute of that quality as, as the winters’ chilliest Blast is of the destitute of the ardent rai [rays] of a Summers’ Sun! this is strictly true, yet I will admit that some—a precious fiew!—are honest, Kind and hospitable as their limited knowlage, dispositions, vageres [vagaries] and educations will permit, and I do feel to say god Bless that precious fiew!” (79)

Two months later on Moloka‘i, Joseph F. found only lapsed Mormons who totally refused to feed him and his companion. Joseph F. exploded wrathfully:

I have ate enough dirt and filth, put up with anough inconveniencies, slept sufficiently in their filth, muck & mire, lice and every thing els[e], I have been ill treated, abused, and trod on by these nefarious ethnicks just long enough. I believe it is no longer a virtue, if they will not not obey my testimony—and my counsels, but persist in their wickedness, hard heartedness, and indifference, their lies, lyings, deceitfulness, and hard hearted cruelty as regards the servents of the lord, I will not stay with them, but leave them to their fait. (April 8, 1857)

To survive, Smith and his companion (Dowell) milked cows for a non-Mormon dairyman in the area, trying unsuccessfully to convert him and a few
other whites. Joseph F. then ended his mission at the City of Joseph on Lana‘i, where he spent most of his time reading books and writing letters. When he left the islands on October 6, 1857, Brigham Young (only in part, one could argue, because of the Utah War) was closing down the mission.

Ricks offers four reasons for the mission’s serious decline after 1854. First, “inexperienced” converts were given leadership responsibilities; second, as already noted, the demands of supporting the missionaries were a heavy drain on members’ resources; third, “cultural schisms” alienated the members from “the Anglo missionaries”; and fourth, the “Protestant community” experienced “growing anti-Mormon sentiment” (3). In fact, Protestant missionaries had been working vigorously against the Mormons since 1851.

Ricks’s first reason—inexperienced local leaders—was less of a problem than traditional Hawaiian sexual promiscuity and missionary inconsistency in dealing with it. Native Elders Jonathan Naela, J. W. H. Kauahui, and William H. Uaua committed adultery quite regularly, felt great remorse, and were quickly “forgiven” by the Utah elders (who often excommunicated less important native sexual transgressors), because these Hawaiian leaders were crucial to the success of the Mormon effort. While exploiting the social position and affluence of these native Mormon luminaries, the Utah elders patronizingly referred to native priesthood holders in general as “children” and seldom included them in mission decisions. This exclusion certainly led directly to “cultural schisms,” and in fact the native brethren angrily “revolted” at the mission conference on Lana‘i in late July 1855, though Ricks does not mention it. Their protest was summarily quashed.9

As for the financial burden imposed by the missionaries, the mission was required to be self-sustaining, and the missionaries themselves were certainly poor. However, the native Saints resented pressures to pay for the translation of the Book of Mormon and George Q. Cannon’s pamphlet in Hawaiian promoting it, but they more deeply resented Brigham Young’s order to move what had started out as the “Hawaiian Mission press” (purchased with money principally supplied by the native Saints) to San Francisco where it was employed mostly in publishing the Mormon Western Standard in English. The native Saints also sacrificed substantially to underwrite Elder Nathan Tanner’s scheme to buy a “mission vessel” in San Francisco (a financial failure) followed by the badly constructed sloop Lanai, also a total failure. Furthermore, the missionaries usually took for granted the native Saints’ efforts to provide food, lodging, and laundry services. The elders virtually never washed their own clothes and would go to great lengths to

9Hammond, Journal, July 23–24, 1855; see also John Stillman Woodbury, Diary, July 23–24, 1855, holograph and typescript, MSS 168, Box 1, fd. 13, Perry Special Collections.
get native women to do it for them.

A further source of disillusionment, not noted by Ricks, was the failed attempt to “gather” all of the native Saints to Palawai on Lanai. Such a move violated the deep-seated commitment of natives to their specific island and traditional village. My great-great-grandfather Frank Hammond was the primary mover in this attempt to create what the native convert “pioneers” on Lanai took to calling “Zion 2” (“Zion 1” being Utah), and he compounded the problem by attempting to force them to live a radical version of the communitarian Mormon law of consecration. Other major negative factors in the decline of the mission, which Ricks does not mention, were the public announcement in 1852 that polygamy was Mormon Church policy and the failure of priesthood administrations to protect the Oahu and East Maui Saints from a terrible smallpox epidemic in 1853.

These many negative factors led to the publicly proclaimed apostasy in late 1856 of the highly influential Elders Kauwahi and, for a time, Uaua. At about the same time, Utah Mormon missionary John Hyde Jr. immediately apostatized upon reaching Honolulu and, enthusiastically aided by Protestant missionaries, dramatically aired his views in public meetings, newspaper articles, and a pamphlet. Ricks provides useful information regarding these sensational events. In his diary, Joseph F. acknowledged that these developments profoundly troubled the native Saints, caused many of them to drop away, and made others less willing to provide food and laundry services for the Utah elders. He recorded spending most of Sunday, February 25, 1857, in “partially . . . removing the load of cankering doubt resting upon the minds of the people, because of the reasent attempts of Hyde and Kauwahi to thwart Mormonism, and anihilate its propogaters” (81).

It is clear in Joseph F.’s journal that he became increasingly contemptuous of the native Hawaiian people in general during the mission’s decline in 1856 and 1857. In 1864 at age twenty-five, he returned to Hawaii as part of a high-level Church delegation assigned to deal with the problems created by Walter Murray Gibson; and although Brigham Young invited him to remain and assist in reopening and rebuilding the mission, he declined. The next time he returned to Hawaii was in the 1880s to avoid arrest for unlawful cohabitation in Utah.

My criticisms of this edition aside, the book has many positive features, and historians owe Nathan Ricks a debt of gratitude for making much more accessible the mission diaries of Joseph F. Smith, who, despite his extreme youth, was a perceptive and powerful figure in the early Hawaiian Mission and LDS Church.


Reviewed by Blair Dee Hodges

As a doctoral student in religious studies, Stephen C. Taysom wished he had a collection of “fine scholarship” he could use to show professors and others “who expressed skepticism about the fitness of Mormonism as an object of serious academic study” what they were missing (vii). Now Taysom is a professor of religious studies at Cleveland State University. His reworked dissertation, *Shakers, Mormons, and Religious Worlds: Conflicting Visions, Contested Boundaries*, was published by Indiana University Press in 2011. Enough has changed within the academy (and within Taysom’s own circles) over the past few years to turn his professors’ skepticism into inquiry: “I have received requests from colleagues for a selection of readings that might be used profitably in courses dealing with Mormonism,” Taysom reports in *Dimensions of Faith: A Mormon Studies Reader* (xi).

His *Reader* is a collection of fifteen essays analyzing Mormonism through literary, ritual, film, gender, folklore, and other studies. Taysom argues that the collection’s very existence bears witness that “Mormonism is a rich field of inquiry into which theories and methods of a vast array of disciplines are being widely and skillfully integrated” (viii). Rather than describing a few of the papers Taysom selected and giving them a thumbs up or down, I’d like to use the book as a way to examine a few key issues being debated—or not—in discussions of Mormon studies today.

First, Taysom notes a pressing puzzle regarding the current state of Mormon studies—the fact that “there has been some debate about the term” (viii). What sort of practice does “Mormon studies” refer to, and who are the practi-
tioners? With a few notable exceptions, the discussion is too young to have received much attention in print. More often the debate has occurred in academic conference sessions and blog posts. Attention has been given elsewhere to the increasing number of Mormon-themed courses and the establishment of Mormon chairs in colleges and universities, including those at Utah State University and Claremont Graduate University. In Taysom’s view, Mormon studies usually consists of work which “draws on the historical record and applies, tests, works through, and evaluates broader theoretical issues and ideas” (viii). History has indeed been the principal avenue by which scholars have studied and written about Mormonism thus far—a fact which Taysom not only acknowledges, but can’t fully escape in the papers he selected for inclusion.

He divides the papers into five “thematic rubrics” (ix): biography, theory, memory, experience, media/literature. I don’t quite grasp the utility of this schema, in part because the division is somewhat uneven—two papers in the smallest category (biography), six in the largest (media/literature). Many of the papers seem to elide these categories. Furthermore, six of the fifteen essays deal with polygamy as a central theme. Scholars pursuing research on Mormonism have benefited from an embarrassment of riches for decades, which contributes to this history-focused approach.

This concentration on history calls attention to the fact that much remains to be done in regards to Mormon studies focusing on the twenty-first century, to say nothing of non-historical approaches. Only three of the fifteen chapters deal with Mormonism after the presidency of David O. McKay: Martha Bradley-Evans’s “Building Community: The Fundamentalist Mormon Concept of Space” (51–72), Stephen C. Taysom, “A Uniform and Common Recollection: Joseph Smith’s Legacy, Polygamy, and Public Memory, 1852–2002” (177–213), and Reinhold R. Hill, “God’s Chosen People: Mormon Representations of the Jewish Other in Holocaust Literature” (375–89). Note that only one of the three focuses on Mormon traditions outside of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Taysom is careful to note that the book is not exhaustive: “Readers should think of this book as an introduction to the kind of fine scholarship that is

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flowering in the field rather than as anything approaching a comprehensive archive” (vii). The book accurately demonstrates that “Mormon studies” is a contestable term and that most Mormon studies output has focused on historical examination.

Second, the Mormon Studies Reader tells us something about the makeup of current practitioners of Mormon studies. Rather than drawing from a “Mormon studies elite,” Taysom notes that “a number of the contributors are not professional historians,” meaning they don’t hold Ph.D’s or professorships in history (ix). In addition to work by such duly credentialed participants, we find essays by “a medical doctor, a chemist . . . a professional editor, independent researchers” and a few graduate students (ix). Taysom sees such diversity as “one of the most attractive elements of the current state of Mormon studies.” What binds them together is their “commitment to thorough and thoughtful scholarship” (ix). Indeed, some of the finest work in the volume is by authors who make their professional homes outside the halls of the academy. An example is the excellent contribution by Jonathan A. Stapley, a chief technology officer for a natural sweetener company, and Kristine Wright, an independent researcher with an M.A. in history: “The Forms and the Power: The Development of Mormon Ritual Healing to 1847” (135–76).

Further, not all contributions represent an “insider’s” perspective, though such voices are fewer. These include Lawrence Foster’s “Sex and Prophetic Power: A Comparison of John Humphrey Noyes, Founder of the Oneida Community, with Joseph Smith Jr., the Mormon Prophet” (25–49) and Douglas J. Davies’s “Mormon Studies in a European Setting” (73–82). A picture emerges of a group of practitioners from diverse professional and religious backgrounds, though room for more variety exists.

All fifteen of the essays were previously published elsewhere. The publications from which Taysom draws his selections likewise give a picture of the largely internal location of article publications on Mormon topics. Six articles apiece come from Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought and the Journal of Mormon History. The other three are from the Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society, Communal Societies, Religion, and American Culture, and Clio: A Journal of Literature, History, and the Philosophy of History.

Interestingly, no articles appear from publications of the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship (formerly FARMS). Though Taysom does not mention the lacuna, M. Gerald Bradford’s “The Study of Mormonism: A Growing Interest in Academia,” (119–74), contains a pertinent suggestion: “Scholars who in the past have geared their writings about the tradition mainly toward an LDS audience and who want to contribute to the kind of scholarship relied upon by those working in broader religious studies programs will need to write for a wider academic audience if their work is to be published by recognized scholarly presses.” That isn’t to say the Maxwell Insti-
tute hasn’t produced any literature which would fulfill Bradford’s description, as his own paper proves. Another example of appropriately ecumenical scholarship from the Maxwell Institute is LDS scholar David Bokovoy’s rigorous exchange with Evangelical scholar Michael S. Heiser in the FARMS Review, an academic conversation that raises an interesting question about the propriety of including ancient scripture studies under the rubric of Mormon studies. Nevertheless, including Maxwell Institute publications would only tip the scales further toward Mormon-centric publications.

Professor Patrick Q. Mason, who recently succeeded Richard L. Bushman as holder of the Howard W. Hunter Chair of Mormon Studies at Claremont Graduate University, has called for greater participation in wider circles. “I’m convinced,” he writes, that those interested in Mormon studies should focus on “reaching out [to be] published in the premier journals of various non-Mormon, and even non-religious, subfields.” That this is already occurring, but could occur more frequently, is evident from Taysom’s collection.

Third, the Mormon Studies Reader tells us something about the makeup of current consumers of Mormon studies. Taysom hopes his collection can reach two broad groups: those with a “casual interest in Mormon studies” and those “of an academic bent” (x). Members of the first group aren’t pursuing religion-related academic degrees or hanging out in the archives in their spare time. Many of them “will be tied to Mormonism in some personal way,” be they active, participating members in some branch of Mormonism, those who have “left the institutional Church,” and those who fit somewhere between these poles (x). Although none of the essays explores this important point, Taysom notes that any one of them has “the potential to change the way readers relate to Mormonism on personal and emotional levels” (x). Members of the second group are those who are already familiar with a good deal of Mormon historiography “but who are looking for a digest of some of the most recent scholarship in the field” (x–xi). Taysom’s editorial decisions were “informed by the notion that the book might be deployed in undergraduate classrooms” (xi), a description suggesting that Taysom would disagree with my use of “consumers” as his intended audience. Taysom is looking for something else. “To me,” he writes, “reading is not a passive activity. It is a contact sport”:

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I spend most of my time teaching undergraduates. Many of them have never read an academic book. My advice to them is not to merely read this book but to step into a boxing ring with it and engage the ideas they encounter here. Take up a pen and analyze the authors’ positions. Interrogate them. Express in the margins your agreement and perplexity and contempt and frustration or, on the other hand, your agreement and surprise and joy at what you learn. I would recommend seizing the arguments and ideas and wringing out their implications (xi).

The physical composition of the book bears this challenge out, printed on pleasingly heavy paper with generous margins all around. This excerpt also points to a key theme in the emerging concept of the purpose of Mormon studies: the placing within, or viewing of Mormonism against, a wider context. Not only will this attitude help readers not to be “unduly influenced by proselytizers,” but will also help them better “understand other people’s beliefs” (xi). This comparative and contextual approach is frequently championed by those most interested in the future of Mormon studies.5

Fourth and finally, Taysom’s book is a testament to the fact that the emerging field of Mormon studies is white, already to harvest, “wide enough to accommodate all who put forth the effort and expend the intellectual energy to contribute” (x). This seems to be the primary reason Taysom edited the collection, the success of which can be measured to the extent that “it leads readers to other books and articles in the expanding world of Mormon studies. Moreover, its success will be amplified if it provides writers and researchers with new ideas and approaches to energize their own work” (vii–viii). There is enough diversity and rigor in Taysom’s Mormon Studies Reader to demonstrate the vibrancy of Mormon studies today, while simultaneously showing us that things are only just beginning. The individual papers are worthy for Taysom’s task.

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Reviewed by Richard A. McFarlane

It has been almost twenty-five years since Stephen L. LeSueur gave us *The 1838 Mormon War in Missouri* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1987) and a new treatment of the troubles in Missouri is past due. At first, I was excited and intrigued by the promise that Brandon G. Kinney, a lawyer by training and profession rather than a historian, would offer a fresh and fascinating insight into the Missouri-Mormon conflict of 1837 to 1838 by tying it to the Civil War a quarter century later: “Here in 1830s Missouri, we have the seeds of the Civil War, challenges to core American beliefs in freedom, and an outcome that shaped the future of westward migration” (ix). Alas, this challenging thesis was not developed.

If slavery was the cause of the Civil War, Kinney fails to make the connection between the Missouri troubles and the larger conflict. He mentions the political controversies over the admission of Missouri as a slave state in 1821 (11–21) and the abolitionist attitude of many Mormon immigrants to Missouri, especially those from Canada (109–10) but does not adequately examine Mormon responses to charges of abolitionism nor does he expound on slavery and abolitionism as a cause of the Mormon War. If states rights or some other issue was the cause of the Civil War, Kinney does not explore it at all in the context of Missouri and the Mormon War. He does not expound on “freedom” more generally as a cause or as an effect of the Mormon War, except perhaps in that Missouri became free of Mormons. Further, he does not explain how the Mormon War “shaped the future of westward migration.”

Kinney correctly states that the Mormon War “is also a stark lesson in the damages of prejudice, a problem that our country has continued to struggle with throughout its history” (ix). He hints at but does not address the important questions that *The Mormon War*, or a book like it, needs to address in a post-9/11 world. What *is* the meaning of “freedom”? What are the limits of religious freedom, if any? What rights do a religious minority, or any minority for that matter, have? More importantly, what rights do they have when the government is their persecutor, rather than their protector? What rights do the majority have in a democracy? Is America a truly pluralistic society? Can it be? Imagine the book rewritten with the word “Muslim” replacing the word “Mormon,” and these questions come into sharp focus.

In essence, *The Mormon War* is a mere narrative history of the events in Missouri in the 1830s without offering any new facts or any new insight. The book
begins well enough with a brief chapter on the life of Joseph Smith Jr. and the origins of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, followed by another on the admission of Missouri to the Union. Coincidentally, both the Mormon Church and Missouri began “early in the spring of 1820,” when Joseph Smith had his First Vision and when President James Monroe signed the enabling act permitting Missouri to frame a state constitution as a part of the Missouri Compromise. However, the book then digresses to explore the history of the Mormons in Ohio without ever tying events in Ohio to the events in Missouri. The chapter on the Kirtland Safety Society and its collapse (Chapter 6) was particularly distracting. The role of the Danites could have been explained better. To be true to the promises made to his readers in the preface, Kinney ought to have made more of an effort to weave the events in Missouri into the larger tapestry of Jacksonian America.

There is little evidence of original research. Kinney’s bibliography mentions the archives of the Historical Department of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and of the “Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints” [sic], but a careful perusal of the endnotes does not indicate that he made much use of them, if any. Although Kinney made use of the “Mormon War Papers, 1837–1841” in the Missouri State Archives, he seems to rely mostly on published primary sources, especially the multi-volume History of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, and on secondary sources, especially Fawn Brodie’s No Man Knows My History. Even his use of secondary sources is incomplete; for example he does not cite James L. Bradley’s Zion’s Camp 1834: Prelude to Civil War (Salt Lake City: Publisher’s Press, 1990).

There are several factual errors which do not necessarily or directly affect the core of book but which are conspicuous enough to call into question the thoroughness and accuracy of Kinney’s research. For example, he states that John Taylor “remained unharmed” during the attack on June 27, 1844, in which Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum were murdered at Carthage Jail in Carthage, Illinois, when, in fact, Taylor was shot four times, though none of the wounds was fatal (199). It was Willard Richards, the fourth member of the Mormon party, whom Kinney does not even mention, who was uninjured except for a clipped earlobe. As another example, Kinney states that John D. Lee, who was an active participant in the Mormon War and whose Mormonism Unveiled Kinney cites repeatedly, was “duly hanged” for his role in the Mountain Meadows Massacre of 1857 (202), when, in fact, he was shot by a firing squad. Kinney also fails to mention that the Extermination Order was eventually rescinded in 1976. Finally, the dust jacket depicts, not a Missouri scene, but the “Burning of the Mormon Temple at Nauvoo, Illinois, in 1848” by “Carl” Christensen (should be “C.C.A. Christensen”). This error is probably not the author’s fault, but it does reflect badly on the work as a whole.
The Mormon War had great promise. It could have been a significant contribution to the historiography of the Mormons, of Jacksonian America, of Missouri, and even of the Civil War. It could have offered a historical lens through which to view twenty-first-century issues of prejudice, fear of the other, religion, terrorism (state-sponsored and otherwise), ethnic cleansing, and pluralism. Sadly it did not live up to expectations, at least not up to mine.

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Reviewed by Paul Wilson

Mormonism in nineteenth-century Finland by the numbers: 25 missionaries, 77 converts, and 3,460 newspaper articles. When proselyting missionaries returned in 1946, only a handful of faithful Mormons remained (in the village of Larsmo), but the media image formed in those newspaper articles still shapes perceptions of Mormonism in Finland today. The history of this community and its encounter with Finnish society is the subject of Kim Östman’s dissertation in the history and sociology of religion, completed at Åbo Akademi in Turku, Finland, in 2010. In contrast to the United States, all dissertations are published in Finland. However, a dissertation is only defended when it is ready to stand as a completed book.

Östman clearly states his goals as describing Mormon religious activity in nineteenth-century Finland, analyzing the response of Finnish society to Mormonism, and theorizing this encounter using sociological theory (2–3). He frames the story as a clash between two socially constructed worldviews. The new religion spread primarily through social networks, but the monopolistic religious economy of nineteenth-century Finland impeded its expansion.

The first two chapters situate the study within two academic fields: Mormon history and the history of religion in Finland. Since there is little overlap between them, the first two chapters serve to set both audiences on equal footing. Chapter 1 is a primer for Östman’s Finnish audience about the history and distinctive doctrines of the Church, while Chapter 2 summarizes the
nineteenth-century Finnish religious landscape for historians of Mormonism.

The Lutheran Church dominated this landscape. When Finland became a semi-autonomous Grand Duchy of Russia in 1809, the Russians agreed to let it keep the law code from its previous period of Swedish rule. This meant that the Lutheran Church retained its status as a state church even as the Russian Orthodox Church was raised to the same position. However, the number of Russian Orthodox in Finland remained tiny and their local influence negligible, particularly in the Swedish-speaking southern and western coastal areas where Mormon missionary work occurred. Any religious proselytizing or activity outside of the state churches remained illegal until the Dissenter Act was approved in 1889. However, this status did not affect the Mormon Church, since it never applied for official recognition and probably would have received it if it had (81). In spite of this religious monopoly, Östman argues that the period saw “an unprecedented pluralization of the Finnish religious landscape,” with the Lutheran Church challenged by internal revivalist movements and smaller Anglo-American religious groups including Mormons, Baptists, Methodists, and others (65).

With Chapter 3, Östman begins his original contribution to the field, by analyzing how printed media had already begun shaping public opinion of Mormonism in 1840. In addition to a few books and magazine articles, his primary sources are 3,460 individual articles mentioning Mormonism in Finnish newspapers. These come from the Historical Newspaper Library of the National Library of Finland, a searchable database of all newspapers printed in Finland between 1771 and 1900. He offers a rigorous discourse analysis of the various representational tropes (almost exclusively negative) used in the stories. Since most of them are examples of “scissor journalism,” consisting of material copied from other sources, there are plenty of salacious quotations but no real surprises for anyone familiar with Mormon history (100). The analysis does set up his claim that, “when Mormon missionaries eventually came to Finland to proselytize in 1875, they did not enter a society that knew nothing of them. To the contrary, they entered into a society in which they and their motives tended to be seen as highly controversial” (159). The roles for polygamists, deceivers, and victims had already been written, and missionaries and converts inside Finland were merely fit into them.

The fourth chapter provides a chronological account of Mormon missionary efforts in Finland and allows Östman to demonstrate how the faith

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1 This fact complicates Zachary R. Jones’s study, which frames the missionary effort in Finland primarily as an encounter between Mormonism and the Russian church and state. See Jones, “Conversion amid Conflict: Mormon Proselytizing in Russian Finland, 1861–1914,” Journal of Mormon History 35, no. 3 (Summer 2009): 1–41.
was spread primarily through social networks. The account paints the missionary efforts led by the Stockholm Conference of the Scandinavian Mission as haphazard at best. No more than one or two missionaries were called at a time, and there were long periods with no missionary activity at all. While the illegality of proselytizing in Finland certainly explains the modestness of this effort, there also seems to have been a lack of commitment from LDS Church authorities in Sweden and Utah. Östman also points out that, in contrast to other Scandinavian countries, no local missionaries (converts called to serve within their own country) were ever used in Finland, reflecting—or perhaps creating—a situation in which “the Mormonism of the Finns appears to have been reactive rather than proactive. They relied strongly on the missionaries and did not actively seem to want to spread the faith themselves” (230).

Östman examines how various elements of Finnish society reacted to Mormon proselytizing in Chapter 5, dividing societal actors into four groups: civil authorities, Lutheran clergy, newspaper writers, and laypeople. As he discusses the responses of these various actors, an organizational limitation of his study becomes apparent. After the extensive analysis of press coverage in Chapter 3, much of what he has to say here begins to be redundant, even though the specific stories and the interpretive framework are different. However, it is interesting to compare his characterizations of the relationships between these actors to those in the Zachary R. Jones article published in this journal in 2009. Whereas Jones’s account reads like a thriller with missionaries on the run from the Czar’s special police goaded on by Orthodox clergy, Östman sees civil authorities varying greatly in the zealousness of their enforcement and intervening mostly at the insistence of Lutheran clergy or church councils.

Chapter 6 is the most compelling in the book. It gives a narrative account of the Mormon community in the village of Pohja, which became the center of a well-publicized trial. While Östman refers to Pohja as a “microcosm” of the Mormon encounter with Finnish society, the case study also seems to offer a contrast to the Mormon experience elsewhere in Finland. The Mormon community and trial centered on Johan Blom, who joined the Church in Sweden. Instead of encouraging him and his family to immigrate to Utah, the Stockholm Conference president asked him to move with his family to Finland to help establish the Church. Blom found work as a gardener at a local manor in 1880. Over time, a small cluster of members linked through social networks of coworkers, servants, friends, and family members coalesced around him. He ultimately was convicted of baptizing on the Sabbath and distributing unap-

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2 Compare Jones, 18-33 to Östman, 237–70.
proved religious publications, served a prison sentence, and immigrated to Utah in 1886. Although missionaries continued to visit the village and baptisms occurred after these events, the Mormon congregation eventually dispersed and the children of the members never became Mormon. In contrast to the isolated converts sustained only by foreign missionaries elsewhere in Finland, Pohja seems, briefly, to have had a small, but vibrant, Mormon community.

The final chapter explores immigration by Finnish Mormons to Utah. Here, the numbers are even smaller. Subtracting the Blom family who had planned to go to Utah even before they came to Finland, Östman estimates that only eight members emigrated. He explains: “The scattered Mormons in Finland were mostly not able to experience such social cohesion, integration, and mutual reinforcement of excitement and longings for Zion that eventually turned into mobilization and action” (365). While the small number of immigrants makes it hard to extrapolate, he uses this chapter to discuss how the doctrine of the gathering paradoxically contributed to the failure of missionary efforts. He writes, “It does not seem to have been a goal to establish strong local congregations abroad, but rather to ‘harvest the crop’ and send it home [to Zion]” (377). This “colonial model” worked as long as there were enough local members to sustain the momentum (377). Unfortunately, in Finland it meant that members remained dependent on missionaries—not just to spread the faith, but to sustain any sort of collective religious practice.

The book is comprehensive, impeccably researched, and makes a significant contribution toward globalizing the history of the nineteenth-century Church.

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This book, as the title suggests, asks and answers 500 questions regarding the history of Nauvoo. These questions are organized into chapters that are alphabetized according to topic. Some of the topics include “Food and Drink” (65), “Homes and Construction” (71), “King Follett Discourse” (87), and “Outdoors and Nature” (152).

George and Sylvia Givens published the first edition of this book in 2000. According to Bobbie Givens Goettler, their daughter and author of the Foreword, “My parents spent time as volunteer historians at Nauvoo Restoration, Inc. Although they led the occasional tour, they primarily focused on answering . . . questions Nauvoo visitors had asked but that the guides’ scripts did not usually answer. Aware such questions might be asked again and again, and that missionary guides might wish to have a ready source, they compiled those questions and answers here.”

The book covers a wide range of topics and questions, some of them assuming considerable background knowledge on the reader’s part. For example, one question is: “Who were the Germans who came after the Icarians?” The answer: “Even while the Icarians were here, German and Swiss immigrants learned of the abandoned Mormon city and started settling here. Word went back to their friends and relatives in Europe, and soon Nauvoo had the largest German-speaking population of any city in Illinois. The immigration started about the year the temple was burned. The Germans were the ones who established the wine culture in Nauvoo” (151).

Another example is: “Since the Thompsonian system of natural medicine was prevalent in Nauvoo, we can assume Lyon (the drugstore owner) sold herbal medicines. Did he grow his own herbs?” The answer: “Lyon would have had an herb garden, as did practically every household in Nauvoo. It didn’t take the prompting of Thompsonian enthusiasts to encourage the use of herbs. Wives and mothers had used them for centuries, and belief in their curative powers was not lost upon the women of Nauvoo, especially with
their Prophet urging greater reliance on them” (100).

However, other questions and answers are more straightforward. For example, “When and how were the death masks of Joseph and Hyrum made?” The answer: “They were made as the bodies of Joseph and Hyrum were being prepared for burial in Nauvoo by M. Hamlin Cannon, George Q. Cannon’s father—who would die two months later—fashioned the molds out of Nauvoo clay, from which the plaster casts were made. The molds were destroyed in the process, but Wilford C. Wood purchased the original casts for his private museum in Woods Cross, Utah. In 1990, the masks were donated to the Church Museum. Since that time, copies have been made of the originals and are not that uncommon” (25). Such questions do not require the reader’s personal experience in Nauvoo or previous knowledge to understand the answer.

The appendix includes “A Nauvoo Chronology,” which focuses on the history of the city. For example, “April 6, 1845: At this conference, the people vote to change the name of Nauvoo to the ‘City of Joseph.’ This decision is honored more in the spirit than practice” (251).

The appendix also includes 152 “Recommended Sources” that gives the interested reader a place to begin with further research; and although the book has no subject index, it include an index of individuals named in the book.


Benjamin Bistline’s “family moved to Short Creek, Arizona, in 1945 to join a united order movement, also known as The United Effort Plan” (233), founded in 1942 by polygamists who resisted the cessation of this historic Mormon practice. Bistline’s widowed mother remarried as a fifth wife and raised her family in a large polygamous household. Bistline grew up in the community, though he did not practice polygamy. In the 1980s, Bistline “became discouraged with the polygamists due to their changes in religious doctrine,” left the community, and joined “the LDS Church in 1992” (233–34).

Part history and part personal commentary, this book documents the history of Colorado City (with less attention to neighboring Hildale) as a polygamist community.

Following Bistline’s foreword, a list of scripture references, and an introduction, the book is organized in nineteen sections. These first nine sections comprise the history of Colorado City starting with the “Birth of the Fundamentalists” (5). The section titles that follow chronologically include titles such as, “Failed United Order Now a United Effort,” and “The Infamous Short Creek Raid” (5). The last ten sections document the transitions in power and doctrine in the FLDS Church. These changes in doctrine and organiza-
tion have, in turn, directly affected the history of Colorado City. Five sections focus on the intracommunity power struggles of prominent polygamous families while two other sections deal with the evictions of residents accused of sinful behavior. Following these sections is an interview with the author about the state of modern polygamy.

The Fundamentalist movement began with what “is referred to as The Eight Hour Meeting among polygamists” (19) in which LDS Church President John Taylor in 1886 “set [five men] apart and gave them authority to perform [polygamous] marriage ceremonies, and also to set others apart to do the same thing as long as they remained on the earth” (22). A group of people “who live[d] in Short Creek, Arizona . . . came to [these] Brethren and offered their land . . . as a gathering place for polygamists” (30). Accepting this offer, those allegedly entrusted with the continuation of polygamy found a home in Short Creek (renamed Colorado City in 1961 to avoid the “stigma” [85] associated with the 1953 Short Creek Raid by Arizona and federal officials.

Bistline describes FLDS attempts to organize a United Order (30), construct schools, a post office, and a general store (83, 57), dig wells (47), pave roads, and generate electricity. Such improvements were always connected with polygamous leaders. Many of these improvements were tied to Marion Hammon who organized a “missionary” program that performed public works. For example, in 1943 the members constructed a meetinghouse. “The building of a power line was completed in 1959” (80) while 1960 saw the “construction on the [high] school building,” and 1962 brought “a new paved highway . . . from Hurricane to Colorado City” (86), all under Hammon’s direction. Power struggles among the leaders affected the community’s infrastructure, services, and morale. For example, in the 1940s, priesthood “cliques” formed, vying for the “priesthood council’s” approval for marriages (45). A “Gestapo-like Goon Squad” emerged in the 1960s (116). Beginning in the 1980s, Short Creek’s corrupt (and legally powerless) “chief protector” Sam Barlow illegally evicted targeted residents from their homes (111), under the policy of “Tenant at Will” (158), a policy developed in 1976 by Rulon T. Jeffs.

In the sixteenth section of the book, Bistline appraises Warren Jeffs’s methods of consolidating and maintaining his power during the lengthy final illness of his father, Rulon Jeffs. He became the prophet when Rulon died in September of 2002. Although this book ends before Jeffs’s arrest in August 2006 or the raid on the FLDS compound in Eldorado, Texas, in April 2008, Bistline, writing in 2004, predicted: “At some point indictments and warrants may be issued for his [Warren Jeffs’s] arrest . . . I do not believe that he would, of his own accord, abandon the project in Texas, since he has put so much effort and money into it. He will try to isolate it so that he will not come under scrutiny of local law enforcement. . . . It is also
my opinion that because of the things Warren Jeffs is doing and the course he is taking (alienating a good many of his followers), he will not be able to maintain control of the community and the people there” (224).

Bistline also urges the decriminalization of polygamy as “the bottom line solution that may produce the greatest gain.” As polygamists “come out into the world . . . they will see clearly that they have choices. Stay in polygamy. Or leave. But the choice is theirs” (228).


This book takes a brief look into the Community of Christ (former Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints) and its historical tradition of congregational music. It is a collection of sheet music, pictures, and short essays that analyze each piece of music. Richard Clothier, emeritus professor of music at Graceland University, has provided a history of the creation of each of the eleven hymnals from 1835 to the present, and then presents a few selections from each.

Clothier states, “One of the best ways to truly understand our heritage is to not only study the events that happened, but to also try to discover what the people felt about what was happening. And, an important path to understanding the beliefs, hopes, and desires of a people can be found in the studying of the hymns that emerged in their worship” (1). Emma Smith has the distinction of compiling four hymnals (110), one in 1835, which was revised and enlarged in 1841 (both, therefore, before Joseph’s death), then a second version in 1861 for the newly formed Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, headed by her son, Joseph III, with a revision in 1864 (6).

Between Emma’s 1835 hymnal in Kirtland and her 1841 revision in Nauvoo came one published in 1840 in Manchester, England, by Apostles Parley P. Pratt, John Taylor and Brigham Young (6). This hymnal contained many of the hymns that appear in the current LDS hymnal and also in the RLDS hymnals that followed.

Joseph III and Emma’s youngest son, David Hyrum, were both published poets; they participated in compiling The Saints’ Harp (28), in 1870. This was a collection of more than a thousand hymn texts containing two-thirds of Emma’s original hymns (29).

The hymn books in the early Church contained only texts; the tunes were not added until the 1889 hymnal, The Saints’ Harmony. This edition contained both texts and tunes that were interchangeable, allowing the singer to pick a number of tunes that would fit with a text (39). This hymnal was followed by The Saints’ Hymnal in 1895. This hymnal inserted the text between the staffs making it easier to read the text and
the melodies (52). Because these two hymnals were in use simultaneously, Clothier explains, “it was generally felt that it would be more practical to combine selections from both books into a single volume” (73). The second edition of The Saints’ Hymnal was compiled in 1933 and was a compilation from the two hymnals.

Zion’s Praises was published in 1903 and was used for Sunday School worship. It contained songs that were included in later editions, including possibly the best-loved of all RLDS hymns, “There’s an Old, Old Path,” written by Vida E. Smith, the daughter of Alexander Hale Smith.

Two more hymnals were published: The Hymnal (1953), and the current Hymns of the Saints in 1981 (91). Clothier concludes by introducing the new hymnal planned for 2013, which will include “a significant number of indigenous songs of the various countries in which the church has a presence” (101).


Growing up, Fletcher, her five siblings (one older and four younger), and her father had no idea that Vickie had multiple personalities. It wasn’t until Fletcher was nineteen that doctors diagnosed her mother. Despite the problem, Tiffany’s father, George Young, threatened to leave Vickie but never did because he still loved her. However, he started to work long hours to avoid tensions and uncertainties at home, so Tiffany and her older sister raised her younger sisters.

Tiffany describes her mother as having “been chained down by the depravity of this world. She was a hostage to her own broken and shattered mind” (177). Although Tiffany says that Vickie tried hard to be a good mother, “she seemed to hurt those she loved the most, a tragic destiny for a woman who had so much to give” (177). She succeeded in a partial victory—she never sexually abused her own children—but she was often distant from them, unable to relate to them or comfort them.

Of a lower socio-economic class, the family had no money for therapy but their faith got them through; but although they were not always active in the Church, their faith was usually a source of strength. It was also a relief that Vickie was able to present herself appropriately at church. The children quickly learned to keep the family secret. Tiffany found solace in writing poems. On paper, her thoughts and emotions “would not be inside of me, strangling the life from me. They were... apart from
me, a distant thing” (69). Tiffany and her older sister even served missions.

Tiffany begins the narrative at her mother’s funeral, when a woman with “expectant eyes” asked how she died. Tiffany immediately could tell that “her question was artificial like everything else at the funeral. She did not care how Mom died. She was testing me to see if I would divulge those indiscretions of my mother—if I would tell her secret. I smiled and said, ‘She died on her knees praying.’ And that was the truth” (17). Tiffany, however, knew from descriptions that “her head and arms sprawled across the blankets. The vision was horrific like a gothic painter’s depiction of the saints lying prostrate before their God” (17).

Tiffany’s motivation in writing her story is the memory of having no one to talk to when she was growing up. She wrote her experiences “for all those that suffer in silence. . . . If sharing my story helps even one soul, then everything has been worth it” if even one may “finally find courage to speak” (183).“
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