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Jan Shipps, JWHA President 2004-05, delivering her address at the 2005 Presidential Banquet held near of Springfield, Illinois. Photo by Dominik Graziano.
Of sorts, modes, types, and kinds of religious experience, there is no end. Certainly that is how it appears when one strolls through the stacks examining the titles of the volumes that sit on the shelves in fine libraries with massive collections of books on religion, libraries like the ones at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton. Or the one I know best, the Herman B Wells Library at Indiana University in Bloomington. Moving from that library’s stacks into my study, I used my laptop to consult the “web” by “googling” religious experience. At last count 52,700,000 entries appeared on the screen. And more are added every day.

Yet from the classic Varieties of Religious Experience by Williams James down to the latest Deepak Chopra tome, few (if any) of the great host of authors who write about this topic have devoted much attention to prophecy as a distinctive form of religious experience. Instead, a prophet’s encounters with the other, with the supernatural, are often classified as “mystical” and, along with other forms of mystical experience, portrayed as spiritual happenings that are overwhelming, transient, and passive.

But if prophetic encounters with ultimate reality have some of the distinguishing characteristics of mysticism, they do not have the ineffability of the intense religious experiences that are usually placed in the mystical experience category. They do not have what James described as “noetic qualities that produce insight into depths of truth unplumbed by the discursive intellect”

1 As in the case of Harry S Truman, the “B” in Herman B Wells stands alone. It is not the initial letter for a middle name.
2 From September 13 to September 14, 2005, the number of citations went up from 51,200,000 to 52,700,000. That is, a million and a half were added in one 24-hour period.
4 A list of Chopra’s many publications is found at http://www.randomhouse.com/features/chopra.
Instead of insight that does not lend itself to straightforward discourse, messages issuing from a prophet’s rendezvous with the sacred are far more direct, even if they are sometimes expressed metaphorically, as in: “The field is white already to harvest.... He that thrusteth in his sickle with his might, the same layeth up in store that he perisheth not....” What this means is that, as far as prophetic experience is concerned, it is important to be cognizant of the fact that the rational mind is somehow drawn into the mystic equation.

A single individual may have both mystical and prophetic encounters with the sacred, and surely such experiential variety was present in the life of the founder of Mormonism. But few, if any, accounts survive in the great mass of historical sources about Joseph Smith’s life indicating that he had the sort of spiritual experiences that are the primary focus of standard studies of mystical experience like those of Evelyn Underhill and Rudolph Otto. That particular experiential lacuna notwithstanding, there can be no doubt that the Mormon prophet was a spiritual polymath. Besides the many disclosive encounters from which issued what will here be called “prophetic speech,” Joseph Smith, Jr., described remarkable religious experiences that made him a visionary, a seer, and a translator. In addition, the text of the sermon he delivered at the funeral of his friend King Follett reveals that inspired discourse was another of his spiritual gifts.

Still, there is something absolutely distinctive about prophetic experience in which an individual is drawn into what I will describe as conversation with divinity. (I use the concept of conversation advisedly because conversation is a means of communication in which human language is employed.) Prophetic experience is categorically supernatural, but its fruits are natural. Rather than receiving impressions, sweeping, all-embracing notions, or poetic analogies during such experiential encounters, chosen individuals are given familiar, even commonplace words to deliver to their fellow members of the human race.

When the singular individuals who have such divine-human conversations share the fruits of their extraordinary disclosive experiences with enough people that communities of faith coalesce around them, they become something more

5 For the four generally accepted characteristics of mystical experience, see James’s chapter on “Mysticism,” Lectures XVI and XVII (pages 413-469 in Modern Library Edition). With regard to ineffability, James says that the experience yields illuminations and revelations, “full of significance and importance, all inarticulate though they remain.”

6 This “field already white to harvest” metaphor is found in several of Joseph Smith’s earliest revelations.

7 Underhill, The Essentials of Mysticism and other essays (New York: E.P.Dutton, 1960). The Otto work is important in the study of mysticism because the word “numinous” became a prominent part of the vocabulary of religious experience after the publication of The Idea of the Holy, the author’s comprehensive study of unique and powerful experiences of religious feeling. First published in German as Das Heilige in 1917, it quickly became a best seller. It was translated into Swedish (1924); Spanish (1925); Italian (1926); Japanese (1927); Dutch (1928); and French (1929). An English translation by John W. Harvey was published in 1923.
than mystics, visionaries, or seers. They become prophets. At that point, new connections between the human and divine realms are created. But not for the prophet alone. Such connections are also opened up for those who have ears to hear the messages that are the fruits, the products, of prophetic encounters.  

   Even within the restoration traditions in which the canon is not closed, this has been a reasonably rare occurrence in recent times. But enough biblical accounts are available to indicate that it happens in this manner. The “prophetic consciousness,” as it is called by Emil Kraeling in his account of the Hebrew prophets, proceeds from the understanding of men (and women) who were subject to disclosive, enlightening moments of inspiration in which they knew they were called, summoned into the divine presence, so that they could become agents, God’s representatives on the earth. Consequently, they knew of a certainty that they were speaking with divine authority. “When addressing individuals or audiences spontaneously, ... Nabi [the word that is rendered prophet in Biblical translations] regarded themselves as being spokesmen of God.” If they were “prompted to go somewhere to deliver an oracle, [they saw themselves] as messengers of God.”  

   Thus, one critical matter — perhaps the most critical matter — in distinguishing prophetic from more typical mystical encounters is that prophetic messages, the fruits of prophetic experience, often begin with the admonition “Behold.” Or they are preceded or followed by the words “Thus says the Lord.” Compelling and powerful, they are messages from on high spoken in plain language that communicates clearly to those to whom they are directed. In a volume sub-titled Listening to Prophetic Voices, Walter Bruggemann, a great modern scholar of the Old Testament and, especially, Hebrew prophecy, sets prophetic messages apart by calling them “Words That Explode.”  

   With the foregoing as context, creating a refined and exacting definition of a prophet is possible. This is critical, for such a definition is essential in considering prophets and prophecy in the Mormon tradition(s). The first element in such a definition is that he (or she) is one who speaks for God. But as is obvious from the cultural experiences of people who lived in Southern California in the 1960s and more recent cultural experiences in the Pacific Northwest, always there are more individuals who are convinced that they speak for God than there are persons on whom the prophetic mantle falls. Consequently, simply saying that a prophet is one who speaks for God is not sufficient.

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8 Mystics also share the fruits of their encounters with an “imageless reality.” But the manner in which the outcome — the product, if you will — of such experiences is communicated to others is dramatically different. While often ordinarily super-articulate, mystics are typically reduced to using figurative, abstract, emblematic language to describe their stunning — sometimes frightening, often awe-inspiring — numinous openings.

9 Emil G. Kraeling, The Prophets (New York: Rand McNally & Co., 1969), 12-13. This quotation has been adapted to refer to prophets in the plural rather than the singular.

10 This work, edited by Patrick D. Miller, is drawn from Bruggemann’s oral lectures. Fortress Press published this book in 2000.
A second element is needed to craft a discriminating definition of a prophet. The messages prophets deliver (i.e., their revelations) must be put into words that carry enough authority and persuasive power that listeners — note the plural — will be persuaded that the will and word of the Lord is infused in the human voice they hear. When a body of hearers becomes convinced that what they are hearing is the Holy word, a faith community comes into being. The first article of faith held by the people in this community is that their prophet speaks for God. From this point forward, prophecy, the fruits of a prophet’s profound disclosive experiences, can rain down like righteousness, opening the earth wide to let salvation spring up.

As rationally understood, there is a circular quality to this definition of a prophet. To wit: the first part of the definition is that a prophet is God’s messenger. The second part is that because a prophet claims that his/her pronouncements come from God, at least some of the persons to whom these claims are directed conclude that the messages delivered through the prophet are revelations. But the circular quality of this definition of a prophet did not seem to matter to those who made up the faith community that coalesced around Joseph Smith, Jr., in western New York in the late 1820s. When he spoke with prophetic authority, when he said “Behold,” his followers were convinced that they were within audible range of the sacred. The Lord spoke and they listened.

Actually, at the beginning, the notion that Smith was a man who could speak for God was not the thing that unified the community that gathered around the young farmer. Neither was the incipient community held together by Smith’s testimony about an astonishing sight of two heavenly personages that he beheld in the spring of 1820.\(^{11}\) Instead, the supernatural focus of the earliest Mormon community was Smith’s story of entertaining a messenger from God in 1823; of learning that God had a work for him to do; of finding, gaining possession of, and translating the engravings on a set of golden plates that promised to validate and add to the Christian scriptures. But by the time this small faith community was formally institutionalized as the Church of Jesus Christ on April 6, 1830, it was not simply the Book of Mormon, but the identification of Smith as a prophet, as well as a seer and translator, that was well on its way to becoming the center of the community’s attention.

How did this happen? Two of the prophet’s well-known biographers, Fawn McKay Brodie and Dan Vogel, do not make a clear distinction between Smith’s roles as seer and translator, on the one hand, and prophet on the other.\(^{12}\) In

\(^{11}\) While the prophet seems to have made some references to this vision as early as 1832, his account of that sight of the Father and the Son and his learning that every sect then in existence was wrong would not be published for almost two decades.

\(^{12}\) Donna Hill does make the distinction clearly. In *Joseph Smith: The First Mormon* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co.: 1977), 107, she quotes David Whitmer who wrote that after the Church was organized, “the members began to receive Joseph’s words as if from God’s own mouth, and to look upon him as their lawgiver.”
their treatments of how Smith’s religious experiences figured in his leadership of the people who would become known as Mormons, they conflate his seer, translator, and prophetic roles. Brodie is more concerned to unravel the story of how Smith managed “to make this all up” and why he subsequently came to believe what he first imagined, i.e., that he was simultaneously a seer, a translator, and a revelator. Vogel’s chapter on Smith’s “Prophetic Calling,” is much more concerned with how “Joseph the magician became Joseph the seer, called to translate the golden plates,” than how his followers came to know that he spoke for God.

The prophet’s most recent biographer does make the role differences clear, noting that a shift occurred in the community’s perception of Joseph Smith after 1830. “From the time of the first seer stone through the completion of the translation [of the Book of Mormon],” says Richard Bushman, “Joseph’s influence had been based on his supernatural gifts.” Those gifts would have been his competence as a seer and translator. But after the organization of the church, a revelation to its members delivered through Smith’s agency told them to heed the prophet’s words because God would tell him what to say. To be precise: “For his word ye shall receive, as if from mine own mouth.” According to Bushman, after that “he governed through his power to speak for God.”

While I fully agree with this conclusion, I believe more evidence is needed of why this was the case. Moving beyond biography to the history of the movement, whether their accounts are written from an orthodox Mormon or exceedingly unorthodox non-Mormon perspective, most historians of Mormon beginnings use a combination of Smith’s followers’ appreciation of his seership and translating skills (his ability to find and translate the engravings on golden plates that would become the Book of Mormon) plus the concept of charisma to explain the recognition of Smith’s prophetic claim by the faith community that grew up around him. Both of these are useful in illuminating the status Smith

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13 Brodie’s conclusion about Joseph Smith’s assuming the role of prophet is that this was “simply” a means he came up with in order to deal with the crisis that arose when the first 116 pages of the text of the Book of Mormon disappeared. In her interpretation, his becoming a prophet was nothing more nor less than the solution to a problem. No Man Knows My History, 2nd edition (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1976), 55.

14 Joseph Smith: The Making of a Prophet (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2004), 87-111. In his biography of Smith in the Penguin Life Series, Robert Remini points out that his followers began to call Smith “the prophet” after the organization of the Church of Jesus Christ, but this author’s concern was how this made the new institution autocratic in its distribution of authority, while ordaining all worthy men to the priesthood, thereby allowing the church to operate comfortably in Jacksonian America. But Remini “lumps” Smith’s various roles all together, describing them as his incredible “mystical life.” See Joseph Smith (New York: Putnam-Penguin, Inc., 2002), 78-82.


16 Doctrine and Covenants of the Community of Christ 19: 2b; Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 21: 5; Book of Commandments (1833) XXII: 5.
had in the community by the time the Church of Jesus Christ was organized. But they are not fully adequate to explain why his followers would accept their leader’s words as if they came from God’s own mouth.

In particular, since charisma is in the eye of the beholder, the notion that Joseph Smith was a charismatic figure does not entirely account for why some people took him at his word when he said he spoke for God while others — many others — were not convinced. The bifurcation between believers and scoffers that obtained in the 1830s has not gone away. It remains with us at the present day. Especially among religious folk — members of many Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox churches today — as well as in academia and in the larger intellectual community, charisma lacks explanatory power because it, like the definition of a prophet, depends on circular reasoning. Using first person language, the Prophet Joseph spoke for God; his hearers believed he was speaking for God because he was a prophet and prophets speak for God. Outside the believing circle, such an explanation is not credible.

No doubt, one reason that an early critic of Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling said that the biography has “a veneer of credibility” is that he concluded that Professor Bushman simply cannot supply the sort of evidence that would provide a rational reason for membership in the believing circle that surrounded the prophet. In what follows here, I argue that it is possible to move beyond the vagueness of the concept of charisma as an explanation for how those persons who were gathered into the restored Church of Jesus Christ would be persuaded that infused in Smith’s human voice they heard the word of the Lord.

Rational reasons were by no means wholly absent. Rather than depending heavily if not entirely on Smith’s spiritual gifts as the basis for his authority, my argument goes as follows: although there are many forms of prophecy other than the forecasting of future events, when prophecies that foretell the future turn out to be correct, this prophecy being “history reversed” reality, as Parley Pratt once put it, tends to verify the legitimacy of the claim of the prophet in question to be God’s spokesperson. When prophetic prediction comes true not just once, but time after time, the formation of a group of believers can be expected to occur. Despite the fact that the working out of predictive prophecies can often be described as self-fulfilling, the movement from forecast

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17 This is by not the first time the rational character of early Mormonism has been explored. But for the most part, such explorations have focused almost entirely on how the Book of Mormon supported the Bible and how both worked together to make Mormon claims credible. See especially Steven C. Harper, “Infallible Proofs, Both Human and Divine: The Persuasiveness of Mormonism for Early Converts,” Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation, 10 (Winter 2000): 99-118.

18 A Voice of Warning and Instruction to All People 13th edition (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1893), 59. The first chapter of this extremely popular early Mormon proselyting book is headed “Prophecy Already Fulfilled.” In it, Pratt said, “Now the predictions of the Prophets can be clearly understood so much so as the almanac when it foretells an eclipse.” See p. 21.
to fulfillment nevertheless provides community members and, perhaps, most especially initiates, with rational reasons for believing. The legitimacy that evidence of fulfillment of prophecy supplies strengthens the assertion that the community’s prophetic leader does truly speak for God.

Certainly that is what happened among Joseph Smith’s followers in western New York as the 1820s drew to a close. The movement from predictive prophecy to fulfillment occurred at two levels, one having to do with ancient prophecy and the other with more recent prophecies that had been announced by Joseph Smith. The prophecy from olden days is found in the Book of Mormon, a tangible if inexplicable body of published writing whose text asserted that it was an ancient text reissued in modern language in order to “show unto the remnant of the House of Israel what great things the Lord hath done for their fathers.... And [to convince Jews and Gentiles] that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God, manifesting himself unto all nations.” The third chapter of this new-found testament contained a prophecy that when the Book of Mormon came forth, a latter-day seer — whose name like that of his father would be Joseph — should also come forth. He would “do much good, both in word and in deed, being an instrument in the hands of God ... bringing forth much restoration unto the house of Israel.” For the people gathered into the restored church, those words surely must have rung true since Joseph Smith, Junior, was a seer, an instrument in the hands of God ... bringing forth much restoration unto the house of Israel. His presence at the head of the newly restored church was direct evidence of prophecy fulfilled.

With regard to prophecy contemporary to the time, a chronological study of the revelations that Joseph Smith announced between 1823 and the date of the formal organization of the church (April 1830) reveals that more than half foretold occurrences that came to pass. The LDS but not the Community of Christ Doctrine and Covenants treats an extract of the angel Moroni’s 1823 promise to restore the ancient priesthood as revelation. Smith and Oliver Cowdery reported that this came to pass on May 15, 1829, and the priesthood was conferred on other members of the group at the time of church organization. The coming forth of a “great and marvelous work” was foretold in five separate revelations whose fulfillment occurred with the publication of the Book of Mormon. Martin Harris was promised that three witnesses would

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19 No doubt other revelations were also announced before the formation of the church in April, 1830. But these are the ones that have been preserved in the 1833 Book of Commandments, the Doctrine and Covenants of the Community of Christ, and the Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Each of these volumes has a unique numbering system. The analysis that follows was made after I created an Excel file with the date of the revelation as the key to the compilation.

20 This revelation is only found in the Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints where it is Section 2.

21 These were revelations to Joseph Smith, Sr., Oliver Cowdery, Hyrum Smith, Joseph Knight, Sr., and David Whitmer. All are contained in all three collections of Smith’s revelations, but they
see the plates, and that happened. Yet another revelation, this one directed to Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer as well as Harris, foretold the privilege three witnesses would have to view the plates, and the fact that this occurred was published at the conclusion of the Book of Mormon. While most students of the Mormon scriptures point to the revelation given to Joseph Smith in the summer of 1828 as important because it dealt with the troublesome issue of the lost 116 pages of Book of Mormon text, at the end of that same revelation a prediction unfolds when God, speaking through the prophet, says that He will gather (restore?) his church and the gates of hell would not prevail against its faithful members. After that, twelve disciples would be called. The restoration of the church occurred, and in time the Traveling High Council was formed whose members were identified, as foretold, by Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer as well as Joseph Smith.

Although skeptical observers in the 1830s and skeptics in the present day can very easily characterize all of these fulfilled predictive revelations as self-fulfilled prophecies, that dismissive opinion does not negate the fact that the members of the community that had gathered around the new Mormon prophet used their rational faculties to conclude that if these prophecies had been fulfilled, other predictive prophecies would also be fulfilled. Nor does the fact that political realities were such that secular prognosticators speculated that any rebellion of the South would probably begin in South Carolina undercut the significance that Saints then and now attach to Smith’s 1832 revelation warning that the American Civil War would begin with a rebellion in South Carolina.

From the way it is still used as evidence that Joseph Smith was a prophet — I cannot even begin to estimate the number of times that revelation has been used to convince me that I really ought to join a church whose prophet could know the future in that way — it is probable that after 1865 this revelation was used to convince some potential Saints that the leader of the fledgling church was a prophet. In fact, should one of the mountain Saints with even a bit of high-school seminary training be asked nowadays to identify a specific revelation which foretold the future (thereby adding luster to Smith’s legitimacy as a prophet when it came to pass), this revelation would probably be the one.

Although it has not yet been fulfilled, a much more important predictive revelation had been announced five months earlier when the prophet traveled to Jackson County, Missouri. There he had announced a momentous revelation that carried with it long-term consequences. This was the revelation in which God’s message informed the church and its members where the long-awaited

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22 Again all the collections include this revelation, but they are numbered variously.

23 Note placement in the initial edition.

24 This revelation is only found in the Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints where it is Section 87.
city of Zion (the New Jerusalem) and its temple would be built. Identifying the frontier town of Independence as the place where the gathering of Israel would commence, this revelation established the locale for the opening of the final dispensation of the fulness of times. In so doing — as William Mulder, one of the giants in the scholarship of Mormonism, noted more than forty years ago — this prophecy protected this embryonic religion from the fate of the Millerites by ensuring that this faith community would have a cartography rather than a timeline.\textsuperscript{25} While the fulfillment of this revelation is ever in the future, its presence — its simply being there — has meant that the progress of the church has ever been and will continue to be measured in spatial terms. Rather than trying to measure how much time is likely to pass before Christ returns to establish his kingdom on the earth, the Saints have the satisfaction of seeing the boundaries of the organized church extend ever further from its physical center.

The restoration of the church in the spring of 1830 transformed Mormonism. By providing an inchoate movement focused on the paranormal with a structure easily perceived with human understanding, it created the seedbed for the extension of community far beyond the geographical bounds imposed by at least the intermittent physical presence of the prophet. One upshot of the existence on the earth of a visible ecclesial organization was that the “gathering” of the church and, afterward, of Israel (a covenant people) could occur. A quite different gathering, but one of equal significance could also take place. This was the gathering of the revelations of the prophet into a Book of Commandments for the faithful.

As is made clear in Michael Marquardt’s very helpful account of “John Whitmer and the Revelations of Joseph Smith” published in Volume 21 of the \textit{John Whitmer Historical Association Journal}, the prophet and his closest supporters were anxious to see that the revelations that he announced were faithfully and properly recorded. On November 1, 1831, the elders of the Church of Christ went further, voting to publish a compilation of the revelations. This volume would create a permanent record of the revelations given to the new Church of Christ. (In a print run decision that today would astonish even the decision-makers of so-called “eastern presses,” a printing of 10,000 copies was anticipated.)\textsuperscript{26}

Because persecution halted the work, what happened next is well known in Mormon history. Pursuant to the elders’ decision that the revelations should be published, manuscript copies of the revelations were assembled and transported to Independence where the church’s printing press had been installed and the printing of the \textit{Evening and Morning Star} had commenced

\textsuperscript{25} William Mulder, \textit{Homeward to Zion: The Mormon Migration from Scandinavia} (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1957).

\textsuperscript{26} \textit{Encyclopedia of Mormonism}, s.v. “Book of Commandments.”
under the editorship of William W. Phelps. Before the first copy of what would be called A Book of Commandments could be finished and bound, however, a group of “old settlers” (non-Mormon citizens of Independence) stopped the printing process by destroying the press and scattering the type that, along with unbound printed sheets which had been in the upstairs print room, were tossed into the street.

Collecting the sheets, the harassed Saints managed to bind a few dozen copies, some of which were carried back to Kirtland. These small 3 x 5 inch volumes did not have printed in them all the revelations the elders of the church had intended to include. The first section of the book, there called chapter, nonetheless contained a message from God delivered through the agency of Joseph Smith. This message lent divine approval of what was clearly the inauguration of a canon of Mormon prophecy:

Behold, this is mine authority, and the authority of my servants, and my preface unto the book of my commandments, which I have given them to publish unto you, O inhabitants of the earth. Therefore fear and tremble O ye people, for what I the Lord have decreed in them shall be fulfilled.

The publication of this work brought into being a physical text that contained the revelations that the prophet had first spoken into existence. Although dramatically different in its provenance, to the extent that this work of prophecy could be hefted and read, this tiny 160-page text resembled the comparatively massive Book of Mormon insofar as it was the fruit of prophetic speech. Together these two works at one and the same time created a new scriptural canon and they demonstrated to the world that the canon which had been closed for more than a millennium and a half was now reopened. In subsequent years the profusion of God’s messages that began to rain down were recorded for the Saints and their posterity, leading to the publication in 1835 of the first edition of the Book of Doctrine and Covenants in which were arranged “the items of doctrine of Jesus Christ for the government of his Church of the Latter-day Saints.

But in the years between the organization of the church and the end of the prophet’s life, the very nature of revelation changed as new role definitions were revealed and established so that Joseph Smith was no longer merely seer,

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27 In the late 18th and early 19th century, the purchase of a printing press was almost the first activity of many newly formed religious organizations. See Frank Lambert, Pedlar in Divinity: George Whitefield and the Transatlantic Revivals, 1737-1770 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994).


29 At this point in time, this was the official name of the church. Another edition was published in 1844, and subsequent editions were published both by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.
prophet, and translator. He also became the chief administrator, \textit{i.e.}, president of the church, and the president of the High Priesthood. Incredibly complex new theological and doctrinal dimensions of this new faith were revealed and, when accepted as revelation by the church, set in stone. No wonder the frequency of revelations to be included in the canon increased. Fourteen were announced between April and the end of the year in 1830; 37 in 1831; 18 in 1832; and 12 in 1833. After that the number of revelations to be added to the canon diminished to an average of a little more than 3 in the following 10 years.

A close examination of the revelations that were added to the canon each year would generate not only a description of the institutional aspects of this faith, but also a sequence of restorations — of the church, of Israel, and of the ancient order of things — that sets this form of Christianity apart from every other form of Christianity that has ever existed on the earth. But rather than engaging in such an examination (which would require at least a capsule history of the Latter Day Saints), I will now turn to another critical issue intimately connected to prophets and prophecy: \textit{discernment}.

When all of the Joseph Smith papers are published, it may turn out that the prophet somewhere left a description of his prophetic encounters with the sacred that is not now known. Until such a description surfaces, however, probably the closest account we have of the efforts of the prophet to discern the will and word of the Lord is his depiction of the process of translation, here set forth in paraphrase:

\begin{quote}
The prophet studied a matter out in his mind. Then he asked God if he had it right. If he had it right, God caused a burning in his bosom, allowing him to feel that it was right. But if it was not right, he had no such feeling, but had a stupor of thought that caused him to forget that which was wrong. This meant that he could not discern God’s word (that which is sacred) save it be given him from God.\textsuperscript{30}
\end{quote}

For lack of a better description of how the human-divine conversation was initiated and tested, this can stand as a reasonable depiction of the way prophecy operated in a prophet’s life. For the purpose of this discussion, that takes care of point one of the definition of prophet that is set forth above, \textit{i.e.}, it explicates the process through which the prophet speaks for God.

No comparable description exists to explain how, in its beginnings, the restored church set about discerning whether the revelations announced by Joseph Smith were, in fact, the will and word of the Lord. But accounts left by members of the church permit some reconstruction of the faith community’s

\textsuperscript{30}This paraphrase is drawn from a revelation given to Oliver Cowdery through the Prophet Joseph Smith in April, 1829, printed as Section 9 in current editions of the Doctrine and Covenants of both the Community of Christ and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This revelation was printed as Section 9 in the Book of Commandments and Section 35 in the 1835 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants.
discernment process.

In many instances the rhetorical structure of revelations gave them such authority and power that — sometimes formally and sometimes informally — the church sustained them without dissent. At other times, the prophet had such a robust understanding of what God wanted him to say that his own discernment of its accuracy and truthfulness spilled over the church causing it to accept revelations with little or no question. In the case of the revelations that came at the time of the dedication of the Kirtland temple, a group mystical experience not unlike Pentecost led to such intense burning in so many bosoms that questions about whether the Lord was speaking were for all intents and purposes foreclosed.\textsuperscript{31} Other revelations so clearly reflected connections to the Bible that members of the community could, through their own study of the scriptures, discern the authenticity of God’s message. A good example of this was the haunting and evocative February 16, 1832 vision of tiered heavens that Sidney Rigdon and Joseph Smith saw when the prophet was (by inspiration) translating a passage from the Book of John. But these are examples of personal discernment. No formal mechanism such as a required show of hands or voice vote was created at the outset to allow the church as a body to signal its acceptance of the prophet’s revelations as messages from the Almighty.

The records of the early history of the church include many accounts of formal expressions of assent such as votes to sustain the prophet and other church leaders that reflect the church’s and/or the community’s discernment that a particular divine message really came from God. But there is no evidence that either the church (gathered in conference to represent the body in its entirety) or groups of individual members were always asked to render a judgment about whether particular revelations were, in fact, the will and word of the Lord. Consequently, it is not surprising that some very crude mechanisms developed through which the various members of the church could indicate the outcome of their own discernment process.

To put it bluntly, since there was sometimes no way for its members to signal assent or to vote to sustain or reject the revelations the prophet presented to the church, those members with questions were sometimes dismissed out of hand. While many of Smith’s followers were excommunicated and branded as apostate, something made possible with the organization of the church, others voted with their feet, leaving on their own and branding the church’s leader as a fallen prophet, or worse, no prophet at all.

Still, as long as the prophet was among them, able to speak for the divine and to lead the community through incredible travail as well as extraordinary — even ecstatic — times, the gathering that was the church and an American

\textsuperscript{31} Some historians have called accounts of the dedicatory episode into question, in effect asking as did observers in the first Pentecost whether these men were filled with new wine. See LaMar Peterson’s \emph{Hearts Made Glad: The Charges of Intemperance against Joseph Smith the Mormon Prophet} (Privately published, 1975).
Israel all bound up together managed to maintain its integrity as the people of God. After Smith’s murder, however, the struggle for the prophet’s mantle laid bare sharp divisions within the church and within the culture, divisions that had almost imperceptively come into existence as thousands were added to a community whose first article of faith was that Joseph Smith was a prophet.

The reasons for these divisions were complex, reflecting disagreement about people and policy, about the church’s hierarchical and authoritarian structure as opposed to the democratic structure of the culture, and so on. But at least two of the most substantial segments of the fracturing church and culture disagreed about whether certain of the prophet’s recent revelations were authentic messages from deity.

*   *   *

While I am very much aware that what follows in the remainder of this presidential address is a bare bones account of Mormon history that needs the efforts of a much younger and more energetic student of religious studies to flesh it out, I want to propose that one of the chief reasons for the fracturing of the Mormon movement after the prophet’s death might well be a reason that would have caused an unbridgeable fissure even if the prophet had lived. What I am saying here is that I believe an almost unfathomable disagreement issued from the community’s effort to discern whether the prophet’s final revelation — the one that became Section 132 in the Book of the Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints — was really a message sent from the divine realm.

At least as far as I can determine, this revelation was never presented to be sustained as the will and the word of the Lord by the full membership of the church for the obvious reason that, in addition to much else about the eternal nature of the wedded state and everlasting family relationships, this prophetic message legitimated plural marriage. Any communal method of trying to determine its status as divine revelation would have made public a counter-cultural and perhaps illegal practice that had already been instituted among the prophet’s core constituency. The fact that a significant proportion of the church membership and the Saintly community was unable to discern the Lord’s agency in the promulgation of this revelation is one more among the multitude of reasons that have been and can be put forward to account for the splintering of the church and movement in the years between 1844 and 1847.

As I move toward the conclusion of this address, I ask listeners (and readers) to do two things: to remember the two-part definition of a prophet that I set forth in the beginning of this address, and then to “fast forward” to the second half of the twentieth century for a brief examination of how the understanding of prophets and prophecy has diverged dramatically among the mountain and the prairie Saints.

Change has come in both communities. Among the members of the Church
of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints headquartered in Utah, the historic pattern in which prophetic speech issued, as it were, unilaterally from the mouth of the prophet has been radically altered. In the LDS Church, revelation has become much more “councilial,” if there is such a word, in that the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve, all of whom are “prophets, seers, and revelators,” must agree that something is revelation before it may be presented to the church gathered in conference for a sustaining vote. But if there has been a change in the way prophetic messages are delivered, there has been no alteration in the process of this faith community’s discernment of revelation, i.e., of how the members of the church determine whether something put forward as prophecy is the will and word of the Lord.

Although it would be too much to say that individual discernment is altogether forsaken when the members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints must decide whether a revelation is in fact a message from on high, the reality is that a particular manner of making that decision now seems to dominate the process. In a Ph.D. dissertation completed just this year, Sara Patterson made a very strong argument that among the mountain Saints the means of clarifying what is and is not revelation resembles the process young Saints and potential converts are instructed to use in clearing away doubts about and gaining a testimony of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon. From Moroni 10:4, it goes like this:

... and when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father in the name of Christ if these things are not true and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you by the power of the Holy Ghost.

Patterson argues that this same method — sincerely asking with real intent and expecting that Christ, through the power of the Holy Ghost, will make it clear to members of the LDS Church that a message put forth as revelation is truly the will and word of the Lord — has become paradigmatic for discerning the authenticity of prophetic messages.

Patterson, who describes this as the “Moronian Fidest” process, sees it as determining nearly everything that calls for spiritual discernment among the mountain Saints. In addition, in tracking everything from the sustaining of church officers to the response to revelation in church conferences across the 20th century, she discovered that even if there is some dissent, the prevailing pattern is to report unanimity in how the church discerns the question of what

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32 This shift away from unilateral “prophetic speech” is discussed in much more detail in “Prophets, Seers and Revelators: A New Form of Revelations for Mormonism’s New Age,” a “Beliefnet” article written by this author. See http://www.beliefnet.com/story/14/story_1443_1.html.

God wills.

While I wish that some phrase a bit more felicitous than “Moronian Fidest” could be found to depict this means of expressing an agreement about what the members of the church have collectively discerned, I think that the extent to which this has become the way things work out in conference in Salt Lake City is essentially correct. Moreover, if Patterson is right, it means that in this “people with a prophet” form of Mormonism, individuals and even organized groups of mountain Saints who might wish to question the administrative and practical as well as prophetic actions of the president of the church, the First Presidency, and the Council of the Twelve are constrained from doing so.34

As for the prairie Saints: on the current website of the Community of Christ, revelation is described as the process through which God reveals divine will and love. This section on revelation continues by saying that as in the past, God continues to reveal today through scripture, the faith community, prayer, nature, and in human history.35 Obviously missing from this expansive understanding of the source of revelation is prophetic speech. Without entirely rejecting this historic form of revelation — the form of revelation that gave rise to the Mormon movement and continued to be the distinctive form of revelation even in the RLDS movement as long as direct descendents of the first Mormon prophet inhabited the presidential office — the faith community long known as the “Reorganization” moved away from being a people with a prophet. Instead, they became a “prophetic people.”

From the very beginning of his Presidency of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, W. Grant McMurray called the members of the RLDS Church, now the Community of Christ, to this altered role.36 Perhaps it was not as much a part of the intra-church discussion as was the question of whether this form of Mormonism was, in fact, becoming a “peace church.” But the prophetic people idea was very much in the minds of church members when, on March 31, 2004, President McMurray presented to the “Councils, Quorums, and Orders, to the World Conference, and to the Church” a document about this idea and what its implications were. He proposed that the document be added to Doctrine and Covenants of the Community of Christ.

34 The fact that not only the President/Prophet who presides over the church, but the other two members of the First Presidency and the members of the Council of the Twelve are all “prophets, seers, and revelators” increases the intensity of this constraint.

35 This is not a paraphrase, for no words have been changed. But as quoted here, the order of the words is not the same as on the website where it says “The process through which God reveals divine will and love is called revelation. God continues to reveal today as in the past. God is revealed to us through scripture, the faith community, prayer, nature, and in human history.”

36 I referred to the RLDS Church as “Non-Prophet Mormonism” in a sidebar to a Sunstone article, “Mormon Metamorphosis [or What Mike Wallace Missed]” (September, 1996), pp. 83-86. Although, this showed a real lack of respect that I regret, it was a reference to McMurray’s preference to be called church president rather than prophet and his desire to call the church a “prophetic people.”
Rather than beginning with “Behold,” the document’s peremptory opening was, “Listen, O people of the Restoration — you who would become a prophetic people.” Plainly this was revelatory discourse, and when the church gathered in conference accepted it as Section 162 of the D&C, it gave the status of revelation to these *Words of Counsel*. In so doing, the Community of Christ put flesh on the notion of the church as a prophetic people, making it unmistakably clear that “as a prophetic people [its members] are called, under the direction of the spiritual authorities and with the common consent of the people, to discern the divine will for your own time and in the places where you serve.”

In order to make sure that my interpretation was not entirely wide of the mark, I made an appointment to have a telephone conversation with President McMurray about this addition to the D&C. In setting a time when we could talk, I asked him to reflect on what he meant when he prepared this document.37

I had read the document carefully, but with my Protestant sensibilities, I really expected him to mirror the words I have heard mainstream Protestants say about being a prophetic people — that is, being concerned about peace and justice, caring for the poor and the downtrodden in Jim Wallis’s *Sojourners* style. While those concerns are not missing from the text — especially with regard to the reference to the call to “the great and marvelous work of building the peaceable kingdom,” McMurray surprised me by talking about process. With elegant language, he talked about how he, as prophet, struggled to discern what God wanted him to say to the church.

And then he said that he believed that the church, not only in conference, but at every level, from the congregation to the whole church, was charged with the task of discerning if he (or presumably any other person who served at the head of the church) had captured the essence of the divine message a church president is charged with bringing to the people, whether in some document presented to conference or in administrative appointments. “As the members of the church do this,” said the church president, “they will be representing the fullness of what it means to be a prophetic people.”

So it is that revelation has taken and continues to take many shapes and forms in this religious tradition. What makes it distinctive in terms of how Mormonism of whatever kind differs from every other kind of Christianity is that—whether delivered to a people with a prophet or discerned by a prophetic people—modern revelation led and it persists in leading to an open canon. Consequently, prophets and prophecy in all Mormon traditions, barring none, set the Saints apart, making them a clearly exceptional if not exclusively chosen people.

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37 Personal telephone conversation with W. Grant McMurray, Thursday, September 22, 2005.
Council Bluffs/Kanesville, Iowa: A Hub for Mormon Settlements, Operations, and Emigration, 1846-1852

William G. Hartley

All major centers of early Mormonism but one have received in-depth, scholarly, book length history assessments and numerous article-length studies in reputable historical journals. Bibliographies relating to LDS history that took place in New York, Ohio, Missouri, Nauvoo, England, and Winter Quarters are lengthy. By contrast, the extensive Mormon presence (1846-1852) in the Kanesville/Council Bluffs area of southwestern Iowa has received but modest attention, despite its pivotal importance to the emergence of Brighamite and Josephite and other Mormon-based faiths. Some specific aspects of the Kanesville story have been studied, so we can find piece-meal chunks of understanding. However, no article or book to date provides the big picture, the overview of the story, the whole that is needed to make best sense of the selected parts thus far studied. This paper’s purpose is to provide in one place a substantial, broad survey history about Kanesville and developments there that impacted on the course of mid-nineteenth century Mormonism.

During the 1846-1852 Mormon period, today’s Council Bluffs was first called Miller’s Hollow (1846) and later Kanesville (1848). It served as a Mormon settlement center for one year less than Nauvoo did, and boasted a population pool nearly a third that found in Nauvoo and vicinity. Kanesville became a hub around which, to the north, east, and south, as many as ninety tiny Mormon settlements developed.

For four years, Kanesville served as the LDS Church’s headquarters for “the States,” chiefly presided over by Apostle Orson Hyde. At Kanesville, Elder

Hyde and others published a major LDS newspaper, the *Frontier Guardian*. There, the Brigham Young-led Twelve Apostles reconstituted a church First Presidency for the first time since Joseph Smith’s death. There, too, Oliver Cowdery received readmission into the church. At Kanesville’s Emigrants Landing, thousands of European converts unloaded from scores of Missouri River steamboats to seek shelter and jobs until they could go west or else stay in the area. During 1849 and 1850, forty-niners flooded into Kanesville to outfit for treks to California gold fields. In 1852, at the LDS Church’s First Presidency’s bidding, their followers mass-evacuated from southwestern Iowa, after which the substantial LDS organized presence in the area ended. In 1853, locals renamed the place Council Bluffs. Among the LDS “remnants” who remained, many became receptive to the RLDS message when it spread across southwestern Iowa by and after 1860.²

A Trading Post Settlement

Prior to 1846, the term “Council Bluffs” referred to a region. For centuries, Native Americans had held ceremonial powwows in a region of bluffs west of the Missouri River and some 20 miles north of today’s Omaha. In 1804 the Lewis and Clark expedition conferred with Otoe and Missouri Indians there. Subsequently, the general region along both sides of the river came to be designated “the Council Bluffs.”³

In 1837, U. S. troops protecting Pottawattamie Indians erected a log blockhouse where present-day Council Bluffs now is. (It stood at the southeast corner of today’s East Pierce and Franklin Streets.) In 1838–1841 it served as the St. Mary/St. Joseph Catholic Mission, and was standing when Mormons arrived and purchased it in 1846.⁴ About seven miles south of the blockhouse, American Fur Company agent Peter Sarpy operated a post termed Traders or Trading Point — or *Point aux poules* in French — consisting of three trading houses.⁵ Sarpy had a similar post directly across the river at Bellevue and employed a small dinghy to ferry people and goods back and forth.

By 1846 U. S. Indian agent Robert B. Mitchell had his Pottawattamie Indian Agency headquarters at Traders Point, beside which spread an Indian village.

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⁴ A historical marker (1971) designating the site of the old Log Blockhouse is at the southeast corner of East Pierce and Franklin Streets. Near that marker, around the corner on Franklin Street is another historical marker that tells about the LDS connection to the blockhouse.

⁵ The post was located one mile north of the present Bellevue Bridge across the Missouri River. *Journal Horace K. Whitney*, typescript, LDS Church Archives, Salt Lake City, UT., June 14, 1846.
In total, the Traders Point settlement consisted of about twenty to forty houses, mostly of hewed logs. The houses looked “very respectful,” Mormon Guy Keysor said in July 1846, “being white washed out side.” The houses had no glass in the windows. People there, “not amounting to many,” included Americans, French, Indians, and “half-breeds.” Peter Sarpy, Richard Pearson, and John D. Lufley (or Utley) held government licenses to trade with the Indians. Indians had settled all around the post “from 3 to 5, 10 & 15 miles.” Some Indians had modest gardens growing corn, potatoes, and beans.

**Arrival of Latter-day Saints**

Approximately 17,000 Saints lived in and near Nauvoo when the 1846 exodus commenced. Those going west left in three distinct groupings. The first, the “Winter Exodus,” was Brigham Young and the Twelve’s “Camp of Israel,” a vanguard group numbering at most 500 wagons and 2,500 people. Across from Nauvoo they assembled at Sugar Creek, Iowa Territory, during February 1846 and then plodded through mud and rain for three months to reach the Missouri River in mid-June. Next, in April through June, the “Spring Exodus” saw tidal waves of people flow from the Nauvoo area, perhaps 12,000 Saints total, who needed but a month to cross Iowa by various routes. A final flow, the “Fall Exodus” of less than 1,000 was forced out in September.

That March, two months before Brigham Young’s Camp of Israel reached the bluffs, it sent John Lowe Butler and James Cummings ahead to the Missouri River and then north to retrieve James Emmett’s company of Saints at Camp Vermillion (present Burbank, South Dakota). Butler and Cummings found seven Emmett families already at the bluffs. Then the two went up and brought down the rest of the company (59 people and 14 wagons) to Traders Point, arriving on May 29. After some trading, they camped near the Missouri border (about where today’s Hamburg, Iowa is) to wait for Young’s Camp of Israel to reach the bluffs.

Meanwhile, in mid-Iowa, Young’s vanguard company veered northwest from a course heading to the Banks Ferry above St. Joseph and rolled instead

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towards the Council Bluffs. In April and May they created two temporary settlements, Garden Grove and Mount Pisgah, leaving a few hundred people at each. By late May, Saints leaving Nauvoo in the Spring Exodus were catching up to the Camp of Israel — covering in three weeks what took Young’s group three months.

On June 14, 1846, Young’s constantly growing company reached the Missouri River and camped about a mile above Traders Point. After making trade arrangements, leaders moved the encampment back to the bluffs to access better water and fuel and to be away from the “Omaha” Indians. Within two weeks, Church headquarters were on what Wilford Woodruff termed “Redemption Hill,” on the northwest side of Mosquito Creek (the hill is a quarter mile north of today’s Iowa School for the Deaf). For the next six weeks companies from Nauvoo arrived almost daily, creating a “Grand Encampment” — consecutive campsites extending nine miles eastward (almost to present-day Treynor). On June 29 the church’s newly-built ferry began moving across the Missouri River what by fall amounted to some 4,000 to 5,000 Saints. At the same time, easily that many found winter sites east of the river on Iowa lands being vacated by the Pottawattamie people.

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Departure of the Mormon Battalion

On July 1, 1846, Captain James Allen arrived from Ft. Leavenworth and presented Brigham Young with President James K. Polk’s invitation to enlist a battalion to serve in the Mexican War. That conflict, involving a border zone claimed by newly independent Texas and by Mexico, had erupted on May 13. Although President Polk’s offer was a favor to the church, it took away manpower badly needed if Saints were to reach the Rocky Mountains by fall. More than one-fourth of the refugee stream’s available manpower marched away. To enlist was a “severe test of loyalty” for many men, none of whom wanted to march 2,000 miles or leave behind homeless families to fend for themselves. In return for the battalion’s service, the church and its members benefited from the soldiers’ pay and in other ways. On July 16, 450 men gathered at church headquarters and signed up, filling four of the five companies. The enlistees marched to Sarpy’s post where each received one blanket and food. On July 18 Brigham Young and four apostles met with the officers and urged them to be fathers to the men and to govern by priesthood power, not military dictation. They were promised they would have no fighting to do. The Battalion’s

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11 Entries for June 14, 1846 in Journal Horace K. Whitney, Manuscript History of Brigham Young, Diary of John D. Lee, typescripts at LDS Church Archives.
13 Manuscript History of Brigham Young, July 16-18, 1846.
farewell ball took place that day under open skies in the Battalion’s camp by the river.¹⁴

On July 21 companies A, B, C, and D began the long march to Ft. Leavenworth. Company E finally filled up and caught up with the rest. The battalion reached Ft. Leavenworth on August 1. From there, despite three sizeable releases of sick detachments during the next months who wintered in Colorado, the unit marched to Santa Fe, New Mexico and then blazed a wagon road to southern California, arriving in San Diego on January 29, 1847. When their year enlistments ended in July 1847, Battalion members rode and walked from California and Colorado by various routes to rejoin their families in Utah, along the trails, or back in the Council Bluffs area.¹⁵

Thomas L. Kane

Thomas L. Kane, a well-connected Philadelphian acting as an emissary from President Polk, helped Captain Allen recruit the battalion.¹⁶ Kane was born in 1822 into a prominent Pennsylvania family. He was educated in Paris, France, and became an attorney. Kane described the encampment of Latter-day Saint refugees that he saw spread out before him in July 1846:

[The bottomlands] were crowded with covered carts and wagons; and each one of the Council Bluffs hills opposite was crowned with its own great camp, gay with bright white canvas, and alive with the busy stir of swarming occupants. In the clear blue morning air, the smoke streamed up from more than a thousand cooking fires. Countless roads and bypaths checkered all manner of geometric figures on the hillsides. Herd boys were dozing upon the slopes; sheep and horses, cows and oxen, were feeding around them, and other herds in the luxuriant meadow of the then swollen river. From a single point I counted four thousand head of cattle in view at one time. As I approached the camps, it seemed to me the children there were to prove still more numerous.¹⁷

¹⁴ Keysor Diary, July 18, 1846.
¹⁶ Regarding Kane see Albert L. Zobell, Jr., Sentinel in the East: A Biography of Thomas L. Kane (Salt Lake City, UT: Nicholas G. Morgan, 1965); David J. Whittaker, “Kane, Thomas Leiper,” in American National Biography (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), Vol. 12:370-372; and Leonard J. Arrington, “‘In Honorable Remembrance’: Thomas L. Kane’s Service to the Mormons,” Brigham Young University Studies 21 (Fall 1981), 389-402. Each year the Mormon History Association gives a Thomas L. Kane Award to persons who are outside the Mormon faith traditions and circle of professional historians but have made important contributions to the cause of LDS history.
Unknown to Kane, what he saw was the start of a seven-year occupation by Saints of that Council Bluffs location. Nor would he know that a city would soon thrive there, named Kanesville in his honor. Kane felt deep sympathy for the plight of the Mormon refugees. After he returned to the East, he served for a quarter-century as an unofficial advisor to President Young on Utah political matters.

**Miller’s Hollow and Nearby Settlements**

By August 1846, Brigham Young dropped plans for even one company of Saints to reach the Rocky Mountains that year, whereupon the mass of homeless refugees fanned out to find places to winter. Within two months, some 5,000 established Winter Quarters on the west side of the Missouri River, where Florence (North Omaha), Nebraska now is, and more than that number scattered up and down the Iowa side, settling dozens of sites near streams and timber. Centered where present-day Council Bluffs’ Broadway and 4th Streets intersect, Daniel and Henry W. Miller’s encampment became called Miller’s Hollow.\(^{18}\) In 1846 the Millers purchased from the Pottawattamie Indians the old army blockhouse. Around it, Miller’s Hollow sprang up, and that building

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\(^{18}\) The settlement snuggled along Indian Creek within a hollow surrounded by hills and bluffs. Indian Creek now flows through underground culverts in downtown Council Bluffs.

\(^{19}\) Petersen, “Kanesville,” 385-398.
served as the church’s meeting hall. (The building was torn down in 1857.) For a
time, Henry Miller was a bishop there and a delegate to the Iowa legislature.\textsuperscript{19}

Thousands of Saints in dozens of cabin clusters within a sixty-mile radius of
Miller’s Hollow built cabins, plowed and planted, sent wagons down to
Missouri to trade, and prepared for winter. The Allred family’s camp was
called Little Pigeon, the Perkins family named their place Macedonia (after
Macedonia, Illinois where they had been living), and Elder Orson Hyde settled
at what became called Hyde Park. Such settlements provided homes for
Mormon Battalion soldiers who returned at the end of 1847, new arrivals from
the States, and LDS European immigrants.\textsuperscript{20}

**Contacts with Native Americans**

Saints in the Kanesville area interacted with several types of people not
of their faith. Their contact with Pottawattamie Indians, then vacating Iowa,
was slight. Barely a few days after arriving at the bluffs, the Twelve and a large
Mormon contingent accepted Agent Mitchell’s invitation to a June 20, 1846
social at the agency:

Many Indians and others were assembled. Halfday [Op-te-gee-shuck] and Hoby,
two chiefs, were introduced to the Presidency and band. After a few tunes the
Presidency, Ladies and band dined with Major Mitchell, twelve at a table, six tables;
thereafter music and dancing and a few songs by John Kay till about half-past six
when the party started for Camp ... all parties appeared highly delighted with the
repasts and amusements of the day, and the best of feelings were manifested by the
citizens and Indians toward the saints.\textsuperscript{21}

The Pottawattamie were hospitable to the Mormon refugees. At some point
the Indian agent summoned the chiefs for a council at Sarpy’s log trading
house at their village. The chiefs signed formal land-use articles “with their
unpronounceable names,” Thomas L. Kane observed. At some meeting with
Mormons, which Kane attended, a chief named Pied Rioche, but called Le
Clerc (he was part French), spoke eloquently to the Church leaders.\textsuperscript{22} Kane
wrote down what seems like an embellished summary of the speech, wherein
Le Clerc empathized with the Mormons because they, like his people, were
“driven away, the same, from your lodges and lands there, and the graves of
your people. So we have both suffered.” He told Mormons they were free to use

\textsuperscript{20} The Pottawattamie High Council Record at the LDS Archives identifies 94 different branches
that existed in Pottawattamie County at one time or another between 1846 and 1859. The LDS
Church Archives has records for 23 of these branches. See Ronald G. Watt, comp., Iowa Branch
Index, 1839-1859, LDS Church Historical Department typescript, 1991.

\textsuperscript{21} Manuscript History of Brigham Young, June 20, 1846.

\textsuperscript{22} Manuscript History of Brigham Young, June 18, 1846.
all the wood they wanted and live on any part of the land not occupied by the
Pottawattamie. The chief recited this speech to Kane in French, right after the
land-use agreements were signed. Brigham Young was not present.

Sarah Studevant Leavitt recalled that she and her children reached the
Bluffs in 1846 and in December moved into a house her boys built at Traders
Point. She suffered from poor health that winter. “We lived only a few rods from
the Pottawattomie chief,” she noted; “He told the boys if there was anything
that they wanted that he had, to come and get it and he would wait until they
could pay him. He had two wives, one a very white French woman. They were
all a great help to us.”

Starting the Utah Migration

During the winter of 1846-1847, the Mormon homeless population had
become widely scattered. Some 5,000 Saints resided at Winter Quarters, about
500 each at Garden Grove and Mt. Pisgah and at the Ponca Camp far north of
Winter Quarters. Another 500 were with the Mormon Battalion. An estimated
1,500 were in St. Louis. Scores stopped in eastern Iowa settlements and in
Illinois towns. In 1847 Brigham Young led a vanguard group of some 150 to the
Rocky Mountains, designated Utah valleys as a new gathering place, left half
the company to plant and build, and returned with the rest to winter a second
time at Winter Quarters with their families. Meanwhile, in the fall of 1847,
about 2,000 Mormon settlers arrived in Utah.

The Kanesville Log Tabernacle

On December 4, 1847, while trying to conduct an overcrowded conference
in the too-small blockhouse, President Young proposed that a large log house be
built in Miller’s Hollow for temporary use. Don’t be surprised if a city should be
built there, he told the congregation. Henry W. Miller led a work crew of some
200 men in felling cottonwood trees, cutting them into logs, and constructing
a large log building in three weeks’ time. This was the LDS Church’s first

23 Kane, The Mormons, 59.
24 Brigham Young’s daily history makes no mention of a meeting like this. However, on July 15
he appointed Jesse C. Little to visit with Captain Allen and get a recommend from him allowing
the Saints to tarry on Indian lands along the Missouri River. Possibly this meeting was where the
chief made his speech. See Manuscript History of Brigham Young, July 15, 1846.
25 Sarah Studevant Leavitt, “History of Sarah Studevant Leavitt from Her Journal,” typescript,
LDS Church Archives.
26 Regarding the Winter Quarters’ shutdown and the 1847 trek west see Richard E. Bennett,
Mormons at the Missouri, 1846-1852: “And Should We Die” (noted above) and We’ll Find the
Place: The Mormon Exodus 1846-1848 (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1997).
27 It measured at least sixty feet west-to-east and forty feet north-to-south, and could seat up to 1,000 people. A fireplace covered the entire west end. Two four-foot doors, about fourteen feet apart, were in the middle of the long south side.

Miller’s workmen finished the large building just in time for the historic (as it turned out) conference held December 23-27, which some 1,000 Saints attended. On December 24, Elder Orson Pratt of the Twelve dedicated the tabernacle as a house of thanksgiving. On the 25th, the congregation voted that the high council on the east side of the Missouri river had all municipal power and that bishops’ courts would serve as civil magistrates in that frontier region until the laws of Iowa went into effect there. The congregation then sustained twelve as high councilmen and two to serve as marshals. Then on the 27th the conference voted to accept the reconstituting of the LDS First Presidency.

Reconstituting the First Presidency

Back on December 5, 1847, nine of the Twelve met at Hyde Park, Orson Hyde’s home, seven miles south of Miller’s Hollow. “The voice of God came from on high and spake to the Council,” Elder Hyde later stated; “What did it say to us? ‘Let my servant Brigham step forth and receive the full power of the

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27 Journal History, LDS Church Archives, Dec. 4, 1847. (Journal History is an on-going day-by-day manuscript-type history of the LDS Church from April 6, 1830, that contains clippings and excerpts from diaries, minutes, letters, and other records.)

presiding Priesthood in my Church and kingdom.’” Hyde affirmed that “I am one that was present ... and did hear and feel the voice from heaven, and we were filled with the power of God.” The council approved that Brigham Young be sustained as President of the Church, and that he nominate two counselors. He chose Elders Heber C. Kimball and Willard Richards.  

On December 27, without saying anything about the revelation, the Twelve put before people in the tabernacle the proposal that the First Presidency be re-established, and that Elders Young, Kimball, and Richards be it. Attenders approved the change, voting by priesthood quorums in turn. “The spirit of the Lord rested upon the people in a powerful manner,” Brigham Young said later, “in so much that the saints’ hearts were filled with joy unspeakable.” He said “a dead stillness reigned in the congregation” while he spoke. “This is one of the happiest days of my life,” he wrote; “Nothing more has been done today than what I knew would be done when Joseph died.” In concluding remarks he said that “As the Lord’s will is my will all the time, as he dictates so I will perform. If he don’t guide the ship, we’ll go down in the whirlpool.” Band music followed his speech, then Apostle George A. Smith led the saints in shouting “Hosanna, Hosanna, Hosanna to God and the Lamb. Amen! Amen! And Amen!”  

The conference’s action received a confirming vote at the Church’s next annual conference held at Kanesville on April 6, 1848. At that point, some 10,000 Saints were in the region compared to only 5,000 in Utah. By seniority Orson Hyde became president of the Quorum of the Twelve. Father John Smith, brother of Joseph Smith Sr., was chosen to be Presiding Patriarch in the Church. As soon as possible, similar sustaining votes took place in a general conference in England on August 14, 1848 and at the October general conference in Great Salt Lake City.  

Miller’s Hollow Renamed Kanesville 

At a Seventies Jubilee held on January 16-21, 1848, believers from both sides of the river enjoyed a six-day gathering at the tabernacle for celebrating, worship, preaching, and dancing. Wagons parked around the tabernacle, Wilford Woodruff observed, “looked like a large emigration camp.” Mornings featured talks and the afternoons dancing interspersed with singing, band numbers, and other amusements. “The Saints enjoyed themselves thoroughly,” Woodford journalized. Reddick Allred, newly returned from Battalion service,
said that Battalion men received special invitations to the affair. President Young, he said, called them “the salvation of the church.”

On January 18, 1848, some 1,750 Saints signed two petitions, one urging the Iowa legislature to make the Pottawattamie tract of land a county, and the other asking the nation’s postmaster general to establish a post office in their area. Early on, the settlement had started a semi-weekly mail service to and from Austin, Missouri, the nearest post office. “There being no post office within forty or fifty miles of said Tabernacle,” the petition enjoined, “the public good requires a convenient office.”

Thomas L. Kane kept in contact with church leaders. On December 3, 1847, some of the leaders met at a home “where Elder William Appleby presented the gold pens and pencils sent by Co. Thomas L. Kane to the Twelve Apostles.” Three days later the Twelve wrote “important letters” to, among others, friend Kane. On February 9, 1848 Elder Young wrote to Kane and asked him to do three favors: (1) present the post office petition to the postmaster general and lobby for the proposal; (2) lobby with the Superintendent of Indian Affairs for a permit to allow the Saints to live on Omaha lands (Winter Quarters) another year, and (3) draft a petition for a territorial government for the Great Basin and agitate the subject in Congress.

Responding to the Saints’ petition, the government established the post office in March 1848 and named it Kane. Evan M. Greene became postmaster. On April 8, 1848, at a general conference held in the tabernacle, the congregation approved that the settlement be renamed Kanesville, to honor friend Thomas L. Kane.

Oliver Cowdery’s Return to the Church

Oliver Cowdery, once Second Elder in the Church and one of the Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon plates, disaffected from the Church in 1838. He never went to Nauvoo but became a private citizen and a lawyer in Tiffin, Ohio. Brighamite friends, especially brother-in-law Phineas Young (Brigham Young’s brother), encouraged him to return to the fold. Phineas Young accompanied Oliver, Oliver’s wife Elizabeth, and daughter Maria Cowdery

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35 Journal History, Jan. 18, 1848 and Wilford Woodruff Journal, same date, 310.
36 Journal History, Jan. 20, 1848.
37 Journal History entries for Dec. 3 and 6, 1847 and Feb. 9, 1848.
38 In 1850 Kane published a talk he gave to the Pennsylvania Historical Society, titled The Mormons. Later, Kane helped negotiate a peaceful settlement to the Utah War, and visited Utah at least twice, where he and wife Elizabeth were honored guests.
39 Journal History, April 8, 1848.
from Wisconsin to the Bluffs. On Saturday afternoon, October 21, 1848, they arrived during a local conference held in the open air close to Mosquito Creek. One report says Elder Orson Hyde, who was conducting the meeting, spotted Cowdery, came down from the stand and embraced him, took him by the arm and escorted him to the platform. Elder Hyde introduced him and invited him to speak.41 “Friends and Brethren my name is Cowdery, Oliver Cowdery. In the early history of this church I stood identified with her, and one in her councils.” Then he bore a testimony: “I wrote with my own pen the entire Book of Mormon (save a few pages) as it fell from the lips of the Prophet, as he translated it by the gift and power of God.” He stated that “I beheld with my eyes and handled with my hands the gold plates from which it was translated,” and affirmed that “That book is true. Sidney Rigdon did not write it. Mr. Spaulding did not write it. I wrote it myself as it fell from the lips of the prophet.” He added that “I was present with Joseph, when an holy angel from God came down from heaven and conferred or restored, the Aaronic Priesthood,” and “I was present with Joseph when the Melchizedek Priesthood was conferred by the holy angels from God on high.” Then, referring to his early calling to help select the first group of twelve apostles in the latter-days, in 1835, he pointed to Apostle Hyde and said, “He was also called through me, by the prayer of faith, an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ.”42

Nine days later, on October 30, Cowdery spent the evening talking with Elders Hyde and George A. Smith, and assured them he sought no leadership position, only to be one among the Saints again.43 On November 5 he met with and was questioned by the high priests and the Pottawattamie High Council in the tabernacle. “I wish to come humbly and be one in your midst. I seek no

41 Faulring, “The Return of Oliver Cowdery,” 144.
42 Roberts, Comprehensive History 1:139.
43 Roberts, Comprehensive History 1:146.
station. I only wish to be identified with you; I am out of the church, I am not a member of the church. I wish to become a member of the church again. I wish to come in at the door. I know the door. I have not come here to seek presidency. I come humbly and throw myself upon the decision of this body.”

All voted in favor of his being baptized. On November 12 Elder Hyde baptized him in Kanesville, in Mosquito Creek. He stayed in the area for two-and-a-half months and helped Elder Hyde publish an issue or two of the Frontier Guardian. He made plans to go west with the Saints the next spring, and that January went to Missouri to visit relatives. Due to family situations and lack of means, he decided to wait another year. In the summer of 1849 his health deteriorated, so he could not go. He died on March 3, 1850.

**Growth of Kanesville**

Unlike in some other Mormon gathering places, Church leaders drew no blueprints for Kanesville. It was supposed to be a temporary settlement lasting only until all the Utah-bound Nauvoo area refugees had left for the west. Despite continual departures to Utah, Kanesville actually grew in size. In 1848 it received an infusion of some 3,000 Saints when Winter Quarters closed down. It welcomed new arrivals from the States and immigrant converts from Europe. An October 1848 report to the First Presidency said that “Kanesville is rather on the gain” because “Henry W. Miller and Company had built and opened a large store, John Needham had converted Daniel Miller’s house into a store, Hyrum Clark opened an inn, the Smith and Tootle store was there, “and a great number of Log Cabins have been put up.”

The winter of 1848-1849 was the “most severe I ever saw,” Elder George A. Smith said, so that by March streams were overflowing their banks and Mosquito Creek on Kanesville’s south edge resembled a lake. By February 1849 Kanesville advertisers included Hiram Clark’s Union Hotel, Dustin Amy’s tinsmith shop, doctors, lawyers, a tailor, and a blacksmith. Near the Tabernacle, which became the “down town” part of Kanesville, Elder Hyde built a home on a street soon called Hyde Street (now First Street). Simple shops and stores sprang up, as did a two-story school, which served as the courthouse and later as a music hall. In every direction, Saints built homes,

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44 Pottawattamie High Council Minutes, 1848-1851, Nov. 4 and 5, 1848; Pottawattamie High Priests Quorum Minutes, 1846-1852, Nov. 5, 1848, and Reuben Miller Journal, all three records are in the LDS Church Archives.


46 George A. Smith, Ezra T. Benson, and Joseph Young to the First Presidency and the Twelve, Oct. 5, 1848, in Journal History, that date.

47 George A. Smith to Orson Pratt, March 24, 1849, in Journal History, that date.


mostly of logs.

The log tabernacle served as Kanesville’s main meetinghouse for almost two years. It was used for conferences, elections, balls, socials, school graduations, collecting tithes, and meetings of the Blockhouse Branch and the Pottawattamie Stake High Council. In September 1849 workmen began repairing the tabernacle. Members met there for the October conference, when more repairs were planned. However, water seepage caused such problems that workmen dismantled the tabernacle by early 1850.50

By 1850 Kanesville had about 350 homes. The federal census that year tallied 5,058 for the Kanesville precinct’s population. Pottawattamie County was Iowa’s sixth most populace county out of forty-nine, with 7,828 residents.51 That fall and winter, principal T. S. Rocker operated the Kanesville Academy where children, for $3 in tuition, were taught in “the usual branches of learning and science.”52 On December 27, 1851, at a public meeting in the courthouse, Kanesville citizens created a petition seeking a land grant from Congress covering the town site, given that the federal survey of the land in question was nearly finished.53

LDS Settlements Ringing Kanesville

With Kanesville as the hub, Mormons from the Nauvoo area, the States, and Europe produced “heavy settlements in all directions on the good land that abounds in the country.”54 Most were not villages or even hamlets but simply handfuls of settlers by a grove or stream — in places named Harris Grove, Honey Creek, Plum Hollow, Pigeon Grove, and Upper Keg Creek.55 Though tiny, many of these clusters had a school, and some set up gristmills powered by horse or water. As of October 1848 Pottawattamie County had about forty branches of the church.56 Just southwest of Kanesville some emigrants worshipped at the “Welsh Tabernacle.” A Fourth of July parade in 1850 escorted Elder Hyde

51 Statistical View of the United States ... Being a Compendium of the Seventh Census [1850], Washington D. C.: Superintendent of the United States Census, 1854; Bennett, Mormons at the Missouri, 217; Gail George Holmes, “LDS Heritage Tour,” brochure, undated; LDS Kanesville Manuscript History, LDS Church Archives.
52 Frontier Guardian, December 25, 1850.
53 On Dec. 27, 1851, at public meeting in the courthouse, Kanesville citizens created a petition seeking a land grant from Congress covering the town site, given that the federal survey of the land in question was nearly finished. (Journal History, Dec. 27, 1851.)
54 Nelson Wheeler Whipple Journal, holograph, LDS Church Archives, Spring and Summer 1848 entries.
55 Bennett, Mormons at the Missouri, 217-219.
56 Kanesville Manuscript History, October 10, 1848.
to that tabernacle. Saints also built a tabernacle in the Crescent area more than a dozen miles north of Kanesville and at the Pigeon Creek Branch.\textsuperscript{57} Local historian Gail Holmes has identified nearly ninety LDS settlements in southwestern Iowa.\textsuperscript{58}

Most of the Saints farmed. The rich Iowa soil produced for them corn, potatoes, beans, turnips, and watermelons. Teenager Gibson Condie said his family, who arrived from Scotland in 1850, lived near Kanesville for two years and three months and “we lived very comfortable” because “it is a fine place to live in. A poor man if he has a farm he would do well, they generally have good crops. Wheat does not yield much. It is more adapted for corn. The land is very rich.”\textsuperscript{59} In October 1851, Little Pigeon reported its farmers had grown a

\textsuperscript{57} Frontier Guardian, July 10, 1850; LDS emigrants in Edward Hunter’s company in 1850 assembled “on the Welsh Farm, near Kanesville.” See Kanesville Manuscript History, June 25 and July 4, 1850.


\textsuperscript{59} Gibson Condie Journal, microfilm of holograph, LDS Archives, typescript in Larsen and Larsen, \textit{Remembering Winter Quarters/Council Bluffs}, 165-172, quote is on p. 172.
carrot weighing three and one-half pounds, a beet weighing seven pounds, and a six-and-a-half pound radish.\textsuperscript{60} Farmers sold their surpluses in Kanesville to residents and travelers. LDS mechanic Jonathan Browning, later known as one of America’s premier gunsmiths, had a shop eight miles south of Kanesville. His advertisement in the \textit{Frontier Guardian} (April 4, 1849) said he would manufacture to order “revolving rifles and pistols; also slide guns, from 5 to 25 shooters....”

\textbf{Church Operations}

From fall 1846 to spring 1848, Mormon leadership in the Missouri River area centered across the river at Winter Quarters. Winter Quarters developed a temporary city government. High councils operated on both sides of the river, as did bishops. After most of the Twelve left for Utah and closed down Winter Quarters in 1848, Apostles George A. Smith and Orson Hyde remained behind to provide regional leadership. In July 1849, Elder Hyde was designated “Presiding Elder of the church East of the Rocky Mountains,” and served as such until 1850.\textsuperscript{61} By March 1849, to help Church communications, a six-times-a-year mail service commenced between Kanesville and Salt Lake City.\textsuperscript{62}

A Pottawattamie high council and several bishops, their ranks constantly turning overdue to departures west, shared the leadership responsibilities with Elder Hyde. They made certain branches had presiding officers. They labored to provide for the poor, collected and disbursed tithes and offerings, settled disputes, and conducted quarterly conferences. They called men on missions. In spring 1851 the Church at Kanesville sent several elders into the eastern states, middle states and Canada “as many special and pressing calls for preaching have been set up here.”\textsuperscript{63} They organized wagon companies of Saints heading west and found places locally for new arrivals. Leaders met together regularly, preached, performed weddings, conducted funerals, approved baptisms, disciplined backsliders, and excommunicated defectors. Throughout the settlements, bishops or branch presidents conducted Sunday

\textsuperscript{60} \textit{Frontier Guardian}, October 31, 1851.
\textsuperscript{61} Kanesville Manuscript History, July 14, 1849; report of semi-annual conference at Kanesville on Oct. 6, 1850 in \textit{Frontier Guardian}, Oct. 30, 1850. Elder Hyde He made a brief trip to Utah July 6 to November 18, 1850, see Hyde, Orson Hyde, 258-272. He was born in Connecticut in 1805, converted to Mormonism in 1831, and was ordained one of the initial Quorum of Twelve Apostles in 1835. In 1841 he dedicated the Holy Land for the return of the Jews. When the Camp of Israel left Nauvoo in February 1846, Elder Hyde, by assignment, stayed behind to see the temple finished and dedicated. He left with Apostles John Taylor and Parley P. Pratt in July 1846 to shore up the church in England. Back home by May 1847, he found the Twelve had just left for the Rocky Mountains. They sent word for him to stay there and direct Church matters. As soon as Brigham Young and others returned from their Utah pioneering venture in the fall of 1847, Elder Hyde met with them regularly that winter.
\textsuperscript{62} Wilford Woodruff to Orson Pratt, March 1, 1849, in Journal History, March 1, 1849.
\textsuperscript{63} Evan M. Greene letter, addressee not identified, Journal History, April 28, 1851.
meetings and tried to provide for members’ physical and spiritual needs. In October 1848 leaders assigned some fifty elders to go in pairs and preach in each of the forty branches every two weeks. In May 1849, traveling elders did such visits regularly. Later that year elders visited three branches a week, every weekend of the month. During the winter of 1850-51, traveling elder William R. Terry made 33 visits to five branches near Macedonia.64

Until Iowa legislators organized Pottawattamie County in 1848, Saints living there lacked civil authorities. To fill the breach, church officers handled civil as well as religious matters. For example, they tried to govern the use of natural resources. In January 1847, Bishop Joseph Knight Jr. was assigned “to superintend and direct the cutting of timber on the East side of the river & see that it be not needlessly destroyed.”65 At an October 1849 conference, the leadership decreed that people living in the “thick settlements contiguous to Kanesville” had the right to obtain firewood from the timber stands nearest to them and no longer be blocked by the few who claimed rights to the timber.66 For a time, Elder Hyde and a high council met every other Saturday to govern local affairs, including some civil matters.67

Church records identify many leaders and leadership changes. On July 22, 1849, Aaron Johnson, a high councilman, was appointed presiding bishop.68 At the October 6, 1849 conference, members sustained William Draper as a patriarch and Aaron Johnson again as presiding bishop, with Elder Hyde holding “general jurisdiction over the Saints on the frontier.”69 In June 1850 the high council appointed Lyman Stoddard of the council to oversee all the branches in the county. He was replaced in March 1851 by James Snow. At the April 1851 conference, William W. Lane was sustained as presiding bishop with two counselors,70 and at an October 6, 1851, Pottawattamie District meeting, three bishops were present, and George W. Harris was sustained as president of the high council.71

Twice yearly, leaders conducted general conferences. These were held at various locations: in the tabernacle, the music hall, a stand southeast of the printing office, on conference grounds a few rods north of the tabernacle, “the grove,” an amphitheater, and a valley on the road between Carterville and

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64 Frontier Guardian, May 2 and Aug. 8, 1849; William Snow to Brigham Young, Oct. 2, 1848, Journal History, that date; William Reynolds Terry, Diary, photocopy of holograph, Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT, 36.
65 Winter Quarters, Municipal High Council Minutes, typescript, LDS Archives, Jan. 31, 1847.
68 Kanesville Manuscript History, July 22, 1849.
69 Kanesville Manuscript History, Oct. 6, 1849.
70 Kanesville Manuscript History, March 1851; Journal History April 6 and 20, 1851. See also Danny L. Jorgensen, “Conflict in the Camps of Israel: the 1853 Cutlerite Schism,” Journal of Mormon History 21 (Spring 1995), 25-64.
71 Journal History, Oct. 6, 1851.
Kanesville.\textsuperscript{72} An estimated 2,500 Saints attended a conference on October 8, 1848, parking some 400 wagons on the grounds.\textsuperscript{73} During that conference, held in the hollow northwest of the tabernacle, Elder Hyde presided. He asked that seats in front of the stand be reserved for the singers, and encouraged “all who are singers, no matter whether they understand the rules of singing or not,” to “come forward to those seats and mingle their voices in harmonious songs of praise to God.” One song the choir sang was “Come, Come Ye Saints,” written two years earlier.\textsuperscript{74} At the April 1849 conference, due to high water and swept-away bridges, only twenty-three out of thirty-eight branches had representatives there.\textsuperscript{75} At the April 1850 conference the general and local Church officers were sustained. At conferences, both men and women voted.\textsuperscript{76} Between 4,000 and 5,000 people attended the fall 1850 conference in Kanesville.\textsuperscript{77}

Conferences were occasions where members got to “see their friends from the different branches.”\textsuperscript{78} One conference announcement said that “our friends in the county can do as they usually have done ... come with their teams and covered wagons, and bring their bread and dinner, and a bed or two; and the friends residing at and near this place should make preparations to entertain strangers from abroad.”\textsuperscript{79}

The high council tried to regulate social activities in the branches. For example, in May 1850 the council gave permission for each branch in the county “to have one dance and one only” to be the “farewell ball” where branch members could socialize before some of their members left that year for Utah.\textsuperscript{80} Each winter became dancing season, regulated by branch leaders. To illustrate, in December 1851 the high council announced that “the season of recreation and amusements is now at hand; and our young people, and old ones, also, perhaps, are anxious to participate in the festivities.” The council permitted that, under branch leaders, every branch in January could have “civil and social parties ... to be conducted in all civility, kindness, and morality.” Branches enjoyed other social events. Following precedent set in Utah the year before, Saints in the North Pigeon Branch in 1850 celebrated the 24\textsuperscript{th} of July pioneer day with music, orations, a talk by 1847 pioneer A. P. Chesley who described Great Salt Lake Valley to the crowd, a parade, and then a feast under a bowery, where 166 couples “partook freely.”\textsuperscript{81}

\textsuperscript{72} Locations listed in conference reports published in the Frontier Guardian.
\textsuperscript{73} Kanesville Manuscript History, Oct 8, 1848.
\textsuperscript{74} Frontier Guardian, April 18, 1849.
\textsuperscript{75} Frontier Guardian, May 2 1849.
\textsuperscript{76} Frontier Guardian, May 1, 1850. “Does the woman vote in the nation?” Elder George Coulson asked at the Oct. 6, 1850 conference; “No ... but in the kingdom of God, women may vote, and her voice is as good as mine in governing.” Frontier Guardian, Oct. 30, 1850.
\textsuperscript{77} Frontier Guardian, Dec. 11, 1850.
\textsuperscript{78} Frontier Guardian, Sept. 19, 1849.
\textsuperscript{79} “Conference,” Frontier Guardian, Feb. 20, 1850.
\textsuperscript{80} “Farewell Ball,” Frontier Guardian, May 29, 1850.
\textsuperscript{81} Frontier Guardian, Aug. 21, 1850.
With memberships fluctuating constantly because of arrivals and departures, a few priesthood quorums held meetings. In the fall of 1848, the high priests quorum met on the first Sunday and the Seventies on the third Sunday, with attendees coming from almost all of the nearby branches. Among officers sustained at the October 1850 conference was an elders quorum president and a priests quorum president. In February 1851 the elders quorum was meeting regularly and, using a notice in the *Frontier Guardian*, it invited all elders residing in the county to join the quorum. Later that year the Seventies called a general meeting for September 21st.\(^82\)

At Kanesville, the Brigham Young-led church took action against three notable disaffectors. In the October 1848 conference, fellowship was withdrawn from Apostle Lyman Wight and Bishop George Miller. Then in 1851 Alpheus Cutler was excommunicated. He and about 100 followers organized the Church of Jesus Christ (Cutlerite) in 1853 and shortly thereafter about 40 Cutlerite families built up the town of Manti (near today’s Shenandoah in Mills County).\(^83\)

**Politics**

During the first meetings in the new tabernacle in December 1846, the congregation voted that the high council on that side of the river “should have all municipal power” and that bishops’ courts “should have authority as civil magistrates” until a county organization was created.\(^84\) On August 7, 1848 Kanesville precinct (then part of far-off Monroe County) voted at the tabernacle for state and local officers, casting 491 ballots for Whig candidates and 7 for Democratic ones. Six weeks later the state created Pottawattamie County, with Kanesville as county seat.\(^85\) Residents then elected a three-man county commission, and soon the county had a probate judge, prosecuting attorney, sheriff, surveyor general, clerks, and justices of the peace.\(^86\) The Mormon vote was crucial in the state because of the almost even split in Iowa voters between the Democrats and the Whigs. Both parties courted the Mormon vote, and politics became at times a divisive issue even among Church members. For U. S. President, the Mormons voted overwhelmingly in 1848 for Whig candidate General Zachary Taylor, prompting Iowa Democrats to propose the county be disorganized. August of 1850 brought local elections that produced “political fire and division” among the branches.\(^87\)


\(^84\) Kanesville Manuscript History, Dec. 25, 1846.

\(^85\) Kanesville Manuscript History, Aug 7 and Sept. 21, 1848.

\(^86\) Kanesville Manuscript History, Sept. 21, 1848; Webb thesis, 152.

\(^87\) Kanesville Manuscript History, March 31, 1849. One activist and prominent Mormon, pushing
The Frontier Guardian Newspaper

For more than three years Elder Hyde and others edited and published in Kanesville the Frontier Guardian newspaper. Its office was located on the southwest corner of Broadway and South 1st Street (Main Street and Hyde Street in those days). This four-page “fortnightly” newspaper was first published on February 7, 1849 and continued until early 1852. Subscriptions cost $2.00 per year. Its purpose was to keep Saints in the area informed about the progress of the Church and to promote Kanesville’s development and overland trail outfittings. It contained much advertising, names of passing gold rush travelers, and news about trail conditions, ferry crossings, and Indians. Early in 1852 Elder Hyde sold the paper, and its new editor, not a Mormon, renamed it the Frontier Guardian and Iowa Sentinel.

Outfitting Center for the California Gold Rush

In January 1848 gold was discovered in California, launching the famous 1849 stampede of gold seekers to California. These “forty-niners” swarmed into Kanesville, practically buying the Mormon settlements out of wagons and draw animals, supplies and food. Shortages made prices skyrocket, giving Mormon sellers good income but also priced many Saints out of being able to afford to head west that famous year. One estimate said that even with new ferries the Saints built in 1849, some 5,000 wagons of gold seekers in 1850 had to wait weeks for a turn to cross the river.

Gibson Condie said that early in 1850 “thousands” with Gold Fever camped all around Kanesville, waiting for prairie grass to start growing. Demand, plus lack of crops, meant that corn prices jumped from 10 cents to $3 a bushel. Farmers planted two or three times but “it seemed that year we would not raise anything. May came along and there was no rain.” Then, according to Condie, a remarkable thing happened. Elder Orson Pratt, returning from England, prayed in a May 19 conference meeting that the Lord would bless the Saints with rains. Elder Hyde then called for donations of jobs and food to help the poor Saints and prophesied that the people would have rains and good crops. After donations were received and donors’ names recorded, the clear sky began to cloud and before the meeting ended drenching rains fell. “From that time we had regular rains,” Condie said, and “Gentiles” at the meeting dubbed Hyde the

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88 Kanesville Manuscript History, Feb. 7, 1849.
90 Bennett, Mormons at the Missouri, 222.
“rain prophet.” The grass then began to grow rapidly the saints and Gentiles then began to move out with their teams on the plains. By fall new corn came in and “we were greatly Blessed with good crops,” Condie noted. Corn prices dropped back from $3 to 15 cents a bushel.\textsuperscript{91}

Church member Jonathan C. Wright felt in April 1850 that Kanesville presented a “chequered” scene of vices and virtues, the vices coming from about 2000 “gold diggers, alias mobocrats, tarrying there, waiting for grass to permit them to head across the plains. He found many to be “hateful, deceitful and devilish” and whose sentiments were “Damn the Mormons.” He resented that they had “swept the country” of surplus produce for man and beast, forcing prices to be so high that the poorer Saints suffered because they could not afford to buy the basics. A number of groceries and cake shops in Kanesville were in “active operation,” he noted,\textsuperscript{92} “More of the rabble go this year,” Elder Hyde observed that April, “it requires all our wisdom and patience to get along with them here — there are so many thousands collected here.”\textsuperscript{93} In early June he reported that about 4,500 wagons bound for California had crossed at Kanesville, with about 13,500 men.\textsuperscript{94}

Kanesville’s economy benefited. Residents tried everything they could to profit in that seller’s market. By 1850 Kanesville was a major Missouri River outfitting spot. Large supply and merchandise houses sprang up and flourished there. A local history described the scene: “The farms furnished abundance of grain, while steamboats arrived almost daily with large stocks of goods for the merchants, and the rush was so great that at times emigrants had to wait for days for their turn to be ferried across the river.”\textsuperscript{95} Along with big infusions of money, however, the gold rush crowds brought to Kanesville elements of the outside world the Saints were seeking to flee: crime, drinking, gambling, profanity, and worse. Not a few travelers showed great disdain and disrespect toward the Latter-day Saints and their religious practices. However, some visitors there became exposed to the Gospel and liked it.\textsuperscript{96}

Between 1849 and 1852, more California gold seekers used Kanesville as their departure point than any other outfitting post along the Missouri River. By 1852, Kanesville was the dominant jumping-off point.\textsuperscript{97}

\textsuperscript{91} Gibson Condie Journal, in Larsen and Larsen, Remembering Winter Quarters/Council Bluffs, 167-168; Kanesville Manuscript History, May 19, 1850.

\textsuperscript{92} Jonathan C. Wright to Brigham Young, April 23, 1850, Journal History, April 23, 1850.

\textsuperscript{93} Orson Hyde to Brigham Young, Journal History, April 25, 1850.

\textsuperscript{94} Frontier Guardian, June 12, 1850.

\textsuperscript{95} Field and Reed, History of Pottawattamie County, 1:9.

\textsuperscript{96} A family named Harris from Indiana was helped by Bishop Joseph Knight Jr., converted to Mormonism, and went to Utah instead of Oregon as they had originally intended; see William G. Hartley, “Stand by My Servant Joseph”: The Story of the Joseph Knight Family and the Restoration (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 2003), 461-462.

\textsuperscript{97} John D. Unruh Jr., The Plains Across (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1979), 42; and “Pottawatamie County,” Frontier Guardian and Iowa Sentinel April 15, 1852.
Outfitting Point for LDS Wagon Trains

Kanesville existed primarily to be an outfitting and transportation post for LDS emigrants heading for Utah. Between 1846 and 1853, more than 25,000 Saints passed through Kanesville and its predecessors. The Pottawattamie High Council vowed to “spare no pains to further, by all available means in their power, the emigration to the Valley of the Great Salt Lake.” However, to go west by wagon and ox team was not cheap. The Twelve instructed in December 1847 that the Pottawattamie lands were the best place for stopping and assembling for the trek west. In April 1849 the First Presidency instructed from Utah that it was unwise for any to head west unless they had “team and wagon sufficient to come through without any assistance from the valley,” and that “they should bring breadstuffs sufficient to last them a few month after their arrival.”

Church leaders prodded people not to stay in the Kanesville area longer than absolutely necessary. When the trail season for 1850 opened, the First Presidency urged Elder Hyde to “push the Saints to Zion and persuade all good brethren to come, who have a wheelbarrow, and faith enough to roll it over the mountains.” It was a “duty devolving upon the Saints to gather to the Valley, as soon as circumstances will permit, to assist in building up Zion.”

However, to make the trek, people had to come up with reasonable outfits and equipage and supplies, or pay to go with someone so outfitted. President Hyde reported in 1850 that outfits then cost about $600 each, equivalent in year 2004 dollars to about $14,418. Given cost and distances, Saints by the hundreds stopped in the Kanesville area for a few days, weeks, months, or even years, depending on needs. Presiding Bishop Edward Hunter arrived in Kanesville from Utah on January 14, 1850, bearing $6,000, the “first fruits of the Perpetual Emigrating Fund” (PEF) raised in Utah for buying oxen to take the poor west. Lydia Knight was one who lacked resources to go west. For her seven children she obtained use of a dugout and converted it into a home, then in the summer of 1849 moved into a better cabin. That year she earned decent money by sewing and washing for the horde of Forty-niners swarming through Kanesville. She took her family west in 1850 in Bishop Hunter’s PEF.

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101 Frontier Guardian, July 24, 1850.
102 Frontier Guardian, Dec. 11, 1850. Based on the consumer price index, the value of a 2004 dollar was 24.03 times greater than an 1850 dollar; see “How Much Is That Worth?” dollar conversion chart at Economic History Services website: http://www.eh.net/hmit/compare.
103 Kanesville Manuscript History, Jan. 14, 1850.
company.\textsuperscript{104} Between 1848 and 1852 Lewis Whitesides cared for horses in the area, bought and farmed 160 acres, and then went on to Utah.\textsuperscript{105} The John Ellison family reached Kanesville too late in 1852 to join a wagon train, so they rented farmland eight miles away, at Pigeon Grove. There John, a printer by trade, planted corn and potatoes, built a log cabin, and prepared for winter. Their diet included a lot of cornbread. Two cows provided milk and butter, two pigs to provide bacon and pork. The family went west the next year.

Kanesville also served as a resting and resupply point for Mormon emigrants previously outfitted. For example, on July 2, 1851, Englishwoman Jean Rio Baker’s little wagon company of relatives reached Kanesville after crossing the state of Iowa from near Keokuk. “Quite a pretty town and the surrounding scenery very beautiful,” she noted in her diary. They stayed for two days, purchased provisions, and then crossed the flooded Missouri bottomlands to the ferry and resumed their westward journey.\textsuperscript{106}

From 1849 to 1852 an estimated 46 individual Mormon wagon trains left from there, involving about 2,900 wagons and more than 25,000 Mormons.\textsuperscript{107} Elder Hyde and the high council authorized and organized the wagon trains that the Saints traveled in.\textsuperscript{108} They chose the captains, wanting to be sure such men were loyal Church members. The high council decreed in 1850 that no person or family would be allowed to go unless they had “at least, one hundred pounds of good breadstuffs to the person, old or young,” and “other eatables in a reasonable proportion.” A “judicious and responsible committee” was to inspect “every wagon, its contents, and the team attached to it” in order to ascertain “if they are in a suitable and proper condition to cross the Plains.” Further, the high council instructed that because in 1849 the last emigrating companies got caught by snows in the mountains “and came well nigh perishing,” no companies would be organized after June 15.\textsuperscript{109}

“We have attended the organization of 350 wagons of Salt Lake emigrants,” Elder Hyde reported on June 12, 1850. Because cholera was so rampant in 1850—reports said sixty Saints had died while crossing Nebraska, most because of cholera — the branches in Pottawattamie County observed July 14 as a day

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{104}] Hartley, \textit{Stand by My Servant Joseph}, 450-453, 473-474.
\item[\textsuperscript{105}] William G. Hartley, \textit{To Build, To Create, To Produce: Ephraim P. Ellison’s Life and Enterprises, 1850-1939} (Salt Lake City, UT: Ellison Family Organization, 1997), 38-39.
\item[\textsuperscript{106}] Diary of Jean Rio Griffiths Baker, typescript, 65 pp. Special Collections, Brigham Young University Library. Entries for July 2-5, 1851.
\item[\textsuperscript{107}] Stanley B. Kimball, \textit{Historic Resource Study: Mormon Pioneer National Historic Trail} (Washington D. C.: U. S. Department of Interior/National Park Service, 1991), 134-141. Kimball uses LDS historian Andrew Jenson’s count of Mormon who went west each year as follows: 1848 (4,000), 1849 (3,000), 1850 (5,000), 1851 (5,000), and 1852 (10,000). This totals 27,000, almost all of whom outfitted at or near Kanesville.
\item[\textsuperscript{108}] “Companies for the Valley,” \textit{Frontier Guardian}, Feb. 6, 1850.
\item[\textsuperscript{109}] “High Council,” \textit{Frontier Guardian}, May 29, 1850.
\end{itemize}
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of fasting and prayer.  

On July 4 Bishop Edward Hunter assembled wagons in the Church’s first Perpetual Emigrating Fund funded company “on the Welsh Farm” near Stringtown.  

That year, 1850, the LDS emigration generally used the Lower Ferry, located about twenty miles south, near Bethlehem.

**LDS European Immigrants**

In December 1847 Church leaders instructed Saints in the British Isles to “emigrate as speedily as possible” to the Pottawattamie lands. About three miles southwest of Kanesville, by a bend in the Missouri River, the Council Point settlement served as a stopping place and depot for Missouri River steamboats unloading merchandise and thousands of travelers. In February 1848 British LDS emigration resumed after being interrupted because of the forced evacuation of the Saints from Illinois. Between 1848 and 1852, more than 8,000 European Latter-day Saints disembarked at the landing at Council Point. British immigrant Thomas Atkin, for example, arrived there on May 4, 1849 and stayed with a local family until he rounded up a wagon and team and headed for Utah three weeks later. John Ormond and others from England reached Kanesville in November 1849, found a cabin to live in, and then built one of their own. “We had a hard time that winter as there was little or no work to be had.” In March 1850 large numbers of people arrived, bound for California, “and we began to sell them pies, and cakes, etc., and we made money very fast while the emigrants were there.” That summer and winter, Ormond sawed lumber with a whip saw, and did “all kinds of odd jobs and earned considerable money,” enough for his family to start for Utah in the spring of 1851.

Luke William Gallop, who arrived in the area in 1849, compared the people-mix in the county with Clayton, Iowa, his former residence: “Clayton [Iowa] has quite a variety of people but nothing to compare with Pottawatamie Co. that is made up from several European countries, the States, Canada, & Texas & nearly all believe in one & the same religion.” On May 16, 1851, the *Frontier Guardian* reported that a company of two hundred English Saints, led by three

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111 Journal History, July 4, 1850.


113 “Kanesville Landing is at Council Point about four miles above Trading Point.” *Frontier Guardian* July 10, 1850. The site of Kanesville or Emigrants’ Landing is in the SW ¼ of section 14, T74N R44W.


elders, arrived at Kanesville’s landing on May 2\textsuperscript{nd} on the steamer \textit{Sacramento}, generally in good health and spirits. “Many of the company are destined for the Great Salt Lake Valley,” the paper noted, but “the remainder will settle in Pottawattamie.” Other steamers that brought passengers that month were the \textit{Statesman} on May 20 and the \textit{Robert Campbell} and \textit{Sacramento} (again) on May 21. Because many arriving emigrants were short of funds, the Church encouraged any short-term residents heading west to let immigrants move into their homes and farms at low or no cost.

\begin{center}
\textbf{Providing for The Needy}
\end{center}

A Herculean task for the southwestern Iowa conglomerations of Mormons was trying to find housing and work for fellow-Saints stopping there. Those who arrived destitute posed even bigger drains on limited local resources. Late in 1846 Brigham Young called Joseph Knight Jr. to be a bishop on the east side of the river, with a main assignment to take care of the needy. In January, men in his ward were building houses for wives of men serving in the Mormon Battalion. Termed “a good beggar for the poor,” he collected tithes diligently and held a dance and a concert to raise money for the needy.\footnote{Journal History, Nov. 26 and Dec. 3, 1846; Winter Quarters Municipal High Council Minutes, LDS Church Archives, Jan. 7, 1847; Hosea Stout diary entry for Sept. 27, 1847, in \textit{On the Mormon Frontier}, I:275; Maurine Carr Ward, ed., \textit{Winter Quarters: The 1846-1848 Life Writings of Mary Haskin Parker Richards} (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1996), 161, entry for Sept. 28, 1847; Journal of William Appleby, typescript, LDS Church Archives, Dec. 14, 1847.} At the area’s October 1848 LDS conference, Bishop Knight became president of the bishops in the stake and responsible for collecting and disbursing tithes.\footnote{Journal History, Oct. 7, 1848.} At the end of that conference, Apostles George A. Smith and Ezra Taft Benson praised him for “running about here taking care of the poor.”\footnote{Journal History, Oct. 10, 1848.}

At the end of 1848, after the harvest season and amid a “general time of health, peace, prosperity and plenty with us at the Bluffs,” Elder Hyde called on people to bring to the tabernacle “a goodly portion” of their flour, corn-meal, beef, mutton, pork, chickens, cheese, butter, eggs, bread, pies, cakes, potatoes and vegetables. He asked merchants to donate dry goods. Through snow and ice, people responded generously, and Elder Hyde distributed the abundant contributions to those in need.\footnote{Orson Hyde to Orson Pratt, Dec 11, 1848, in Journal History of that date; Hyde, Orson Hyde, 234-35.}

With new LDS emigrants arriving in the spring of 1849, Elder Hyde reported to Utah that “we have had our hands full to keep soul and body together among the poor.”\footnote{Orson Hyde to Heber C. Kimball, April 5, 1849, Journal History of that date.} Two months later he complained that wealthier Saints assisted the
poor to reach Kanesville, but then left them there. “This is over burdening us,” he said; “to see the poor flocking here, having nothing to help themselves with, and do not know how to make a hill of corn or potatoes, is not agreeable.”

At a Kanesville conference held in May 1850, Elders Hyde, Orson Pratt, and Wilford Woodruff appointed a committee of three to “locate the poor immigrants who could not proceed to Salt Lake this season.” In 1851, Gibson Condie recalled, Elder Hyde “wanted a good many Brethren to go up North to chop down trees and build log houses for a great many poor saints was coming out from the Old Country to this place and they were destitute of means.” Gibson, then fifteen, and his father went with others about a day’s journey north of Kanesville and worked at chopping and building for a few days. “It was for a good cause to get homes for the poor saints.” In October 1851, some branches observed “a day of fasting and prayer” when, “as was the custom heretofore,” members took their offerings to the bishops “for the benefit of the Poor and needy, in their various districts.”

**Depot for Mormons Eastbound from Utah**

For missionaries, leaders, and others from Utah heading to “the States” or abroad, Kanesville was a transfer point. The first missionaries ever sent out from Utah arrived there December 11, 1849. Their ranks included Apostles John Taylor, Lorenzo Snow, Erastus Snow, and Franklin D. Richards. They seemed “much gratified” to see Kanesville flourishing around the tabernacle and the countryside LDS villages with “farms and mills and flocks and herds.” Local Saints held “many parties and entertainments for us,” missionary Job Smith said, the proceeds from which paid the missionaries’ passages to St. Louis.

**Closing Down Kanesville and Iowa LDS Settlements (1852)**

At times the First Presidency said they wanted European converts to halt in the States for a while so that those who would otherwise apostatize in Utah would do it there instead. However, by 1851, too many Saints were staying there too long and getting too comfortable. On August 24, 1851 the Frontier Guardian published a letter written by Presiding Bishop Edward Hunter and other leading elders in Utah, dated June 8th. “Sell your farms and houses, and let Kanesville be in the hands of strangers, for you can do more good here,”

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122 Orson Hyde to Orson Pratt, June 24, 1849, Journal History of that date.
123 Journal History, May 19, 1850.
126 Journal History, December 11, 1849.
they admonished. “It is the duty of the saints to come, and also assist those brethren who are too poor to make a fit-out for themselves.” Saints had a duty to build up the Utah area. “We hope there will not be a man who once lived in Nauvoo and has had five years already to make an outfit, but will have energy of character to fit himself, and some poorer family.”

Stronger counsel came from the First Presidency, dated September 21, 1851. They instructed “All the Saints In Pottawattamie” to come to Utah the next season “and fail not.” “What are you waiting for? Have you any good excuse for not coming? No!” “We wish you to evacuate Pottawattamie, and the States, and next fall be with us.” Those who make the sacrifice “shall be blessed.”

Elders Ezra T. Benson and Jedediah M. Grant arrived from Utah, having been “sent expressly to push the Saints to the Valley.” At a special conference on November 8, 1851, the two apostles bore “united testimony ... for the Saints to prepare for emigration to the Valley in the Spring.” Six days later the Frontier Guardian proclaimed “Pottawattamie County for Sale,” and announced that “The Mormons are about to make a general move from this place in the Spring.... Now is the time for purchasers: strike while the iron is hot and secure a fortune while you can.” At close of 1851, there were 29 settlements or branches in Pottawattamie County. Elder Benson visited “all around the different branches” to organize evacuations the next spring. On March 16 he reported that he had organized nearly 1,800 Saints into eight companies from eight branches, and that 32 more branches would soon be organized similarly. Overall he projected that 5,000 to 6,000 Saints would leave Pottawattamie, along with another 4,000 from outside the county. On April 15, 1852, a Frontier Guardian editorial described soon-to-be vacated Kanesville as “a fine, flourishing town,” having 1200 to 1500 inhabitants and about 500 houses; 16 mercantile establishments; 2 drug stores; 2 printing offices; 5 hotels; 4 groceries; 2 jewelers shops; 1 harness maker; 8 wagon shops; 2 tinsmiths; 2 livery stables; 2 cabinet shops; 5 boot and shoe makers; 2 daguerrean rooms; 5 practical physicians; 9 attorneys at law; 1 gunsmith; 1 cooper, several ministers of different denominations; 3 barber shops; 4 bakeries; 1 mill; 7 blacksmith shops; and about 1000 to 1500 inhabitants.

An April 20, 1852, report said that Kanseville had faced a hard winter and was having a backward spring, which meant that emigration would be very late that season. “The Saints are generally poor and the way looks dark and

127 Frontier Guardian, Nov. 14, 1851.
128 Journal History, June 28, August 18, and Sept. 15 and 22, 1851.
129 Journal History, Nov. 14, 1851.
130 Kanesville Manuscript History, Dec. 1851 entries.
131 Gibson Condie Journal, in Remembering Winter Quarters/Kanesville, 171.
132 Ezra T. Benson to Brigham Young and Council, March 16, 1852, in Journal History of that date.
133 Frontier Guardian and Iowa Sentinel, April 15, 1852.
In order to leave, the Condie family cut timber, built a wagon, and obtained a loan, to be paid back in Utah, with which to buy a yoke of oxen, wagon cover, and cooking utensils. They could not sell their farm and, Condie said, others could not either so they just “left their places.”

To go west, young marrieds Lewis and Susan Whitesides joined the John B. Walker wagon train, comprised mostly of McOlney Branch members, from two or three miles north of Kanesville.

On May 1, the first of twenty-one Church-organized wagon trains ferried across the Missouri. Others followed as fast as ferryboats — flatboats carrying two or three wagons — could take the wagons, oxen, horses, sheep, dogs, cats, men, women, and children. Crossings were at the Upper or Mormon Ferry near where Winter Quarters was, the Middle Ferry near Kanesville, and the Lower Ferry six miles south at Bellevue, Nebraska. From the three landings the travelers drove onto trails, all three of which converged about ten miles into Nebraska, north of where the Elkhorn River flows into the Platte River. Early in June the Frontier Guardian reported that “our streets are still thronged with emigrants bound for Oregon, California, and Salt Lake. Although thousands have crossed the river at this point, still thousands are yet remaining to be crossed.”

The year’s emigration, the paper said, included many more women and children than ever before, many of whom had “barely sufficient” for the trek.

Because of the Kanesville close-down, numbers on Mormon Trail were nearly double those of any previous year. Thomas Margetts, a Utahn heading east against this heavy westbound traffic, estimated that he passed about 1400 teams and no less than 10,000 Saints. Adding even greater strain on overland trail resources — firewood, prairie grasses, campsites, stream crossings, buffalo chips, and buffalo — were another 50,000 non-Mormons bound for California and 10,000 for Oregon. Trail traffic was so heavy that one wagon train was rarely out of sight of another.

Those Who Stayed Behind

The 1852 mass departures did not deplete the area of Saints. Those who remained received instructions that December from a “council” that “each branch is to make, at least one feast or party for the poor of their branch, and as many more as their liberality will allow them.” On February 24, 1853, with most of the Mormons gone, the Kanesville incorporated under the new name...
of Council Bluffs.\textsuperscript{140} “The natural influx of Gentiles,” a county history states, changed the city’s character: “Under the old dispensation the saloon, gambling and bawdy house were not tolerated, but now blossomed out in full vigor” and became “a wide-open town.”\textsuperscript{141}

Long and short stays in the Kanesville area softened the faith of many Mormons. Good farms sounded better than the long trek to Utah. Some that had lost loved ones or became destitute while trying to head west decided they had sacrificed enough. The LDS Church’s constant appeals for funds, and the 1851 public announcement of plural marriage caused disaffection. Break-away groups, such as those led by James J. Strang and Lyman Wight, proselytized with some success among converts fresh from the British Isles. Historian Richard Bennett estimated that 2,000 members disaffected in the Missouri River areas between 1846 and 1852. (By comparison, Bennett estimates that about 12,000 members left Kanesville for Salt Lake Valley during that same period, half of whom were from Great Britain.)\textsuperscript{142} Elder James Bond, an outbound missionary, wrote from Council Bluffs City on August 12, 1853:

There are ... very few saints remaining here.... Yet there are quite a number of Mormons here ... [who]are firm believers in “mormonism” as it used to be but have seen enough of it, as it is, and cannot endure the “tyranny” and “awful doctrines” that exist in the Valley.... We were not aware, until informed [here], of the wickedness [sarcasm] of the place we have left, and of the coercion there practiced by the authorities of the church.\textsuperscript{143}

While in the Kanesville area during the winter of 1853-1854, Wandle Mace lodged with George W. Harris, once a stalwart, who “said he had worked the Lord long enough.” Mace found “many others in Kanesville who had spent years in bearing testimony to the divinity of the restored gospel, but had become weary of well doing and their minds had become darkened.” He said he met many who had broken away from the body of the Church and followed various apostate leaders.” Charles Thompson was one. “Some of Lyman Wight’s followers were living here ... Father Cutler also was trying to build up a church in this region ... in fact there were representatives of nearly all the different factions, which had tried to lead the Church. Even Gladden Bishop ... had his followers.” A main reason many gave for not going west was “on account of the succession of the Presidency. Said they: ‘How did Brigham Young get to be President of the Church?’” Mace and other elders held several meetings that summer through

\textsuperscript{140} \textit{Journal History}, Feb. 24, 1853.
\textsuperscript{142} Bennett, \textit{Mormons at the Missouri}, 227.
\textsuperscript{143} \textit{Journal History}, Aug 12, 1853.
which effort, he said, “many” were won back to the Church and moved on to Utah.\textsuperscript{144}

**RLDS Beginnings in the Area**

LDS “remnants” — those who chose did not go west or who were “Come Backs” from Utah — became a rich source of converts when missionaries of the “New Organization” arrived in the area in the 1859.\textsuperscript{145} That August and September Elders Edmund C. Briggs and William W. Blair organized five branches totaling at least 100 members.\textsuperscript{146} The first RLDS branch in Council Bluffs was started on May 18, 1862 by Charles Derry, with eight members. It first met in the James and Margaret Stuart home on Piece Street, between Park Avenue and First Street. James, an LDS convert in England, had arrived in Kanesville in 1850. The first branch president was Thomas Revel, who, with his wife Elizabeth, had joined the LDS Church in 1847, immigrated to America in 1851, gone to Utah in 1853, then back trailed to St. Louis and then to Council Bluffs. He was among the RLDS Church’s first converts in the city. Calvin Beebee, who joined the RLDS Church with his wife, on September 11, 1859, later would serve as the Council Bluffs branch president. By 1870 at least 37 RLDS branches dotted southwestern Iowa.\textsuperscript{147}

\textsuperscript{144} Journal of Wendle Mace, photocopy of holograph, LDS Church Archives, 167-72.


\textsuperscript{146} Bernauer, “Gathering the Remnants,” 20. In 1859, branches started at Union Grove, Farm Creek, and Galland’s Grove, plus ones farther east in Decatur County at Franklin and Little River; see Bernauer map/chart on p. 8.

\textsuperscript{147} Wilcox, Roots of Reorganized Latter Day Saints in Southern Iowa, 97-99. A list and map of the 37 branches is in Bernauer, “Gathering the Remnants,” 8.
I first heard of his existence through the “Mormon Underground” in 1979, all I was told was that a black man named Lewis from Massachusetts or New York had been ordained an Elder in the 1840s, something which I was sure had to be incorrect; I had grown up believing that black men had always been banned from the Mormon priesthood until LDS President Spencer W. Kimball reversed that long-standing policy in 1978. I was not surprised at all to find that in Mormon historical circles Walker Lewis was little more than a very curious footnote, far outshone by Elijah Abel, the black man who had been ordained to Mormon priesthood by none other than the founder of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints himself, Joseph Smith. However while combing early manuscript diaries and correspondence of Mormon apostles and missionaries who had been in the Lowell and Boston areas, I was surprised to learn that Elder Lewis was well known and well respected among those early Mormon leaders.

Further genealogical research into Lewis and his relatives was even more exciting — his large and extremely influential family is perhaps the best-documented African American family, partly due to their critical role in Massachusetts’ abolitionist politics. Walker Lewis himself was literate, educated, upper-middle class (at least by African-American standards of the day), and well-connected socially and politically. Laboring his whole life as a very successful barber, Lewis was a radical abolitionist, a prominent organizer of and participant in the Underground Railroad, a Most Worshipful Grand Master of Freemasonry, one of two — or possibly three — free black men.

I must give a heartfelt expression of gratitude for the assistance that Martha Mayo has given in support of my research into the life of Walker Lewis and his relatives. Martha is the Director of the Center for Lowell History at the University of Massachusetts Lowell, and the past president and current librarian of the Lowell Historical Society. She has also diligently researched the lives and roles of African Americans in Lowell’s long history, concentrating on the Walker and Lewis families. She has provided invaluable insight and freely shared her own research with me.
known to hold the higher Mormon priesthood in the 1840s, and he almost became Mormonism’s first and only black polygamist. Despite his abiding faith in Mormonism and acquaintance with and influence among the highest rank of LDS leaders, racism ultimately prevailed in the LDS Church. The inter-racial marriage of his Mormon son to a white Mormon woman so infuriated Brigham Young when he learned of it at the end of 1847 that he wished to have the newlywed couple murdered, and soon thereafter Young instigated a complete priesthood ban against all men with any African ancestry at all (and a temple ordinance ban against both black men and women). In February 1852, under pressure from Young, Utah’s first governor, the very first territorial legislature passed a law prohibiting all sexual relations between consenting Africans and white people (whether married or not), accompanied by a severe criminal punishment. Pointedly, Young stumped for — and the legislature passed — this racist law during the half-year that Elder Lewis happened to be in Utah.

While I plan to complete a comprehensive online history of the Walker and Lewis (and allied) families later, for this essay I here provide a summary of the more important highlights of their history as background to Walker’s own fascinating life.

Born Quack Walker Lewis on Friday, August 3, 1798 in Barre, Worcester County, Massachusetts to Peter P. Lewis, Sr. and Minor Walker Lewis, he was named after his 45 year old maternal uncle, Quacko Walker (who was also born in August, probably on Saturday the 4th, 1753 — Kwaku is Ghanian for “boy born on Saturday,” a common naming device among African tribes of the time). Walker was the couple’s fourth of eleven children. His older siblings were:

- Samuel Alexander Lewis (1792 - 1852); married first Susanna “Sukey” Maldree in 1815 and then Elizabeth Munroe in 1841
- Adam Lewis (1794 - ?)
- Sophia Lewis (1796 - 1852); married black abolitionist John Levy2 in 1822

Walker’s younger siblings were:

- Joseph Lewis (1800 - ?); married Sylvia A. _______
- Enoch Lewis (1801 - before 1844); married Azuba Nichols in 1823
- Rosanna V. Lewis (1802 - 1826)
- Dinah S. Lewis (1805 - ?); married first William F. Bassett in 1827 and then Isaac

In addition, I also thank Margaret Blair Young of Brigham Young University and Dr. Newell G. Bringhurst of College of the Sequoias for their encouragement and support in publishing this life history. Certainly Elijah Abel held the higher Mormon priesthood, but there is some controversy over whether or not William McCary, a half-Indian, half-African Mormon, had been ordained to the priesthood by 1847.

2 See his autobiography, The Life and Adventures of John Levy, edited by his 19 year old daughter Miss Rachel Frances Levy (by his second wife or domestic partner, Henrietta Williams), Lawrence (MA): 2nd edition printed at the Journal Office, Brechin Block, 1877. The first edition was published in 1871.
Davidson in 1842
- Andress Valentine Lewis (1806 - ?); married first Martha Lew in 1832 and then Urania Silver in 1846
- Peter P. Lewis, Jr. (1807 - 1845); married Relief Ingalls Lovejoy — the sister of Walker’s wife — in 1830
- Simpson Harris Lewis (1814 - 1887); married Catherine Jackson in 1833, Susan M. Jackson in 1841, Caroline F. Butler about 1845, and Frances Ellen Brown in 1875

Little is known about Peter P. Lewis, Sr. until his marriage to Minor Walker in Barre, December 5, 1792. In land records he is called a “yeoman” (gentleman farmer); he was born about 1758 and was from Cambridge, Middlesex County, Massachusetts.

Minor (or Minah and variants) Walker was born a slave in 1758 on the homestead of her parents’ owners, James and Isabel Oliver Caldwell, in Barre (Rutland District), Worcester County, the second child and oldest daughter of slave parents Mingo (also known later as Nimrod Quacko or Quameno) and Dinah. (Minor/Minah is a common African woman’s name with various possible meanings; Dinah is a Muslim name; Quameno, from Ghanian kwamin, means “boy born on Wednesday,” and Mingo is apparently Bobangi for “defiant one,” an apt name as will be shown.) Mingo eventually had at least twelve children by Dinah, or by his second wife, Elizabeth Harris (married September 19, 1773).

The naming practices of this family over the decades are really quite interesting. The first generation of Mingo, Dinah and their first two children, Quacko and Minor, maintained their ethnicity with names of African origin, but beginning with Mingo’s third child, the names became somewhat campy, even mocking, apparently imposed on them by their masters — especially for the boys Step, Prince, Boston, and Cato Walker. However, around the time of the American Revolution, the family began using bourgeois New England names and naming practices, perhaps being influenced by the first wave of white abolitionists, the Quakers. Over the next one hundred years the vast majority of names of this and allied families could just as easily have come from some Monthly Meeting records of the Society of Friends, such as Relief Ingalls Lovejoy or William Bradford Peck. This, ironically, led some Mormon genealogists to believe they were in fact white and had LDS temple ceremonies performed vicariously for many of these people, decades before the ban against this would be lifted.

3 The genealogical information here comes from vital records of Barre, Lowell, Dracut, Boston, and Framingham, Massachusetts, Family History Library, Salt Lake City, Utah; most can also be found on familysearch.org. Note that Frances Ellen Brown is listed in her marriage record as the fifth wife of Simpson, but only the names of four are known.


5 For example, see the Peter Lovejoy Family Group Sheet in the Family History Library (Salt
Mingo was born in Africa but apparently enslaved and deported to America while still quite young, perhaps at ten to fifteen years of age (for we know that he spoke “middling good English” and children learn other languages better than adults do). He may have been the son of one Rose Mingo, of Framingham, Massachusetts. Mingo and Dinah started a family together about 1752, while slaves owned by Zedekiah Stone, of Rutland District, Worcester Co. When their first born, Quacko (later surnamed Walker), was about nine months old, the whole family was sold (ultimately very fortuitously as it turned out) to James Caldwell (1711-1763) of Barre on May 4, 1754. His brother John Caldwell, Esq. (1714-1807) was a witness to the sale, and this John would later marry Mingo — aka Nimrod Quameno — to his second wife, Elizabeth Harris, in 1773 as Justice of the Peace in Barre.

James Caldwell increasingly came to feel that slavery was wrong and he promised Quacko that on his 24th or 25th birthday, he would be manumitted and become a free man. Unfortunately, one month before Quacko turned eleven, Caldwell died. Caldwell and his slave (undoubtedly Quacko’s father, Mingo) had “taken refuge under a tree during a heavy thunder shower. The tree [was struck] by lightning and a limb detached which killed him and broke the thigh of the negro” on July 18, 1763. Despite his untimely and tragic death, his widow, Isabel Oliver Caldwell (who had been born in Ireland), then promised to free Quacko at the age of 21, which would have been in August 1774.

Quacko’s father Mingo on the other hand was not promised his freedom. As defiant as his name suggests, Mingo escaped from his now-widowed mistress, Isabel Caldwell, in June of 1765. A Boston newspaper’s notice of his escape portrayed him as speaking “middling good English, a sprightly little Fellow, about five Feet and five or six Inches high … [wearing] an all wool brown colour’d great Coat, with large white metal Buttons, and an all wool Jacket of the same Colour; a blue and white striped woolen Shirt, and a worsted Cap, an old Hat, a Pair of old leather Breeches, and light blue Stockings: a pair of Shoes about half worn, tied with leather Strings.” He was eventually recaptured and

Lake City), submitted for temple work in 1959 by Virginia Call Morgan; the African American Peter Lovejoy was vicariously sealed to white “parents” who weren’t his (Daniel Lovejoy and Mary Holt); he was also baptized, endowed, and sealed to his wife and children in the Idaho Falls Temple in 1960 and 1961, some 18 years before it was valid to do so.

A woman named Rose Mingo married Toby Cambridge in Framingham in 1738. The Mingo/Walker family may have personally known Crispus Attucks, the famed Boston Massacre martyr, for he had escaped from his owner, William Brown of Framingham, in 1750.

John Caldwell also owned at least one slave in 1773, a half-Indian, half-African man named Harry, who escaped from him in April of that year, (Boston News Letter, April 16, 1773).

Matthew Walker, History of Barre, (handwritten manuscript, Family History Library, Salt Lake City) p. 10. Isabel Caldwell had an inscribed marker placed on the spot, stating “This stone is erected in memory of the time when and place where Mr. James Caldwell died, which happened by the falling of a tree, July 18, 1763, in the 52 year of his age.”

Boston News Letter, June 16, 1765.
returned to Isabel Caldwell (for he fathered children with Dinah in 1767 and 1770, and with Elizabeth Harris in 1774). The widow Caldwell then married Nathaniel Jennison on March 28, 1769 and he moved into her home and took possession of her property, including Mingo and his family. But as fate would have it, just weeks before Quacko turned 21, Isabel Oliver Caldwell Jennison died around June 1774, and the African family’s new master, Nathaniel Jennison, a mean-spirited and abusive man, refused to stand by the Caldwells’ bargain and Quacko remained a slave in the Jennison household, even after Jennison had to return to his own farm when the Caldwell children inherited their mother’s estate and legacies.

As the movement for American independence from Great Britain spread through the colonies, the Caldwell family became convinced more and more that slavery was immoral and should be abolished. Befriending Mingo’s family, the Caldwells quite effectively educated them during the American Revolution, keeping them versed in the latest political happenings and rhetoric of freedom. In April 1780, when Massachusetts passed its state constitution that declared that all men “were free and equal,” the Caldwell’s pressed this ideal into the mind of young Quacko and finally, on or about May 1, 1781, Quacko escaped from the cruel Nathaniel Jennison and took up employment as a paid laborer for the father and son, John and Seth Caldwell. Jennison, enraged at Quacko’s audacity, gathered helpers and found Quacko harrowing in the Caldwells’ fields, where they captured him, beat and shackled him, took him back to the Jennison farm, beat him again severely with a whip handle and locked him in a shed.

Two hours later, the Caldwell men discovered the abuse the man suffered and broke into the shed to rescue Quacko Walker and return him to the Caldwell home, where he recuperated and continued to be hired by them for his labor until June, when the exasperated Jennison entered his “plea of Trespass” against the Caldwells. John Caldwell offered legal services to Quacko to sue Jennison for the beating, kidnapping, and enslavement. The case went to the Inferior Court in September 1781 and Quacko (spelled “Quork” in the legal dockets presented by Jennison) Walker won his case and 50 pounds. (Jennison counter-sued the Caldwells for theft of private property, etc. and he also won initially. But the Caldwells appealed the decision to the State Supreme Court in 1783 and won their case against Jennison as well.)

Both the 1781 Quarko v. Jennison and the 1783 Jennison v. Caldwell et al. cases are cited as the case that emancipated all slaves in the state of Massachusetts, the second state to free its slaves (Vermont being the first in 1776) and literally scores of legal and historical articles, essays, and books have been published debating and detailing the importance of this landmark case in United States jurisprudential history.¹⁰ In the midst of this legal battle, Jennison

¹⁰ See for example: Hon. Peter W. Agnes, “The Quork Walker Cases and the Abolition of Slavery in Massachusetts: A Reflection of Popular Sentiment or an Expression of Constitutional Law?,”
very viciously “took the younger portion of his slaves to Connecticut and sold them there,” but the young members of Mingo’s family (such as Quacko’s brother Prince) escaped and returned to Massachusetts now that it was a free state. During the trial, Quacko took on the surname of Walker, certainly as a way of establishing himself as a citizen; however Jennison, consumed with condescension, constantly referred to him during the court proceedings only by his first name. One story claims that Prince Walker took his last name from a prominent Walker family in the county (perhaps Obadiah Walker or Christiana Walker?) but another possibility is that Walker is rather homophonic with kwaku, and since Quacko was the eldest child, and the most famous, perhaps that was the origin of their newly chosen surname.

With this incredible judicial victory, the Walker family became immediately famous and they maintained their friendly connections for many decades with New England politicians, lawyers, judges, senators and members of prominent families involved in the case like the Strongs, Lincolns, Cushings, and Caldwells, propelling them into the upper-echelons of African-American society in Massachusetts. The men of the family as soon as they could afford to, began to purchase property and were voting as early as 1803.

In 1792, Peter P. Lewis and Minor Walker were married in Barre by Rev. Josiah Dana (whose wife was a Caldwell sister) and within three months, Peter Lewis had purchased a tract of land in the town, to raise their family on. Most of the newly freed blacks formed the “little colony” of African-Americans in the west part of Barre Township, known as “Guinea Corner.” Quacko Walker however had settled in the easterly part of the town with his wife, Elizabeth Harvey (married in 1786), where he died about September 1812. Although Quacko Walker never learned to write (he signed his deeds with an “X”), his sister Minor and her husband Peter Lewis were taught to read and write (both Peter and Minor signed their names to a deed in 1812; her other siblings only “gave their marks”). In turn all their children learned to read

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11 Matthew Walker, History of Barre, p. 62.
12 According to Worcester County deeds, “Quork Walker” a “Negroe man of Barre...Labourer” purchased land from Francis Nurse in November 1786.
13 Matthew Walker, History of Barre, p. 62.
14 “Elizabeth Walker [Quacko’s widow], singlewoman, Step Walker Laborer, Priscilla Walker
Walker Lewis grew up in “Guinea Corner,” and attended the integrated First Congregational Church of Barre with his family. Minor Walker Lewis had been baptized there in 1771 while a slave of Jennison. On August 20, 1815, her singlewoman, Peter Luis yeoman, Miner Luis his wife, William Ebit yeoman, Rosannah Ebit his wife, Prince Walker yeoman, all of Barre,” to William Robinson, deed executed September 19, 1812.
husband Peter, and five of their sons and all three daughters were also baptized into “the First Church.” Walker Lewis’ baptismal record that day is the only known instance where he went by his full name of Quack Walker Lewis.

Although their roots had been firmly in Barre for almost a century, by 1819 Peter and Minor’s second son, Adam Lewis “a man of culler,” was living in Cambridge and purchased land there on October 8 for $250. More Lewis children would soon follow to the neighboring cities of Cambridge and Boston, as well as Lowell, a bit farther to the north. Walker Lewis moved to that area in the early 1820s and bought a home and set up his barbering business in the Belvidere section of Tewksbury (which was annexed to Lowell in 1832). He returned to Barre to marry Elizabeth Lovejoy there on March 26, 1826. She was already some six months pregnant with their first child at the time of their marriage. I can only speculate that after Elizabeth became pregnant, Walker waited to marry her to become more financially secure. The newly-weds returned to Lowell to start their family. As Martha Mayo of the Lowell Center for History has noted, the public school system became fully integrated when Lowell was incorporated as a town in 1826 (making it one of the earliest cities in the state to integrate), mainly because of the leadership of Rev. Theodore Edson, Chairman of the Lowell School Committee, and later the President of the Lowell Anti-Slavery Society in 1832. (Edson had been preaching in what eventually became St. Anne’s Episcopal Church since 1824, and as its pastor in 1839 he actively encouraged participation in his church by the Walker Lewis family — see below.) Mayo also indicated that several other black families who lived in the area since the mid-1700s, particularly those of Anthoney Negro and Barzillai Lew, had “amazing relationships” with the community in Lowell and nearby Dracut, and she feels this certainly helped contribute to the integration of the Lowell schools.¹⁵

Elizabeth was the daughter of Peter Lovejoy, who was black, and Lydia

¹⁵ Martha Mayo to Connell O’Donovan, emails, May 16 and 24, 2006, and her timeline, “Massachusetts Primary and Grammar Schools: Integrated Schools,” copy in my possession.
Greenleaf Bradford, a white woman. Elizabeth Lovejoy Lewis was so light-skinned she sometimes passed as “white” (and is listed as such in the 1850 census). She was one of six girls and one boy born to the Lovejoys in Amherst, Hillsboro County, New Hampshire. Their inter-racial parents had married there on October 3, 1786. Peter Lovejoy may have been born September 26, 1764 in Methuen, Essex County, Massachusetts to Jonathan Lovejoy, but I do not have firm evidence of this.

Elizabeth Lovejoy Lewis gave birth to their first child, a son, Enoch Lovejoy Lewis, on May 20, 1826. This son would also join the LDS Church in the 1840s and enrage Brigham Young for his inter-racial marriage to a white Mormon. Enoch’s birth was followed a year and a half later with the birth of the couple’s first daughter in November 1827, Lydia Elizabeth Walker, named for her mother and her mother’s mother.

Four years after Walker and Elizabeth were married, Walker’s younger brother Peter P. Lewis, Jr. married Elizabeth’s youngest sister, Relief “Lephia” Ingalls Lovejoy on August 4, 1830.

Around the time of his marriage to Elizabeth Lovejoy, Walker Lewis is first known to actively engage in abolitionist activities. Along with some thirteen other prominent black abolitionists, he was a founding charter member of the Massachusetts General Colored Association (MGCA) in 1826, the first such all-black organization in the United States. Other founding members included the famous author and journalist William Cooper Nell and his father William Guion Nell, Coffin Pitts, and the “dangerous” radical David Walker (no relation), who would later advocate black armed resistance to enslavement and other curtailments of black equal rights. Many members of the MGCA were outspoken advocates for the immediate emancipation of all slaves and full racial equality across the board, which most white abolitionists rejected, favoring a more gradual process of emancipation and only a few equal rights for blacks. Three years after its founding, David Walker released his radical and incendiary call to arms, the 76-page *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World*, through the MGCA, causing scandal and division amongst the abolitionists, white and black, and terrifying southern slave-owners. Part of the work of the MGCA was to distribute the *Appeal* to slaves in the south, sparking slave empowerment and resistance. The printing was also done by a white printing company that had previously printed the African Grand Lodge’s articles, certainly through the assistance of Walker Lewis, since he was the Most Worshipful Grand Master of the Lodge at the time. The black clothiers in Boston, such as David Walker himself, William Guion Nell, and Walker’s youngest brother, Simpson Harris Lewis, helped covertly distribute the *Appeal* by sewing copies of it into the linings of clothing destined for sailors going to southern ports.

David Walker himself wrote of the Massachusetts General Colored

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Association that,

The primary object of this institution, is, to unite the colored population, so far, through the United States of America, as may be practicable and expedient; forming societies, opening, extending, and keeping up correspondences, and not withholding anything which may have the least tendency to meliorate our miserable condition.¹⁷

The Appeal called for immediate, unconditional, and universal emancipation of all slaves. Recolonization in Africa was also out of the question — America had been bought by the slaves with their blood:

Let no man of us budge one step, and let slave-holders come to beat us from our country. America is more our country, than it is the whites — we have enriched it with our blood and tears. The greatest riches in all America have arisen from our blood and tears: — and will they drive us from our property and homes, which we have earned with our blood?¹⁸

Slaves were also told that there might be justice found in armed resistance and violence in overthrowing the institution of slavery:

If you commence [a revolt], make sure work [of it] — do not trifle, for they will not trifle with you — they want us for their slaves, and think nothing of murdering us

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¹⁷ As quoted in http://www.gwu.edu/~e73afram/bf-yh-as.html

¹⁸ Appeal, p. 65.
in order to subject us to that wretched condition — therefore, if there is an attempt made by us, kill or be killed....[I]t is no more harm for you to kill a man, who is trying to kill you, than it is for you to take a drink of water when thirsty.99

Black abolitionists called this treatise a “smooth stone” up against “many mighty Goliaths;” it is still referred to as “the most incendiary antebellum abolitionist document.”20 It was such a radical, frightening document to slave owners that anyone caught with the Appeal in their possession in the southern states would likely be killed on the spot; Louisiana and Georgia made distribution of it illegal, and a $10,000 reward was offered for David Walker, dead or alive. Walker Lewis, as a leader in the MGCA, undoubtedly supported these radical aims, despite white abolitionists urging them to caution and lesser aims. Only one year after his Appeal was published and distributed through the Massachusetts General Colored Association, David Walker died at 34 (most likely of “consumption” or tuberculosis), just months after completing the Appeal, leaving a pregnant widow, much as his own enslaved father had died before David’s birth to a free black woman in Wilmington, North Carolina.21

Sometime before 1823, Walker Lewis also became initiated, crafted, and raised into Freemasonry, through the all-black Prince Hall African Lodge in Boston. The Lodge, active in limited Masonic work since 1776, had been granted a charter or warrant in 1784 to organize by the Grand Lodge of England and through the support of the lodges of Ireland, with Revolutionary War soldier and black abolitionist Prince Hall, as its founder and first Grand Master. Prince Hall organized the African Lodge #459 on May 6, 1787. One year after Prince Hall’s death, the African Lodge then became the African Grand Lodge #1 in December 1808. Besides “Masonic work,” the African Grand Lodge was also deeply involved in abolitionist and equal rights activities (especially advocating educational rights for black children), which created occasional divisive moments between it and the all-white Massachusetts Grand Lodge. Around 1825, to his great honor and credit, Master Mason Walker Lewis was raised as the sixth Right Worshipful Master of the African Lodge #459. One year later, on May 29, 1826, he was elected as Senior Warden for the Lodge. Two years after becoming a Grand Lodge, Lewis was elected as the Most Worshipful Grand Master for 1829 and 1830.22 Unfortunately a fire destroyed most of the Lodge’s records in 1869, making further research into Lewis’ participation in

21 Henry Highland Garnet, Walker’s Appeal, with a Brief Sketch of His Life (New York: J.H. Tobitt, 1848), preface.
Freemasonry very difficult. When Lewis later joined the LDS Church, it should be noted that this made him one of the oldest, and certainly the highest-ranking, Freemason in the church. This may have caused some consternation, anger, and fear among the Mormon hierarchy (most of whom were also Masons). This will be discussed in further detail later.

The mass anti-Masonic hysteria of the mid-1820s seems to have been solely focused on white Freemasons. The African Grand Lodge seems to have passed through that era relatively unscathed and unmolested. Perhaps the African Freemasons took advantage of the chaos among white Masons to declare themselves independent. For in 1827, the current Right Worshipful Master John T. Hilton, along with Walker Lewis and Thomas Dalton as “Past Masters” signed a Declaration of Independence from the Grand Lodge of England. This enabled the newly named African Grand Lodge to grant warrants and charters, and establish other African Lodges elsewhere, “when they are found worthy,” so that “succeeding generations...may under its happy influence enjoy peace, union, prosperity and safety forever.” They published notice of the Declaration in both the *Columbian Sentinel* and *Boston Advertiser* on June 26, just after the annual St. John’s Day procession, an important Masonic ceremonial day. Walker’s signature on the Declaration of Independence is only one of two known holographic signatures of his; the other is found on his last will and testament. The newspaper article in the *Boston Advertiser* indicates that the Lodge had attempted several communications with the Grand Lodge of England “to be placed on a different and better standing” but had never received any replies. Therefore they felt justified as brothers with “what knowledge we possess of masonry, and as a people of colour by ourselves, we are and ought by rights

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23 Recently converted LDS bishop George Miller became the Grand Master of the Nauvoo Lodge at LDS headquarters in Illinois, on December 29, 1841. However the Nauvoo Lodge never became a Grand Lodge, as the Prince Hall Grand Lodge was at the time of Walker Lewis’ two-year term as its Most Worshipful Grand Master. Joseph Smith himself was irregularly raised to Master Mason in the Nauvoo Lodge on March 16, 1842 — and on May 4, 1842 gave the first “endowment ceremony,” based closely on the secret Masonic ritual, to nine LDS leaders. Smith however excluded Assistant Church President John C. Bennett - and the 2nd highest-ranking Mason of the Nauvoo Lodge - under whose spurious patronage the Nauvoo Lodge had been chartered in the first place. This is because it was soon publicized that John C. Bennett was “any thing other than and good and true Mason” on May 7, had formal charges brought against him in the Nauvoo Lodge on May 18, was disfellowshipped from the LDS Church on May 25, and then fully excommunicated (as a consequence to his disloyalty to Joseph Smith, his multiple sexual liaisons with Nauvoo women, and his “buggery” with the men of the Nauvoo Legion under his command) on June 18 that year (D. Michael Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1994), pp. 491-3, 634-5; D. Michael Quinn, *Same-Sex Dynamics among Nineteenth-Century Americans: A Mormon Example* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1996), pp. 266-268; Andrew F. Smith, *The Saintsly Scoundrel: The Life and Times of Dr. John Cook Bennett* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1997), pp. 75-76 and 89-91). The irregularities of its founding, plus the activities of Smith in revealing Masonic secrets to non-Masons (especially the women of Nauvoo) under the aegis of the “Quorum of the Anointed,” rendered all the “Masonic work” of the Nauvoo Lodge invalid.
to be, free and independent of other Lodges...and we will not be tributary, or governed by any Lodge than that of our own.” 24 As a result, “Prince Hall Freemasonry” now has some five thousand lodges and 47 grand lodges all around the world, all stemming from the moment that the Declaration of Independence was signed by Walker Lewis and his two Masonic brothers in 1827.

In 1830, Lewis purchased a tract of land for $200 in Cambridge near the Botanic Gardens and bordered on the south-east by Harvard College and sold it a year later to his brother Peter. He also owned a house and barbershop in Boston by this time, as well as the home and barbershop in Lowell, frequently traveling back and forth between the two. His barbering business boomed, as he apparently had found the perfect niche marketing — he was apparently really good with children and specialized in cutting their hair. 25 That same year brought the addition of Walker and Elizabeth’s second daughter (named for her father’s mother), Lucy Minor Walker.

During the mid-1830s the abolitionist organization that Walker Lewis had helped found became even more outspoken in its politics by exercising its clout when the MGCA voted “to send a petition to Congress to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia,” its unbearable presence there sullying the principles of freedom and democracy in the nation’s own capital. 26

At the beginning of 1833, after many months of discussion pro and con, the MGCA voted to end its existence as a black-only, separatist organization, and instead became an “auxiliary” to the increasingly-powerful New England Anti-Slavery Society headed by William Lloyd Garrison, whom Walker Lewis undoubtedly met through the activities of the MGCA. 27 In April 1833, the newly renamed Boston Anti-Slavery Society featured an address by the popular and dignified African American abolitionist Maria W. Stewart, who openly chided the former members of the MGCA for not being strong and courageous enough. She finished her address by calling for the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia as well. 28 Her address has the honor of being the first time that a woman (and a black woman nonetheless) ever formally addressed a public meeting, a major step in women’s equal rights.

Many members of the Lewis family were active in the abolitionist and equal rights movements. We know from extent records that at the very least Walker Lewis and his two brothers, Andress Valentine and Simpson Harris Lewis, Simpson’s wife Caroline F. Butler Lewis and their son Frederick, and Walker’s

25 *Lowell Advertiser*, November 9, 1852.
brother-in-law John Levy were all publicly involved in equal rights activities. John Levy in particular became quite well known for his abolitionist activities and even wrote an autobiography, *The Life and Adventures of John Levy*. In November 1841, Levy helped arrange to have the “Amistad Africans” (now of Steven Spielberg movie fame) speak in Lowell, and “rendered important services” to the Africans who were on tour through New England trying to raise money for their return voyage to Africa.\(^\text{29}\) Levy also helped white abolitionists Maria Weston Chapman and Sarah Clay to form the Lowell Woman’s Anti-Slavery Society in 1843; and in 1844, along with Frederick Douglass and William Lloyd Garrison, he helped organize a series of one hundred anti-slavery conventions throughout the state of Massachusetts.\(^\text{30}\)

Walker’s younger brother, Peter Lovejoy Lewis, Jr. and his four children aged seven to eleven years (Peter III, Theodore Walker, Levi, and Mary Elizabeth) became embroiled in an equal rights controversy in 1844 when, as part of a school field trip to the Chemical Painting Exhibition at Mechanics Hall in Lowell, the four black children were denied entrance, even though the school system had long been successfully integrated and served as a model for the rest of the state, if not the country. The Lowell community erupted in anger at this bigotry and strong editorials were published in the Lowell papers, defending the right of the Lewis children to see the exhibit. One read:

> We deem it the duty of the press to protest your sort of exclusiveness, having its origin in a narrow-minded prejudice, and to stand up manfully for the rights of the colored citizens when trampled upon in any way. The proprietor has very much mistaken the public sentiment of Lowell by adopting such a cause; in our public schools, he will see the children of colored parents sitting side by side with those of white parents, a living evidence of toleration and respect.\(^\text{31}\)

In addition, in 1850, Walker’s mother, Minor Walker Lewis, and his sister, Sophia Lewis Levy, were harboring an escaped slave named William H. Taylor from Virginia;\(^\text{32}\) and the famous escapee Nathaniel Booth (who would later also serve as one of three men appointed to take an inventory of the Walker Lewis estate in probate) was living in the home of Walker’s widowed sister-in-law, Relief Ingalls Lovejoy Lewis. Whatever expenses Walker Lewis or his family members may have incurred in their equal rights and Underground Railroad


\(^{32}\) *Boston Vigilance Committee Treasurers Accounts*, 1850-1861, handwritten monograph, p. 54 (unpaginated), which indicates that Simpson H. Lewis accompanied “Wm Taylor and Lewis Cobb” to Canada in July 1857 to avoid slave catchers. In 1854, William H. Taylor had married Rosanna M. Bassett, Walker’s niece.
activities, they did not request remuneration from the Treasury of the Boston Vigilance Committee between 1850 and 1861, for their names are not found in the committee’s account books for that period, with one exception. Walker’s brother Simpson Harris Lewis did receive financial assistance three times from the Vigilance Committee in 1857 and 1858 (through William Cooper Nell).33

In high school in Utah, the history I was taught regarding the abolition movement, was that all abolitionists had been white, well-meaning, educated New England blue-bloods who took the burden of racial injustice upon themselves to assist “the hapless and helpless Negro,” and the Underground Railroad was more a myth than reality, consisting of a few scattered Quaker (i.e. white) homes trailing off into the unknown North. Just from my one peek into the machinations of the Boston Vigilance Committee through its financial records, in reality black Bostonians were fully at the core of the abolition movement, and not just “preaching the word,” but actively engaged in sheltering, warning, hiding, and transporting fugitive slaves to safe places (usually Canada, but sometimes local). The financial records are complete with the names and familial relations of the slaves — many of them women with children, where they had come from, any special needs they might have, sometimes quick notes about their misfortunes; they show a massive, wonderfully organized, carefully nurtured Underground. While much of the funding came from white churches, black people (free and fugitive alike) were definitely in the trenches, doing all the hard work of feeding, clothing, educating, befriending, doctoring, barbering, and boarding these traumatized people.34 I am surprised at the accuracy and detail of these records; if the wrong hands had confiscated this record book, hundreds of people could have found themselves in dire legal trouble, if not worse. I must also note that the beautiful penmanship of the Committee’s Treasurer, Francis Jackson, is so perfect it’s nearly of typographical quality. His careful, comprehensive accounting of every penny coming in and every penny going out of their organization shows just how sacrosanct this work was for all these people.

**Meeting the Mormons**

As stated earlier, Walker Lewis had been baptized into Barre’s First Church, which his mother had joined while still a slave belonging to Nathaniel Jennison. By the 1830s, however, it appears as though Walker Lewis and his family had converted to the Episcopal Church. The diary of Rev. Theodore

33 *Boston Vigilance Committee Treasurers Accounts*, p. 54.
34 In a very real and dangerous way, what the black clothiers and barbers of Boston could offer fugitive blacks were new identities: clean, fashionable clothing and new haircuts or styling not only lifted their spirits but easily changed their identities in the days before photography, when most fugitives were only described not portrayed with images.
Edson of St. Anne’s Episcopal Church in Lowell, reveals that in the month of March, 1839, he set up special meeting times for the Lewis family to attend his services on Friday night, when it would be most convenient for the Lewis men to participate. On March 8, Edson wrote,

In the evening I commenced holding a little meeting for the colored portion of my people, if they may be called mine who so seldom come to church though they have a pew. The evening was very stormy, muddy and dark, My object was to be able to come at the young men. Out of six who I suppose might be expected I got but two. How the thing will succeed I do not know and though they were very civil and expressed great sense of my kindness in coming I could not quite satisfy myself whether it is likely to be on the whole sufficiently satisfactory to the mm [males?] to induce their attendance. The time of the next meeting was unsettled.\(^{35}\)

Although Edson only ever referred to the Lewis family as “my colored people” without specifically naming them, Martha Mayo has assured me that this phrase can only refer to the Lewises. In his entries for March 15 and April 5, Edson also referred to meeting the black family “in Belvidere,” which is the area of Lowell where Walker Lewis lived, and Mayo, who has traced the presence of every African American in Lowell, has found that only the extended Lewis family lived there in the 1830s.\(^{36}\) From the above diary entry we learn that although the Lewis family had been renting a pew at the church for some time, they were not very active there. After another disappointing meeting on April 5, 1839, Edson gave up his efforts to hold Friday night services just for the Lewises. That night in Belvidere, he recorded:

I found three women with whom I talked upon religion and prayed but the men did not come in til nine o'clock. I do not see that it is desirable to continue the appointment I can call and see all the women at times more convenient, so as to accomplish just as much with them  and the men for whose sake the arrangement was specially made do not come and I do not see as there is any prospect of their attending.\(^{37}\)

Elizabeth Lovejoy Lewis probably was not in attendance as she gave birth to their last child, Walker Lovejoy Lewis (who also went by Walker Lewis, Jr.)

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\(^{36}\) Theodore Edson Diary, 5, 8, and 15 March and 5 April 1839; Martha Mayo, “Re: Edson Diaries,” 24 May 2006, personal email (24 May 2006); specifically Mayo stated, “There may have been other African Americans, among ‘my colored people’, but the Lewis family members were the core.”

\(^{37}\) Theodore Edson Diary, April 5, 1839.
that very month.  

How, when, where, and under what circumstances Walker Lewis first heard Mormonism preached, and why he converted to it, are unknown and remain speculative at best. None who knew him ever explained this in the known accounts of him that exist. Certainly his conviction to and faith in it were strong, for once he was converted, Lewis remained faithful for nearly a decade. There is only one small clue as to who might have actually baptized Walker Lewis into the LDS Church. In 1890, when black Mormon Jane Elizabeth Manning James wrote to Apostle Joseph Fielding Smith requesting to be allowed into the temple, she informed him of “a Coloured Brother, Brother Lewis” whom she had met, and that “parley P Pratt or dained Him an Elder.”  

As will be shown hereafter, it was in fact Apostle William Smith who ordained Walker Lewis an Elder; therefore I propose that Apostle Parley P. Pratt actually baptized him a Mormon, not ordained him to the priesthood, and perhaps Jane James simply confused the two events that she had heard about some forty years earlier. (James may also have been subconsciously influenced by the fact that the controversial William Smith had long-ago abandoned mainstream Mormonism — thus calling into question the validity of the ordination, while Parley P. Pratt had remained faithful.) We know Pratt was in Boston in the fall

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38 Lowell birth records, Family History Library.

39 Jane Elizabeth Manning James to Joseph F. Smith, February 7, 1890, LDS Church Archives, transcript in my possession.
of 1835 and again in the summer of 1843. If Pratt indeed baptized Lewis, it was likely during his latter time there.

After his conversion to the LDS faith, Walker Lewis would come to know at least five members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles personally (including Brigham Young, William Smith, Wilford Woodruff, Ezra Taft Benson, and Parley P. Pratt, all of whom labored as missionaries in Lowell, Cambridge, and/or Boston), as well as a number of other early Mormon leaders, earning their esteem, appreciation, and gratitude, while also profoundly challenging their long-held beliefs and stereotypes. Evidence suggests that none other than Brigham Young himself was the first Latter-day Saint missionary to preach in Lowell, sometime in the summer or fall of 1835. However, we do know that Orson Hyde and Joseph Smith’s younger brother Samuel H. Smith had baptized about 25 people in Boston and formally organized a branch there in the summer of 1832. The two missionaries also visited Lowell, where Hyde’s sister, Laura, and her husband, William B. North lived, but were not well received because of Hyde’s new religion. Incensed at this snub, Hyde “stayed only long enough to discharge my duty, and never again voluntarily returned” to Lowell. The two missionaries left Lowell and returned to Boston without staying to try to establish a branch of their church in Lowell.\footnote{40}

That same summer, Joseph Smith had sent out most of the members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles on a mission to the eastern states. Apostle Parley P. Pratt was in the Boston area in September before returning to Kirtland.\footnote{41} In a letter to an unnamed woman from Lowell, Brigham Young informed her that, “I believe it was in the year 1835 that I visited Lowell, when I held meetings and preached to the people the doctrines believed by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.”\footnote{42} It is possible but doubtful that Walker Lewis converted to Mormonism at this time, as little missionary or other Mormon activity is known to have continued there for the next six years, and as far as I know, no formal “branch” of the church existed in Lowell at that time. Even if someone there were to convert to Mormonism at that point in its history, the next immediate step as a sign of faith would have been to join the “gathering Saints” farther west in Kirtland, Ohio, not stay to build the church in their native place.

A year later, during most of the month of August, 1836, Joseph Smith himself was in the Boston area, along with Sidney Rigdon and Oliver Cowdery, hunting for “a vast treasure buried beneath an old house” in Salem; a Mormon convert claimed he knew the location of the house. Joseph Smith even produced a revelation from God stating “its wealth pertaining to gold and silver shall be

\footnote{40} “History of Orson Hyde” sketch included in, “History of Brigham Young,” published in the \textit{Millenial Star}, 26, no. 49 (Dec. 3, 1864): 775-776; online at http://saintswithouthalos.com/b/hyde_oh.phtml
\footnote{41} \textit{Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt}, Chap. 16.
\footnote{42} \textit{Contributions} (vol. 1), Lowell, Massachusetts, 1875, p. 133.
But the financially strapped church would find no relief, despite the revelation that God had treasures of gold for the Mormons awaiting them in Salem. Still they toured the area and preached. Brigham Young and Lyman E. Johnson showed up as well; they remained in Boston two or three weeks, and baptized seventeen persons.”

The first missionary to really establish a strong and stable presence in the Boston area was Eli P. Maginn, and the earliest evidence indicates he was in that area in February 1842. He was quite successful in converting people to the faith, focusing his proselytizing efforts particularly on the downtrodden yet upwardly mobile (and this may be one key to understanding Walker Lewis’ attraction to the LDS church). A humorously candid report of missionary activities “in the field,” including the mercurial preaching tactics of Eli P. Maginn, has recently been found among some family papers in New England. In a letter from Joel Damon to his brother, Rev. David Damon, regarding the missionaries in the West Cambridge, Massachusetts and Peterboro, New Hampshire areas, he noticed that both Elders Freeman Nickerson (1778-1847) and Eli Maginn (1817-1844), would not give a simple yes or no to a question but instead of answering directly would tell you what Paul or James or John or somebody else said about something or other which was no more to the point as I thought than Harrisons inaugural address. To use a vulgar comparison he put me in mind of the paddy’s flea you put your thumb on him and he is not there. There is cunning, and craft enough about them but very little candid fair arguments. The converts in general are such as would get converted at a methodist campmeeting. However give the devil his due as the saying is. The mormon has got out people who have not been at meeting so long that they scarcely knew how the inside of a meeting house looks or knew how to behave (and for the matter of the looks I do not know as they all know now for he preaches mostly in the town house) and to appearance some have been converted and become good men who have heretofore been the reverse. So far so good.

By September 1842, Maginn had converted another 26 members in Lowell, for a total of 36 active members, including two priests (of the lesser Aaronic priesthood) and he was officially the branch president. Five months later, Elder Maginn reported at a regional conference held on February 9, 1843 in the top storey of Boylston Hall & Market, Boston (not the later Boylston Hall on Harvard campus) that the Lowell Branch consisted of 60 members, with one

43 Doctrine and Covenants, Sec. 111, v. 2-10; see http://scriptures.lds.org/dc/111.
46 Journal History of the Church, 11 September 1844.
Elder and three lesser priesthood officers in attendance. Since we know from both Wilford Woodruff and William I. Appleby that William Smith ordained Lewis an Elder, this “one Elder” in the Lowell Branch cannot be a reference to Walker Lewis, since William Smith did not arrive in Lowell until later that summer. It might instead be a reference to Darius Longee (1815-?), whom we know was an Elder in Lowell as early as 1847.\(^{47}\) I can only assume that Walker Lewis was at least in attendance at this important regional conference however, as were leaders from Nauvoo, including Elders George J. Adams, Erastus Snow, and Erastus H. Derby, and Ezra T. Benson.\(^{48}\)

George J. Adams, upon returning to Boston from a trip to Nauvoo to answer charges of adultery, organized public meetings to speak about Mormonism for both members in the area and for interested or curious non-Mormons to attend. For example, “On the Sabbath, March 26th, during the day, [Elder George J. Adams] introduced Elder E. P. Maginn, and gave him a high recommendation as an able minister of the fullness of the Gospel, who is to take his place in Boston for the present.”\(^{49}\) Adams then organized a large tea party and dinner in Boston on March 29, 1843. The *Boston Bee* reported “at the great tea party... three hundred and fifty sat down at the first table. After supper, Elder Adams delivered a very appropriate and eloquent address.”\(^{50}\) Although I do not know that Walker Lewis was present at these events, it seems likely. Ezra T. Benson reported in his autobiography that right after this conference, “I went to the city of Lowell to preside over that branch, and I remained there and in the region around till fall [1843] and was greatly blessed and baptized quite a number.”\(^{51}\)

During the summer of 1843 two more missionaries appeared in the Boston and Lowell areas from Nauvoo: Apostle William Smith (1811-1893), who was the younger brother of Joseph Smith, and Elder Benjamin Franklin Grouard (1819-1894). William Smith joined most of the other apostles who were proselytizing in the “Eastern States Mission,” such as his cousin George Albert Smith, Parley P. and Orson Pratt, Brigham Young, Wilford Woodruff, John Taylor, and Willard Richards. It was either during the summer of 1843 or the summer of 1844 that Apostle William Smith was in Lowell and ordained Walker Lewis an Elder in the Melchizedek priesthood of the Latter-day Saint church. Wilford Woodruff recorded in his journal that Lewis was an Elder in November 1844 and Elder William I. Appleby wrote to Brigham Young on May 31, 1847 that Lewis had been “ordained some years ago by William Smith.” While Appleby is not clear, “some years ago” seems to fit better with 1843 than

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\(^{47}\) William I. Appleby noted that in May of 1847, “Elder Longee” was presiding over a branch in Lowell of 20 members, *William I. Appleby Journal*, 19 May 1847, LDS Church Archives.

\(^{48}\) *Journal History of the Church*, 9 February 1843.

\(^{49}\) *Journal History of the Church*, April 1, 1843.

\(^{50}\) *Journal History of the Church*, March 29, 1843.

\(^{51}\) As quoted in Elden J. Watson, *Manuscript History of Brigham Young, 1846-7* (Salt Lake City: Elden J. Watson, 1971), 255.
1844, so I lean to the earlier date.\textsuperscript{52}

The other missionary in Lowell at the time, Benjamin F. Grouard (a master seaman, shipbuilder, and mechanic originally from New Hampshire) had been living in Nauvoo with the other Latter-day Saints, when he was voted to go on a mission to the Pacific Isles on May 11, 1843. He was ordained a Seventy almost two weeks later and set apart as a missionary. Grouard left Nauvoo for what would ultimately be Hawaiʻi on June 1, 1843, and headed to New England to board a ship from there, preaching as he traveled.

Elder Maginn was temporarily in Nauvoo at that time as well, but was ordered on July 29, 1843 to “take charge and preside” over the Boston, Lowell (MA), and Peterborough, (NH) branches of the church and he was also appointed secretary of the regional “general conference” to be held in Utica, New York later that year.\textsuperscript{53}

In the meantime, Elder Grouard, awaiting ship’s passage to Hawaiʻi, began proselytizing while in Massachusetts. On August 4, 1843, he wrote in his journal,

\begin{quote}
I left Boston for Lowell & arrived there the same day. I found a small bra[n]ch of the church there consisting of 40 members who received me with much joy & administered to my wants I remained there over Sunday & preached to the people
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{52} Calvin P. Rudd, \textit{William Smith: Brother of the Prophet Joseph Smith}, Master’s thesis, Brigham Young University, LDS Church Archives, p. 86.

makeing known the mission which had been appointed us. They were very anxious for me to stay with them a length of time but I was very anxious to see my parents before leaving America I could not but promised to stop a little on my return to Boston.\textsuperscript{54}

After visiting his “parental roof,” on August 17 Grouard recorded that,

he took stage for Lowell, where I arrived the same day. The Saints were rejoiced to see me & entreated me to stay with them till conference, & as I had visited all the branches of the church allotted to me I concluded to do so. Considerable of an interest was awakened while I remained & five were baptised. The saints of Lowell are, with a few exceptions a warm hearted zealous & faithful people. They administered to all my wants, & helped the mission as far as lay in their power, which I pray the Lord to bless them for.\textsuperscript{55}

Doubtless one of the warm hearted, zealous, and faithful Mormons in Lowell was Walker Lewis. Unfortunately Grouard never directly mentioned Lewis in his journal.

Grouard then “bade the Saints of Lowell adieu & took the cars for Boston” on September 9, 1843 to attend another regional General Conference at Boylston Hall. In attendance were apostles Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, Parley P. Pratt, Orson Pratt, Orson Hyde, John E. Page, Wilford Woodruff, and George Albert Smith. Elder Maginn was also there, but had a rough time as he got into a public sparring match with both Brigham Young and Parley P. Pratt. The two apostles publicly chastised Maginn because he was not correctly urging the Mormons to heed Joseph Smith’s prophetic voice and migrate to Nauvoo. Young later in the conference took another, rather petty, swipe at the Elder because Maginn had refused to give Brigham Young his ivory cane.

During the conference, Grouard acted as the church representative for the Lowell Branch. Apostle Woodruff recorded in his journal merely that “Elder B.F. Gruid represented the Lowel Branch consisting of Members 48.” However the Journal History of the Church gives a bit more detail, including a curious phrase:

The branches of the church at New England reported in the forenoon meeting of the conference in Boston, this day...Elder Benjamin F. Grouard from Lowell Branch represented that there were 48 members in good standing in that branch and that much interest was manifested in the work, but that no Elder able to speak was there at present.\textsuperscript{56}

That odd wording “no Elder able to speak was there” sounds like there in fact

\textsuperscript{54} Benjamin F. Grouard Journal, 4 August 1843, LDS Church archives, copy in my possession.
\textsuperscript{55} Grouard Journal, 17 August 1843.
\textsuperscript{56} Journal History of the Church, 9 September, 1843.
was an Elder there but he was unable to speak; this could be a reference to Walker Lewis being an Elder but not being permitted to exercise his priesthood publicly or officially.\textsuperscript{57}

After the conference, Grouard and his future companions, Elders Addison Pratt, Noah Rogers, and Knowlton F. Hanks, engaged passage to the Pacific, and they departed Boston on October 9. Grouard would not return to Lowell but after his mission, settle in San Bernardino, California and later leave the Latter-day Saints Church.\textsuperscript{58}

Eli P. Maginn, who had been Lowell’s Branch President, married 19-year old Abigail Seekel Ricketson in New Bedford, Massachusetts on January 27, 1844. I do not believe his bride was LDS. 27-year old Maginn then died exactly four months later in Lowell.\textsuperscript{59} Twelve days earlier, the Mormon-owned \textit{Times and Seasons} newspaper announced a regional General Conference would be held in Lowell on July 27 and 28, 1844.\textsuperscript{60}

\textbf{Joseph Smith’s Quest for a Theocratic Empire}

Meanwhile, back in Nauvoo, very peculiar things were taking shape among the leading councils of the LDS church in the winter of 1843-44 and early spring, which would deeply influence Walker Lewis and his family. Joseph Smith, seeking an ever-expanding influence that he felt was divinely inspired, had settled on a political system that he called a “theo-democracy,” a theocracy (led by him of course) that guaranteed “God and the people hold the power to conduct the affairs of men in righteousness, and where liberty, free trade, and sailor’s rights, and the protection of life and property shall be maintained inviolate for the benefit of ALL.”\textsuperscript{61} The newly created secret Council of the Fifty, initially focusing on spiritual matters, was given political charges by Smith during the spring of 1844, to set up a world theocratic government, ruled by the Fifty, with Smith at its head. To that end, the Council ordained Joseph Smith a king, organized his candidacy for President of the United States, and called several of its members to become ambassadors of their empire to various countries.

Nearly every one of the missionaries who had been proselytizing in the Lowell and Boston area were deeply involved in Smith’s theocratic plans. Missionaries

\textsuperscript{57} Wilford Woodruff Journal, 24 December, 1848.

\textsuperscript{58} \textit{Journal History of the Church}, 9, 10, 11, 20 and 22 September 1843 and 9 October 1843. For Grouard’s later activities and departure from Mormonism, see the Addison Pratt family papers, <http://library.usu.edu/Specol/ manuscript/collms228b.html> (8 May 2006).

\textsuperscript{59} <http://familysearch.org> for Maginn and Ricketson (who was the daughter of Elihu and Reliance Snow Ricketson), (17 June 2006).

\textsuperscript{60} \textit{Journal History of the Church}, April 15, 1844.

Brigham Young, Parley P. Pratt, Orson Pratt, Wilford Woodruff, Lyman Wight, Orson Hyde, George J. Adams, Alexander Badlam, William Smith, Almon W. Babbitt, George Albert Smith, and Erastus Snow were all members of the Council of the Fifty under Joseph Smith, while Elder Albert P. Rockwood (1805-1879) became a member of the Council under Brigham Young in 1845; and Apostle Ezra Taft Benson on Christmas day, 1846.\(^62\) Elder Adams was also personally a witness to the anointing and ordination of Joseph Smith as theocratic king on April 11, 1844 in Nauvoo. William Smith, who had ordained Walker Lewis an Elder, did not himself witness the coronation of his brother as a king because he did not join the Council of the Fifty until a month later, on May 6, 1844.\(^63\) One month after that, Adams was called and ordained as the Council’s ambassador to Russia on June 7, 1844;\(^64\) other ambassadors of the Council were Amos Fielding to England, Lucien Woodworth to the Republic of Texas, and Orson Hyde to Washington, DC. All were given ministerial certificates from Joseph and Hyrum Smith to mask their true political appointments as ambassadors of the emerging Mormon theocracy.\(^65\)

**Joseph Smith, Abolition, Amalgamation, and African Americans**

Joseph Smith’s attitudes towards African Americans, much like the rest of his dogma and practice, slowly evolved over the years through trial and mishap, reflecting ambivalence and indecision. While he was open to priesthood ordination for free black men, he certainly drew the line at the ordination of the enslaved. Smith himself ordained Elijah Abel to the higher Melchizedek priesthood, and Abel lived for awhile in Nauvoo, but then mysteriously removed himself from the center of the gathering Saints, and settled in Cincinnati, remaining loyal to Mormonism, but from a distance.\(^66\)

It was only after the Mormons in Missouri suffered what Smith saw as overwhelming, unjustified persecution against them, that he seemed to finally begin to see the similarities between racism and anti-Mormon prejudice, and began to publicly denounce slavery and the lack of equal rights for African Americans. Still he remained somewhat ambivalent about abolition and full equal rights.

Smith also seemed to be an abolitionist, but categorically refused the label.

\(^{62}\) See the ranked list of the members of the Council of the Fifty in Quinn, *Origins of Power*, pp. 521-528; for Rockwood, pp. 529-530; for Benson, p. 539.

\(^{63}\) Quinn, *Origins of Power*, p. 534.

\(^{64}\) Note that Adams, when ordained by Smith, was called to be an “apostle” to the empire of Russia, but this was not as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. As Quinn has pointed out, Adams was “an apostle in a proselytizing context only and had no status among the general authorities,” *Origins of Power*, p. 534.


\(^{66}\) For documentation that Joseph Smith ordained Elijah Abel, see Eunice Kenney to “Brother Watson,” Bay Springs, Michigan, 1891, LDS Church Archives.
When Smith campaigned for president as a Jeffersonian Democrat in the spring and summer of 1844, it was on a platform that included a plan to abolish slavery by 1850 by compensated emancipation “for a reasonable price,” through the sale of public lands; the resulting freed slaves would then be settled in Texas.\(^{67}\) While Smith’s controversial biographer, Fawn Brodie, commended Smith’s “very strong abolitionist stand,” Smith refused to be known as an abolitionist, perhaps trying to have it both ways for a political sake — act like an abolitionist but not be called one — thus currying the favor of both sides of the controversial and increasingly violent issue.\(^{68}\) The ever-unpredictable “saintly scoundrel,” John C. Bennett, considered himself an abolitionist, and he made some public statements to that effect in his position as Assistant President of the Church, arguably second only to Joseph Smith in the church hierarchy at that time. For example, Bennett wrote to Dr. Charles V. Dyer, M.D. decrying the 12-year prison sentence given to three abolitionists from the Quincy Mission Institute of Illinois:

> I am the friend of liberty, UNIVERSAL LIBERTY, both civil and religious. I ever detested servile bondage. I wish to see the shackles fall from the feet of the oppressed, and the chains of slavery broken. I hate the oppressor’s grasp, and the tyrant’s rod; against them I set my brows like brass, and my face like steel; and my arm is nerved for the conflict.\(^{69}\)

Even though Joseph Smith confessed to Bennett in correspondence that the imprisonment of the students from the Quincy Institute made “my blood boil within me to reflect upon the injustice, cruelty, and oppression,” he published a rebuttal to Bennett’s correspondence with Dr. Dyer, affirming that in fact he and Bennett were not abolitionists: “the correspondence does not shew (sic) either myself or Gen. Bennett to be abolitionists, but the friends of equal rights and privileges to all men.” [emphasis mine] This was but a restatement of an 1838 denial that Mormons were abolitionists.\(^{70}\) Joseph Smith, in his presidential platform of February 1844, significantly rejected abolitionism as a false priesthood: “A hireling pseudo priesthood will plausibly push abolition doctrines and doings, and ‘human rights,’ into Congress


\(^{69}\) Times and Seasons, (3:10:723-4).

and into every other place, where conquest smells of fame, or opposition swells to popularity.”

At a meeting at the Nauvoo Temple on March 7, 1844, William W. Phelps, a member of the Council of the Fifty sitting on Joseph Smith’s “central campaign committee,” read General Smith’s Views and Smith was “unanimously, with one exception” nominated as a candidate for President of the United States. Explaining his views on slavery and westward expansion, Smith said that he would free the slaves from a few states, compensate their owners, annex Texas, and settle the freed slaves in Texas, where they would act as a buffer of human flesh against the British, who were also attempting to gain control of Texas:

British officers are now running all over Texas to establish British influence in that country.... It will be more honorable for us to receive Texas and set the negroes free, and use the negroes and Indians against our foes.... How much better it is for the nation to bear a little expense than to have the Indians and British upon us and destroy us all.... The South holds the balance of power. By annexing Texas, I can do away with this evil. As soon as Texas was annexed, I would liberate the slaves in two or three States, indemnifying [i.e. compensating] their owners, and send the negroes to Texas, and from Texas to Mexico, where all colors are alike. And if that was not sufficient, I would call upon Canada, and annex it.

While Smith favored “national equalization” for people of African descent, still he remained opposed to race mixing between blacks and whites (especially black men and white women). Despite the fact that Joseph Smith was striking at the very core of the definition of the institution of marriage with the introduction of polygamy (both polygyny and polyandry), and insisting that the Constitution shielded his actions, still he remained too short-sighted and prejudiced to allow “amalgamation,” or inter-racial marriage; while he felt he had the right to marry whomever (and how many ever) he wished, he refused that right to people of African descent. On January 2, 1843, he said, “Had I anything to do with the negro, I would confine them (sic) by strict law to their own species” and a year later, as Nauvoo’s Justice of the Peace, on February 8, 1844, he fined two African American men $25 and $5 respectively for “trying to marry white women.”

Brigham Young would later re-affirm this racist attitude opposing sexual and marital relations between black men and white women, as president and prophet of the LDS Church after Smith’s murder, especially due to a member of Elder Lewis’ family.

As Newell Bringhurst has pointed out, Smith’s (and Young’s) attitudes

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71 Smith, Views, p. 6.
on miscegenation and abolition were very much in line with most white Americans:

In fact, antiblack discrimination ‘intensified’ during the late 1840s and 1850s throughout the US. Illinois, just after the Mormon exodus from Nauvoo, approved a statute that absolutely prohibited black migration into the state. Therefore, Nauvoo antiblack statutes conformed with those of the larger American society that routinely discriminated against blacks in the political realm.74

However, the fact that the Nauvoo Mormons conformed to general white attitudes of the time belies their doctrinal claim to be a revelatory and “peculiar people” who fiercely go against the grain in matters of ethics and morality, especially with their prophetic claims of unique communication with deity regarding “a higher law” of acceptable standards of behavior. Despite these claims, we only find the early Latter-day Saints sullying themselves with fear-based racism like the majority of the American populace. Rather than taking the opportunity to become leaders in a socially progressive faith and practice with other religions like the Society of Friends, Congregationalists, and Unitarians, the Mormons were content with the status quo, which is unfortunate.

At the first Mormon “Jeffersonian Democratic Convention, held in Boston’s Franklin Hall on May 24 and 25, 1844, Parley P. Pratt was voted as chair of the convention. Those in attendance passed resolutions for equal rights for all, including Catholics, Mormons, and “black men burned at the stake or tree.”75

Back in Nauvoo, four days after being initiated into the Council of the Fifty, Apostle William Smith published a four-page statement on May 10, 1844 “inveighing against ‘Mormon Apostles’” for their criticism of him and his recent actions in New England.76

Around the end of May, William Smith was back in Nauvoo, but only briefly for he and his brother Joseph Smith got into a fight. In Nauvoo, Joseph had signed over a lot of land near the temple, after receiving assurance from William that William would build a house and settle his family on it. However, within only hours of the deed being recorded, one of the Ivins brothers “appeared before the city recorder to determine if the lot was free and clear” because he had just purchased the lot from William Smith for $500. When Joseph Smith heard of his brother’s duplicity and greed, he was enraged and immediately had the deed canceled. This in turn enraged William, who threatened Joseph and “quickly left Nauvoo and never saw his brother Joseph alive again.” On June 20, 1844, Joseph wrote to his brother William and the other proselytizing and

74 Brinthurst, Saints, Slaves, p. 90.
76 Rudd, William Smith, pp. 90.
campaigning Apostles to return to Nauvoo immediately. William’s brothers, Joseph and Hyrum Smith, were murdered seven days later, ending Joseph’s aspirations for the presidency and ultimately a theocratic empire, with him as “President Pro tem of the world,” as two Apostles called him.⁷⁷

William Smith and his often-ailing wife Caroline “were with Heber C. Kimball and Lyman Wight on their way to Boston” the day after his two brothers were slain in Illinois. The following day, a regional conference was held in Franklin Hall in Boston, with Apostles Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, Orson Hyde, Orson Pratt, William Smith, Lyman Wight, and Wilford Woodruff in attendance. The next day, an area conference was held in Lowell and again, many of the Apostles attended it. If Lewis was not at the Boston meeting, he certainly would have been at the Lowell conference.⁷⁸

On July 1, still unaware that Joseph Smith had been murdered, “Gen. Joseph Smith” was nominated for President at the Massachusetts State Convention of Jeffersonian Democracy, held in the Melodeon. Brigham Young took the role of President and William Smith and Lyman Wight were Vice Presidents, and Woodruff was one of the secretaries. However, “rowdies” according to Wilford Woodruff then broke up the convention. While Brigham Young was speaking, the radical woman’s rights suffragette Abby Folsom stood up and began “speaking while the president was addressing the meeting,” the first time (but not the last) a feminist helped break up an LDS meeting. (Ralph Waldo Emerson called Folsom “The Flea of Conventions” because of her irritating habit of breaking into men’s public addresses.) Soon another young man in the gallery began making loud “rowdy remarks” and the police were called in; but the police were mobbed, “assaulted and beaten badly” and the “meeting was soon broken up.” Still, the national convention was scheduled to be held on July 13 in Delaware, with Heber C. Kimball and S. B. Wallace appointed as delegates.⁷⁹

Finally on July 8, many of the apostles who were in Massachusetts read that day’s headlines from the New York Herald: “The Murder of Joe Smith, the Mormon Prophet.”⁸⁰ Woodruff found out in Portland, Maine on the 9th after seeing the Boston Times. Brigham Young, while visiting the Peterborough, New Hampshire Branch, received correspondence from Woodruff that the Smith brothers had been killed. He started back to Nauvoo, Illinois immediately, spending one night at Lowell on his return journey.⁸¹ Woodruff returned to Boston and held a memorial there on July 11 and the local Latter-day Saints

⁷⁷ Rudd, William Smith, pp. 90-92; Lyman Wight and Heber C. Kimball to Joseph Smith, June 19, 1844, as quoted in Quinn, Origins of Power, p. 124.
⁷⁸ Rudd, William Smith, p. 92; Woodruff Journal, June 29, 1844; and Journal History of the Church, June 30, 1844.
⁷⁹ Wilford Woodruff Journal, July 1, 1844.
⁸¹ Journal History of the Church, July 16, 1844.
“were strengthened in the faith & we had a good time.”

An unnamed LDS apostle who had just returned from a mission to England (and was probably on his way back to Nauvoo) stopped in Lowell in July or August 1844. There he preached with another young Mormon man, when the Quaker poet, John Greenleaf Whittier happened to come by and listened to their message. Whittier later wrote an essay, “A Mormon Conventicle,” as part of his book called The Stranger in Lowell. What I find so intriguing about this essay is that I believe that the young man preaching with the apostle was none other than Walker Lewis’ 19 year-old son, Enoch Lovejoy Lewis. Whittier recorded:

Passing up Merrimack street the other day, my attention was arrested by a loud, earnest voice, apparently engaged in preaching....

Seating myself I looked about me. There were fifty to one hundred persons in the audience, in which nearly all classes of this heterogeneous community seemed pretty fairly represented, all listening with more or less attention to the speaker.

He was a young man, with dark, enthusiastic complexion, black eyes and hair; with his collar thrown back, and his coat cuffs turned over, revealing a somewhat undue quantity of “fine linen,” bending over his coarse board pulpit, and gesticulating with the vehemence of Hamlet’s prayer, “tearing his passion to rags.” A band of mourning crape, fluttering with the spasmodic action of his left arm, and an illusion to “our late beloved brother, JOSEPH SMITH,” sufficiently indicated the sect of the speaker. He was a Mormon - a Saint of the Latter Days!

Note that Whittier found the young, dark-complexioned man preaching on Merrimack Street, which is where Walker Lewis had his barbershop (adjacent to the Merrimack House on the corner of Merrimack and Dutton streets). Since Enoch’s mother was so light complexioned herself (being half white and half black) that she is listed in the 1850 census as “white,” Enoch may have been only “dark-complexioned” and not “black” per se. Circumstantial evidence certainly indicates it was young Enoch whom Whittier heard preaching with the apostle that late summer day in 1844. (Whittier’s essay then reports what he thought drew people to the “delusion” of Mormonism, he critiqued the “apocryphal Book of Mormon,” sorrowed for their persecution, and lauded the beauty of the Nauvoo temple.)

Whittier noted that both the young man and the older Apostle spoke on the power of faith, and Whittier wrote that through their message, “I discovered, as I think, the great secret to their success in making converts.” First, they taught that the miracles brought on by the power of faith were not just “confined to the

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82 Wilford Woodruff Journal, July 11, 1844.
first confessors of Christianity,” but available to the Mormons today. Second, “they speak a language of hope and promise to weak, weary hearts, tossed and troubled, who have wandered from sect to sect, seeking in vain the primal manifestations of the Divine power.” Again, this gives us contemporary insight into why Walker Lewis and his son would have affiliated with Mormonism.84

In the following chaotic months after the Smiths’ murder, the LDS church was thrown into a succession crisis, with various claimants vying to lead the church. Missionary activities in New England were reduced temporarily while Brigham Young, as the Senior Apostle, reigned in most (but not all) of the leading Mormons to follow him. In the wake of the succession crisis, many of the more scurrilous Mormons grew bolder in their unethical behaviors, especially once away from LDS headquarters. By the fall of 1844, Woodruff, William Smith (who had stayed in New England after his brothers’ deaths), and an “Elder Ball” had returned to Lowell to proselytize there. Smith and Ball however were creating utter havoc among the church branches in Massachusetts, Lowell in particular, due to their inappropriate (even by Mormon standards) sexual behavior and teachings.

William’s sexual improprieties had begun in the early 1840s when confronted with his brother’s explanations of polygamy and so-called “spiritual wifery.” As Michael Quinn has documented, William Smith was investigated in 1842 by the Nauvoo High Council as an extension of their investigations into John C. Bennett’s prolific sexual activities in Nauvoo with both women and men.85 Two Nauvoo women, Sarah Miller and Catherine Fuller Warren, identified William Smith “as one of Bennett’s friends who visited [them] for sexual intercourse.” Although Joseph Smith initially asked Brigham Young to excommunicate his brother, Joseph soon withdrew the charge and instead claimed that the charges had been trumped up to sully the Smith family. Their cousin, George A. Smith, was angered that William had been “Commit[t]ing iniquity & we [apostles] have to sustain him against our feelings.”86

With the death of the Patriarch to the Church Hyrum Smith (whose office was organized as an inherited, patrilineal position, open to the male descendants of Hyrum and Joseph’s father, Joseph Smith, Jr.) William Smith became the new Patriarch, in many senses co-equal to the position of the President of the Church, which Brigham Young had assumed pro tem. However, William was not officially ordained to this position until May 24, 1845 after a year of being away from Nauvoo, Illinois. Smith, who had been back in the eastern states when his brothers were killed (again, after fighting with Joseph over William’s duplicitous actions regarding the land deed near the Temple), was asked by the

apostles to remain there on his mission because, as a surviving Smith brother, his life was in danger, especially in tumultuous Nauvoo and environs. In fact, another Smith brother, Samuel H., had mysteriously died a month after Joseph and Hyrum; William believed that Apostle Willard Richards had asked Hosea Stout, a Missouri Danite, to murder Samuel to prevent him from claiming succession to the church presidency.

Although Brigham Young had written to Willard Richards in July 1844 that “Br William Smith is a grate man in his cauling in this country,” by October, another apostle was having to contend with the legacy of a very different side to William, which was creating dissension and division in the Lowell Branch. Wilford Woodruff wrote to Brigham Young on October 9,

Elder Ball has taught as well as Wm Smith the Lowell girls that is not wrong to have intercourse with the men what they please & Elder Ball tries to sleep with them when he can They have tried to remove a good presiding Elder in Lowell & put in Bro Robins who is in their company, But they would not have this the Lowell Church is shaking.

Nearly a week later, Woodruff recorded in his journal, “I visited Lowel and held a meeting with the Lowell branch, It was rather a squally time difficulties appear to be rising in this quarter - some dissatisfaction, after I closed I was followed by Elder Wm Smith.” Thankfully, Woodruff gave a fuller account to the “squally time” in a letter to Brigham Young a month later. In the letter, we find that all the men in the Lowell Branch had in fact resigned their priesthood offices, with the exception of Elder Walker Lewis, leaving him as the de facto presiding Elder of the Branch, if only for a brief time. Woodruff explained to Young, referring to the events of mid-October,

All was right with the Peterboro Church...but I found it different with the Lowell Church, Elder Wm Smith & myself attended a church meeting to gether there All the mail members resigned their offices in that branch of the church except one colourd Brother who was an Elder But the president & Clerk resigned. the reason was a complaint that has saluted my ears in most of the eastern churchs I have visited, but I advised them to hold their stations as they were, & go ahead all would be right - if the[y] did well they would be blessed, they were not accountable for

87 Quinn, Origins of Power, p. 213.
88 Danites, or the “Daughters of Zion,” were a group of secret, semi-official Mormon vigilantes organized by Joseph Smith to defend the Mormons and harass (or worse) its dissenters and enemies, Quinn, Origins of Power, pp. 92-103.
90 Wilford Woodruff Journal, October 9, 1844. I am unable to ascertain the identity of this “Elder Ball.” He may be the same Elder Ball referred to as living in Cambridge or Boston, Massachusetts (on 12 Butoph Street) with his mother, when Woodruff visited Albert P. Rockwood in jail (for “religious persecution”) as noted in his journal, May 11, 1838. The jailor locked Woodruff up as well, but only until 10:00 pm and then released him.
Although Woodruff does not here identify for Young what the complaint was, it becomes clear as we follow Woodruff’s continued missionary activities in the Boston, Peterborough, and Lowell areas. On October 16, Woodruff “spent the day in Lowell and Preached in the evening.” Smith went to Peterborough that night. The next day Woodruff joined him and they held a meeting at which Smith preached. On October 18, the two Apostles again preached to the Peterborough Mormons: “Elder Wm Smith again addressed the assembly spoke of the rise & progress of the Church, coming forth of the Book of Mormon, The Saints brought forward their tithings for the Temple all of which Elder Wm Smith took to the amount of $150. dollars for the Temple and $25 or $30. dollars for his own use,” although in reality, the funds Smith collected did not make it to Nauvoo. In a letter to Brigham Young, Apostle Ezra Taft Benson explained that, “the particular difficulties in the Lowell Branch came about as a result of church finances and the collection of funds.” 92 But this was not the only thing William Smith was doing wrong, as hinted at by the teachings of William Smith and Elder Ball to the “Lowell girls” that premarital sex was condoned by the church. Woodruff had avoided a complete implosion of the Lowell Branch, yet a month later, all was not completely stable there, as Elder Jesse Wentworth Crosby discovered. On November 19, Crosby wrote, “On my return [from Peterborough] I stopped in Lowell (Sunday last) and preached to the saints who are well united with the exception of two or three uneasy spirits.” 93

Crosby then moved from Boston to Lowell on December 1, 1844 to be the Branch President there. As he reported in his journal, he returned again to Boston being much worn down with excessive labour concluded to tarry during the winter and recruit my health, by invitation consented to take the presidency of the small Branch in Lowell city 30 miles from Boston and to take up my abode there. Came into the city Dec. 1st kept up regular meetings during the winter gave my attention partly to studying some useful sciences baptized a number during my stay. 94

Parley P. Pratt was appointed around December 30, 1844 “by the President and others of the Twelve to go East, and take charge of churches in the Atlantic States.” Pratt then appointed apostle Ezra T. Benson “to take charge of Boston and vicinity.” 95 Pratt soon became aware of just how disastrous for the

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91 Wilford Woodruff to Brigham Young, November 16, 1844.
92 Wilford Woodruff Journal, 16, 17, 18, and 19 October 1844; Ezra T. Benson to Brigham Young, as quoted in Bringhurst, Saints and Slaves, p. 104 n. 40.
93 Journal History of the Church, November 19, 1844.
95 Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt, chapter 43.
church William Smith’s presence was in Massachusetts. In January 1845, he recorded,

As we gradually became acquainted with circumstances pertaining to the Church in these parts, we found that Elders William Smith, G. [George] J. Adams, S. [Samuel] Brannan and others, had been corrupting the Saints by introducing among them all manner of false doctrine and immoral practices, by which many of them had stumbled and been seduced from virtue and truth. While many others, seeing their injury, had turned away from the Church and joined various dissenting parties. We, therefore, in accordance with the instructions of the Holy Spirit in President Young before he left home, directed William Smith and G. J. Adams to return to Nauvoo, where, in process of time, they were cut off from the Church.... I devoted the winter in the presidency of the eastern churches, to writing for the Prophet and in visiting the churches in Boston, Lowell, Philadelphia, Long Island and various other places, and preaching the gospel among them.96

In the light of this and Woodruff’s earlier note on William Smith’s conduct with the “Lowell girls,” Ezra Taft Benson’s report to Young that the “difficulties in the Lowell Branch” were strictly having to do with the disappearing church funds, was clearly an underestimation of the damage that Smith and his cronies were committing. Elder George J. Adams, a member of the theocratic Council of the Fifty, was excommunicated on April 10, 1845 by the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and a month later, he organized a schismatic Mormon church, proposing that Joseph Smith III lead it (as opposed to Brigham Young), with William Smith as its Patriarch.

In addition, Samuel Brannan was disfellowshipped by the Twelve in April 1845 as well “for entering into a polygamous marriage, which William Smith had performed in New York.” As Quinn noted, “Polygamy was risky enough in Nauvoo, and the apostles took a dim view of introducing the practice in the scattered branches of the church.” However, Brannan was reinstated to full fellowship in Nauvoo on May 24, 1845. One year later he took a shipload of some 240 Mormons to San Francisco (Joseph Smith had envisioned that the persecuted Mormons would settle in the “upper California,” but in 1847, Young stopped short of the goal in Utah), where the Mormons were among the first to find gold in March 1848 near “Mormon Island” on the south fork of the American River; after Brannan siphoned off some 30% in “tithing funds” from all the Mormon gold laborers, ostensibly to fund a new Mormon Temple in the Salt Lake Valley, he abandoned the church and remained in San Francisco, where he built the first incarnation of the famous Cliff House in 1858, and a prominent street downtown is named after him. Incredibly wealthy from the gold rush, he lost most of it in an acrimonious divorce and subsequent “unusual deals” with the Mexican government, dying penniless in San Diego in 1889.97

96 Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt, chapter 43.
97 Quinn, Origins of Power, pp. 214-215, and 534. For Brannan’s activities in California, see The
In the meantime, Elder Crosby “paid Andover a visit this is a village about 10 miles from Lowell went in company with about 200 persons ten large sleighs I had the privilege of examining a very large library....” I can only wonder if Elder Lewis was in that large company of 200 in ten sleighs to make the entertaining journey nearby. Then on January 25, 1845, Crosby was witness to a horrible fire that swept through Lowell, destroying much of the city:

We had a dreadful storm during the night the snow drove through the air in almost solid columns about 3 o’clock we were aroused by the ringing of the bells every one in the city was ringing the cry was Fire! Fire! I dressed myself and went out to witness the most terrific scenery my eyes ever beheld Fire-engines were in the streets but buried in snow it was impossible to get them to the fire, the wind blew a hurry cane the air was full, it was difficult to breathe, the reflection caused every thing to appear red the buildings burned down, no assistance could be rendered the inhabitants escaped with their lives.98

Otherwise, after spending “the winter very agreeably,” Crosby “left Lowell...by council of P.P. Pratt,” resigned his presidency of the Lowell Branch and left for Nauvoo on March 29, 1845.99 This would also have been about the same time that William Smith returned to Nauvoo.

After the nearly-disgraced and highly-untrusted Presiding Patriarch William Smith returned to Nauvoo in May 1845, he and senior Apostle Brigham Young struggled with each other as they attempted to share spiritual, ecclesiastical, and political power after Joseph and Hyrum’s murder. Still Young married the 34-year old Smith to a 16-year old girl on June 22, 1845, one month after the death of William’s wife, Caroline A. Grant Smith. Young again performed another marriage for Smith on August 8, 1845 with a “Miss Rice” who was but 14. (Note that Smith was married at the time to several other unidentified women as well.)100 Then Smith provoked further divisions within the church and among the hierarchy when he “stunned the congregation and his fellow apostles” at a citywide meeting on August 17. Smith publicly confirmed “his belief in the doctrine of the plurality of wives,” and refused to be “ashamed of her [a spiritual wife] before the public.” Since the church was still officially denying polygamy, many “people appeared disgusted and many left the ground.” Apostle John Taylor then arose and denied what Smith had said, doing some fast spin-doctoring. Smith and Young continued vying against each other, with Young clearly in the lead. Smith abandoned Nauvoo on September 14 and in October had taken up with a teenaged Catholic girl in St. Louis and on October

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100 Quinn, Origins of Power, pp. 220-221.
19, 1845, he was publicly excommunicated by the Twelve Apostles.101

With the status and safety of the Mormons in Illinois growing increasingly uncertain, Young began the daunting task of preparing the church members to move westward, away from the US, and settle in Mexican territory. Missionary activities abated somewhat in preparation for the trek west en masse. I know of no missionaries in Lowell, until Parley P. Pratt passed through on his way to his mission in England in the fall of 1846.102

The Sources of the Priesthood Ban

In the fall of 1846, just three years after Massachusetts legalized miscegenation, a marriage took place in Cambridge that would profoundly affect Mormon doctrine and practice for the next 130 years.103 On September 18, 1846 Elder Lewis’ eldest son, 21-year old Enoch Lovejoy Lewis, whom I believe John Greenleaf Whittier witnessed preaching Mormonism in Lowell, married a white Mormon woman named Mary Matilda Webster in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Enoch’s slightly older bride may have been the daughter of Ira Webster and Bathsheba Wright of Chester, Hampden County, Massachusetts, but I have not been able to prove that. Matilda may also have been pregnant at the time of their marriage, as their first and only child, Enoch R. Lovejoy Lewis was born only seven months after their marriage, in Lowell.104

I believe that this 1846 inter-racial marriage, coupled with both Walker Lewis’ high ranking stance in African Freemasonry, and the actions of another black Mormon named William McCary, are what drove Brigham Young to instigate the denial of priesthood to any man with black ancestry, free or enslaved in late 1847.

As Newell G. Bringhurst has thoroughly documented, William McCary, a half-African, half-Indian Mormon musician, was in Winter Quarters, Nebraska, entertaining “the encamped Saints in February and March 1847.” An accomplished ventriloquist, McCary was expelled from Winter Quarters for dressing as an Indian, claiming to be Adam “the ancient of days,” and then throwing his voice to announce that “God spake unto him and called him Thomas.” Before McCary departed, Brigham Young confronted him. Still not having developed the “curse of Cain” as reason to deny black men priesthood, Young told McCary, “Its nothing to do with the blood for [from] one blood has God made all flesh, we have to repent [to] regain what we av lost — we av one of the best Elders an African in Lowell.”105 Here Young still believed that it wasn’t

101 Quinn, Origins of Power, pp. 222-223.
102 Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt, chapter 43.
104 Cambridge marriage records and Lowell birth records, copies in my possession; William I. Appleby to Brigham Young, May 31, 1847.
105 Brigham Young Papers, March 26, 1846, LDS Church Archives.
racial identity, but individual worthiness, which merited priesthood. And he used Walker Lewis as an example of that very concept.

“The negro prophet” soon returned after his expulsion however to start “his own rival Mormon group,” and in the fall of 1847 William McCary began practicing polygamy, having white Mormon women “sealed to him” (married for “time and all eternity” through Mormon ritual), which was “for the women to go to bed with him in the daytime” while his first wife “was in the room at the time of the proformance.” Some Mormons reacted very strongly to this mockery of both polygamy and the sealing ritual of the temple. For instance, Nelson W. Whipple (1818-1887) threatened to shoot McCary.106

Newell G. Bringhurst and Ronald K. Esplin document that the “earliest-known statement” of black priesthood denial came a month after McCary’s first expulsion from Winter Quarters, from none other than Parley P. Pratt, who certainly had known Walker Lewis for at least four years. Pratt told a Mormon congregation in April 1847 that the apostate William McCary “was a black man with the blood of Ham in him which lineage was cursed as regards the priesthood,” quoting from the Mormon scriptures called the Book of Abraham.107

In the meantime, Elder William Ivers Appleby (1811-1870) arrived in Lowell, just after Pratt’s speech in Nebraska. A poorly educated scrivener and schoolteacher from New Jersey, Appleby had joined the LDS church in 1840 and visited Nauvoo for the first time in 1841. While most of the Mormons were preparing to migrate west from Illinois, he was on a mission throughout the eastern states. (He and his family later migrated to Utah in October 1849.)108

In 1846 he assisted Samuel Brannan and the shipload of Mormons heading to California, and in 1847 he assisted Jesse C. Little in presiding over the church in the eastern states. Sometime during that year Appleby became the President of all the church branches in the east.

While Appleby was proselytizing in Lowell, he encountered Elder Walker Lewis, learned of his ordination under William Smith, and grew agitated upon discovering a black man holding Mormon priesthood. On May 19, 1847, Appleby recorded that he,

Left this Afternoon, for Lowell, where I arrived in about one hour and a half, distance 25 miles. Here I found a branch of the Church of about 20 members in tolerable good standing. Elder [Darius] Longee presiding. In this Branch there is a Coloured Brother, (An Elder ordained by Elder Wm. Smith while he was a member of the Church, contrary though to the order of the Church or the Law of the Priesthood, as the Descendants of Ham are not entitled to that privilege) by the name of Walker Lewis. He appears to be a meek humble man, and an example for

106 Bringhurst, Saints, Slaves, pp. 84-87.
his more whiter brethren to follow.

While Appleby here gives what appears to be the first very clear explanation of the “curse of Ham” doctrine, as the reason for the priesthood ban against black men, it must be noted that this “journal” was actually written in the mid-1850s, and based only on notes that he kept at the time. I speculate that his original notes probably only consisted of “May 19, 1847 - Afternoon to Lowell, one hour and a half, 25 miles. Branch of 20 members, Elder Longee presiding. Coloured Brother, Walker Lewis.” The rest seems to have been fleshed out later in the 1850s, when the “curse of Ham” doctrine had been firmly established and promulgated by Brigham Young. The later revision of his “journal” is borne out by the fact that 12 days later, while in Batavia, New York, Appleby wrote to Brigham Young demonstrating the doubts he had in his mind about the propriety of this “meek humble man” holding the Melchizedek priesthood. And Appleby broke the news to Young about the Lewis-Webster marriage.

At Lowell...I found a coloured brother by name of ‘Lewis’ a barber, an Elder in the Church, ordained some years ago by William Smith. This Lewis I was informed has also a son who is married to a white girl [Enoch Lovejoy Lewis and Mary Matilda Webster Lewis]. and both members of the Church there. Now dear Br. I wish to know if this is the order of God or tolerated in this Church ie to ordain Negroes to the Priesthood and allow amalgamation [inter-racial marriage]. If it is I desire to Know, as I have Yet got to learn it.  

Elder Appleby was clearly disturbed by Elder Lewis’ ordination. And he was equally incensed that a Mormon man of African descent had married a white Mormon woman. Appleby sent this important document to Young at Winter Quarters, Council Bluff, Nebraska. But of course Young at that time was en route to “Mexico” (California/Utah), so he did not receive the letter for six months. In a complete coincidence, Appleby’s querying letter, Brigham Young, and Elder Appleby himself all converged at Winter Quarters at the beginning of December 1847. Young had just returned to Nebraska from the Salt Lake Valley, when Appleby arrived on December 2 from the eastern states. Young, with Appleby’s revelatory letter in hand, surely met privately with Appleby to ensure the accuracy of the details.

The following day, Woodruff (who was also in Nebraska for the moment) recorded in his journal,

Elder Appleby Arrived in our mids from Philadelphia & spent the evening with us & gave us much information concerning the wars & state of the Nations....He also gave an account of the state of the churches in the east.  

109 William I. Appleby to Brigham Young, May 31, 1847, LDS Church Archives.
111 Wilford Woodruff Journal, December 3, 1847.
The enraged Brigham Young, having read Appleby’s letter concerning the Lewis family with his questions about conformity to doctrine and practice and hearing Appleby’s personal report, must have rued the fact that just nine months earlier, he had praised Walker Lewis as “one of the best Elders” in the entire church and had told McCary that it wasn’t ancestral blood that prohibited priesthood ordination. Confronted with the knowledge that Walker’s son had legally mixed his black blood with that of a white Mormon, just as McCary had done polygamously, Young then met privately with the apostles present (Heber C. Kimball, Willard Richards, Orson Pratt, Wilford Woodruff, George A. Smith, Ezra T. Benson, Amasa Lyman, and Erastus Snow). There, Young confided to them that he would have both Enoch Lovejoy Lewis and his wife Matilda killed “if they were far away from the Gentiles,” instead of in Massachusetts. Certainly the Danites might have been successful in covertly carrying out this execution in Missouri, Illinois, or Nebraska. But not in Boston or Lowell, under a public magnifying glass in a hotbed of abolitionist activism.

Note that Brigham Young was not opposed to “inter-racial marriage” *per se*. Young in fact had married Lewis Dana, a Native American who had been an Latter-day Saint Elder for four years, to Mary Gout in 1845, “she being a White Woman.” Young however was horrified by the mixing of “the seed of Abraham” (all white people regardless of their lack of Semitic blood) with “the seed of Cain” or Ham or Canaan (variously), especially black men marrying white women. Young would do all in his power to prevent that from happening both in his church as president and in his territory as governor. Magnifying what Rigdon had said in the 1830s, and what Joseph Smith had done and said in the 1840s regarding marriages between blacks and whites, Young was outraged by Enoch Lovejoy Lewis’ marriage to Matilda. No doubt he was paranoid that if black men were allowed the priesthood and all temple benefits (including “celestial marriage,” or polygamy) they would have lines of white women in tow. Young seems to have fallen prey to the stereotype of the wild, exotic black man indulging his animalistic passions with “pure white womanhood.”

Brigham Young, still quite vulnerable in his leadership position of the majority of the Latter-day Saints, may not have appreciated Walker Lewis’ high Masonic rank either. Young had only been a Mason since 1842, being initiated along with Joseph Smith, Wilford Woodruff, and the majority of other LDS leaders at the Nauvoo Lodge. Joseph Smith, Sr. had been a Freemason since 1817, but he had died in 1840 before the Nauvoo Lodge was started. The other pre-church organization Masons were Hyrum Smith, William W.
Phelps, and Heber C. Kimball; but they had all become Masons between 1823 and 1826, which is the same timeframe that Walker Lewis was first raised as well. According to John L. Brooke, Joseph Smith, Jr. had espoused a “Masonic mythology” in which the descendants of Seth and Cain formed into “two races of men, good and evil, carrying pure and spurious versions of Masonic knowledge.”115 Walker Lewis seemed to be living proof of this: a black man allegedly descended from Cain, and a past Most Worshipful Grand Master of African Grand Lodge #1, one of the most controversial lodges in existence and often held (by white Masons) as spurious indeed.116

Young’s instigation of a priesthood ban against all men of African ancestry may have been partly due to Walker Lewis’ high Masonic rank in a Grand Lodge that many white Freemasons esteemed as spurious and irregular. That, coupled with the fact that many of the men in the mob that killed Joseph and Hyrum Smith were Freemasons, may have turned Young against Walker Lewis. When Joseph Smith was assaulted, his last words were the first part of the Masonic distress call: “Oh Lord my God.” He was unable to finish the last half, “Is there no help for the widow’s son?” as he fell from the second storey of the Carthage Jailhouse; stunned from the fall, he was set against a nearby well and shot execution-style by several mobsters backed by the Whig Party.117 The failure of Masonic brothers to come to the aid of a fellow brother in distress caused many of the Mormon leadership to eschew Masonry and Freemasons.

I feel certain that William McCary’s troubling actions at Winter Quarters in the spring and fall of 1847, Young’s discovery of the Lewis-Webster marriage in December 1847, and Walker Lewis’ high standing in African Freemasonry, were the three most important factors in Brigham Young’s instigation of a priesthood ban against all men with African ancestry in late 1847 or early 1848.

**Young on Abolition, Slavery & Black-White Sex**

On June 1, 1851, Young preached during a regular Sunday meeting in Salt Lake City about his views on slavery, the divine calling of blacks to be servants to whites, and their curse that binds them to this. According to Woodruff, Young said:

Their is great Excitement in the world about slavery & the Abolitionest are vary fearful that we shall have the Negro or Indian as Slaves here. We have a few that


116 In fact, the entire 1982 book by white Freemason Henry Wilson Coil, *A Documentary Account of Prince Hall and Other Black Fraternal Orders* (see note 20 above), is a mean-spirited attempt to provide documentary evidence that the Prince Hall African Lodges are completely irregular and spurious and therefore have no claim to be properly called Freemasons. This Masonic controversy, clearly racialist based, started in Massachusetts as early as the 1830s and continues through today.

117 Wicks and Foister, *Junius and Joseph*, pp. 177-180 and 204-206.
were prisoners that we have bought to save their lives. But what will the Abolitionest do? If you owe them a dollar they will jog you up. Neither will they liberate the slave by buying them & setting them free. The Master of Slaves will be damned if they Abuse their slaves. Yet the seed of Ham will be servants until God takes the Curse off from them. But they are not all the Slaves their is in the world. The whole world are Slaves to sin & wickedness & passion.

I Have two Blacks. They are as free as I am. Shall we lay a foundation for Negro Slavery? No God forbid And I forbid.

I say let us be free. We will be rich but we must be rich in faith first or we shall be rich in no other way.  

Almost a month later, again during a Sunday sermon, Young exulted in the joys of the Mormon theocracy. Demanding, “Give us the kingdom of God instead of the glories of the world,” Young then launched into another tirade about blacks and the curse that dated back to God’s rejection of Cain’s sacrifice and his subsequent murder of Abel:

Their has been a great stir to exalt the Negro & make him equal to the white man but there is a curse upon the seed of Cain & all Hell cannot wipe it out & it cannot be taken off until God takes it off. When A person unlawfully seeks for power & exaltation by taking the blessings which belongs to Another He will sink far below the other. As Lucipher the son of the morning sought Abels Blessing & took the life of his brother. The consequence was Cain was cursed & his seed & this curse will remain until Abels posterity will get all the Blessing their is for him. Then the curse may be taken from Cain or his posterity but his posterity will be below Abels. All are slaves. Polititions are the worst slaves And if we dont do right we shall ketch the lash. We are the freest people on Earth. Queen Victoria is A slave. Had to Ask the liberty to Marry prince Albert. But we are free. We have the right God & kingdom.  

After Appleby’s meeting with Young and the Twelve in Council Bluffs, they wrote the historically monumental General Epistle from the Council of the Twelve Apostles, explaining to the scattered Saints the events at Nauvoo that led to the church’s removal to the Utah territory. The Epistle called all Latter-day Saints to gather “on the east side of the Missouri River, and, if possible, be ready to start from hence by the first of May next, or as soon as grass is sufficiently grown, and go to the Great Salt Lake City.” It counseled those unable to move to the Valley the following summer to settle for a time near Council Bluffs, urged the European Saints to immigrate speedily, by way of New Orleans to the Bluffs, and asked all those coming west to bring whatever seeds, plants, livestock, tools, machinery, books, maps, charts, and scientific

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118 Wilford Woodruff Journal, June 1, 1851.
119 Wilford Woodruff Journal, June 29, 1851.
Brigham Young signed the *General Epistle* on December 23, 1847. Appleby addressed a conference on December 26 in the Log Tabernacle “upon the Political state of the world the gathering of the Jews at Jerrusalem & many other interesting things.” Then on December 28, 1847, “the manuscript was handed to Amasa Lyman and Ezra T. Benson, who in company with William I. Appleby, Erastus Snow, James H. Flanigan, and others, left Council Bluffs for the East on December 28, and on January 14, Lyman, Benson, Snow, and Appleby reached St. Louis. Three days later, from St. Louis, Benson and Appleby wrote to Brigham Young that they had “five hundred copies of the Epistle already struck off” the printing presses and were getting 3,000 printed at a cost of about $30. They then scattered about the states, distributing them to the various Mormon branches, encouraging the faithful to migrate to the Utah territory.

Back in Lowell and Boston, the Lewis family was oblivious to the ecclesiastical crisis they had caused in the leading councils of the LDS church. During the early to mid-1840s, the family grew through marriage and lost some to death. Walker’s youngest sibling, Simpson, after 1840 had married rapidly in succession three women, the most recent being Caroline F. Butler, a vocalist and abolitionist from Rhode Island, around 1845. Another younger brother, Andress, had also married a second time, to Urania Silver, in 1846; and his older sister, Dinah, had married a second time as well, to Isaac Davidson, on December 2, 1847, the day before Brigham Young’s threat to have her nephew and wife killed. In addition, Walker’s youngest daughter, Lucy Minor Lewis, married Horace B. Proctor in 1848. Sadly, in 1844, the patriarch of the Lewis family, Peter P. Lewis, Jr., died in Cambridge. Almost exactly one year after the death of his namesake, Peter P. Lewis, Jr. also died in Lowell. And lastly, the only child of the controversial couple Enoch and Matilda Lewis, Enoch R. Lovejoy Lewis, died at the age of fifteen months.

In the summer and fall of 1848, Apostle Wilford Woodruff was back first in Boston, then in Lowell, where on October 16, he “Baptized and confirmed two in the evening Varanus [or Varanes] Libby & Mary Thornton of Lowell Mass. The Church in Lowell gave me $8 dollars to assist me on my mission.” And on November 1, Woodruff “visited most of the brothering staid this night with Br Pevey” (Merrill Cummings Peavey or Pevey) in Lowell. One month later, Brigham Young himself was “ordained King, Priest, and Ruler over Israel on

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120 *General Epistle from the Council of the Twelve Apostles, etc.*, Winter Quarters, Omaha Nation (now Florence, Neb.), December 23, 1847, LDS Church Archives; *History of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints*, (Independence, MO: Herald House, 1951), vol 3, p. 20.

121 Wilford Woodruff Journal, December 26, 1847.

Earth,” following in Joseph Smith’s steps toward a theocracy.\textsuperscript{123}

That September, Elder Albert P. Rockwood (1805-1897) arrived in Boston to proselytize. Rockwood was a polygamist from Holliston, Massachusetts who had been a Danite (Mormon vigilante) since their inception in Missouri in 1838, a Freemason, a member of the Council of the Fifty, and also a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy, making him a “general authority” over the church, just one tier lower than the Twelve Apostles. On Sunday, September 24, 1848 Rockwood spoke at a regional conference being held in Boston, presided over by Wilford Woodruff. Wilford records that Rockwood “exhorted the Saints to carry out the principles of the Epistles in emigating (sic) to the west.”\textsuperscript{124} Walker Lewis was probably in attendance and heard Rockwood’s call to the Latter-day Saints to gather in Utah, for soon afterwards, he would begin preparations to do so.

Rockwood then visited Lowell on December 16, 1848, where he stayed at Merrill C. Peavey’s home, preached “to the Saints in Lowell” the following day (no doubt where he met Elder Lewis personally and sparked their friendship) on the following day, and then left to preach elsewhere, returning to the Peavey residence on December 23. On Christmas Eve, Rockwood “preached to the Saints at the house of Br Lewis had a very attentive audience.” That is the only time we know of that an LDS meeting was held in Elder Lewis’ home. That night, Rockwood stayed at the home of LDS member George Wilkins (1822- ). The following day, Rockwood gratefully acknowledged in his journal the aid he received from Walker Lewis, as a barber: “Br W Lewis the coole[r] Br gave 100 [donation] he lent me a razer and brushe so I can shave with a razer that is borrowed in std of one that is pierced [or pitted?] as the Anansiases? will be.” Almost two weeks later, Rockwood returned to Lowell, having breakfast with Peavey on January 6, 1849. In a penciled section beneath this latest journal entry, Rockwood added “A Letter is to be maild to Br Darias Longee Lowell Mss / W Lewis of Lowell Mss [gave?] me one dolr 1.00.”\textsuperscript{125} If Rockwood knew of Young’s threat against Enoch, he did not show it, despite being a Danite likely to carry out what he might consider an order from Young; in fact, rather than any animosity at all, he seems only to have expressed camaraderie with Lewis. Rockwood then left Massachusetts for Utah, on January 20, 1849.

\textbf{To Utah...and Back}

Just as a cholera epidemic began sweeping through New York and Boston, on June 16, 1849, Woodruff was back in Lowell, where he spent the night at Merrill

\textsuperscript{123} Wilford Woodruff Journal, October 16 and November 1, 1848. Quinn, Origins of Power, p. 610.

\textsuperscript{124} Wilford Woodruff Journal, September 24, 1848.

\textsuperscript{125} Albert P. Rockwood Journal, December 16, 17, 23, 24, and 25, 1848, and January 6, 1849.
C. Peavey’s (on Branch St.) and the following day, a Sunday, he “preached to the saints in Lowell.” Merrill and his brother (or possibly nephew?) Abiel Peavey (who was also a Mormon) were personally asked by Woodruff to migrate to Utah the following spring to set up iron foundries there for industrial purposes. Woodruff returned again to Lowell on January 19, 1850, and preached at Merrill’s residence twice on the following day. He sadly noted in his journal that “in the evening I called upon Abiel Pevey a few moments...But I think he has No interest in the kingdom of God. I spent the night with Elder [Darius] Longee.”

At the end of the month, Woodruff and Merrill Cummings Peavey went proselytizing together in Peterborough, New Hampshire. The next month, Woodruff noted in his journal that upon returning to Cambridge from a trip to Maine, he had “received A letter to day from Walker Lewis” on March 4, 1850. Although I searched through all of Woodruff’s papers which I had access to in 1979 and 1980, I was unable to find this important letter. I can only guess that, from the events that would unfold, Lewis might have informed Woodruff that he intended to gather with the rest of the Latter-day Saints in Utah. On April 10, 1850, Woodruff left New York with 209 Mormons, heading en masse to Utah, 100 of whom were from the Boston area. Walker Lewis was not among them, waiting another year to do so.\(^{126}\)

Finally, in preparation for his journey to Utah, Elder Walker Lewis wrote and filed his last will and testament on March 26, 1851 in Lowell, leaving his wife, Elizabeth Lovejoy Lewis, as the executrix, and giving his estate to her and their four children. As part of the probate, an inventory was taken of all his property, revealing that Walker Lewis (and members of his family) was very musically talented. Among his two homes in Boston and Lowell, the inventory takers found that Lewis owned a French horn, a clarinet, two violins, and a grand piano made of rosewood. (It’s quite possible that Lewis had purchased this piano from Elder Alexander Badlam, a member of the LDS church who lived in Cambridge and manufactured piano forties and furniture.)\(^{127}\)

Lewis must have left on his journey almost immediately in April 1851, for it was about a six-month cross-country journey to Utah from Massachusetts (per Wilford Woodruff’s several trips back and forth), and we know Lewis was in Utah by early October.

Just one month after his father’s departure for Utah, the controversial young Mormon, Enoch Lovejoy Lewis, was arrested in Lowell for stealing clothing. A Lowell newspaper informed the public of what happened:

\(^{126}\) Wilford Woodruff Journal, January 20, 21, 29, and 30; March 4; April 9 and 10, 1850.

\(^{127}\) Last Will and Testament of Walker Lewis, dated March 26, 1851, entered into probate on December 2, 1856, Middlesex County, Massachusetts probate records, Book 4, p. 358, no. 36420. For Alexander Badlam’s piano manufacturing business, see Wilford Woodruff Journal, August 13, 1848.
A negro by the name of Enoch Lewis, last Sunday night, undertook the operation of breaking into the clothing store of F.W. Tuxbury & Co, on Central Street. He was detected by watchman Sanborn, and by him arrested on Warren Street. Yesterday he was examined before the Police Court, and for want of $500 bail was committed. He is an old offender.\textsuperscript{128}

It’s difficult to speculate why Enoch would have done this — his family was well-off and respectable, so he had no need to steal clothing. I can only offer two speculative explanations. The first may be that he was trying to steal clothing from the Tuxbury store to supply his uncle’s clothing store with more clothing for fugitive slaves, a Robin Hood of sorts. Secondly, we know that Enoch Lovejoy Lewis was declared insane in 1856, and this compulsion to steal unneeded clothing may have been early signs of his deteriorating mental condition. In any case, young Lewis was convicted of attempted robbery and he spent two years in the state prison for his crimes in July 1851.\textsuperscript{129}

In the meantime, Elder Lewis probably arrived in Utah around the end of September 1851. We know from the \textit{Journal History of the Church} that between September 1 and October 3, at least nine companies of Mormon immigrants arrived in Salt Lake City, either from Nebraska or California.\textsuperscript{130} Once there, Walker Lewis almost immediately met with the aging polygamous Patriarch to the Church, John Smith (1781-1854), the uncle of the murdered Joseph Smith and of William Smith, who had ordained Lewis to the priesthood. On October 4, the Patriarch laid his hands upon Lewis’ head and gave him his patriarchal blessing, giving the Elder spiritual guidance and direction. For non-black Mormons, the recipient is also informed which of the twelve tribes of Israel he or she has been adopted into. Most Anglo-Mormons are thereby spiritually adopted into the Tribe of Ephraim (as I was in my own patriarchal blessing.) In his case however, Lewis was declared to be of the “tribe of Canaan” (i.e. Canaan).\textsuperscript{131} The typewritten index to the early patriarchal blessings indicates...

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{128} \textit{Lowell Advertiser}, May 6, 1851.
\textsuperscript{129} \textit{Lowell Advertiser}, July 10, 1851.
\textsuperscript{130} \textit{Journal History of the Church}, September 1, 12, 14, 24, 38, 29, and October 1, 1841.
\textsuperscript{131} Patriarchal Blessing Book, vol. 11, p. 326, LDS Church archives.
\end{footnotesize}
the tribe of “Cainan” (a rather Freudian conflation of Cain and Canaan), but when I was given the opportunity to actually view Lewis’ blessing, I noted that John Smith had actually spelled it “Canan.” As I am not a descendant of Lewis, I was not allowed to copy the blessing, and unfortunately I do not recall anything more of the details of its contents.

This blessing, coupled with a statement made by Jane James in February 1890, is the only evidence from Utah I have found that Lewis was in the Salt Lake valley for about six months. I can find no other Mormon/Utah record of his presence there. Unfortunately, none of the Mormons who knew him from Massachusetts and who were in Salt Lake or environs at the time recorded his stay. But as will be seen, his presence was certainly felt, especially by Brigham Young, now freshly reminded of the marriage of Walker’s son to a white Mormon. In any case Lewis certainly attended the semi-annual General Conference on October 5 and 6 at the Bowery.

While in the Salt Lake valley, Elder Lewis somehow met Jane Elizabeth Manning James, a black Mormon from Connecticut who had been a servant in Joseph Smith’s household and then in Brigham Young’s household and in the Salt Lake Valley worked as a laundress. Faithful to Mormonism until her death, she had persistently requested entrance into the Temple for many years. Jane James claimed that while in Nauvoo, Emma Smith had come to her with a proposal from Joseph, that Jane be “sealed” to Emma and Joseph as a child. Although she had not understood what that meant at the time and refused the offer, she had since realized her error. Jane therefore asked several church leaders that she be allowed to have this temple ordinance be performed for her. In one letter to Apostle Joseph F. Smith (son of Hyrum Smith, 1838-1918) in 1890, she wrote:

“Dear Brother - - Please excuse me taking the Liberty of Writing to you - but be a Brother...by answering my questions - There by satisfying my mind - - First, as Brother James [her husband Isaac] has Left me 21 years - And a Coloured Brother, Brother Lewis wished me to be sealed to Him, He has been dead 35 or 36 years - can i be sealed to him - parley P Pratt or dained Him an Elder. When or how[?] can i ever be sealed to Him.”

It is from Jane’s letter that we find out that: first, somehow Jane continued to receive news about Walker Lewis after he returned to Massachusetts, since the 78 year-old woman knew rather accurately what year Walker had died many years before; second, Walker wanted to participate in temple ordinances

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132 An ad from a Lowell newspaper, quoted below, informs us of his return to Massachusetts.
133 Margaret Blair Young, “With My Comments,” 6 June 2006, personal email (June 6, 2006).
134 Jane Elizabeth Manning James to Joseph Fielding Smith, February 7, 1890, LDS Church Archives, transcript in my possession.
135 By February 1890, Lewis had actually been dead only 33 years, not “35 or 36 years” as Jane thought at the time.
(both the endowment and sealing ceremonies); third, he was willing to marry polygamously; and fourth, he proposed to Jane James but it seems she turned him down. We will never know what Young and other Mormon authorities would have done with Walker’s request to practice plural marriage. However, given Young’s knowledge of William McCary’s schismatic, polygamous indiscretions four years earlier, coupled with Young’s emerging “curse of Cain” doctrine as justification for a priesthood ban, I feel certain that, even if Jane James had agreed to marry Walker Lewis, Brigham Young would never have allowed a priesthood-blessed, polygamous sealing (or eternal marriage) ceremony for the two to take place in the upper floor of the Council House, which was used for temple ordinances from 1851 until the Endowment House was completed on May 5, 1855.

Lewis may have met other free blacks living in Utah (some 24 of them according to the 1850 Census); and he could not have failed to discover that a number of members of his church were slave owners upon his arrival; in 1851, 23 slave owners are known by name, including wealthy southern apostle Charles C. Rich. This certainly must have been difficult for the nephew and namesake of the man who brought emancipation to his state almost 20 years prior to Walker’s own birth.136

Once the Mormons received news from California that the US Congress had approved the proposal that Utah become a territory of the United States, with Brigham Young as the first governor in January 1851, the thoroughly theocratic legislature of “the State of Deseret” was disbanded on April 5 in order to establish the official territorial government.137 The newly approved government for “the territory of Utah” convened for the very first time on September 22, 1851, just as Walker Lewis arrived in Salt Lake.

With the Past Most Worshipful Grand Master and radical abolitionist in the new “City of the Saints,” Brigham Young no doubt was confronted yet again with his prejudice and fears, and he lashed out publicly, pushing the legislature to oppose extreme forms of abusive slavery but still support a limited form of slavery; unlike “southern slavery,” Utah slavery, for example, prohibited both physical abuse of, and sexual relations with slaves, and mandated their education, or face stiff penalties. And worse for Walker Lewis and his family, Young publicly opposed all sex between white people and those of African descent, again invoking the “curse of Cain,” as he had after the incidents with McCary and the revelation of the Lewis-Webster marriage. Significantly, the first territorial legislature was composed of two of the men who knew Walker Lewis best, Albert P. Rockwood and Wilford Woodruff. Other church leaders whom Lewis knew from Massachusetts, and who were now in the first legislature, were Heber C. Kimball, Orson Pratt, Parley P. Pratt, Ezra T. Benson, and George A. Smith. Patriarch John Smith, who had just given Lewis his blessing, was also

136 Bringhurst, Saints, Slaves, Tables 6 and 10, 220-221 and 225.
137 Wilford Woodruff Journal, January 28 and April 5, 1851.
the Chaplain for the House of Representatives at the time. And finally, the man who had instigated the controversy in the first place by reporting the Lewis-Webster marriage, William I. Appleby, was also a member of the first territorial legislature. Partway into their first session, Young addressed the territorial legislature on issues of race.\textsuperscript{138}

According to Hubert Howe Bancroft’s \textit{History of Utah},

In a message to the legislature, dated Jan. 6, 1852, Brigham, reviewing at length the internal policy of the territory, said that the system of slavery was obnoxious to humanity, but that the negro should serve the seed of Abraham, and not be a ruler nor vote for men to rule over him. ‘My own feelings are, that no property can or should be recognized as existing in slaves, either Indian or African.\textsuperscript{139}

Michael Quinn has also documented that on January 23, Brigham Young instructed the territorial legislature to legalize slavery, because “we must believe in slavery.”\textsuperscript{140}

In a lengthy journal entry from sometime between January 4 and February 8, 1852, Wilford Woodruff recorded a speech of Young’s (perhaps given on February 2) to the legislative assembly “upon slavery.” Since Young’s remarks quite sternly deal almost strictly with the question of miscegenation between blacks and whites, I quote Woodruff’s entry here almost in full:

\textit{The Lord said I will not kill Cane But I will put a mark upon him and it is seen in the \[face?] of every Negro on the Earth And it is the decree of God that that mark shall remain upon the seed of Cane & the Curse untill all the seed of Abel should be re\[deem?]ed and Cane will not receive the priesthood untill or salvation untill all the seed of Abel are Redeemed. Any man having one drop of the seed of Cane in him Cannot hold the priesthood & if no other Prophet ever spake it Before I will say it now in the name of Jesus Christ. I know it is true & they know it. The Negro cannot hold one particle of Government But the day will Come when all the seed of Cane will be Redeemed & have all the Blessings we have now & a great deal more. But the seed of Abel will be ahead of the seed of Cane to all Eternity.}

\textit{Let me consent to day to mingle my seed with the seed of Cane[,] It would Bring the same curse upon me And it would upon any man. And if any man mingles his seed with the seed of Cane the owny way he Could get rid of it or have salvation would be to Come forward & have his head Cut off & spill his Blood upon the ground. It would also take the life of his Children...}

\textit{Their is not one of the seed of old Cane that is permitted to rule & reign over the seed of Abel And you nor I cannot Help it.}


\textsuperscript{140} Quinn, \textit{Extensions of Power}, 749.
Those that do bear rule should do it in righteousness. I am opposed to the present system of slavery. The Negro Should serve the seed of Abram but it should be done right. Dont abuse the Negro & treat him cruel....

As an Ensample let the Presidency, Twelve Seventies High Priests Bishops & all the Authorities say ["]now we will go & mingle with the seed of Cane and they may have all the privileges they want. We lift our hands to heaven in support of this."] That moment we loose the priesthood & all Blessings & we would not be redeemed untill Cane was. I will never admit it for a moment....

The Devil would like to rule part of the time But I am determin He shall not rule at all and Negros shall not rule us. I will not admit of the Devil ruling at all. I will not Consent for the seed of Cane to vote for me or my Brethren.....Come here with a part of the Canaanite [i.e. African] Blood in them they are Citizens & shall have their rights but not to rule for me or my Brother....The Canaanite cannot have wisdom to do things as the white man has. We must guard against Evil. I am not going to let this people damn themselves as long as I can help it.

From these comments we learn that Young believed that all black blood was cursed, that blacks could never rule or govern over whites (lacking the “wisdom” to do so), black votes did not count in ecclesiastical circles, and blacks would eternally trail behind whites. He was very serious in his hatred of whites “mixing” with blacks, and he made several vicious doctrinal remarks to justify his prejudice, vowing that only the controversial Mormon doctrine of “blood atonement” for an entire racially mixed family (father, mother and their progeny) could wipe away the black stain from white blood. Young also clearly linked his recent ban on the priesthood to the race mixing that so upset him; they were part and parcel of the same. Young also obliquely confirmed that Joseph Smith had not introduced the priesthood ban, when he stated with full prophetic authority invoking the divine, “any man having one drop of the seed of Cane in him Cannot hold the priesthood & if no other Prophet ever spake it Before I will say it now in the name of Jesus Christ” (emphasis mine).

On February 4, the Legislature passed “An Act in Relation to Service,” which gave legal recognition to limited slavery. As part of the act legalizing euphemistically named “servitude,” the legislature very pointedly added an onerous prohibition on consensual sex between any white person and any black person, even if married to each other, accompanied by a very heavy penalty. In the second half of section 4, it is declared that “if any white person shall be guilty of sexual intercourse with any of the African race, they shall be subject, on conviction thereof to a fine of not exceeding one thousand dollars, nor less than five hundred, to the use of the Territory, and imprisonment, not exceeding

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three years;”¹⁴² Newell G. Brighurst misinterpreted this portion as prohibiting only sexual intercourse between “white masters and their black slaves,” but the wording clearly indicates a much broader prohibition that disregarded citizenship status.¹⁴³ The man who had once helped publish and distribute David Walker’s *Appeal* must have been personally and politically appalled at this bigotry from his church leaders whom he had esteemed, welcomed into his home, trusted, and assisted. The “Act in Relation to Service” was not repealed until June 19, 1862, when Congress prohibited slavery in all US territories.

The day following passage of the Act, Young addressed the joint session of the legislature, telling them that slavery was “God decreed” and would be not only acceptable, but even “a great blessing,” if only white people treated their “servants” paternalistically and compassionately:

> I am as much opposed to the principle of slavery as any man in the present acceptation or usage of the term. It is abused. I am opposed to abusing that which God decreed, to take a blessing and make a curse of it. It is a great blessing to the seed of Adam [Abraham?] to have the seed of Cain as servants, but those they serve should use them with all the heart and feeling, as they would use their own children and their compassion should reach over them and round about them, and treat them as kindly, and with that human feeling necessary to be shown to mortal beings of the human species.¹⁴⁴

Although there is no record of Walker Lewis’ reaction to such rhetoric, he could not have been anything other than profoundly offended. His own wife had a black father and a white mother, and his son was married to a white woman. It must have brought a crisis of faith to hear that for them to have forgiveness and salvation per Mormon doctrine, they would have to offer themselves up (including all their children) in a bloody act of atonement, a mass self-sacrifice.

Perhaps with the coming of the spring and the first mail from back east, he also learned that his son was in prison for attempted robbery. Coupled with his frigid reception in “Zion,” he left Utah forever, probably in March or April, when weather permitted. Just as he was leaving Utah, his sister, Sophia Lewis Levy, died back in Cambridge. Half way through his journey home, Walker’s oldest brother, Samuel Alexander Lewis died in Lowell. No doubt this sad news crushed him upon his arrival in Massachusetts in October 1852, as he was already burdened with a religion that rejected him and his family, and having

¹⁴² *Acts, Resolutions, and Memorials, Passed by the First Annual, and Special Sessions, of the Legislative Assembly, of the Territory of Utah* (Salt Lake City: Brigham H. Young, 1852), pp. 80-82, digital copy in my possession.

¹⁴³ Brighurst, *Saints, Slaves*, p. 129.

¹⁴⁴ “Governor Brigham Young’s Speech before the Joint Session of the Legislature,” 5 February 1852, Brigham Young Addresses, manuscript D 1234, box 48, folder 3, LDS Church archives.
a son in prison.

As soon as he could compose himself and rest from his exhausting, soul-trying journey, he went right back in the barber business. The *Lowell Advertiser* published an ad written by Walker Lewis:

**RETURNED FROM GREAT SALT LAKE VALLEY. WALKER LEWIS** feels thankful for the patronage and support which he has formerly received, and would respectfully inform the citizens of Lowell and vicinity, that he has returned from Great Salt Lake Valley, and has re-opened the BARBER’S SHOP, adjoining the Merrimack House, Dutton St., where he will be glad to wait upon all those that feel disposed to give him a call. Particular attention paid to Cutting Children’s Hair.145

Within two months of his return, Walker Lewis’ Mormon daughter-in-law, Matilda, died from “exhaustion” just after Christmas in the State Hospital in Worcester, Massachusetts, while her husband was in prison.146

Other than some minor land transactions, nothing is known directly about the rest of Walker Lewis’ life. His daughter, Lydia Elizabeth, married George H. Bennett two days before Christmas, 1854. We also know that Walker’s younger brother, Simpson Harris Lewis, was one of 23 signers of a petition brought to the 1853 Massachusetts Constitutional Convention, requesting that the state constitution be amended so that all male citizens of color could legally serve in, or hold office or commission in the state militia. The petition was not only voted down by the constitutional committee, but it was not even allowed to be “placed on the records of the Convention,” nor be published with the official proceedings, a severe slap in the face of the black abolitionists, and ultimately contrary to the US constitutional right for all citizens to bear arms.147 Simpson, his wife Caroline F. Butler Lewis, and their nine year-old son Frederick (named for Frederick Douglass) all participated in a “testimonial” to honor the fellow black abolitionist William Cooper Nell for his relentless efforts to have all school systems become integrated statewide. The law had passed the spring of 1855 and so on December 17, 1855, a large assembly of black people met in a church in Boston to thank Nell for his work. Simpson and his wife were organizers of the meeting, Caroline Lewis sang “a floral invocation,” and young “Master Frederick” Lewis, himself an attendee of an integrated school in Boston, addressed the assembly with an extremely florid, high Victorian speech called “Champion of Equal School Rights, We Hail Thee!”148

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145 *Lowell Advertiser*, November 9, 1852. This ad and the will he wrote before his trip to Utah are the only two known documents written by Lewis himself. Again I am grateful to Martha Mayo for having found this ad, firmly establishing the date of Walker’s return to Lowell.


Enoch Lovejoy Lewis was released from prison around July 1853 and since Matilda had died tragically, he then married Elisa Richardson Shorter, a black woman from Topsfield, Massachusetts in September.

Quack Walker Lewis finally died on October 26, 1856 in Lowell, from “consumption,” which was probably tuberculosis. Lewis, after his rejection by the LDS church, may have returned to the Episcopal Church, as the funeral and burial services were performed by St. Anne’s Episcopal Church in Lowell. However, that may simply have been what Elizabeth Lovejoy Lewis had decided to do as his widow, since she had never left the Episcopal Church to begin with. Elizabeth also purchased a beautiful family lot in the private garden-style “Lowell Cemetery” and Walker, Elizabeth, and nine other members of the their family are buried there.

Walker Lewis’ estate went into probate in December and Elizabeth had his will published in the _American Citizen_ in Lowell that month, per instructions from the court (to ensure that all creditors could make their claims). Caleb G. Weaver, A.C. Varnum, and the former slave, Nathaniel Booth, took the inventory of the Walker Lewis estate. His home on River Street in Lowell was valued at $900 while his home in Boston, on the corner of Harrison Avenue and South May Street, was valued at $2,800. Lewis’ personal estate, in addition, was valued at nearly $1,500.

In February 1857 Stephen Mansur, who was then the mayor of Lowell, and the City Aldermen, represented to the Middlesex County Probate Court that Enoch Lovejoy Lewis had become “an insane person,” and a man named Perley Parker was appointed the “Principal” and legal guardian of Enoch. I do not know whether his insanity was organic in nature, or whether Young’s threat against him, the early death of his only child, the tragic loss of his first wife, his two-year imprisonment, and then his father’s death, all coming so rapidly in succession, were what drove him insane.

Walker Lovejoy Lewis, as a minor, was appointed a legal guardian by the Probate Court as well. The court selected Hon. Linus Child, a white politician who opposed slavery (but like Joseph Smith refused the label of abolitionist) and former Whig senator who was now the Agent (similar to a CEO) of the Boott Mill in Lowell, employing some 2,000 textile workers, mostly women. Young Walker, like several of his Walker and Lewis cousins, fought in the Civil War. He enlisted in the Navy at Boston on June 21, 1861 but initially was rejected

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6cb/a/data.txt> (2 June 2006).

149 City of Lowell death register, entry 365 for 1856, copy in my possession.


152 Middlesex County Probate Records, February 17, 1857, Book 38, p. 32.

until Congress passed acts on July 17, 1862 allowing African Americans to fight in the war. His enlistment record says he was a 5’9” 22 year-old mulatto barber from Lowell. After he was allowed to fight, young Walker Lewis served for over a year on the *USS Rhode Island* as a landsman. He also witnessed the sinking of the *Monitor* in December 1861 and heroically assisted in the rescue of survivors. During a leave, December 1862 he was married to a woman of Irish descent, Mary F. Roche (or Roach) and was released from service in October 1863, when he returned to barbering, like his father. He and Mary had eight children together. When he died and was buried in 1901, he was buried in the family plot with full military honors and an official marker was put on his grave for his service during the Civil War. When the Lewis family plot in the private Lowell Cemetery was recently refurbished in the Spring of 2002, a new honor marker was placed on his grave and the old one they discovered was buried near him. The new one reads: “WALKER LEWIS, LANDSMAN, US NAVY, US RHODE IS, MAY 7, 1839-APR 18, 1901.”

Walker’s oldest daughter, Lydia Elizabeth Lewis Bennett, died in September 1908. She and her husband George had no known children. Walker’s youngest daughter, Lucy Minor Lewis Proctor, had three children by her husband Horace, and she died in 1889.

Unfortunately I must report that no known descendants of Walker Lewis are alive today. In fact, neither Martha Mayo nor I have found any known living descendants of Mingo and Dinah, and we have both been working almost obsessively for many years to find a member of this fascinating family. We both hope someday to hand over a complete and accurate genealogy and family history to descendants of Mingo so that they too can know the important roles which he and his descendants played in fighting the bigotry of racism in all its ugly aspects and ending at long last the inhumanity that is slavery.

When I reflect upon Quack Walker Lewis and the influence he had in his era as a black equal rights proponent, a black Freemason, and a black Mormon Elder (and his blackness, his *otherness* was intrinsic to those three identities), I see how visionary he truly was in hoping and dreaming toward a future.

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far beyond racism, beyond political inequities and ecclesiastical injustices; far beyond fear, beyond despair, for everyone, regardless. Hopefully, he no longer remains a mere curiosity, a minor footnote in LDS history; I hope to have shown that his life was not incidental but central to the solidification of Mormon priesthood denial based solely on ancestry. William I. Appleby was correct; Walker Lewis was, in every sense, an example for his white brothers to follow. And they utterly failed to do so. The highest rank of Mormon leaders had a monumental opportunity to join Walker’s vision of an unprejudiced faith and an unbiased polity. Instead, his existence and everything he stood for caused LDS leaders to increase their anti-black sentiments publicly, to uphold unjust and bigoted laws, and to diminish officially the role of blacks in the church for nearly 130 sorrowful years.
Joseph Smith, Jr., and “The Notorious Case of Aaron Lyon”: Evidence of Earlier Doctrinal Development of Salvation for the Dead and a Trigger for the Practice of Polyandry?

Michael S. Riggs and John E. Thompson

Introduction

Eight miles east of the Mormons’ principal city of Far West, a small community called Guymon’s Mill had been well established as the first permanent white settlement in the county. In Mid-March of 1838, the small hamlet entertained their prophet-leader Joseph Smith overnight as he prepared to make his formal entrance among the Missouri Saints in Far West. A little more than a month later, however, Joseph Smith became involved again with this small group of Mormons. They had stripped away the membership rights of their leading High Priest in a local Elder’s Church court and the case was appealed to the Far West High Council and, as it turned out, Joseph Smith himself. Some of these same Saints were called upon to testify at the trial about the events that led to the downfall of their former local leader.

This study critically examines the Aaron Lyon case in April 1838, for both the insights it provides as a snapshot of conditions in the Mormon Church at Far West, as well as the religious life and group dynamics of remote Mormon settlements (like Guymon’s Mill) during this period of Latter Day Saint history. Also included is an outline of the spiritually abusive offence that led to Aaron Lyon’s trial. In the context of other period High Council meetings, serious irregularities become apparent in relation to the Lyon case that put Joseph Smith in position to defend Aaron. We will argue that the incident

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1 A version of this paper was presented at the annual meeting of the Mormon History Association held at Omaha, Nebraska on May 23, 1997 under the title; “Thomas Guymon’s Horse Mill and ‘The Notorious Case of Aaron Lyon.’”

2 Archaeological evidence recently excavated at the 1830s LDS hamlet of Haun’s Mill in present-day Eastern Caldwell County, Missouri (property owned by the Community of Christ) conducted under the direction of Paul DeBarthe and Michael S. Riggs has, however, revealed the existence of a much earlier Middle-Woodland (2,000 year old) village. See <http://www.farwesthistory.com/arch.asp> for more information on this exciting find.
which brought this case to light was the logical trigger that prompted Joseph Smith’s initial practice of polyandry. This case also brought to light an earlier than expected Mormon theological innovation. More than three years before Joseph Smith’s funeral sermon for Seymour Brunson introducing the doctrine of salvation for the dead, the residents of Guymon’s Mill had begun to discuss the concept of LDS members dying and “preaching to the spirits in prison.”

The Offence

Aaron C. Lyon was a man of property and influence among his local brethren, but for over a year he had been without a wife. Roxanna Lyon had died in late August of 1836, shortly after they moved from Willoughby, Ohio to the new county named Caldwell. Leaving “the partner of her youthful days, a family of children and a circle of friends to deplore her loss,”

they laid her to rest on a peaceful hillside overlooking Shoal Creek.

Undeterred, Aaron and his sons Windsor P. and Charles continued to acquire and develop property in and around what would become known as contemporaneously as the Guymon’s Mill branch. Non Mormons had originally developed the area as early as 1831, but sold out to the Saints as part of an agreement reached by the Missouri State Legislature which made Caldwell County the new Mormon homeland.

In November of 1837, the community of Saints at Guymon’s Mill became unsettled as the “word of the Lord” began flowing anew through Aaron Lyon. Sarah Jackson and her husband had recently converted to the Mormon faith while living in Alton, Illinois. Her husband sent Sarah to Missouri and promised to join her there when he was able. Why Sister Jackson chose to settle in the Guymon’s Mill Branch is not known. She resided in the home of a Brother Best.

Five months after arriving in Missouri and with no word of her husband, Sarah took it upon herself to seek out the village seer. “I, believing Elder Lyon to be a man of God, asked him to inquire of the Lord concerning my husband and what was the cause of his not coming.”

Not long afterwards, Aaron organized

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3 *Latter Day Saints’ Messenger & Advocate*, Kirtland, Ohio, vol. III (January 1837) 447-448. (hereafter *M&A*). “Died at Shoal Creek Mo. On the 28 of August last [1836] Roxanna, consort of A.C. Lyon formerly a resident of Willoughby, Cuyahoga, Co. O. Sister Lyon was far on the declivity of life and has left the partner of her youthful days, a family of children and a circle off friends to deplore her loss.” The last sentence of her death notice bordered on the prophetic, “Surely the destroyer executes his office reckless of consequences.”

4 Cannon and Cook identify “Br. Best” as Henry Best; see Donald Q. Cannon and Lyndon W. Cook ed., *The Far West Record* (hereafter, *FWR*), (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book Company, 1983), 186n4. Although Henry Best was a Far West era Mormon, he did not live at Guymon’s Mill. According to his Missouri Redress petition he lived in Daviess County during his entire stay in the State. See Clark V. Johnson ed., *Mormon Redress Petitions*, (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1992). 420. We have, however, not been able to distinguish the various “Br. Best” options.

5 *FWR*, 206.
a prayer meeting which they held at Brother [John] Wheeler’s\(^6\) house. This meeting became a forum for Lyon to prophesy publicly as he had done on previous occasions, including the death of his own wife. Lyon rose with power and declared that “some one now in the room shall be led to mourn before three weeks unless there was a speedy repentance, & who it was he did not know.”\(^7\) Aaron knew the prophecy would be confirmed shortly as he was the source of the grief for the unnamed individual. He also knew perfectly well the one to mourn was going to be the young and attractive Sarah Jackson.

The groundwork having been laid, Aaron moved quickly to the next stage

\(^{6}\) _FWR_, 186. Cook speculates this was referring to Wheeler Baldwin, however, original land entries for Caldwell County indicates it was more likely John Wheeler as he owned property near the settlement.

\(^{7}\) _FWR_, 206. Br. Best testified that the prophecy was “that some one would be heard to mourn.” _FWR_, 184.
of his plan. According to Sarah, “on returning from the meeting, he told me, that he had inquired of the Lord, and that my husband was dead and preaching to the spirits in prison, and that I was the one that should be led to mourn.”

Having eliminated her husband as an earthly rival, Aaron Lyon moved quickly to secure his prey. The next morning he came to Sarah and told her “that the Lord had appointed him a wife, by revelation, and he knew her name, and if he did not have her in less than six months he would never prophesy in the name of Jesus again.” Lyon’s executions of his plan nearly complete when he returned shortly thereafter and told Sister Jackson “the whole of his mind.” Sarah was the one appointed by God to be his wife. “Lord is it so?” she exclaimed. Aaron’s answer was quick and with absolute authority, “Yes for I know all things.” He told her that he had gone twice to the Lord on the matter and when she was presented to him he cried out “Why Lord she won’t have me.” “Yes she will” was the divine response, “and if she don’t I’ll place another in her stead that shall be more beautiful to the eye than she is.”

The snare was sprung, but the game was still struggling, so Lyon resorted to the basest form of spiritual abuse. Aaron told her he was a “man of truth” (in a prophetic sense) and if she failed to yield to the Lord’s will, she would be forever miserable. Lyon related to her how Joseph Smith himself had once warned him to beware of whom he cursed as it could result in the death of that individual. Lyon added that he was in the “same spirit” that inspired him toward her that he once had when he cursed a man who did die and when he saw the death of his wife Roxanna. He followed the veiled threat of eternal punishment with a plea for trust, “I would not tell you anything to injure you, for them that are ordained to this high authority are ordained of God and you have as much right to believe me as to believe Paul; yes, and better right for it is not handed down so far.”

Broken by grief, trodden down by spiritual abuse, and confirmed by what she took for personal testimony, Sarah Jackson at long last consented to become Aaron Lyon’s next wife.

The Mormon leadership model had prevailed, a prophecy had been received by one in authority, the one intended had received a testimony of truthfulness, and finally, obedience to council was to be acted upon. So, what went wrong? Simply put, Sarah’s husband showed up at Guymon’s Mill looking for his wife and he had not been preaching to the spirits in prison. The disconfirmation of Lyon’s prophecy produced what Durkheim would have termed a “collective reality,” and resulted in the local branch Priesthood (an Elder’s quorum),

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8 *FWR*, 206. It will be further demonstrated below through statements made by witnesses during his High Council trial that Aaron had predetermined to find a new wife and had fixated on Sarah Jackson to fulfill that purpose.

9 *FWR*, 206.

10 All of these quotations for from Sarah Jackson’s written account of Aaron Lyon’s actions prepared the day before the Far West High Council met to consider the case. *FWR*, 206-207.

11 For an excellent summary of the difference between the importances of group dynamics in the
cutting Aaron off from the LDS Church. Lyon’s only hope ultimately redemption in the Mormon Kingdom was to appeal his case to the Far West High Council. Fortunately for Lyon, a more skillful ecclesiastical leader, Joseph Smith, took an active interest in his defense.

**Pre-Trial Irregularities**

There are three primary source records for the Far West High Council’s trial of Aaron Lyon: 1) a signed affidavit by Sarah Jackson written the day before the case was heard in the High Council and read at the proceedings, 2) the official minutes of the Far West High Council kept by the Ebenezer Robinson during the trial, and finally 3) the diary of Joseph Smith as recorded by his scribe George W. Robinson (hereafter called the “Scriptory Book”) who was also an eyewitness. Each of these three documents represents contemporaneous independent views of the trial proceedings. In comparison, the excommunication of Oliver Cowdery, only two weeks before the Lyon case, filled less than a page of the Scriptory Book. The Lyon trial filled up four times that many. This made the Aaron Lyon case one of the best documented events in official records during the Far West, Missouri period.

As dramatic as the local events that brought about the hearing before the High Council in the first place, a close examination of the trial proceedings raises even more controversial issues. The irregularities began with the sitting of the High Council that Saturday morning in April 1838. George W. Robinson began his account by stating Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and himself were invited to attend the High Council. As the meeting was about to start, it was determined that vacancies needed to be filled for two council members. As no other High Priests were readily available, Smith and Rigdon “were strongly solicited” either to act as councilors or replace presidents (Thomas B. Marsh and David W. Patton) pro tem., so they could be freed up to sit as councilors. Uncharacteristically (and contrary to an earlier revelation\(^\text{12}\)), Joseph decided against taking the leadership position on this occasion, placing himself and Sidney in the lesser role as high councilors. “The Council was organized” with Rigdon as number five and Smith in the sixth position, however, strangely, it was voted that they “act in the places of NO. 9 & 10.”\(^\text{13}\) Despite being asked to only temporarily fill in, Joseph and Sidney were, nevertheless, immediately pressed into service. Joseph was appointed along with his friend and current

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\(^{12}\) Joseph Smith Jr., et. al. compilers, *Doctrine and Covenants*, (Kirtland, OH: F. G. Williams & Co., 1835), 96, verse 6. (hereafter D&C)

\(^{13}\) *FWR*, p. 183.
house host, George W. Harris to speak in favor of Aaron Lyon and Sidney was paired with George M. Hinkle to act as prosecutors.

It is hard to believe Joseph got up that Saturday morning with nothing else to do and just happened to land right in the middle of this “difficult” case by accident. Beyond citing overt coincidence, however, the following procedural abnormalities also lead us to conclude that Joseph Smith engineered himself a place on the Aaron Lyon defense team. To begin with, the vacant seats Joseph and Sidney filled were for council members nine (George M. Hinkle) and ten (George W. Harris) who were in fact, present and also participated in the case. The following instructions for how High Councils were to be organized are contained in section five of the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants:

Whenever a high council of the church of Christ is regularly organized, according to the foregoing pattern, it shall be the duty of the twelve counselors to cast lots by numbers, and thereby ascertain who, of the twelve, shall speak first, commencing with number 1; and so in succession to number 12.14

By being appointed councilors numbers nine and ten, Joseph and Sidney were not supposed to be in line to speak in the case. While the practice of drawing lots was consistently used in the Kirtland High Council15, beginning in August of 1837, in Far West the formality was discontinued without explanation. Except when filling either temporary or permanent vacancies in the quorum, the same positions were occupied by their respective members (a statistically impossible feat if lots were actually being drawn). Also, suspended was a strict adherence to selection of councilors to speak according to lot drawn order.16 In all cases, however, whichever councilor who was selected on the even side spoke for the accused and was paired against the corresponding odd numbered prosecutor.

This was significant because the *Far West Record* states that Smith and Rigdon were to “act in the places of NO. 9 & 10.” If Joseph Smith was in the ninth position, then he should not have been speaking for the accused. This was clearly indicated in the following verse, “Those counsellors who draw even numbers, ... are the individuals who are to stand up in the behalf of the accused, and prevent insult or injustice.”17 The most striking atypical action

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14 *D&C*. 5:7, 97.
15 *Kirtland Council Minute Book*, typescript by Lyndon W. Cook. The instructions for the organization for the Kirtland High Council was given on February 17, 1834, see page 32-35. The practice was followed throughout the remainder of the recorded meetings in Kirtland ending on November 30, 1837.
16 During the two month period between February 24th and April 28, 1838, the High Council met a total of eight times to consider Church membership cases. In all but two of these meetings, the councilors chosen to speak for and against the defendants were not properly selected according to *D&C* 5:7, 97. Only on March 10, 1838 (excommunication of W.W. Phelps and John Whitmer) and again on April 12, 1838 (excommunication of Oliver Cowdery) were the correct numbered councilors used. See *FWR*, 141-183.
17 *D&C*. 5:8, 97.
taken on Joseph’s part, however, was his decision to act as a councillor and not preside over the meeting. Section 5, verse six of the 1835 *Doctrine and Covenants* states,

The president of the church, who is also the president of the [High] council, is appointed by revelation, and acknowledged, in his administration, by the voice of the church; and it is according to the dignity of his office, that he should preside over the high council of the church....

President Smith attended five High Council meetings (four of which involved membership courts), after his mid-March 1838 return to Far West from Ohio, up to and including the April 28 case of Aaron Lyon. Joseph, as proscribed, presided at all of them except, the Lyon’s case.

Lastly we are faced with the question of why Joseph? Four other potential councilors were available that morning. Yet, it was Joseph along with George W. Harris whom they assigned to defend Lyon. Concluding that this situation was at the behest of Smith, we are left to wonder why the Prophet went so far out of his way to defend a man accused, of among other things, trying to marry another man’s wife?

**Damage Control**

Joseph Smith’s removal to Far West from Kirtland was much the same as an admiral being forced to change flag ships in the middle of an engagement. Kirtland was fast sinking, so for the survival of the movement, it became necessary for Joseph and his remaining loyalists to reestablish his command elsewhere. Upon arriving in the new promise land, however, Smith found that some of his fiercest Ohio enemies had also relocated to Caldwell County.

The leading antagonist was former “Second Elder,” and close associate Oliver Cowdery. With Oliver came dark rumors from Kirtland involving Joseph’s extramarital involvement with Fanny Alger. Somehow, widespread circulation of this disastrous development had been largely confined to Kirtland, but now the news was about to be leaked in Far West. Only two weeks before the Lyon case, Oliver Cowdery was excommunicated from the LDS Church. During his trial, a graphic picture was painted respecting what was termed the “adultery scrape.” Testifying against Cowdery, Joseph reportedly “gave a history respecting the girl business” to the assembled High Council members. It was not clear what spin Smith put on the story as the specifics were omitted. As no mass apostasy followed, however, it can be assumed that whatever was necessary was said to mitigate the possible concerns of the Missouri faithful. As damaging as full disclosure of the Fanny Alger incident might have been to the progress of Mormonism in Missouri, Joseph Smith had only recently pushed the envelope even farther. Moving beyond polygamy, shortly after his arrival in Far West, Joseph Smith entered a polyandrous relationship with his
good friend George W. Harris’ wife Lucinda. Lucinda and her first husband (William Morgan) lived in upstate New York where as a dissenting Mason, he was abducted and presumably murdered for publishing the secrets of the craft. Lucinda next married one time Mason George W. Harris and together they converted to Mormonism in 1834. It was into the Harris home that Joseph and his very pregnant wife Emma moved into when they came to Far West in March 1838. They lived with the Harris’ for a couple of months until a home was provided for Joseph and his family within the Far West town plat.

It was while in route to Far West that Joseph would have probably first heard of Aaron Lyon’s failed attempt at seducing the already married Sarah Jackson. On February 24, 1838, a joint committee consisting of Edward Partridge, George W. Harris, and Isaac Morley was tasked with seeing to it that someone was sent to Huntsville, Missouri to meet Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon and provide them with adequate money and transportation to conclude their journey to Far West. John P. Barnard, a resident of Guymon’s Mill, was the person selected to fulfill the assignment. Huntsville was a good three day journey from Far West, so John Barnard (later a witness in the Lyon Far West High Council case) would have had more than enough time to inform Joseph Smith about the situation in his settlement. Even if the conversation never turned toward that topic during their trip, Joseph and his party stayed

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18 This statement is supported by the following sources: “Lucinda Harris, also one of the first plural women sealed to the Prophet.” Andrew Jensen, comp., Historical Record, 9 vols. (1882—90), 6:233. (hereafter HR) See Todd Compton, “A Trajectory of Plurality: An Overview of Joseph Smith’s Thirty-Three Plural Wives,” Dialogue, Summer 1996, vol. 29, no. 2, pp. 2, 22, 28 and 32. Wyl’s 1886 interview with Sarah Pratt involving Joseph Smith’s 1842 advances towards her, establishes the 1838 date for Lucinda’s involvement with the Prophet. “Mrs. Harris was a married lady, a very great friend of mine. When Joseph had made his dastardly attempt on me, I went to Mrs. Harris to unbosom my grief to her. To my utter astonishment, she said, laughing heartily: ‘How foolish you are! I don’t see anything so horrible in it. Why, I AM HIS MISTRESS SINCE FOUR YEARS!’” Wyl, Mormon Portraits (Salt Lake City, UT: Tribune Printing and Publishing, 1886), 60. What has not been pointed out previously, was the fact that neither Lucinda or her husband George were included as members of Joseph Smith’s elite “Anointed Quorum” or among those listed as having been “endowed” before the completion of the Nauvoo Temple. This is significant because many of his other plural wives were included on one or both of these lists. Because these secret ceremonies were often used to initiate women into polygamy, Lucinda not being included, strongly indicates a pre-1842 relationship with Smith. Compare Compton, pp. 2–3 with Andrew F. Ehat, “Joseph Smith’s Introduction of Temple Ordinances and the 1844 Mormon Succession Question,” Masters Thesis, Brigham Young University, 1982, 102-107.


22 FWR, 139-140.
the night at Barnard’s house in Guymon’s Mill before proceeding on to Far West the next day.²³ It would stretch the bounds of reason to believe an event so devastating to such a community would not have been mentioned to Joseph given the number of opportunities presented.

It has long been recognized that questions relating to current events surrounding his life preceded many, if not most, of Joseph Smith’s religious innovations. We would argue that his contact with the Lyon/Jackson incident was the trigger that prompted him to first consider the merits of (in Joseph’s case) sharing another man’s wife. We would agree with LDS historian Andrew Jenson who in listing the plural wives of Joseph Smith placed Lucinda (Morgan) Harris next after Fanny Alger, and stated that she was “one of the first.”²⁴

The problem that confronted Joseph in late April 1838 was this, “his bosom friend” Oliver Cowdery, while having been excommunicated only two weeks previously, was still in town and fuming. Joseph said at Oliver’s trial, concerning the Fanny Alger episode in Kirtland, “he intrusted him with many things.”²⁵ Besides that, Joseph had clandestinely entered yet another even more daring relationship since moving to Far West with Lucinda (Morgan) Harris. The Lyon case (which had triggered his polyandrous actions) was now coming to trial and if his involvement with Lucinda was disclosed simultaneously, it would have probably been a disaster. The Saints might ask, for example, “what is the difference between Aaron Lyon and Joseph Smith, both were seeking the favors of another man’s wife?” To amplify this point, consider Michel Foucault’s reflection of the duality represented in the “prestige of Don Juan, which three centuries have not erased,” which it could be argued similarly apply to the erotic aspects of Joseph Smith’s character;

Underneath the great violator of the rules of marriage — stealer of wives, seducer of virgins, the shame of families, and an insult to husbands and fathers — another personage can be glimpsed; the individual driven, in spite of himself, by the somber madness of sex. Underneath the libertine, the pervert. He deliberately breaks the law, but at the same time, something like a nature gone awry transports him far from all nature; his death is the moment when the supernatural return of the crime and its retribution thwarts the flight into counternature. There are two great systems conceived by the West for governing sex: the law of marriage and the order of desires — and the life of Don Juan [and Joseph Smith] overturned them both.²⁶

²⁴HR, 6:233.
²⁵FWR, 168.
Joseph’s extraordinary pre-trial actions and consideration of what he had at stake if exposed, therefore, lead us to the reasonable conclusion Smith having been paired with Lucinda’s husband George W. Harris to defend Aaron Lyon before the High Council, was a skillfully (and successfully) engineered effort to achieve damage control in the face of a potential public relations debacle.

The Notorious Case of Aaron Lyon

Both accounts recorded during the trial refer to the case as being an appeal. No extant records exist for the original proceedings held at Guymon’s Mill. The Far West Record references minutes being read of an “Elder’s meeting” from which the “case had been tried, also the charges and the appeal.” Since it was an appeal, assuming Lyon did not prevail is safe. Interesting questions are raised about this first trial, for example, if Lyon was the branch leader, by what authority were the Elders organized? This community was never designated a Stake, so in the absence of a standing local High Council, the Elders apparently were structured into a functioning quorum. It seems logical depending on how far a branch was from Far West determined what degree of autonomy they exercised. The Rich branch (headed by later LDS Apostle Charles C. Rich), for example, was less than half the distance from headquarters as Guymon’s Mill. In the beginning, Sunday church services and weeknight “candlelight” meetings were held in homes or at the Log Creek neighborhood schoolhouse, but after Joseph Smith relocated to Missouri, members of the Rich Branch began to attend meetings every Sunday in Far West and no longer locally.27 It seems this behavior was less at the behest of their Prophet leader, than as an overwhelming desire to be closer to the charismatic Smith. Whether deliberately designed or not, Smith’s structurally dividing priesthood quorums was an effective means of retaining faithful church members. By compartmentalizing group members, dissemination of negative information was limited in periods of potential disaffection.28 For those living in Guymon’s Mill branch, however, the distance to attend church services in Far West was not practical.

After the charges against Lyon were read, the accused made confession to five of the eleven counts. Some discussion took place on whether the witness


28 See Richard Lyman Bushman, Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 333. Kirtland, for example, Wilford Woodruff kept “more involved with the Seventies who met on Tuesday evenings through the winter [1836],” than with Joseph Smith. As this was a critical time of early dissent in Ohio, keeping church members in smaller, more manageable sub-groups could be helpful.
should be allowed to testify along with Sarah Jackson’s written statement. It was concluded that they should hear them. At this point the Council adjourned for one hour. This allowed Joseph Smith who would be defending Lyon against the able orator, Sidney Rigdon, time to prepare his defense.

Upon reconvening the meeting, the hymn “This earth was once a garden place” was sung and President David W. Patton offered a prayer. Following the adjournment Peter Dustan replaced Jared Carter as the number two High Councilor. After they transacted a quick matter of old business, what George W. Robinson penned, “the notorious case of Aaron Lyon” was begun in earnest.

To understand the hostile tone of the *Scriptory Book* account of this trial, recognition of the scribe George W. Robinson’s background is important. Within two months after this trial, Robinson would become a Danite Colonel and become actively involved in the expulsion of Mormon dissenters. While being very close to his Prophet leader (and scribe of his personal journal), he was also a son-in-law of Sidney Rigdon. Later in Nauvoo, George would become a dissenter himself largely because of Joseph Smith’s advances toward his sister-in-law, Nancy Rigdon and later attempts to defame her character. George W. Robinson proved in Missouri and later in Nauvoo, to be a bitter opponent of plural marriage in any form. It did not matter whether it was a local branch leader like Aaron Lyon or the Prophet himself. Little wonder then, that George began his account of the trial with a scathing attack on Lyon. He wrote: “Now as to this man Lyon, it is a well known <fact> and without contradiction, that he has been in transgression <ever> Since he first came into Kirtland, which is some four, or five years since....” In reviewing available Kirtland, Ohio sources, however, only items that presented Aaron Lyon in positive terms have been found and none adverse. A Non-Mormon named in New York did write a troubling letter to his Gentile relative Timothy Bancroft in Clay County about Lyon well before this trial. Bancroft was informed Lyon had left New York and was likely going to relocate soon to Clay County and accused Aaron of having “been in years past expelled from other churches.” There is no evidence that George W. Robinson’s ad hominem arguments against Lyon for his pre-

32 See for example; *Kirtland High Council Minute Book*, pp. 98, 127, 193, 195, 216, and 218. *Documentary History of the Church*, vol. 2, 205 & 207, where was among those being blessed for working on the Kirtland Temple. *M&A*, vol. II (June 1836), 335. Included in list of “Ministers of the Gospel.” Note that the date of Aaron Lyon’s first land entry in Caldwell County, Missouri was in August of 1836, only two months after his inclusion on the list of ministers. Robinson’s comments about Lyon’s Kirtland reputation were, therefore, unfounded.
33 LDS Archives, Bancroft Family Correspondence, 1821-1836, MS 16483
Missouri activities were informed by either Aaron’s proto-Mormon activities or by his time spent in Ohio before migrating to Caldwell County. The *Far West Record* was kept by Ebenezer Robinson (no relation to George W. Robinson). While Ebenezer’s later membership in the RLDS Church signified a similar disapproval of plural marriage, his account of the Lyon trial was much less bias than the *Scriptory Book*.

After naming the witnesses which were to testify, the *Scriptory Book* explained that her husband sent Sarah Jackson from their home in Alton, Illinois, “as he himself could not come, at that time.” Brother Jackson’s final departure from Illinois to rejoin his wife Sarah in November 1837 may have been linked to the highly publicized killing of abolitionist and journalist, Rev. Elijah Lovejoy. Widely considered today a martyr to freedom of expression in our new republic, Lovejoy was first warned out of St. Louis before relocating across the Mississippi River to establish his press at Alton. Slavery was illegal in Illinois, but tolerance for abolitionism was not very high among the mostly southern extracted populace. That is not to say that all people in Illinois opposed him. After a mob threw his press into the river for a second time, future “Mormon benefactor,” Isaac Galland of Commerce, Illinois, wrote Lovejoy that, “It is truly mortifying to the feelings of every honorable minded American citizen to learn that any portion of this community are so lost to every sense of propriety and self-respect, as to disgrace themselves by such acts.”

Upon his third attempt to set up a press in Alton, a mob shot and killed him the evening of November 7, 1837. Sarah’s overdue husband would have left Alton just after the death of Lovejoy. According to Historian (and former Senator) Paul Simon,

The [economic] panic of 1837 had already hit Alton when the news of the Lovejoy slaying spread everywhere. Alton became known as a town of lawlessness. River traffic went to St. Louis and other towns. Instead of passing St. Louis in growth, as seemed likely, Alton started losing ground ... Real estate values plunged. One twenty-five-thousand-dollar piece of property soon sold for two thousand dollars. Overnight, Alton changed from being almost the largest city in the Midwest to a town losing its population and its economic base.

The radical overnight change in economic conditions in Alton following Lovejoy’s death, may well have facilitated Brother Jackson’s departure for

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36 Reid’s *Brochure of a Notable American City: Alton Illinois* (St. Louis: James Allan Reid, Book Maker, 1912), 84.
37 Simon, 140.
Missouri. In a morbidly ironic sense, Lovejoy’s murder probably saved the Jackson’s marriage.

After the court heard the written statement of Sarah Jackson, Aaron Lyon’s neighbors were next summoned to testify against their former ecclesiastical leader. First on the stand was Brother Best who had been Sarah Jackson’s host during her time at Guymon’s Mill. His account was the longest of all the witnesses and agreed with Sarah’s written statement. His version does show that Aaron and Sarah were more familiar with one another than her story would suggest. Best said he “was knowing to Lyons walking to and from meetings with her, both in night and day time, as she lived at his house.” We are also indebted to Best for providing the information that allows us to date the events. The length of time Brother and Sister Jackson were separated was “about five months, but he returned soon after, which was sometime in November last [1837].”

Next to speak was Shadrach Roundy. He suggested Lyon’s alleged revelation was merely a self-fulfilled prophecy. Lyon had shared with Roundy his belief that the Lord was going to give him a wife “by revelation ... with whom he could live in peace.” This may have been the way Shadrach recalled the situation in hindsight, but at the time he did not question his branch High Priest’s actions. Roundy further testified that,

At another time Lyons told him that he enquired of the Lord respecting a companion, when Sister Jackson was presented before him, when he said to the Lord “She is pregnant by another man;” when the Lord replied “wait my time & it will all come right.”

Mention of her being with a child was absent in Sarah’s statement and her husband stated at the end of the testimony that she “was not pregnant when he returned.” If she had been pregnant, she would have been well into her second trimester at the time of Aaron’s advances on her. This coupled with the stress of worrying about the welfare of her missing husband, may have induced a miscarriage.

John P. Barnard agreed with Shadrach Roundy’s comment that “Lyons generally took the lead of meetings in that branch” and added, “when he [Lyon] spoke in the name of the Lord, the brethren had great confidence in it.” Barnard’s testimony, along with most of the others, illustrated how comfortable Lyon was speaking in the name of the Lord, especially in the first person. This John Barnard, it will be recalled, was the same man who went to meet Joseph Smith in Huntsville, Missouri and instructed to convey him to Far West in March of 1838.

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38 *FWR*, 206-208.
39 *FWR*, 184.
40 *FWR*, 184.
Thomas Guymon (for whose Mill the branch was most often referenced) testified next. He stressed the fear Sarah Jackson had of Lyon and his warnings of curses if she did not submit to his (or rather, the Lord’s) will. He told of the faint hope she held that her husband might yet be alive. She even continued to ask the members of the branch to pray for his return. Over time, however, she lost faith and “expressed her fears that he was dead & was inclined to think she had a testimony to that effect.” Guymon also related that Lyon had “told him that Brother Best had given him liberty to come to his house and see Sister Jackson.”

The testimony of all these witnesses demonstrated that the community was well informed of the actions of Aaron Lyon toward Sarah Jackson and it was perfectly acceptable to them until Brother Jackson arrived. There did not seem to be any critical analysis by the local church members regarding Lyon’s prophetic role in their community. They believed in his revelations and therefore did not question his motives until they failed. What if Brother Jackson had died in Alton or on his way to Missouri? Would that have justified Aaron Lyon’s behavior toward Sarah? No doubt, based on the trial testimony, the marriage between them would have occurred if her husband would not have returned. If this had happened, the lives of the Saints at Guymon’s Mill would not have been altered by the local scandal. When word did reach them of Brother Jackson’s death, would they have been justified in praising God for the confirmation of a great prophet in their midst?

A Brother Benjamin was the last witness called before the appointed High Councilors took a center stage. Although short, Brother Benjamin’s statement was especially intriguing for the theological issue it raised. He testified that, “Calvin Reed, a boy of about 15 years of age, said he had a revelation or vision, in which he saw, Br Jackson dead or preaching to the spirits in prison.” Several aspects of his testimony warrant further examination before we continue.\footnote{FWR, 184.}

\textbf{Preaching to the Spirits in Prison}

Sarah Jackson’s aforementioned written statement, contained a reference to Aaron Lyon’s revelation about her husband’s other worldly mission. Young Calvin Reed’s vision was taken as a confirmation and validation of Lyon’s claim. Here were two individuals, who supposedly had visions relating to a dead man they had never met, and yet were each able positively to identify him as Mr. Jackson. Clearly, young Reed\footnote{Many years later, while living in the Mormon settlement at San Bernardino, California, Calvin Reed would again dabble in communication with the dead as a Spiritualist Medium during the 1850s. See Edward Leo Lyman, \textit{San Bernardino: The Rise and Fall of a California Community} (Salt Lake City, UT: Signature Books, 1996), 117-118.} was caught in the enthusiasm of the moment,
probably during one of the groups “prayer meetings” which they held in the
branch. The use of the phrases “dead” in conjunction with “preaching to the
spirits in prison,” was quite significant, particularly in an early 1837 context.

In 1879, William Smith (Joseph Smith’s younger brother) as a member of
the Reorganized Church, preached a sermon on baptism for the dead, at the
Far West Temple site. On that occasion, he observed that;

this ordinance would again be restored to the Church. It was for this reason also,
that these Saints of latter days build temples, in order to prepare a place for the
administration of ordinances that belong in the order of the holy priesthood. And
it was for this object also, that this corner stone was planted in this town of Far
West, under the direction and superintendency of Joseph, the Martyr in 1836-37
[1838].44

This may be simply example of revisionist history by William Smith, but it
may not be too unbelievable after all. In a question first posed in November of
1837, the issue was raised, “If the Mormon doctrine is true what will become of
all those who have died since the days of the Apostles?” The answer printed in
the July 1838 edition of the Elders’ Journal printed in Far West, was, “All those
who have not had an opportunity of hearing the gospel, and being administered
to by an inspired man in the flesh, must have it hereafter, before they can be
finally judged.”

Speaking of the gap in time between Joseph Smith’s 1836 vision of his
unbaptized brother Alvin in the Celestial kingdom, and the August 1840 funeral
sermon for Seymour Brunson, Historian M. Guy Bishop noted “We have been
left with scant evidence of how Joseph Smith formulated the Mormon plan
of baptism for the dead.”45 It was not a quantum leap that occurred in those
intervening years. Rather, it was an evolutionary process. By 1840, Joseph’s
plan finally crystallized, but (as with the Saints at Guymon’s Mill) the subject
had been more widely discussed throughout the Church than previously
thought.

In a wider context, the theological relationship of the living, their dead
and the thinness of the veil that separates them was also a topic outside of
Mormonism. In May 1837, for example, Unitarian divine, Rev. William Ellery
Channing, wrote to a grieving friend, the Rev. William Brooks, who had recently
lost a wife in the prime of her life, “You were one of the most privileged men
in possessing as you did the love, confidence, society of such a pure, celestial
Spirit... How slight is the partition between this & the Spiritual world & how

44 Letter from Wm. B. Smith from Far West about March 30, 1879, The Saint’s Herald, p. 355.
For the in depth study on the RLDS Church and baptism for the dead see, Roger D. Launius,
“An Ambivalent Rejection: Baptism for the Dead and the Reorganized Church Experience,” Dia-
logue, Summer 1990, 61-81.

45 M. Guy Bishop, “‘What Has Become of Our Fathers?’: Baptism for the Dead at Nauvoo,” Dia-
logue, Summer 1990, 86.
short the time of separation between us & the departed!”

Within the LDS movement, concern for preaching to the departed was not isolated to just those at Guymon’s Mill. In December of 1836 Lorenzo Snow, in a Joseph Smith, Sr.-given Patriarchal Blessing, was told, “Thou shalt have power to translate thyself from one planet to another; and power to go to the moon if thou so desire; power to preach to the spirits in prison.” When Zebedee Coltrin ordained Wilford Woodruff a Seventy in January 1837, he remembered being told he “should visit COLUB [Kolob] & Preach to the spirits in Prison.” The concept, and phraseology were likely brought down to Missouri and cross-pollinated to the local branch by Aaron Lyon when he left Kirtland in 1836. Considering these accounts of an earlier evolving salvation for the dead cosmology, William Smith’s retrospective memory of the Far West Temple as the place where ordinances for the dead were to be first performed as opposed to Nauvoo is more intriguing.

Mercy Robs Justice

The final portion of the trial consisted of the statements made for and against Lyon by of the selected high councilors. The Far West Record provided more information on the testimony of the witnesses and only summarized the words of the councilors as “some lengthy remarks” with “very good instruction given by councillor Smith.” The Scriptory Book, however, amalgamated the testimony of the witnesses, but provided greater detail for the Smith/Harris and Rigdon/Hinkle discussion. Fortunately, yet ironically, the two varied perspectives provide a much more comprehensive picture of the trial. As the testimony taken from the Guymon’s Mill residents concluded, George Robinson began his graphically violent tirade of metaphors consistent with his upcoming Danite leadership position.

But, alass. to[o] late for the old man, the testimony, being closed, and the Sword of Justice, began to be unsheathed, which fell upon the old man like a scourge of ten thousand lashes, wielded by the hand of President S. Rigdon & George M. Hinkle, inspired by the spirit of justice, accompanied with a flow of eloquence, which searched for the feelings, like the sting of so many scorpions, which served

48 Scott G. Kenney, editor, Wilford Woodruff’s Journal: 1833-1898 Typescript, volume 1, (Midvale, UT: Signature Books, 1983), 119. We are indebted to Michael Marquardt for providing us with the Snow and Woodruff citations.
49 See John E. Thompson’s essay on Danite Leadership also in this volume.
to atone for past iniquity.\textsuperscript{50}

After Rigdon and Hinkle had completed probing and exposing all the intimate details of the incident, it was Joseph Smith’s turn to speak. Again the literary style of George Robinson,

After justice had ceased to weild <its> sword, Mercy then advanced to rescue it victom, which inspired the heart of President J. Smith Jr, & Geo W. Harris who, with profound elequence with <a>deep & sublime thought, with clemency of feeling, spoke in faivour of the defendant.\textsuperscript{51}

Joseph had been persuasive, but each side was given another chance to plead their side of the debate. With his closing comments, Rigdon, ...leveled a voley of darts, which came upon the old man, like a huricane upon the mountain tops, which seemingly, was about to sweep the victom entirely out of the reach of mercy, but amidst the clashing of the sword of justice, mercy still cla<i>imed the victom.\textsuperscript{52}

Robinson extolled the greatness of repentance, and the fact that Lyon could yet “be saved in the Kingdom of our God.” Lyon’s church membership was saved, but he was not to be trusted as a Priesthood holder. His license was revoked as a High Priest “in consequence of his being considered not capable of dignifying that office.”\textsuperscript{53}

Thus, concluded the “notorious case of Aaron Lyon.” Joseph Smith did not attempt contracting any new plural marriages for several more years. When his attentions did again turn to polyandry later in Nauvoo, however, one of his chosen wives was Sylvia (Sessions) Lyon. She was the wife of Aaron’s son Windsor P. Lyon. It would have been interesting to know Aaron’s thoughts on Joseph’s relationship with his daughter-in-law, but that was not to be. Aaron Lyon died in Hancock County, Illinois, at the age of fifty-eight, only a year and five months following his Far West High Council trial.

Thomas Guymon’s son, Thomas Noah and his wife Mary Dickerson (Dudley) named their second child born in September 1840 Lucinda Harris. After the surrender of Far West, Some of those who lived in the branch returned to their lands until the next spring when the bulk of the Mormons relocated to Illinois. Several were arrested and taken to Richmond, but were released several days later. Most of them likewise returned to their farms at Guymon’s Mill. Dissenting Mormons like Samuel Richey and others tried to continue the branch as a town following the exodus, but this failed due to the growth of nearby Kingston. The mill and a store along with a blacksmith shop operated for sometime even after the establishment of Kingston as the new county seat.

\textsuperscript{50} \textit{Scriptory Book}, 178.
\textsuperscript{51} \textit{Scriptory Book}, 179.
\textsuperscript{52} \textit{Scriptory Book}, 179.
\textsuperscript{53} \textit{Scriptory Book}, 179.
All that remains today are some stone foundations and potsherds in an area the locals remember as old “Salemtown.”

Conclusions

In the same year [1837] John Humphrey Noyes began his experimentations with what he called the “complex marriage system” in upstate New York, and saw published his belief that even if a woman was another man’s wife under the law, she could also be his “in spirit.” By rejecting societal norms, “Noyes lost a substantial portion of his small band of followers in the subsequent furor.”54 After migrating to Far West in 1838, Joseph Smith was skillful in his covert attempts to avoid disclosure of his provocative marital practices, regarding either Fanny Alger or Lucinda Morgan Harris. The incident between Aaron Lyon and Sarah Jackson was the likely trigger that stimulated Joseph Smith’s receptiveness to consider “taking another man’s wife.” The reaction to the disconfirmation of Lyon’s revelation concerning the death of Brother Jackson by the local LDS community, however, threatened dissonance of his own practices if revealed. This necessitated Smith’s action to work through the ecclesiastical structure he created (the High Council) and subvert it for his own purposes. As Max Weber so aptly wrote; “It is characteristic of the prophets that they do not receive their mission from any human agency, but seize it, as it were.”55

The comparisons made between Mormonism’s founder and Mohammed have been repeated many times, but as Philip Jenkins points out, “Joseph Smith himself drew the Muslim analogy, warning in 1838 that he ‘will be to this generation a second Mohammed, whose motto for treating for peace was ‘The Alcoran or the sword.’” Smith’s bold, yet clandestine, taking of Lucinda Morgan Harris as a polyandrous wife reflected an expanded image of himself as a “second Mohammed” beyond a Prophet of just political/military conquest. His aggressive experimentations with doctrines such as provisions for Christian salvation for even dead relatives, also like Mohammed, unapologetically pushed the bounds of orthodoxy in his day. Aaron Lyon may have only become a obscure footnote in LDS history, but the impact of his prophetic attempts to “take another man’s wife,” triggered what would become an enduring effect on the movement’s founder and his church. Ultimately, Joseph’s Don Juanistic qualities, while long since revealed did not result in the mass disaffections he must have feared would be the case in Far West. Perhaps Smith underestimated the capacity of his people for the faithful rationalization56 the majority of them

56 The “modes of adaptation” typical of religious movements subjected to prophetic non-confirmations or disconfirmations are discussed in Joseph F. Zygmunt, “When Prophecies Fail: A
would later exhibit in the late Nauvoo period. Maybe “Brother Joseph” knew his followers, like his personal scribe George W. Robinson, well enough to realize they were not yet able to accept, in the words of Aaron Lyon, “the whole of his mind.”

It has not been our intention to be guilty of what William James called, “pooh-poohing” sociologically or otherwise Mormon “hero-worshiping” of their movement’s founder.\textsuperscript{57} We will leave it to the reader to decide if they want to pass judgment(s) on the moral implications of “the notorious case of Aaron Lyon.”\textsuperscript{58} Our purpose has been to explain how two significant doctrinal shifts (salvation for the dead and the origins of Smith’s practice of polyandry) developed sooner than once thought on the prairies of Northwest Missouri well in advance of the previously credited Nauvoo period.

\textsuperscript{57} William James, The Will To Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1897, 1956), 261.

\textsuperscript{58} According to Martin Marty, a recent biographer of the father of Evangelical Christianity, Martin Luther, “With so many in his time, he considered that because the husband had a strong sexual drive, he needed to satisfy it by entering his wife, but Luther advocated the rights of both and encouraged both to find pleasure. In two theoretical but drastic situations he counseled first that if a woman persistently denied her man, the husband might then turn to the housemaid or someone else for sexual relations. He balanced that provocative and patriarchal advice with its counterpart: A woman who was wed to an impotent man but who desired to have children or was unable to remain continent, ‘with the consent of the man (who is not really her husband, but only a dweller under the same roof with her),’ should have intercourse with another, for example her husband’s brother. They were to keep this ‘marriage’ secret and ascribe any children to the ‘so-called putative father.’ Such a woman would be in a saved state and would not be displeasing God.” Martin Marty, Martin Luther (New York: A Lipper/Viking Book, 2004), 108.
Religious historian Sydney E. Ahlstrom in his seminal *A Religious History of the American People* characterizes Mormonism along with Seventh-day Adventism, the Christian Scientists, Jehovah Witnesses, and Pentecostalism as “five large and easily differentiated religious movements that bear the stamp ‘made in America.’” The leaders of each of these indigenous religions spawned in America’s environment of “religious pluralism” have been compelled to confront long-festering problems of racial discrimination involving African-Americans, or what noted sociologist Gunnar Myrdal has characterized “An American Dilemma.”

At the root of this dilemma was the institution of black slavery which flourished in antebellum America — the so-called “peculiar institution” that Joseph Smith, Mormonism’s first prophet, confronted, as did the founders/prophets of two other indigenous American religions, specifically William Miller and Ellen G. White — the two major progenitors of Seventh-day Adventism; and Mary Baker Eddy, the founder of Christian Science. Beginning in the 1830s Smith, Miller, White, and Eddy, all New England natives, were each, in their own way, caught up in the increased controversy over slavery, generated in large measure by militant abolitionism which swept like wildfire through their native region and beyond.

Joseph Smith, Jr., the Vermont-born founder and “prophet, seer, and revelator” of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the oldest and largest of these three indigenous religions, commented extensively on slavery. Smith, through the pages of *Book of Mormon*, brought forth in 1830 and considered by the church as holy scripture on a par with the Old and New Testaments, expressed views that clearly condemned human servitude. According to Latter-day Saint belief the *Book of Mormon* chronicles the sacred history of an ancient American civilization of Middle East Israelite origins. This work focuses on the struggles and antagonisms between two major peoples — a light-skinned group

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known as Nephites and their rivals, the Lamanites — a dark-skinned group considered ancestors of the present-day American Indians. This work written from the perspective of the Nephites proclaimed that it was “against the law of our brethren ... that there should be any slaves among them” or that “ye make slaves one of another.” In sharp contrast to favored Old Testament Hebraic peoples whose slaveholding received divine sanction, the Book of Mormon Nephites refused to enslave the less favored dark-skinned Lamanites. “Neither do we desire to bring anyone to the yoke of bondage.” In fact, the idolatrous Lamanites were the ones who practiced slavery and made repeated efforts to enslave the divinely-chosen, more civilized Nephites. Lamanite slaveholding was cited as additional proof of that people’s “ferocious” and “wicked” nature. At the same time Nephite resistance to the aggressive warfare of these dark-skinned slaveholders was cited as a struggle for freedom from “bondage” and “slavery.”

Joseph Smith’s anxieties concerning African-American slavery were more directly expressed in the Doctrine and Covenants, a second set of Latter-day Saint writings containing Smith’s revelations and which, like the Book of Mormon was considered holy scripture. Particularly noteworthy was the Mormon Prophet’s “Revelation and Prophecy on War” received on 25 December 1832 in the midst of, and in reaction to South Carolina Nullification Crisis. This revelation, destined to become among the best-known in Latter-day Saint annals, was strongly millennialistic and apocalyptic, predicting that numerous wars would “shortly come to pass, beginning at the rebellion of South Carolina.” In time, Smith prophesied, “the Southern States shall be divided against the Northern States” and war would be spread to “all nations.” More ominous, black slaves would be involved in these cataclysmic events: “And it shall come to pass, after many days, slaves shall rise up against their masters, who shall be marshaled and disciplined for war.” Further elaborating on this revelation a month later, Smith stated “not many years shall pass away before the United States shall present a scene of bloodshed as has not a parallel in the history of our nation.”

4 Ibid., Alma 44:2. See also Mosiah 2:13; Alma 27:9. In this regard compare such Book of Mormon prohibitions with those Old Testament verses condoning the holding of slaves by God’s chosen people and the rules governing such slaveholding. See Genesis 14:14, 24:34, 30:43; Exodus 20:17, 21:2-32; Leviticus 25:39-55; 2 Samuel 8:2, 6,14; 1 Chronicles 18:2,6,13; Proverbs 29-30. It is worth noting that many of these Old Testament verses were used by southern apologists during the ante-bellum period.
5 Book of Mormon, Mosiah 7:15; Alma 43:29.
6 Ibid., Alma 50:22
7 Ibid., Alma 43:45-49, 48:10-11, 53:17.
8 Doctrine and Covenants, 87:1, 3, 4.
9 Joseph Smith, Jr., to N.E. Sextus, 7 January 1833, Joseph Smith, Jr., Letterbooks, LDS Church Historical Department, Salt Lake City, Utah.
The Mormon leader expressed anti-slavery sentiments in a second *Doctrine and Covenants* revelation, this one received in December 1833: “It is not right that any man should be in bondage one to another.” However within two years, Joseph Smith embraced a pro-slavery position, clearly at variance with his earlier anti-slavery statements. An August 1835 statement approved by a “General Assembly” of the Church as official policy affirmed that:

> We believe it just to preach the gospel to the nations of the earth and warn the righteous to save themselves from the corruption of the world; but we do not believe it right to interfere with bond-servants neither preach the gospel to, nor to meddle with or influence them in the least to be dissatisfied with their situations in this life thereby jeopardizing the lives of men. Such interference we believe to be unlawful and dangerous to the peace of every government allowing human beings to be held in servitude.

This declaration was initially published in the *Latter Day Saints Messenger and Advocate*, the Church’s official newspaper. It was clearly approved by Smith and received further sanctification through its inclusion in the *Doctrine and Covenants*. Three months later, in November 1835 Smith addressed a letter “To the Elders of the Church” in which he quoted pro-slavery scripture contained in the Old Testament admonishing: “Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eye service, as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing God.” As for the Elders to whom the letter was addressed, the Mormon leader cautioned missionaries to avoid going “unto ... slaves or servants” unless granted “permission by the master.”

In April 1836, Joseph Smith reiterated support for the South’s peculiar institution in a lengthy front page editorial published in the *Latter Day Messenger and Advocate*. In it, Smith declared, “we [Latter-day Saints] have no right to interfere with the slaves, contrary to the mind and will of their masters.” He then went on to give scriptural legitimacy to his position, quoting from both the Old and New Testaments. In particular, the Mormon leader cited passages from Genesis sanctioning the holding of “the sons of Ham in servitude.” Continuing, “and he said cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren.” Affirming such scriptural support Smith further

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10 *Doctrine and Covenants*, 101:79.
11 *Latter Day Saints Messenger and Advocate*, August 1835.
12 *Doctrine and Covenants*, 134:12. It should be noted that this resolution was not a “revelation” but was part of a section entitled “A Declaration of Belief Regarding Governments and Laws in General” placed near the end of early editions of the *Doctrine and Covenants*. Eventually this declaration was incorporated into the main part of this works as Section 134:12.
13 Colossians 3:22.
14 *Latter Day Saints Messenger and Advocate*, November 1835.
16 Genesis 9:25, 26, 27.
editorialized:

I can say that the curse is not yet taken off the sons of Canaan, neither will it until it is affected by as great a power as caused it to come; and the people who interfere the least with the decrees and purposes of God in this matter will come under the least condemnation before him; and those who are determined to pursue a course which shows opposition and a feverish restlessness against the designs of the Lord, will learn, when perhaps it is too late for their own good, that God can do his work without the aid of those who are not dictated by his counsel.\textsuperscript{17}

Joseph Smith’s shift from anti-slavery position to one affirming support for the peculiar institution was due to several factors. First and foremost were conditions surrounding Latter-day Saint settlement in the slave state of Missouri during the period 1831 to 1839. Commencing with the arrival of the first Mormons in Jackson county in January 1831, Smith was commanded by revelation to gather his followers and build the Saints’ “New Jerusalem” in preparation for the Millennium and Second Coming.\textsuperscript{18} The overwhelming majority of Smith’s followers were from older, more settled, non-slaveholding states in the Northeast and Midwest whereas their non-Mormon Missouri neighbors were largely southern in their background, eking out a relatively primitive existence in the rough frontier environment of western Missouri. Thus Jackson county Mormon settlers, who comprised some 25 percent of the county’s total population by 1833, were forced to confront conditions alien to what they were accustomed, including the institution of black slavery.\textsuperscript{19}

The resulting clash of cultures as it involved slavery was most vividly illustrated in the publication of an article entitled “Free People of Color” in the July 1833 issue of the \textit{Evening and Morning Star}, the official Mormon newspaper published in Independence. The article which anticipated the possible migration into Missouri of free blacks as part of the larger Mormon migration outlined the procedures necessary for free Mormon blacks to migrate into this state. The article was not written by Smith whose primary residence at the time was in Kirtland, Ohio, but instead by William Wines Phelps, the editor of the Independence-based Mormon newspaper, having been assigned this post by the Mormon leader. Phelps, moreover, wrote a companion article in which

\textsuperscript{17} \textit{Latter Day Saints Messenger and Advocate}, April 1836.
\textsuperscript{18} \textit{Doctrine and Covenants}, 45:74-75.
\textsuperscript{19} Stephen LeSueur, \textit{The 1838 Mormon War in Missouri} (Columbia, Mo: University of Missouri Press, 1987) is the best discussion concerning the clash of cultures climaxing in armed conflict between the Latter-day Saints and the older settlers, resulting in the expulsion of all Mormons from Missouri by 1838-39. This 25\% figure is based on the fact that by this date a total of 1200 Mormons had settled in Jackson County, whereas the total population for the county numbered 5,071, as of 1832. Figures compiled from Fawn M. Brodie, \textit{No Man Knows My History: A Biography of Joseph Smith}, 2d ed. (New York, 1977); and S. George Ellsworth, “A History of Mormon Missions in the United States and Canada,” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, 1951), 133.
he revealed his basic anti-slavery feelings in which he stated “in connection with the wonderful events of this age much is doing towards abolishing slavery and colonizing the blacks in Africa.”

The Mormon editor’s statements combined with long-festering non-Mormon Missouri grievances activated mob violence resulting in the evacuation of all Latter-day Saints from Jackson county into neighboring Clay County just to the north. Non-Mormon residents of Jackson county, in justifying their actions, circulated a so-called “Secret Constitution” in which they accused the Saints of “tampering with our slaves, and endeavoring to sow dissensions and raise seditions [sic] amongst them.”

Mormon settlement in Clay county also proved temporary. By June 1836 the Latter-day Saints were compelled to flee once more further north, taking up residence in the relatively unsettled counties of Caldwell and Daviess in Missouri. Among the reasons cited for the Mormons’ expulsion from Clay county by local non-Mormon residents was that “they [the Latter-day Saints] are non-slaveholders, and opposed to slavery....” In March 1838 Joseph Smith, along with his immediate family arrived in Far West Missouri, taking up residence in that community, thereby establishing northwest Missouri as Mormonism’s primary gathering place.

Joseph Smith’s willingness to embrace a pro-slavery position was also influenced by a second important factor, specifically the expansion of Latter-day Saint missionary activity into the slaveholding south. Prior to 1835 and adoption of the Church’s “official position forbidding the preaching to slaves contrary to the wishes of their masters ... very little missionary work occurred in the South” according to scholar Heather Hardy, who has carefully traced the history of Mormon activity amongst slaveholding southerners during the antebellum period. In 1836 Joseph Smith, anxious to push Mormon missionary work in this region, cautioned that “it would be much better, and more prudent, not to preach at all to the slaves until after their masters are converted.” By 1840, at least nine southern slaveholders had converted to Mormonism, owning between them some 50 black slaves.

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20 Evening and Morning Star, July 1833.
22 As quoted in the Evening and Morning Star, December 1833.
23 As reprinted in the Latter Day Saints Messenger and Advocate, August 1836.
25 Latter Day Saints Messenger and Advocate, April 1836.
26 As compiled from “Southern-Baptized LDS Slave Owners.” Table attached to Heather Hardy, “Southern Saints and Slavery.”
The earliest known instance of Mormon slaveholding in Missouri was in 1836 when an “unnamed Southern convert” arrived in Far West with his single black slave.\textsuperscript{27} Eventually, “nearly two hundred Southern saints” emigrated to the Mormon regions of northwest Missouri according to figures compiled by Heather Hardy.\textsuperscript{28} The total number of slaves owned by, and brought to Missouri by these individuals, is unknown. But among the known Mormon slaveholders in Missouri was Levi Taylor who along with his wife Ann owned a total of nine slaves — four males and five females. Taylor’s wife Ann was the daughter of a well-known 19\textsuperscript{th} Century Latter-day Saint, Abraham O. Smoot, who himself was a slave owner.\textsuperscript{29} More noteworthy is the apparent fact that Joseph Smith, himself, owned a black slave or at least utilized the domestic services of an African-American during his Missouri sojourn.\textsuperscript{30}

In addition to an active Mormon presence in Missouri throughout the 1830s combined with a desire to expand missionary efforts in the slaveholding South, Joseph Smith was also influenced by a third important factor in asserting his pro-slavery position. This involved the Mormon leader’s strong desire to disassociate himself and the Church from the fledgling but extremely unpopular abolitionist movement. Smith’s April 1836 lengthy pro-slavery editorial in the \textit{Latter Day Saints Messenger and Advocate} was prompted, in large measure, by the visit to Kirtland of James J. Alvord, an organizer for the American Anti-Slavery Society. Alvord reporting that “his doctrines of liberty” were received “kindly” by the Mormon-dominated community, proceeded to organize a chapter of the abolitionist society consisting of eighty-six members.\textsuperscript{31}

Smith discounted the significance of this event, asserting that “very few” Latter-day Saints were involved and that Alvord had presented his arguments to “nearly naked walls.” The Mormon leader went on to denounce abolitionism in general, asserting that he “did not believe that the people of the North have any more right to say that the South shall not hold slaves than the South shall say the North shall ...” adding that the cause of abolitionism was “calculated to set ... loose, upon the world a community of people who might peradventure, overrun our county and violate the most sacred principles of society, – chastity

\textsuperscript{27} Wilford Woodruff, Journal, 19 September 1836, LDS Church Historical Department.

\textsuperscript{28} Hardy, “Southern Saints and Slavery,” 10.

\textsuperscript{29} Levi Taylor, Redress Petition, 3 October 1838, Daviess County, Missouri. Daviess County, Missouri Deed Record Book “A,” pp. 1-2.

\textsuperscript{30} Thomas B. Marsh Affidavit, Richmond, Missouri, 24 October 1838. In his statement discussing Mormon evacuation of the community of Millport Marsh states that: “When [Lyman] Wight returned from Millport & informed [Joseph] Smith that the people were gone & the property left, Smith asked him if they had left any of the Negroes for them, and Wight replied no. Upon which someone laughed and said to Smith, ‘you have lost your Negro, then.’”

and virtue....” Smith’s views were echoed by other Church spokesmen, who declared that the Mormons “stand aloof from abolitionist societies.” Some two years later in July 1838, Joseph Smith, in the wake of his own settlement in Far West, Missouri was compelled to respond to the rather pointed question, “Are the Mormons Abolitionists” replying: “No ... we do not believe in setting the Negroes free.”

In fact, by 1838 Joseph Smith and his Mormon followers in Missouri found themselves in a rather paradoxical position as it involved interaction with their non-Mormon Missouri neighbors. Helping their position, the Saints successfully dispelled non-Mormon perceptions of being abolitionist and/or opposed to black slavery — central issues in the Mormons’ earlier difficulties in Jackson and Clay counties. But during this same period, overall relations between the Latter-day Saints and non-Mormon Missourians worsened to the point of armed conflict resulting from other problems. This resulted in the so-called “Mormon War” in 1838 culminating with the imprisonment of Joseph Smith himself and the complete expulsion of the Latter-day Saints from the state, even though slavery and/or abolition were minimal factors in this bloody conflict.

Joseph Smith’s position on slavery shifted, dramatically, following expulsion of the Saints from Missouri and the establishment of Nauvoo, Illinois as Mormonism’s new Zion in 1839. The Mormon leader assumed an anti-slavery position somewhat reminiscent of that which he promoted prior to 1835, representing a stark reversal from his previous anti-abolitionist, pro-slavery position. In 1842, Smith through the pages of the *Times and Seasons*, the Church’s official Nauvoo-based newspaper, which he himself edited, called for “UNIVERSAL LIBERTY” in endorsing the activities of anti-slavery advocates. The Mormon leader’s statement was prompted by the recent imprisonment of three abolitionists by Missouri authorities — an act which along with other “injustices, cruelty and oppression” which made his “blood boil” causing him to declare, “when will these things cease to be and the Constitution and the Laws bear rule?”

Specifically addressing the problem of slavery, Smith proclaimed: “Had I anything to do with the negro [sic], I would put them on a national

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32 *Latter Day Saints Messenger and Advocate*, April 1836.
33 *Ibid.*, April, May 1836. Among those affirming Smith’s views were high church officials Oliver Cowdery and Warren Parrish.
34 *Elders Journal* (Kirtland, Ohio; Far West, Missouri), November 1837, July 1838. This question was initially posed in the November 1837 issue of the *Journal*, but not answered until July 1837 due to the fact that publication of the *Journal* was suspended for several months beginning in November 1837 as a result of dissension in Kirtland which caused Joseph Smith and those loyal to him to abandon the Ohio community and migrate to Missouri.
36 *Times and Seasons* (Nauvoo, Ill.) 1 March 1842.
equalization.” To LDS slaveholders living in the South, the Mormon leader advised them to bring their slaves into “a free county and set [them] ... free — Educate them and give them equal rights.” Smith’s advice appeared to be followed by those LDS slaveholders who chose to gather with their fellow Saints in Nauvoo. Emigrating Mormon slaveholders either sold their slaves or freed them prior to departing for Illinois — a state where slavery was illegal, which further influenced them.

The absence of the peculiar institution in Nauvoo caused Smith to boast that there was not a slave “to raise his rusting fetters and chains, and exclaim, Oh liberty where are thy charms?” The Mormon leader’s anti-slavery views were echoed by other Church leaders and spokesmen throughout the early 1840s. Such views received public exposure in various Latter-day Saint periodicals published in Nauvoo and elsewhere.

In 1844, Joseph Smith vigorously promoted his anti-slavery views as proposed public policy in his short-lived campaign for President of the United States. As a self-styled third party candidate pitted against Democrat James K. Polk and Whig candidate, Henry Clay, Smith adopted a platform, “Views on the Government and Policies of the United States.” Smith’s platform, along with other proposals, called for the “break down [of] slavery” and “removal of the shackles from the poor black man” in order to ameliorate the deplorable condition in which “some two or three millions of people are held as slaves, because the spirit in them is covered with a darker skin than ours.” In his program based on compensated emancipation, Smith admonished southern citizens to petition their respective state legislators to approve the necessary funding and enabling legislation. The financing needed would be obtained through the sale of public lands. Smith was confident that Southerners whom he characterized as “hospitable and noble” would eagerly embrace his program to rid the United States which he termed “so free a country ... of every vestige of slavery.” The Mormon leader believed that his program could bring about the complete elimination of American slavery by 1850. Summing up his position,

37 2 January 1843, History of the Church, 5:217.
38 30 December 1842, in Joseph Smith’s Journal, kept by Willard Richards. Copy at LDS Archives-Historical Department.
40 Times and Seasons, 1 June 1844.
41 Bringhurst, Saints, Slaves, and Blacks, 56-60.
42 For a consideration of the various motives attributed to Joseph Smith in his quest to become U.S. President see: Fawn M. Brodie, No Man Knows My History, 362-6; and “Joseph Smith’s Presidential Platform,” Dialogue 3 (Autumn 1968): 17-27.
43 Joseph Smith, Jr., Views on the Government and Politics of the United States (Nauvoo, Illinois, 1844). This pamphlet was distributed throughout the United States. It was also reprinted in various periodicals edited by LDS Church spokesmen. See: Times and Seasons (Nauvoo, Ill), 15 May 1844; Nauvoo Neighbor, 8 May 1844; and Prophet (New York City), 8 June 1844.
44 Smith, Views on the Government, 3, 7-8. The feasibility of Smith’s proposal to liberate the
Smith declared:

Wherefore, were I the president of the United States, by the voice of the virtuous people...when that people petitioned to abolish slavery in the slave states, I would use all honorable means to have their prayers granted ... that the whole nation might be free indeed!\(^{45}\)

Smith’s campaign proposals for compensated emancipation were directed not just to his Mormon followers but addressed towards American society at large. The Mormon leader sought to reconcile differences between proponents and opponents of Manifest Destiny — the primary issue in the 1844 Presidential campaign. This issue involved debate over American westward expansion into Texas and other western territory. Slavery was central to this debate given the situation of Texas, then an independent republic, seeking immediate annexation to the United States. Texas was a region where black slavery was both legal and a flourishing institution. Foes of Manifest Destiny opposed the annexation of Texas and other western territory, fearing the expansion of the Peculiar Institution. Whereas proponents of westward expansion were either minimally concerned about such expansion or favored it. Both major political parties were deeply divided. Within the Whig Party, “Cotton Whigs” favored expansion whereas “Conscience Whigs” were in opposition. The Democrats mirrored a similar split through the rival campaigns of John C. Calhoun and Martin Van Buren for that party’s presidential nomination. Calhoun, the South’s most articulate pro-slavery spokesman favored annexation, whereas former president Van Buren assumed a free-soil position in opposition to expansion. In addition, the Liberty Party ran James J. Birney, an ardent abolitionist who ran on a strong anti-annexationist platform.\(^{46}\)

Thus, Joseph Smith through his anti-slavery, pro-annexationist platform sought national consensus. The Mormon leader announced that once he was elected president he would annex Texas and proceed to do away with slavery in the following manner: “As soon as Texas was annexed, I would liberate the slaves in two or three states, indemnifying the owners, and send the negroes black slaves through the payment of a “reasonable price” to southern slaveholders obtained from the sale of public lands has been questioned by at least one writer, who explained: “There were almost 3,000,000 slaves in 1844, with an average value of $500. Total public land sales in the 1840s averaged approximately $2,000,000 yearly, and the proposed cutbacks in congressional membership and pay (which Smith suggested as an additional source of revenue) would have produced perhaps $500,000.” According to these figures, at 1840s rates it would have taken about 700 years, rather than the 5-6 years estimated by Smith to carry out his program. See: Martin B. Hickman, “Editorial Footnotes to General Smith’s ‘Views ...’”, *Dialogue* 3 (Autumn 1968): 28.

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\(^{45}\) Smith, *Views on the Government*, 8.

Throughout his short-lived presidential campaign, Smith continued to attack the Peculiar Institution, denouncing it as a “national evil” that should not be allowed to generate “fleshy capital.” He further lamented that America was not an “asylum for the oppressed” so long as the “degraded black slave” was compelled to hold up his manacled hands and cry, “Oh liberty, where are thy charms that sages have told me were so sweet.” But at the same time, Smith sought to disassociate himself from the objectives of the extreme abolitionists. He proclaimed that neither he nor his Latter-day Saint followers cared “nothing about” nor were “advocates of [immediate] abolition as it now exists.”

The assassination of Joseph Smith on 27 June 1844 ended the Mormon leader’s presidential campaign on an sudden, tragic note. As for Smith’s program calling for the abolition of slavery through compensated emancipation, and colonization abroad, the extent of its appeal to the larger American society will never be known. In certain respects, the Mormon leader’s proposals were similar to, and reminiscent of earlier proposals made by Thomas Jefferson, Henry Clay, as well as the American Colonization Society.

More evident, is that Joseph Smith through his shifting views on slavery left a mixed legacy for Mormonism, vividly reflected in the differing, often conflicting views of those individuals claiming Smith’s mantle of leadership. Brigham Young, as leader of the largest group of Latter-day Saints — those Mormons who migrated west establishing their Great Basin sanctuary separate from the larger American society — embraced anti-abolitionist, pro-slavery beliefs, reminiscent of those expressed by Joseph Smith during the late 1830s. Under Young’s leadership, the Utah territorial legislature in 1852 legalized black slavery — the only western territory to do so. Utah black slavery remained firmly entrenched until abolished by Federal statute in 1862. Also, throughout the decade of the 1850s Young and his Mormon followers excoriated those Northerners who, in increasing numbers, condemned slavery as immoral. While at the same time, Young expressed empathy for the slaveholding south, particularly after the newly-emergent northern-based Republican Party condemned slavery and polygamy as “twin relics of barbarism.”

By contrast, Joseph Smith III, son of the slain Mormon Prophet, who

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47 Joseph Smith, Jr., History of the Church, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City, 1978); 6:244, 7 March 1844. According to Wilford Woodruff version of this same speech, Smith stated: “as soon as texas [sic] was annexed I would liberate two or three states & pay them for their slaves & let them go to Mexico where [sic] they are mixed blacks....” Wilford Woodruff, “Journal,” 7 March 1844.
48 Nauvoo Neighbor, 22 May 1844.
49 Times and Seasons, 1 June 1844.
50 Times and Seasons, 1 June 1842, 1 October 1842; Nauvoo Neighbor, 8 January 1844.
52 Bringhamut, Saints, Slaves, and Blacks, 62-73.
53 Ibid., 109-22.
emerged by 1860 as leader of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, embraced anti-slavery, pro-abolitionist views strikingly similar to those expressed by his father during the early 1840s. Coming of age in Nauvoo, during the late 1840s and 1850s the younger Smith was strongly influenced by growing anti-slavery sentiment which manifested itself in Illinois and throughout the northern United States.\(^54\) As Smith became politically active, he “aligned himself with the Republicans because of the party’s strong anti-slavery stance.”\(^55\) On at least one occasion during the 1850s, Smith while serving as Nauvoo’s Justice of the Peace assisted in the escape of a black slave fleeing from the South. He did this even though his actions were clearly in violation of the provisions of the recently-enacted Fugitive Slave Act of 1850.\(^56\) As for the Civil War, itself, the RLDS leader manifested ambivalent behavior. On the one hand, he endorsed the major objectives of the war, specifically to preserve the Union and especially to end the “tyrannical institution” of slavery.\(^57\) But at the same time as leader of the Reorganized Church he was appalled by the fighting and the bloodshed it engendered. Thus he advised the young men of fighting age within his church:

Do not enlist. Enlisting makes your military service an individual and voluntary action, whereby you might shed blood while in the service. Wait; if drafted, the responsibility is lifted. In such case, do not hesitate to take your place in the ranks and to do your full duty as good soldiers and citizens, supporting the government to the best of your power.\(^58\)

\section*{II}

Besides Joseph Smith, Jr., two principal leaders identified with American Adventism, namely William Miller and Ellen G. White made public their views on slavery during the antebellum period. The views of Miller and White, in turn, influenced policies involving slavery and ultimately race within American Adventism — an emerging indigenous denomination which, like Mormonism, was highly visible during the period before and after the Civil War.

William Miller, like Joseph Smith, Jr. was a New England native, born on 15 February 1782 in Pittsfield, Massachusetts but lived most of his life in two villages on the borders of Vermont (Poultney) and New York (Low Hampton). Also like Smith, Miller had limited formal education initially eking out a living.

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\(^{54}\) Roger D. Launius, \textit{Joseph Smith III: Pragmatic Prophet} (Urbana, Ill: University of Illinois Press, 1988) is by far the best and indeed, the definitive biography of this RLDS founding figure.
\(^{55}\) Launius, \textit{Invisible Saints}, 119.
\(^{56}\) Ibid., 118-19.
\(^{57}\) Ibid., 124.
\end{italics}
as a poor farmer before joining American forces fighting in the War of 1812. In his religious beliefs, Miller was initially a deist, but by 1816 had become a Calvinist Baptist, apparently caught up in the religious fervor of the Second Great Awakening, again as was Joseph Smith. At the same time Miller undertook intense study of the Bible, drawn particularly to its apocalyptic books, especially the Book of Daniel, whereby he became convinced that advent leading to the End Times and the Second Coming of Jesus would occur in or about 1843.59

Miller began lecturing on the advent in 1831 and over the next decade he enlisted a following that at its peak included 50,000 adherents. In 1840 Miller’s adventism became an organized movement thanks in large measure to the effective promotional skills of Joshua V. Himes. Also helping in the growth of adventism was the personality and demeanor of William Miller, himself, characterized by historian Paul K. Conkin as “a kind good man, pudgy and unpretentious” projecting a genuine “sincerity.” At the same time Miller reflected “the resentments of small farmers in his region” while articulating “the attitudes of lowly people, those horrified by the riches and luxuries of the cities, and ... quick to condemn the apostasies of modern, fashionable churches.”60

Miller was a “committed anti-slavery man” according to historian Ronald D. Graybill.61 Initially, however, Miller expressed anti-abolitionist views. In an 1834 account he denounced the abolitionists as “fire-skulled [sic], visionary, fanatical, treasonable, suicidal, demoralizing, [and] hotheaded....”62 But after 1840 the Adventist leader became more sympathetic to the anti-slavery cause, largely because his movement attracted a significant number of one-time abolitionists. Most noteworthy was Joshua V. Himes, Miller’s foremost associate, who before joining the adventist cause, had worked closely with William Lloyd Garrison in the American Anti-Slavery Society.63 Although Miller, in the words of Ronald D. Graybill, “had a reputation as a reliable and practical abolitionist,” there is no record of Miller’s “active participation in an anti-slavery society....”64 Actually, Miller along with his followers avoided involvement in any and all reform associations — including the abolitionists — presenting themselves as “apolitical apocalyptics” looking, instead, towards the

59 Ronald L. Numbers and Johnathan M. Butler, eds., The Disappointed: Millerism and Millenarianism in the Nineteenth Century (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1993) provides through a series of essays by various scholars an excellent overview of William Miller and varied aspects of the movement he led.


64 Ibid., 140.
millennium and Second Coming as the only means of reforming society. Thus Miller, in sharp contrast to Joseph Smith was unwilling to actively promote anti-slavery in the political arena as public policy. Despite Miller’s withdrawal, William Lloyd Garrison proclaimed the adventist leader “an outspoken friend” of the anti-slavery cause.

By 1843 Miller as an avowed foe of slavery was “saddened and disgusted by the factional squabbles among abolitionists” lamenting that “the poor slave, has little chance to be liberated by these two parties ...” Miller found solace in his fundamental adventist beliefs looking towards the imminent coming of Jesus. He exclaimed: “God can and will release the captive. And to him alone we must look for redress.” In a similar spirit of apocalyptic premillennialism prominent Millerite leader, Joseph Bates confessed to a southern slaveholder: “Yes ... I am an abolitionist, and have come to get your slaves, and you too! As to getting your slaves from you, we have no such intention.... We teach that Christ is coming and we want you all saved.”

Swept up in such adventist fervor, Miller and his followers expected that 22 October 1844 would be the date that the advent would commence. However, this date came and went without anything miraculous occurring. The so-called “Great Disappointment” followed by Miller’s own death, shortly thereafter, ended the Millerite phase of adventism.

III

Despite the “Great Disappointment” some 50,000 people still considered themselves adventists, divided by a dozen different doctrines. The largest Adventist faction came under the control of a triumvirate of three individuals: Joseph Bates, James White, and his wife Ellen G. White. Joseph Bates, a one-time abolitionist became the movement’s itinerant evangelist, preaching the message of Adventism to the outside world, while James White served as Adventism’s chief organizer and publisher of tracts, books, and other materials. Ellen G. White assumed the Adventists’ most crucial role as the movement’s “seer or prophet” who in the words of Paul Conkin, used “her visions to confirm, reinforce, [and] extend the developing doctrines of the movement.” Her role in Adventism was comparable to that of Joseph Smith within Mormonism.

67 Ibid., 149.
70 Paul A. Conkin, American Original, 127.
Ellen Gould Harmon, a native New Engander, was born in Gorham, Maine on 26 November 1827 as a twin. At age nine Ellen suffered a broken nose and other facial injuries from a heavy stone thrown by an angry classmate. This resulted in extreme physical disfigurement along with difficulty in breathing and other chronic health problems. These problems compelled Young Ellen to suspend her formal education after completing just three grades. Psychologically she became withdrawn and sensitive. She found solace in her religious faith and as an adolescent embraced adventism. Ellen was impressed by William Miller, who preached his message of adventism in nearby Portland, Maine in 1840. However, shortly thereafter, she formally joined the Methodist Church for reasons that are not clear. Although devastated by the Great Disappointment of 1844, her faith remained strong and she experienced the first of what would become hundreds of visions. She in turn, shared her revelatory messages of hope and reassurance with fellow Millerites who, like herself, had been disappointed. The young, charismatic seer thus established herself as the prophetess of a revitalized Adventist movement — a role further re-enforced by her marriage to James White in 1846.  

Ellen G. White along with her husband and other Adventist leaders developed a set of five distinctive beliefs/practices which brought cohesion to the movement. First and most important was an explanation for the Great Disappointment of 1844. What had really happened on that crucial October 22 date was an important event in heaven not visible to mortal man on earth. Jesus Christ had entered the “most holy place” of a “heavenly sanctuary” which signaled that “he would soon return to the earth.” While White and other Adventists emphasized Christ’s imminent return they declined to set a precise date. Second, Adventists adopted the concept of a Saturday Sabbath, hence the name Seventh-Day Adventist. Third, they embraced a belief in “conditional mortality” or “soul sleep.” This was the idea that upon death the deceased individual’s soul did not ascend to another world but remained dormant or asleep until the resurrection of the body. A fourth important creed, were doctrines involving hygiene and health, including bans on alcohol, tobacco, coffee, and tea. The consumption of meat was also condemned as was the eating of excessive amounts of food. A fifth crucial characteristic involved acknowledging Ellen G. White’s role as prophetess of the movement. The Seventh-Day Adventist movement, in contrast to Millerite adventism experienced slow growth during its formative years, numbering just 3500 members when formally incorporated as a church in the early 1860s. Meanwhile Ellen White, her husband and growing family of three children moved to Battle Creek, Michigan, where the Adventist

General Conference established its headquarters. It was here that John Harvey Kellogg, an innovative physician, joined the Adventists. Kellogg helped perfect a method of turning cooked grains into dry flakes, which were initially sold as an Adventist health food. To further promote health and wellness, White established in Battle Creek the Western Health Reform Institute, placing it under the direction of Kellogg.74

Meanwhile during the 1850s and early 1860s Ellen White along with other Adventists promoted their core doctrine of millenarian Adventism that is their fundamental belief that the end times were near, interpreting the growing national division over slavery and the coming of the Civil War as clear signs of the times. White, herself, was in essence “an outspoken abolitionist sympathetic to the Union cause....” in the words of her biographer, Ronald Numbers.75 By the late 1850s White was so outspoken that on at least one occasion she publicly reprimanded a pro-slavery Adventist, threatening to disfellowship him if he did not alter his views.76

White viewed the slavery issue in eschatological terms. American slavery and the complicity of other American denominations, both Catholic and Protestant “was a chief indication of a decaying world.” In an 1858 essay entitled “The Sins of Babylon” contained in her major published work, Spiritual Gifts, White condemned slavery as an abomination in the eyes of God: “All heaven beholds with indignation human beings, the workmanship of God, reduced by their fellow men to the lowest depths of degradation and placed on a level with the brute creation.” The Adventist Prophet then issued the following apocalyptic warning: “God will restrain His angels but little longer. His wrath burns against this nation and especially the religious bodies that have themselves engaged in [slavery].... The cries of the oppressed have reached unto heaven, and angels stand amazed at the untold, agonizing sufferings which man, formed in the image of his Maker, causes his fellow man.... God’s anger will not cease until he has caused this land of light to drink the dregs of the cup of his fury, until He has rewarded unto Babylon double.”77

The onset of the Civil War with all of its death and destruction, prompted White to further declare in 1862: “God is punishing this nation for the high crime of slavery. He has the destiny of the nation in his hands. He will punish the South for the sin of slavery, and the North for so long suffering its overreaching and overbearing influence.”78

During the Civil War, White and her fellow Adventists were generally Radical Republicans, thus mirroring the dominant political sentiments of their Michigan-Midwest environment. But at the same time, Adventists were

74 Numbers, Prophetess of Health, 160-201.
75 Ibid., 47.
77 Ibid., 184.
78 Ibid.
pessimistic concerning America’s future, viewing it in millenarian-apocalyptic terms. The course of American history up to this point was in the process of fulfilling the prophecy of the “two-horned beast” with horns like a lamb but speaking as a dragon. This prophecy was based on the Adventists’ unique interpretation of the Book of Revelation 13:11-18. In essence “the lamb-like appearance of American freedom and progress was an illusion” whereas by the 1840s and throughout the 1850s, as controversy over slavery intensified, America “revealed its dragon nature.” The Civil War, itself, proved that “America was failing” with the Union tearing itself to “pieces over slavery,” with the South’s rebellion a “sign of the times.” Ultimately, American democracy would experience “a sordid death.” “As a consequence of [this] American failure the end of time was imminent.”

Accordingly, Adventists refused to vote and participate in the political process affirming their belief that “the American two-horned beast would be a dragon at heart, ultimately, no matter how Adventists voted, and they refused to ‘hasten or retard’ the fulfillment of this prophecy.” These are the words of Adventist historian Jonathan Butler.

Adventists also refused to volunteer to fight in the Civil War. Ellen White sanctified such refusal through a prophecy proclaiming: “I was shown that God’s people, who are his peculiar treasure, cannot engage in this perplexing war, for it is opposed to every principle of their faith.” Adventists could not fight for two fundamental reasons: First, America “would remain a dragon” in that slavery would not be “abolished until the Second Advent.” And second, because fighting in this war (and indeed, any war) would be a clear violation of two commandments; the Fourth Commandment which called for keeping the Sabbath — impossible in a fighting army environment; and the Sixth Commandment — “Thou Shalt Not Kill.” In response to eventual implementation of the draft, Ellen White initially urged those Adventists drafted to respond through commutation — that is, by paying a substitute to serve in their place, thereby avoiding the fighting themselves. But when commutation option was eliminated through revision of the draft law in July 1864, the Seventh-Day Adventists declared their denomination a “peace church” and their members “unanimously noncombatant.”

Thus, Ellen White, in declaring Adventists disdain for slavery while refusing to fight in the Civil War, itself, adopted a position remarkably similar to that of Joseph Smith III and the Reorganized Church. At the same time, the Adventist anti-slavery position stood in sharp contrast to support for the Peculiar Institution affirmed by Brigham Young and his Great Basin Mormon followers.

79 Ibid., 180-86.
80 Ibid., 187.
81 Ibid., 188.
82 Ibid., 189.
Also expressing views on the slavery issue was Mary Baker Eddy, founder of Christian Science. Even though the Church of Christ, Scientist was not formally organized as a distinct denomination until 1879 — some fourteen years after the Civil War and the ending of African-American slavery — the attitudes articulated by Mary Baker Eddy relative to slavery prior to 1865 were important in that they influenced practices and policies developed and enforced by Eddy within that movement.

Born on 16 July 1821 in Bow, New Hampshire, Mary Morse Baker was almost an exact contemporary of fellow New England-born church founder, Ellen G. White. Like White, Baker as a youth suffered from chronic health problems, specifically spinal and nervous ailments. This made it difficult for her to attend school regularly, thus adversely affecting her formal education, again mirroring the situation of Ellen White. Indeed, Baker, like White, would experience chronic health problems during her entire life. Baker’s “whole life,” in the words of historian Paul Conkin “involved a vain search for good health and thus a preoccupation with illness and wellness that helped shape her later religious beliefs.”

Baker, however, was both resourceful and talented. By age of 12 she was writing verse, something she would continue to do for the remainder of her life. Her father, Mark Baker was a reasonably prosperous farmer and a devout member of the Congregational Church which exposed Mary to a harsh Calvinist creed that she would ultimately repudiate. She was also exposed to the political views of her father and older brother, Albert, both staunch states rights Democrats. Both were prominent in state politics and, in fact, close friends with future President Franklin Pierce.

Among the important political issues, on which Mark and Albert Baker expressed views were slavery and abolition, which in turn influenced young Mary as she came of age during the 1830s. “Both Mark and Albert Baker looked upon the abolitionists as disrupters of the Union,” notes biographer Robert Peel.

Albert Baker, “the major intellectual influence on Mary” served

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84 Conkin, American Originals, 228.

85 Peel, Mary Baker Eddy: The Years of Discovery, 61.
as chairman of the New Hampshire Select Committee on Slavery” a group that “adopted resolutions rebuking abolitionist propaganda and recommending that Congress should not interfere with the slave-trade between states.”86 “So far as her family was concerned” Mary heard nothing but the case against the abolitionists. The Bakers regarded “slavery itself ... a lesser evil than national disunion.”87

Mary, herself, was directly exposed to the South’s Peculiar Institution as a result of her marriage in December 1843 to George Washington Glover and the young couple’s subsequent move to Charleston, South Carolina. Glover, although a native New Englander and long-time friend of the Baker family, had moved to Charleston some four years earlier, achieving success as a builder. Shortly after their arrival, the newlyweds took up residence in Wilmington, North Carolina. Meanwhile, Glover secured a major contract to build a cathedral in Haiti and was making plans to depart for the Caribbean nation when George became gravely ill, apparently with yellow fever. He died in June 1844. They had been married just six months and Mary was pregnant with the couple’s first child.88

It is unclear whether George owned African-American slaves. In her own recollections, written many years later, Mary asserted that her husband “was considered wealthy, but much of his property was in slaves, and I declined to sell them at his decease in 1844, for I could never believe that a human being was my property.”89 The factual basis of this assertion is “shaky at best” according to biographer Gillian Gill. More certain is that Glover “hired slaves for his [construction] business...” also noted by Gill.90 As for house slaves, it is “unlikely” that Glover “had any” maintains another Eddy biographer Robert Peel, who suggests that Glover “being a young man of some means and ambition ... may well have had a body servant for himself and a personal maid for his wife.”91

Also highly questionable is Mary Baker Eddy’s claims, again made years later: “I did all I could to teach and preach abolition” while living North Carolina “although it brought protests from my dear husband,” adding: “I spoke freely against slavery and wrote vigorous articles for the press in favor of freedom”92 While it is true that Mary contributed articles to at least one

86 Gill, Mary Baker Eddy, 65.
87 Peel, Mary Baker Eddy: The Years of Discovery, 61.
88 Gill, Mary Baker Eddy, 49-64.
89 Message to the First Church of Christ, Scientist, or The Mother Church, Boston, 15 June 1902 (Prose Works, 1902, 15).
90 Gill, Mary Baker Eddy, 65.
91 Peel, Mary Baker Eddy: The Years of Discovery, 69.
periodical published in Charleston, South Carolina, none of these dealt with slavery and/or abolition. As her biographer Robert Peel has carefully noted: “An exhaustive search of the Charleston and Wilmington papers has not brought any such articles to light. Southern newspapers were definitely not publishing anti-slavery views in those days.”

In her political views, moreover, Mary Glover remained a loyal Democrat, throughout the 1840s and into the 1850s. During the 1844 presidential campaign, after returning to New Hampshire she was outspoken in her support for Tennessee slaveholder and Democratic candidate, James K. Polk, rejecting the message of abolitionist Liberty Party candidate, James Birney. During the Mexican-American War of 1846-48, she rejected the abolitionists once more, specifically anti-slavery advocate claims that this war for territorial expansion would further expand slavery into the far West. A strong pro-war advocate, she wrote poetry extolling the cause of war. In one verse she exclaimed:

Rouse free men from the lethargy
Of Peace ye long have slept
Rouse if your country’s honor calls
To victory or death....

In the 1852 campaign she actively supported fellow Democrat and close family friend, Franklin Pierce over Free Soil candidate John P. Hale. A year later, along with much of the country she read with interest, fellow female author Harriet Beecher Stowe’s powerful abolitionist novel, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* but “didn’t think much of it.”

However, by the eve of the American Civil War, her political allegiance had dramatically shifted causing her to cast her lot with the Republican Party. With the outbreak of war in 1861 she was an enthusiastic, vocal supporter of both Abraham Lincoln and the Union cause. Possibly influencing Mary’s change of attitude was involvement in the war by two important men in her life. One was her second husband, Daniel Patterson, whom she had married in 1853. Patterson, a dentist and homeopath, was commissioned in 1862 by the Governor of New Hampshire to help Northern sympathizers in the South. Unfortunately, he was captured by Confederates and placed in a southern prison, where he remained for almost a year. Ultimately he managed to escape returning to his practice in Lynn, Massachusetts. The second was her son George Glover, whom she bore from her first marriage. In 1861 young George at the time just 15 years old, volunteered to fight in the Union army. He was wounded and after a brief

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94 Ibid., 322, ff. 135.
95 Ibid., 71.
96 Ibid., 85.
97 Ibid., 88.
hospitalization reenlisted, much to the dismay of his worried mother. 98

Despite such personal concerns, or perhaps, because of them, Mary Patterson, publicly supported the war through her written poems and prose published in various periodicals. She wrote articles defending liberty and democracy while at the same time excoriating the “hydra-headed” Copperheads. In poetry she encouraged the enlistment of soldiers, extolling “sacrifice, duty, and honor.” It was “better to die nobly than in shame” she declared. Fully supportive of President Lincoln, whom she affectionately labeled “our faithful Abraham,” she hoped he would continue to “blend Justice with victory” in dealing with the rebellious South. 99 In addition to her printed prose, Mary wrote a letter to General Benjamin Butler, early in the war, responding to the general’s capture of a significant number of slaves while advancing into the Confederate South. She urged Butler to not return this black contraband to their white masters. 100 This gesture clearly affirmed, at long last, Mary Patterson’s unequivocal opposition to the South’s Peculiar Institution.

Following the Civil War, Mary Patterson’s major concern was not slavery per se, finally and completely abolished through the Thirteenth Amendment. Rather, she was concerned about her failing marriage and continuing chronic health problems. Her marriage to the economically unstable and habitually unfaithful Daniel Patterson ended in 1866 although they were not formally divorced until 1873. For her health problems she sought various types of treatment including that provided by Dr. Phineas Parkhurst Quimby. She also studied with Quimby, and was greatly influenced by his ideas of mental healing. These, in turn, helped provide a foundation for her emerging Christian Science beliefs. In February 1866, she suffered extensive injuries as the result of a fall on the ice in downtown Lynn, Massachusetts. When she regained consciousness she was unable to move and seemed close to death. However just two days later, she got up unaided, appearing fully recovered. Ultimately she credited her discovery of Christian Science for her seemingly miraculous recovery. 101

Over the following decade Mary Baker Eddy (in 1877 she had married for the third time, Asa Gilbert Eddy) undertook the research and writing for what would become Science and Health: A Key to the Scriptures, her most important work. Science and Health, first published in 1875, was destined to be the foundational work for Christian Science, formally organized as a denomination shortly thereafter. Science and Health became, in the words of historian Paul Conkin, “One of the most influential religious books ever written by an American” comparable to the Book of Mormon brought forth by Joseph Smith in 1830. 102
Eddy, like Smith, produced a book, based on claims of divine inspiration through revelation. In this work she taught that reality was “one unified whole” which was “in all senses perfect.” That reality, which she had difficulty in defining, was in essence God. But her God was not the anthropomorphic or personal image God defined in traditional Christianity. Instead she characterized God through an array of suggestive synonyms, including, Mind, Spirit, Soul, Principle, Life, Truth, and Love. She also stressed that this divine Spirit transcended gender distinctions, including in itself the best qualities associated with both masculinity and femininity.103

Eddy further asserted that each human was an individualized reflection of this divine Spirit, and at one with its essence. In their true reality each spirit or person was fully unified in substance with God, and therefore perfect. At the same time, she denied the reality of evil, defining it as an illusion of humankind’s imperfect perception of reality which was rooted in “illusions of materiality.” Among the unreal manifestations of such material evil were sinfulness and unrighteousness along with disease and illness. Included were the various illnesses and maladies that Eddy herself, had suffered from throughout her life. Through divine enlightenment and by utilizing techniques of self-healing alluded to in Science and Health, individuals could cure themselves of any disease while also ridding themselves of sin and disobedience.104

Also through the pages of Science and Health Eddy revealed her strong anti-slavery views, albeit seemingly belated, given the complete abolition of African-American slavery some ten years earlier. “Slavery is not the legitimate state of man. God made men free.”105 “The omnipotence of divine justice” she asserted was crucial in breaking “the despotic fetters” and abolishing “the whipping post and slave market.” She acknowledged that the effort to “legally abolish unpaid servitude in the United States was hard....”106

Eddy linked the now-defunct practice of black slavery to “mental slavery” which all mortal beings found themselves in. She characterized this new form of slavery as “the bondage of sickness, sin, and death.” “The voice of God” demanded that “the fetters of sin, sickness, and death be stricken from the human mind and that its freedom be won, not through warfare, not with the bayonet and blood, but through Christ’s divine Science.” The abolition of this “mental slavery,” she confessed, would be “a more difficult task” than the abolition of African-American slavery.107

104 Eddy, Science and Health, passim.
105 Ibid, 227.
106 Ibid., 225-227.
107 Ibid., 225.
In conclusion Mary Baker Eddy, along with Ellen G. White, William Miller, and Joseph Smith, as leaders of three major indigenous American religions were each strongly affected by the existence of black slavery in Antebellum America. The way in which each of these four prophetic leaders responded and the attitudes that each developed, directly affected policies, practices, along with basic theological ideas within all three denominations, the lasting effects of which continued to be felt long after the complete abolition of slavery in 1865.
That polemic is easier said than done. Had Smith confined his claims to visions and revelations, it would have been simpler for “faithful” LDS scholars and others to develop a common discourse predicated on agreement that Smith sincerely believed he had seen angels and written texts under inspiration. Matters are complicated, however, by Smith’s claim to have possessed golden plates which others claimed to have handled. As Terryl Givens has observed, the claim to tangibility presses us out of “the realms of interiority and subjectivity.”

When witnesses report having hefted something heavy concealed in a box or under cloth, it becomes hard for scholars unconverted to Mormon orthodoxy to avoid the suspicion that, in Richard Bushman’s words, “something fishy was going on.” The plates are thus a potential “scandal” in the sense of the Greek skandalon: a stumbling block to conversation about Mormonism across the religious divide and hence to the mainstreaming of Mormon studies.

Despite this problem, a number of faithful scholars appear confident of their ability to credibly voice orthodox claims about the Book of Mormon in non-Mormon academic venues. Brigham Young University faculty members

1 “Faithful scholars” refers to LDS academics who work on Mormon topics from a perspective that assumes the objective historical truth of LDS faith claims, notably that the Book of Mormon is a translation of an ancient document. Most of the scholars working in this vein are housed at BYU, with prominent exceptions like Richard Bushman and Terryl Givens; many have been associated with FARMS, the Joseph Fielding Smith Institute, or BYU’s religion department. I dislike the way the terms “faithful scholarship” and “faithful perspective” normalize LDS orthodoxy (i.e., by implying that Mormons who don’t believe in the historicity of the Book of Mormon are not “faithful”). Elsewhere I have employed the term “orthodox scholarship” instead. John-Charles Duffy, “Defending the Kingdom, Rethinking the Faith: How Apologetics Is Reshaping Mormon Orthodoxy,” Sunstone, May 2004, 22-55. Nevertheless, I speak in this study of “faithful scholarship” given that this is a preferred form of self-identification for the scholars whose work I am analyzing.


John Tvedtnes and Noel Reynolds offer anecdotal evidence that non-Mormon academics are coming to seriously consider LDS scholarship on the Book of Mormon and even to be convinced of the book’s antiquity or Hebrew provenance. Reynolds believes that “we are nearing the point when it might be acceptable for non-LDS academic presses to publish academic books on Book of Mormon topics that would be written from a faithful perspective.” Grant Underwood, speaking at the May 2005 symposium on Joseph Smith at the Library of Congress, opined that while it is “beyond the methods and focus of the academy” to legitimize Smith’s claims to be God’s spokesman, “scholars do not rule out the possibility.”

Are these assessments accurate? How open is the non-Mormon academy to “faithful” Mormon perspectives? What is the current political climate in academia vis-à-vis the credibility of orthodox accounts of the Book of Mormon? Is it possible to speak of the book in academic settings as a bona fide translation of an ancient record written on golden plates without creating scandal? To use a different metaphor: How must the golden plates be “handled” in academic discourse?

**About This Study**

To answer these questions, I will analyze how Smith’s production of the Book of Mormon (the golden plates, the visitations by Moroni, the miraculous translation, and so on) has been narrated in academic texts published outside the Mormon world. The goal of the analysis is to identify the discourse conventions that delimit what can be credibly said about the Book of Mormon’s provenance in academic settings at this period of time. My analysis assumes that academic credibility is a function of the rhetorical, ergo social, forces at work in academic discourse communities. When scholars write, they do so in ways calculated to deflect criticism from individuals or groups whom they imagine

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4 Tvedtnes claims to have met a non-Mormon academic who “acknowledged the Book of Mormon as an authentic ancient text” and another who was “very open to the idea that the Book of Mormon was translated from an ancient Hebrew text.” Reynolds cites a letter sent by an Oxford professor who says that a conference organized at BYU UNIVERSITY showed him that the Book of Mormon is a “complex and inspiring work” which bears “close analysis.” Reynolds presents this letter as evidence that “non-LDS scholars are ... willing to take a more serious look at the Book of Mormon in light of LDS scholarship.” John A. Tvedtnes, “Hebrew Names in the Book of Mormon,” paper presented at the Thirteenth World Congress of Jewish Studies, Jerusalem, August 2001; online at http://www.fairlds.org/pubs/HebrewNames.pdf; Noel B. Reynolds, “The Coming Forth of the Book of Mormon in the Twentieth Century,” *BYUNIVERSITY Studies* 38, no. 2 (1999): 38-40.


6 To support this claim, Underwood cites George Marsden, a Calvinist historian who has argued that the academy unfairly excludes Christian perspectives. A video file of Underwood’s remarks can be accessed at http://www.ldsl.org/library/display/0,4945,510-1-3067-1,00.html.
to constitute their audience. Through close reading, we can infer the rhetorical pressures that shape scholars’ writing about Book of Mormon origins and thus can identify prevailing understandings of the limits of credible academic discourse on this subject. Different understandings about what is appropriate to academic discourse, or what counts as credible scholarship, may compete or coexist within a given community of scholars, creating situations that may either hinder or facilitate faithful scholarship’s entrance into the academic mainstream.

For my analysis, I have created a pool of fifty academic texts published outside the Mormon world over the last quarter century that summarize Smith’s claims about the coming forth of the Book of Mormon (see appendix). While I do not claim that my pool is exhaustive, I have cast my net broadly enough that I am confident in drawing conclusions about trends in academic discourse. Because I define academic discourse by audience, I have excluded from the pool works from major publishing houses such as Knopf or Viking, even if the authors of those works had academic credentials such as faculty positions at institutions of higher education. “Academic” texts, as I define them for this study, come from journals associated with universities or widely recognized professional associations or from presses that primarily market themselves as serving academic audiences. Because I am interested in how the Book of Mormon’s provenance is discussed before principally non-Mormon audiences, I have not included publications from BYU, FARMS, Signature Books, Sunstone, Dialogue, the Mormon History Association, and the like, unless these were republished outside the Mormon world.

7 For a list of the fifty texts in my pool, see the appendix. Creating the pool was a multi-stage process. First I drew samples from texts which I already knew fit the parameters of my study. Second, I identified additional candidates for inclusion in the pool by searching the online catalogue at my university library using the subject keywords “Book of Mormon” and “Joseph Smith.” I then ran those same keyword searches in three databases: the ATLA Religion Database, the MLA Bibliography, and Web of Knowledge, which includes Science Citation Index Expanded, Social Sciences Citation Index, and the Arts & Humanities Citation Index. Finally, I sifted through the candidate texts generated by these searches to determine which ones would meet all of my criteria.


9 By “widely recognized professional associations” I have in mind entities such as the American Psychological Association. I decided to treat some state historical societies as “professional associations,” and therefore included items from their journals in my pool, but I did so with reservation since in these societies the boundary between academic and lay intellectual audiences can be highly permeable. (I will discuss a complication created by this decision in the section of my analysis on openly deprecatory rhetoric, below.) By “presses that primarily market themselves as serving academic audiences,” I mean University Presses chiefly, though the definition also encompasses certain non-University Presses like Ashgate and Sussex Academic Press. I did not include in my pool books from overtly religious presses or articles from theological journals, given that theology’s status as an “academic” endeavor is contested.
Of the fifty texts in my pool, 16 were written by authors who identify as believing or practicing LDS; 8 by authors who are disaffiliated from the LDS Church or plainly heterodox; 5 by authors with Community of Christ (RLDS) backgrounds, and 21 by authors without any known Mormon background. A text’s summary of the Book of Mormon’s coming forth may range in length from a single sentence to an entire chapter.

Handling Smith’s Claims: Rhetorical Strategies

I have organized authors’ treatments of Book of Mormon provenance under several headings. These headings can be thought of as a range of rhetorical strategies for “handling” Smith’s claims: open deprecation, disclaiming the truth question, naturalistic explanations, implicit skepticism, distancing devices, and factual language. An author may use more than one strategy in the same text.

Open Deprecation

In their introduction to Believing History, Richard Bushman’s collected essays, Reid Nelson and Jed Woodworth speak of unnamed “secular historians” who, “eager to pronounce the [Book of Mormon] fraudulent, ... wave off the book with surface references to warmed-over King James English or theology resembling Smith’s environment.” In fact, if my sample is reliable, an overtly deprecatory attitude toward Mormon beliefs is rare in academic publication. In my pool, only three, maybe four, texts display such an attitude. Kevin Garvey writes of an “eerie similarity” between Mormonism and Jonestown; William Cullen Bryant II paints Smith as a “self-declared seer” who “beguiled” his followers and relied on a “dreaded secret police to enforce his dicta”; Viola Sachs alludes to Smith’s “mystic delusion”; and T. L. Brink speaks of Smith’s “literary

10 An author’s placement in one of these four categories reflects what I know about his or her religious status at the time the text I am analyzing was written. A list of the authors in each category follows. If the number of authors listed in a category does not match the number of texts given above, that means the pool contains more than one text by the same author. Believing/practicing LDS: Leonard Arrington, Philip Barlow, Richard Bushman, Craig Campbell, Kathryn Daynes, Eric Eliason, Terryl Givens, Grant Hardy, Kent Jackson, John Lundquist, Dean May, Richard Turley, Grant Underwood, Michael Van Wagenen. Disaffiliated/heterodox LDS: Newell Bringhurst, Clyde Forsberg, Klaus Hansen, Floyd O’Neill, Richard Ouellette, Gordon Shepherd. RLDS/Community of Christ background: Reed Holmes, Roger Launius, G. St. John Stott, William Morain. No known Mormon background: Dan Blazer, T. L. Brink, John Brooke, William Cullen Bryant II, Douglas Davies, R. Tripp Evans, Lawrence Foster, Kevin Garvey, Sarah Barringer Gordon, Paul Gutjahr, Nathan Hatch, David Holmes, Richard Hughes, Mark Leone, Colleen McDannell & Bernhard Lang (co-authors), Viola Sachs, Jan Shipps, Rodney Stark & Roger Finke (co-authors), Stephen Williams, Timothy Wood.

fantasies.” Brink’s phrasing, however, is not so obviously pejorative in tone as the other texts cited (he could be using “fantasies” in a technical psychological sense). To complicate matters further, two of these texts — Garvey’s and Bryant’s — come from sources whose academic status is debatable even given the criteria I set out for my study. I included these two texts in the pool only to give them the benefit of the doubt.

It appears, then, that academic discourse on the Book of Mormon rarely serves as a forum for writers “eager to pronounce the [book] fraudulent.” As we will see, academia is open to naturalistic explanations for the book, which Mormons of an orthodox bent might see as inherently deprecatory by the dualistic logic that to deny Smith’s prophetic claims are literally true is ipso facto to brand him either deluded or a fraud. But in fact, most proponents of naturalistic accounts refrain from applying pejorative labels to Smith such as “deluded” or “fraudulent,” at least in their academic publications.

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12 Garvey, “Prophet from Palmyra,” 60; Bryant, review, 442; Sachs, “Holy Scriptures,” 52; Brink, review, 273. Full bibliographic information for these texts, as for all the texts in my pool for analysis, can be found in the appendix.

13 Garvey’s essay appeared as part of a book published by John Wright PSG. This apparently defunct press produced medical and scientific texts and therefore might qualify as a non-University Press serving primarily academic audiences — if one considers medical and scientific professionals to constitute academic audiences (a debatable proposition to which I am open but which is debatable since many practitioners are not housed at academic institutions). However, while most contributors to this book have credentials in psychiatry, Garvey is described merely as a “writer” and “journalist.” This fact strongly suggests that even if the press qualifies as academic, Garvey himself lacks academic credentials. Bryant’s review appears in New York History, a journal produced by the New York State Historical Association. As I explain in footnote 9, I accepted state historical associations as “professional associations,” and therefore their journals as representing academic discourse, only with reservation, since their audiences are likely to encompass both academics and non-academics. I know that Bryant served as chair of a language center at Columbia and edited the collected letters of his famous namesake for Fordham University Press, but I have not been able to ascertain if he had what could be regarded as academic credentials, strictly speaking (e.g., a professorship).

14 Jeffrey R. Holland invokes this dualistic logic when he insists, “Either the Book of Mormon is what the Prophet Joseph said it is or this Church and its founder are false, fraudulent, a deception from the first instance onward.” Holland, “True or False,” New Era, June 1995, 64. Louis Midgley translates orthodox dualism into a scholarly vernacular: see, for instance, his “No Middle Ground: The Debate over the Authenticity of the Book of Mormon,” in Historicity and the Latter-day Saint Scriptures, ed. Paul Y. Hoskisson (Provo: BYU UNIVERSITY Religious Studies Center, 2001), 149-70.

15 I have seen scholars use more deprecatory language when writing for less strictly academic audiences. In another paper that analyzed responses to John Brooke’s Refiner’s Fire, I cited statements from non-Mormon scholars such as Martin Marty and Paul Johnson, who characterized Smith’s claims as “self-delusion, other-delusion, folly, and even chicanery,” or as “one of the strangest stories in the strange history of American religion.” John-Charles Duffy, “Clyde Forsberg’s Equal Rites and the Exoticizing of Mormonism,” Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, forthcoming. Those statements appeared in publications (Commonweal, The New Republic) that do not meet the stricter definition of “academic” I am using in this study to draw conclusions about academic discourse conventions.
Disclaiming the Truth Question

A number of authors disclaim interest in the truthfulness of Smith’s claims. A few do this on the grounds that the question is irrelevant to their particular project. Others make a more sweeping assertion that the truth question is unimportant or inappropriate for the purposes of their discipline or for academic inquiry generally. Douglas Davies goes so far as to maintain that the question is one of “personal belief” and thus entirely unsusceptible to being proven or disproven on a “historical or textual basis.”

Statements like this may betoken irenic intentions. This is clearly the case for Stephen Williams, author of Fantastic Archaeology, who confesses his skepticism about Mormon beliefs but aspires to treat them with respect. Similarly, Jan Shipps’s refusal to take a position on Book of Mormon provenance is doubtless, at least in part, an exercise in diplomacy for the sake of her relationships with Mormon colleagues and friends. But disclaiming the truth question is not necessarily an effort to strike a neutral pose. Viola Sachs, whom I cited above about Smith’s “mystic delusion,” uses that pejorative language in the very same sentence in which she explains that she does not intend to discuss the nature of Smith’s experiences: “I do not intend to discuss the nature of this mystic delusion: what matters is that this could only have happened in the cultural context of a bible-minded people....” Likewise, T. L. Brink calls the truth question an “irrelevant debate,” but in the very next sentence he alludes to Smith’s “literary fantasies,” making clear where he stands in this irrelevant debate.

16 Foster, Religion and Sexuality, 297 n. 15; Sachs, “Holy Scriptures;” 52; Wood, “Prophet and the Presidency,” 169; Givens, By the Hand of Mormon, Author’s Note (no page number); Campbell, Images of the New Jerusalem, 29.

17 Hansen, Mormonism and the American Experience, 27; Shipps, Mormonism, 39; Brink, review, 273; Shepherd, review of Trouble Enough, 268.

18 Davies, Introduction to Mormonism, 60.

19 The purpose of Williams’s book is to expose archaeological frauds. However, when he comes to the Book of Mormon, he writes: “[D]ealing with revealed faith is a difficult subject, especially when feelings run high on both sides of the question. I hope I have been able to treat the matter of Joseph Smith and the golden plates from Hill Cumorah in a responsible fashion. I will admit that I am skeptical of the original discovery; the absence of the actual ancient documents makes detailed analysis impossible today” (Fantastic Archaeology, 166). Earlier he had sidestepped the truth question by conceding that the dictation of the Book of Mormon “was quite a feat, whether miraculous or not is for others to judge” (163).

20 Shipps has written that she does “not feel compelled to take a position on the disputed issue of whether Joseph Smith was the author or the translator of this extraordinary work”; she characterizes her stance as one of “stubborn silence.” Shipps, “An ‘Insider- Outsider’ in Zion,” Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought 15, no. 1 (Spring 1982): 143.


22 Brink writes that to ask whether the Book of Mormon reflects the influence of Ethan Smith’s
It is noteworthy that three authors who insist on the relative unimportance of the truth question for their discipline — Klaus Hansen, Lawrence Foster, and Jan Shipps — nevertheless offer explanations for Smith’s experiences which would serve to answer that question: depth psychology for Hansen, visionary trance for Foster and Shipps. The idea that the truth question is unimportant for academic purposes is not as settled as some authors profess it to be — which may explain why authors feel a need to make these disclaimers at all. If it went without saying in the disciplines that the truth question is unimportant, why would authors need to say that? Indeed, contra those who prefer to sidestep the truth question, other commentators maintain that scholars have an obligation to offer secular explanations of Mormon origins. These include Alfred Bush, who once told Richard Bushman that a “historian is responsible ... for determining whether or not the [Book of Mormon] is true history”; Klaus Hansen, who, despite downplaying the truth question in *Mormonism and the American Experience*, also insisted that “if Mormons want to play by the rules of historical scholarship,” they must address the Book of Mormon’s “historical authenticity” (his emphasis); and Norman Murdoch, who lamented in a review essay that Bushman and Shipps did not address the question of the Book of Mormon’s authenticity, given that “being an historian means explaining the past in human terms.”

Naturalistic Explanations

About one fourth of the texts in my pool put forth understandings of Book of Mormon origins that challenge the objective reality of the Mormon story, typically by psychologizing or otherwise interiorizing Smith’s experiences. Lawrence Foster and Reed Holmes describe Smith’s visions of Moroni as “dreams,” G. St. John Stott as an “hallucination.” Klaus Hansen reviews explanations for Smith’s experiences grounded in Jungian, Adlerian, and Eriksonian psychology, while William Morain develops a Freudian interpretation of the Hebrews “focuses on an irrelevant debate. The relevant question is not who might have influenced that intellectual growth and source of literary fantasies of the young Smith, but how did his writings reflect his own complex personality and how did they serve so effectively as the foundation for the most successful religion of purely American origin?”

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23 I say the authors “offer” their explanations because Hansen and Shipps present their explanations as possibilities only. (Hansen is actually summarizing theories offered by T. L. Brink.) Foster presents his theory in relatively more conclusive, yet still contingent, terms. Hansen, *Mormonism and the American Experience*, 24-27; Shipps, *Mormonism*, 10, 39; Foster, *Religion and Sexuality*, 296-297 n. 15.


25 Foster, *Religion and Sexuality*, 129; Holmes, *Dreamers of Zion*, 29; Stott, “Joseph Smith’s 1823 Vision,” 353. Holmes writes that “four years after his dream experience, Joseph drew the metallic plates from the earth.” Calling the vision a “dream experience” interiorizes the experience, but Holmes then speaks of the plates as if they were material objects, so it’s not certain from this text what he believes about the nature of Smith’s claims.
that traces Smith’s “trancelike states” and “fantasies” to the trauma produced by the operation on his leg and the exhuming of his brother Alvin. Jan Shipps proposes that Smith’s experiences may represent the phenomenon of “visionary trance,” which she further opines (moving from a historical mode toward a theological one) is a means by which the Spirit “makes itself known to one portion of humanity.” Shipps probably regards her proposed explanation as working to defend the religious authenticity of Smith’s experiences: as she sees it, understanding Smith’s experiences as trance would mean placing them in the same category as the prophetic ecstasies described in the Hebrew Bible or Paul’s vision on the road to Damascus. Still, her trance theory shares with naturalistic accounts an impulse to treat Smith’s visions as subjectively, not objectively, real.

Other writers who promote or take for granted naturalistic understandings of Book of Mormon origins are David Holmes, who uses “stylometrics” to argue for Smith’s authorship of the book, and Paul Gutjahr, whose literary analyses assume that Smith is the author.

The most extensive efforts to explain the Book of Mormon in naturalistic terms have been made by scholars who are former LDS or RLDS: Hansen, Morain, and Stott. This fact is consistent with Hansen’s observation that those scholars who seem most preoccupied by problems of historicity “are largely multi-generational Mormons ... who were brought up to believe that if the Book of Mormon wasn’t true, it must be a monumental fraud.”

**Implicit Skepticism**

Several authors make rhetorical moves that lend themselves to being read as implicit expressions of skepticism about Smith’s claims. These moves include: repeating doubts about Smith’s story expressed by others; observing that non-Mormons find Smith’s claims incredible; and underscoring the fact that the plates were concealed from view or are no longer available for examination, having been “swept away” by the angel. By including these details in their

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29 Stott’s work has received little attention, though his was the most sedulous attempt to interpret the multiple, conflicting accounts of the Book of Mormon’s coming forth, within a naturalistic framework, prior to the elucidation of Dan Vogel’s “pious fraud” theory in *Joseph Smith: The Making of a Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2004).


31 The phrase “swept away” is used by Garvey: “the plates were swept away by the angel after the successful translation” (“Prophet from Palmyra,” 64). In light of Garvey’s earlier assertion that “an eerie similarity” exists between the LDS Church and Jim Jones’s People’s Temple (66), the dramatic phrase “swept away” looks like it’s intended to be subtly disparaging, i.e., by calling attention to the suspicious convenience of Smith’s claim about Moroni’s reclaiming the plates.
summaries of Smith’s story, the authors invite readers to conclude that “something fishy was going on” (to borrow Bushman’s phrase) but without the authors actually drawing that conclusion in the text. The passages quoted below illustrate what I have in mind. Inevitably when reading for implied meanings, there is a risk that I am reading into the text something the author did not intend. However, most of these passages come from authors who, somewhere else in their texts, explicitly signal disbelief in the objective reality of Smith’s claims, e.g., by giving a naturalistic account of Book of Mormon provenance. That fact lends plausibility to reading these passages as reflecting or implicitly conveying authorial skepticism. In any event, I have taken the space to reproduce a number of these passages so that readers can make their own judgment about the accuracy of my claim that these passages are implicitly skeptical.\(^\text{32}\)

When a chagrined Harris asked Joseph why he could not retranslate the [lost 116 pages], he was told that designing enemies ... would make changes in the original.... Apparently it did not occur to Harris that such changes would be easily detected, since the manuscript was in his own handwriting....\(^\text{33}\)

This “translation” purported to be an ancient religious history of two peoples of Hebraic extraction who had migrated to the American continent about 600 B.C.... Although non-Mormon archaeologists have not found this account historically persuasive, [it] had immense appeal in an early nineteenth-century America....\(^\text{34}\)

Once the plates had been recovered, Smith kept them well hidden, for he feared they would be stolen.... The plates ... were kept well covered except when Smith was translating them. Even his good wife, Emma, never saw them directly; she only saw the package.\(^\text{35}\)

Emma never saw [the plates], nor, in the absence of angels, did anyone else.... [A]s the hapless and frustrated Isaac Hale related, “... I was allowed to feel the weight of the box, and they gave me to understand that the book of plates was then in the box — into which, however, I was not allowed to look.”\(^\text{36}\)

Four years later, Smith was finally able to secure the plates, bringing them home

Garvey also invites a skeptical reading when he cites Peter Ingersoll’s report that Joseph Smith once admitted to him that the Book of Mormon was a monumental joke (66). Further, Garvey draws attention to what he sees as an inconsistency in Smith’s claims, noting that the story of how Smith translated the plates “varied to suit the needs of the audience” (67).

\(^{32}\) The authors who explicitly signal disbelief in Smith’s claims in addition to making moves that I categorize as implicitly skeptical are Hansen, Garvey, Foster, Williams, and Morain. Stark, Finke, and Gordon, while making what I see as implicitly skeptical moves, do not explicitly signal disbelief elsewhere.

\(^{33}\) Hansen, _Mormonism and the American Experience_, 6, 8.

\(^{34}\) Foster, _Religion and Sexuality_, 129–130.

\(^{35}\) Williams, _Fantastic Archaeology_, 162.

\(^{36}\) Morain, _Sword of Laban_, 67, 76.
inside a locked trunk, which could not be opened, because, as he reminded everyone, to look directly upon the plates could be fatal. He also claimed to be able to read the plates through the trunk....

Joseph Smith, the sect’s founder, prophet, and first president, translated the “golden plates,” which he reported were revealed to him by an angel. Smith was a visionary who had a reputation in upstate New York as a counterfeiter, fortune-teller, and treasure hunter.

In different ways, these authors lay before readers information that calls Smith’s claims into question or otherwise signals the author’s incredulity. But they do so in ways that free the authors from the burden of having to directly challenge Smith’s claims, or his integrity, themselves. The reasons for preferring indirection may range from a desire to be respectful of Mormon beliefs (explicitly the case for Stephen Williams) to a conviction that the truth is too obvious to need spelling out (likely motivations for Klaus Hansen and Kevin Garvey, given the more overtly critical tone of their discussions). In any case, the decision to be implicitly skeptical reveals that while academic discourse is open to scholars voicing skepticism about LDS claims, there are also rhetorical pressures at work that motivate some authors to be restrained in how they do that.

Distancing Devices

A number of authors create critical distance from Smith’s claims by placing quotation marks around the word “translation.” Much the same effect is achieved through the use of modifiers such as “supposed,” “so-called,” “purported,” and “ostensibly.” Writers may also distance themselves from Smith’s claims through the use of attribution: “Smith claimed,” “Smith said,” “according to Smith’s account,” and so on. These devices are used by many

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39 Garvey, “Prophet from Palmyra,” 64; Foster, *Religion and Sexuality*, 129; Arrington, review, 470; Morain, *Sword of Laban*, 77; Blazer, review, 1790; Brinthurst, review, 319-320. Gordon places quotation marks around the phrase “golden plates” (*The Mormon Question*, 19). Morain places them around the word “vision” (*Sword of Laban*, 59) as well as around the words “obtained” (67) and “acquisition” (76) when speaking of Smith’s recovery of the plates from Cumorah.
authors across religious categories: non-Mormon, RLDS, disaffiliated LDS, and practicing LDS.

It is difficult to determine whether a particular author uses these devices (a) to imply skepticism or (b) to signal a posture of neutrality. In either case, quotation marks and modifiers clearly work to create critical distance. Attributions, by contrast, may or may not be intended to create critical distance: an author might use an attribution simply to identify the source of a particular piece of information. This ambiguity could make attribution an especially appealing device for scholars who might desire to position themselves ambiguously in relation to Mormon claims.

Jan Shipps, for example, frequently uses attributions in her treatment of the golden plates: “Smith said ... he had a vision of Moroni;” “he reported to his mother and father that he had learned of the existence of a cache of gold plates;” he “said that he had gained possession of the gold plates and the Urim and Thummim;” “he reported that the plates were in his possession;” “Joseph said that they were carried south hidden in a 40-gallon barrel of beans” (my emphasis). These attributions could be read not as intending to create critical distance but as flowing out of Shipps’s interest in the construction of the Mormon story out of various accounts. On the other hand, Shipps uses factual language — without attributions or modifiers — in discussing Smith’s revelations. She writes matter-of-factly of “a revelation to his father, probably given through the Urim and Thummim,” adding that “a revelation a month later directed Joseph to finish translating the record.” As I pointed out earlier, Shipps inclines to the view that Smith’s revelations were actual communications of the Spirit through the medium of trance. Her use or disuse of attribution thus coincides with her belief in the reality of Smith’s revelations, which she discusses factually, as opposed to the existence of the plates, about which she professes neutrality and which she discusses with attributions. The use of attributions thus allows Shipps to retain an ambiguous stance toward those particular elements of Smith’s claims about which she prefers not to commit herself.

**Factual Language**

Mormons who perceive the academy, as Bushman does, as a place where
LDS “belief and practice are an offense”\textsuperscript{45} might be surprised to see how often authors use factual language when discussing Smith’s visions and the discovery and translation of the plates. Co-authors Colleen McDannell and Bernhard Lang, for instance, speak matter-of-factly about “the ancient golden plates which Joseph Smith discovered and translated.”\textsuperscript{46} Other non-Mormon authors from my pool of texts who use factual language are Richard Hughes, Stephen Williams, John Brooke, Paul Gutjahr, Timothy Wood, and Douglas Davies.\textsuperscript{47} However, no non-Mormon author uses this kind of language without making some sort of distancing move farther away — often a modifier or attribution placed somewhere earlier in the text. The statement I just quoted from McDannell and Lang appears in a paragraph that opens, several sentences earlier, with the attribution, “According to Latter-day Saint belief....”

By contrast, Mormon scholars who use modifiers or attributions are more likely to use them in close proximity to what would otherwise be a factual assertion about Smith’s visions or the plates. Indeed, the distancing device typically occurs in the very same sentence, as when Dean May describes the Book of Mormon as “an additional book of scriptures [Smith] claimed to have translated from records inscribed on goldlike plates provided by an angel,” or when Leonard Arrington writes that Smith “purportedly received visitations from heavenly beings and translated [the Book of Mormon] from gold plates” (my emphasis).\textsuperscript{48} The contrast between Mormon writers’ use of distancing devices in close proximity to Smith’s claims and non-Mormon writers’ use of such devices at a greater remove from those same kinds of claims suggests that these Mormon writers are more anxious about the perception that they lack critical distance than are their non-LDS colleagues.

A dramatic illustration of this anxiety is a passage authored by Brigham Young University religion professor Kent P. Jackson for an anthology of perspectives on scripture from various faiths, published by University of South Carolina Press in 1985. Jackson uses modifiers and attributions so frequently that they become conspicuous:

Joseph Smith published what he claimed was a new volume of Christian scripture.... It purported to be the record of a people that lived in the western hemisphere.... Latter-day Saints believe that it records God’s word as revealed to the ancient prophets of the Americas.... Joseph Smith said that on the night of 21 September

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\textsuperscript{45} Bushman, Believing History, vii.

\textsuperscript{46} McDannell and Lang, 313-314.


\textsuperscript{48} May, “Mormons,” 720; Arrington, Great Basin Kingdom, 3. For other Mormon scholars (practicing LDS, disaffiliated LDS, or RLDS) who use modifiers or attributions in close proximity to a potentially scandalous claim, see Launius, Joseph Smith III, 3; Shepherd, review of Studies of the Book of Mormon, 274; Ouellette, “Mormon Studies,” 112; Eliason, “Introduction,” 1.
1823, a messenger from God appeared to him.... He reported that he learned from Moroni [about the record’s contents].... In the Book of Mormon account, Moroni was the last of a line of ancient American prophets.... According to [Smith], Moroni appeared to him often.... At the appropriate time, the young prophet went to the burial spot, took possession of the record, translated it, and published his translation as the Book of Mormon. (my emphasis)

Note that while Jackson recounts the recovery and translation of the plates in factual language (“the young prophet went to the burial spot, took possession of the record,” etc.), distancing devices punctuate the preceding sentences. This suggests that Jackson felt a need to qualify his presentation of Smith’s claims for a non-Mormon audience — though he managed, at a key moment, to use language consistent with his orthodox LDS conviction of the historicity of these events.

Avoiding Scandal: Rhetorical Strategies of Faithful Scholarship

Couched in terms of rhetoric, a principal aim of faithful scholarship is to present orthodox LDS claims in factual language, without the kinds of distancing devices that Jackson used so frequently. Givens is explicit about his desire to avoid such devices, which he calls “ tiresome and pedantic,” in the Author’s Note that prefaces By the Hand of Mormon. The first effort to use factual language in an academic publication outside the Mormon world was made by Richard Bushman in his 1984 Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism. Subsequently, LDS scholars Philip Barlow, Richard Turley, Grant Underwood, John Lundquist, Grant Hardy, and Terryl Givens have made similar efforts. (Community of Christ/RLDS scholars have not demonstrated the same impulse.)

However, no LDS scholar to date has used factual language in connection with Smith’s claims about the Book of Mormon without also making some kind of rhetorical move which appears to disclaim interest in persuading readers that Smith’s claims are factual. Lundquist and Underwood, much like non-Mormon scholars we’ve considered, employ the device of placing an attribution early on in their discussion (“According to Mormon belief,” for Lundquist, “For the Latter-day Saints,” for Underwood), after which they use factual language.

49 Jackson, “Latter-day Saints,” 64, 67.

50 It is conceivable that an editor may have added the distancing devices. Even if that were the case, the passage would still demonstrate an anxiety — albeit on the part of the editor, not the author — about the use of factual language by an LDS writer. Either way, the passage helps to illuminate the discourse conventions that govern academic presentations on the Book of Mormon.

51 “I have ... avoided constructions like ‘Joseph Smith’s alleged vision,’ or ‘the purported visit of Moroni,’ as they would become tiresome and pedantic if repeated on every page.” Givens, By the Hand of Mormon, Author’s Note (no page number).
with no further distancing devices.\textsuperscript{52} In addition, Underwood establishes a precedent of using factual language to describe non-Mormon religious experiences, as when he writes that the followers of Nathaniel Wood “enjoyed the gifts of the spirit, including prophecy.” This precedent allows him to then make factual statements about Smith’s experiences (“The resulting theophany [the First Vision] inaugurated a decade of divine dispensations that culminated in 1830 with the publication of the Book of Mormon.... Plenary inspiration and divine authority were once again on the earth” without necessarily looking like he’s advocating the facticity of Mormon beliefs.\textsuperscript{53} That is, readers could understand Underwood to be subscribing to a convention of writing factually about all religious experiences for the sake of neutrality.

There are two principal strategies by which faithful scholars have justified their use of factual language: (1) they claim to be using factual language for purposes other than advocacy of the orthodox Mormon account; or (2) they announce that they are writing from a distinctively Mormon perspective. Bushman employs both strategies in \textit{Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism}, where he explains that “believing Mormons like myself understand the origins of the Book of Mormon quite differently from others” and wonders how he can “accommodate a Mormon’s perception of events and still make sense to a general audience.” (Note that Bushman professes to want only to “accommodate” a Mormon perception, rather than, say, to “defend” or “advocate” for it.) His solution to the problem he poses is “to relate events as the participants themselves experienced them, using their own words where possible.” His method, he knows, will leave “general readers ... with questions about the meaning of these experiences, but at least they will have an understanding of how early Mormons perceived the world.”\textsuperscript{54} Though somewhat ambiguous, this statement \textit{appears} to disclaim the truth question. That is, the statement seems to imply that Bushman uses factual language in order to reproduce participants’ understanding of these experiences, not to make an argument about how readers should understand them. At least three reviewers of the book understood Bushman’s intentions this way.\textsuperscript{55}

Like Bushman, Richard Turley explains his decision to recount early Mormon history in LDS terms, in his book \textit{Victims}, as an attempt to help


\textsuperscript{53} Underwood, \textit{Millenarian World}, 20-23.

\textsuperscript{54} Bushman, \textit{Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism}, 3.

\textsuperscript{55} Norman H. Murdoch and Martin Ridge believe that Bushman intended to sidestep the debate about whether Smith’s claims are true or fraudulent. In a similar vein, Ferenc W. Szasz reads Bushman as “offer[ing] each reader a chance to come to his or her own opinion on the claims of the first Mormon prophet.” Norman H. Murdoch, “Joseph Smith, the ‘Book of Mormon,’ and Mormonism: A Review Essay,” \textit{New York History} 67 (1986): 229; Martin Ridge, “Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, and a Religious Tradition,” \textit{Reviews in American History}, 14, no. 1. (March 1986): 27; Ferenc W. Szasz, review of \textit{Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism}, \textit{New Mexico Historical Review} 61, no. 1 (January 1986), 84.
non-LDS readers understand the LDS version (which in turn will help them understand the “tension” between canonical accounts and the Hoffman forgeries). The narrative that follows is not couched, strictly speaking, in factual language but relies heavily on direct quotation with accompanying attributions. Readers might therefore have understood Turley to be neutrally reproducing Mormon accounts. However, the fact that Turley feels he has to explain his use of canonical sources indicates that he does not see his summary of Mormon history as neutral and thus needs to deflect suspicions that he is being apologetic. His strategy for deflecting those suspicions is a version of the first strategy listed above: professing to use canonical accounts for purposes other than advocacy of Mormon orthodoxy — in Turley’s case, to give non-Mormons a window into the Mormon worldview.\footnote{Turley, \textit{Victims}, viii, 3-5.}

The most recent instance of an LDS scholar justifying a matter-of-fact reproduction of LDS claims occurs in Terryl Givens’s \textit{By the Hand of Mormon}. In a prefatory note, Givens explains that he has “avoided constructions like ‘Joseph Smith’s \textit{alleged} vision,’ or ‘the \textit{purported} visit of Moroni,’” on the grounds that “the disputability of the facts is too obvious to bear repeating on every page” (his emphasis). More directly than Bushman or Turley, Givens denies an intention to advocate for the orthodox LDS view, stating that his “focus in any case has not been on whether the Book of Mormon or the account of it given by Joseph Smith is true.”\footnote{Givens, \textit{By the Hand of Mormon}, Author’s Note (no page number).} As we will see shortly, this statement is arguably disingenuous.

Bushman’s second strategy for legitimizing the use of factual language — openly identifying his perspective as that of a believer — was subsequently adopted by Philip Barlow (in \textit{Mormons and the Bible}) and Grant Hardy (in his reader’s edition of the Book of Mormon). Having identified themselves as believers,\footnote{To be precise, Barlow labels himself a “practicing Mormon” (\textit{Mormons and the Bible}, xviii), while Hardy calls himself a “believer” and an “insider” (\textit{Book of Mormon: A Reader’s Edition}, viii).} Barlow and Hardy go on to recount the discovery and translation of the plates in matter-of-fact terms, without distancing devices. Barlow, however, takes some pains to identify as a relatively \textit{liberal} believer, in the process of which he makes arguments on behalf of scholarly objectivity and a Romantic religiosity that would tend to align him more with New Mormon Historians like Dean May, Leonard Arrington, and Thomas Alexander than with the more assertively orthodox “faithful” scholarship represented by Bushman or FARMS.\footnote{Barlow, \textit{Mormons and the Bible}, xv-xviii. Barlow distances himself from certain unnamed LDS writers who “hope to make the church invulnerable to fair and open historical inquiry by asserting the incomprehensibility of ‘objectivity’” (xvii). Such assertions have been made most stridently by Louis Midgley and David Bohn, but also by Richard Bushman. Louis Midgley, “The Myth of Objectivity: Some Lessons for Latter-day Saints,” \textit{Sunstone}, August 1990, 54-56; David} By contrast, Hardy’s book is the boldest presentation
of an orthodox LDS perspective yet published in the non-Mormon academy. Unlike Bushman, who identified as a believer yet took care to point out why non-Mormons could find his history useful, Hardy offers no explanation as to why non-Mormon academics should be interested in “an insider’s point of view” about the Book of Mormon. Hardy rather, takes the value of his LDS perspective for granted and appears to expect readers to do the same. In a move that might be read as soft missionizing, Hardy quotes at some length from Gordon B. Hinckley’s testimony of the Book of Mormon, calling attention to Hinckley’s confidence “that a fair examination of all the relevant evidence will support the claims of faith.” However, Hardy’s professed goal is to promote academic understanding.\footnote{Hardy, \textit{Book of Mormon: A Reader’s Edition}, viii-ix.}

Both of the primary strategies LDS scholars have used to justify factual language — professing not to be advocating for LDS claims and identifying one’s perspective as that of a believer — are problematic. As we have seen, Bushman seemingly and Givens unambiguously deny that they are trying to weigh in on the truthfulness of Mormon beliefs. Nevertheless, both \textit{Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism} and \textit{By the Hand of Mormon} had apologetic dimensions, a fact not lost on reviewers.\footnote{Reviewers of Bushman who characterized his work as apologetic or as following official church lines are: Murdoch, “Joseph Smith,” 230; Ridge, “Joseph Smith,” 27; Marvin S. Hill, “Richard L. Bushman — Scholar and Apologist,” \textit{JMH} 11 (1984): 125-133; Gary Shepherd, review of \textit{Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism}, \textit{Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion} 25, no. 2 (June 1986): 267-268; Mark A. Noll, review of \textit{Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism}, \textit{American Historical Review} 91 (1986): 185-186; Samuel S. Hill, review of \textit{Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism}, \textit{Western Historical Quarterly} 17, no. 2 (April 1986): 230-231; Richard E. Bennett, review of \textit{Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism}, \textit{Journal of American Ethnic History} 10, no. 4 (Summer 1991): 95. Reviewers who saw Givens’ book as apologetic are: Massimo Introvigne, “LDS Apologetics from Oxford?” \textit{Sunstone}, July 2002, 58-59; Benson Bobrick, “The Gospel According to Joseph Smith,” \textit{New York Times Book Review}, 18 August 2002, 11; Jana Reiss, “Book of Mormon Stories,” \textit{Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought} 35, no. 3 (Fall 2002): 242. Though he does not use the word “apologetic,” Daniel Peterson is excited by the various passages in which Givens supports the Book of Mormon’s authenticity — passages which Peterson helpfully quotes in his review. Daniel C. Peterson, review of \textit{By the Hand of Mormon}, \textit{Brigham Young University Studies} 43, no. 4 (2004): 140-149.} Both authors offered evidence that supported LDS claims about the Book of Mormon being a translation of an ancient record, and both responded to contemporary challenges to the book’s historicity (e.g., readings of the book as a reflection of its nineteenth-century environment).\footnote{Bushman, 87-88, ch. 4; Givens, \textit{By the Hand of Mormon}, 120-121, 142-143, ch. 6.} In light of the apologetic dimensions of their work, Bushman’s and Givens’ claims to have used factual language for purposes other than advocacy may look disingenuous.
The second strategy — identifying one’s perspective as that of a believer — is problematic because it tends to relegate faithful scholarship to a special category, detached from larger scholarly conversation. *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism* received kind but guarded reviews indicating that non-Mormon readers saw the book as a useful source for understanding Smith the way Mormons see him, but not as an authoritative interpretation of Mormon history. In contrast to LDS reviewers who lauded Bushman for successfully working from a faithful perspective without sacrificing scholarly standards, other reviewers faulted Bushman’s work (albeit gently) for being apologetic and uncritical, giving “unwarranted facticity to verbal quotations,” and offering a “limited perspective.” Among faithful scholars, Givens’ work has evoked even more enthusiastic responses than Bushman’s. But in the non-Mormon academy, *By the Hand of Mormon* has been essentially ignored, a further sign of faithful scholarship’s detachment from academic conversation.

**Handling the Witnesses**

What of the witnesses who professed to have handled the golden plates — potentially the chief occasion for scandal in academic conversation about the Book of Mormon? How is their claim handled in academic discourse? The vast majority of the writers in my pool simply do not discuss the testimony of the eight witnesses (or, for that matter, the testimony of the three). These writers include LDS scholars Leonard Arrington, Dean May, Kent Jackson, Philip Barlow, Richard Turley, Grant Underwood, John Lundquist, and Craig Campbell. No doubt in many cases — LDS and otherwise — the omission results from the need to be brief. Still, in light of Givens’ assertion that the eight witnesses’ testimony is “perhaps the most extensive and yet contentious

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63 Reviewers granted that Bushman’s book would be “useful to scholars who want to understand Joseph Smith, Jr. as Mormons see him” (Murdoch, 228) and was even, therefore, “the proper place to start” in understanding Mormon history (Ridge, 27). But readers would want to “go on to engage other points of view.” Robert S. Ellwood, review of *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism*, *Journal of Religion* 67 (1987): 561.


65 Of the reviews of Givens cited in footnote 61, all but one appeared in Mormon publications. The exception is Benson Bobrick’s review in the *New York Times Book Review*, which does not meet my criteria for an academic publication. I have yet to see reviews of *By the Hand of Mormon* in academic publications outside the Mormon world.
body of evidence in support of the tactile reality of supernaturally conveyed artifacts that we have in the modern age,” it is striking that most non-Mormon scholars writing on the Book of Mormon do not attempt to come to terms with that evidence. Most non-Mormon scholars, it would seem, do not regard the witnesses as a challenge that must be answered.

Six non-“faithful” scholars do discuss the witnesses’ claims: Klaus Hansen, Jan Shipps, G. St. John Stott, Stephen Williams, Douglas Davies, and R. Tripp Evans. Four of those six, Hansen, Shipps, Williams, and Evans, place the word “hefted” or “handled” in quotation marks. In addition, Shipps uses attribution when she discusses reports about the plates’ tangibility, such as their being transported in a barrel or stored in Emma’s red morocco trunk. Stott downplays the witnesses’ significance by stating that their account “has had to stand alone” and observing that “most non-Mormons” have found the witnesses’ testimony “insufficient evidence for the existence of the plates.” Davies reports that witnesses affirmed having seen the plates but says nothing about anyone claiming to have handled them. The only scholars in any category (non-Mormon, Community of Christ, LDS) who speak in factual terms about witnesses handling the plates are Richard Bushman and Terryl Givens. But Bushman’s and Givens’ use of factual language is ostensibly not intended as an assertion of facticity. No writer affirms that witnesses handled the golden plates without disclaiming advocacy or otherwise distancing him-or herself rhetorically from the witnesses’ claims. No writer, in other words, actually argues that the witnesses’ claims ought to be taken at face value, though Givens comes as close to this as he can without patently belying his professed disinterest in the truth question.

66 Givens, By the Hand of Mormon, 22. For similar remarks, see Givens, Viper on the Hearth, 91.

67 Hansen, Mormonism and the American Experience, 7; Shipps, Mormonism, 23; Williams, Fantastic Archaeology, 163; Evans, Romancing the Maya, 90.

68 Shipps, Mormonism, 13.

69 Stott, “The Seer Stone Controversy,” 37-38; Davies, Introduction to Mormonism, 62. Interestingly, when faithful scholar Grant Hardy summarizes the witnesses’ experience, he, like Davies, writes of witnesses seeing the plates but does not mention witnesses handling them: “eleven men and one woman testified that they had seen the gold plates” (Book of Mormon: Reader’s Edition, xi, my emphasis). On the other hand, Hardy reproduces the eight witnesses’ statement in an appendix (631-633) and alludes factually to the plates as displaying a tangible reality in other contexts: wrapped in linen, lying on the table, etc. (xiii).

70 Bushman, Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism, 106-107; Givens, Viper on the Hearth, 91; Givens, By the Hand of Mormon, 40. Actually, Givens’ treatments are difficult to classify as factual or not, probably by design. In both Viper on the Hearth and By the Hand of Mormon, Givens quotes the witnesses’ claim to have handled the plates, a rhetorical move that could be read as distancing. However, the overall tenor of Givens’ discussion is to cast the witnesses’ experience as empirical evidence for the plates’ tangible reality. Bushman and Givens also quote Lucy Smith’s claim to have felt the interpreters through a cloth (Bushman, 82; Givens, By the Hand of Mormon, 22).
Conclusion

What can be concluded about the conventions that govern how Book of Mormon provenance is handled in academic discourse? Nakedly deprecatory treatments of Smith’s claims are permissible but rare. One strain of scholarship holds that the truthfulness of Smith’s claims is a question lying outside academic discourse. Nevertheless, the academy remains open to attempts to explain Smith’s experiences in naturalistic (e.g., psychological) terms. In effect, this means that scholars who disbelieve Smith’s account are free to argue for alternative explanations of what really happened. Many scholars, however, express skepticism only implicitly or adopt a stance of critical detachment. In recent years, academic publishers have permitted LDS scholars to imply the objective truthfulness of Smith’s claims through the use of factual language and even sophisticated, softly pitched apologetics. But to do this, faithful scholars have had to (1) pose as disclaiming apologetics, a move that risks looking disingenuous, or (2) label themselves as believers, a move that effectively detaches their work from larger academic conversations. A lack of symmetry exists: scholars may openly argue against the orthodox account of the Book of Mormon, but faithful scholars may not openly argue for it. Again, however, the majority of writers in my pool appear uncomfortable with either of those options, preferring a pose of neutrality.

Can LDS scholars credibly voice orthodox perspectives about the Book of Mormon in non-Mormon academic forums? My analysis suggests that the answer is yes only if “voicing” an orthodox perspective means something other than “openly advocating for it.” If faithful scholars are content to speak before academic audiences in a mode analogous to show-and-tell (“here’s what Mormons believe”), they are likely to be tolerated. If faithful scholars seek to overtly persuade academic audiences that the orthodox account of the Book of Mormon is historically accurate, scandal is almost certain to result because such attempts are bound to be labeled “apologetics” or “evangelism.” Hence the consternation produced when BYU’s John Clark affirmed, during the Joseph Smith symposium at the Library of Congress in May 2005, that archaeological evidence compels the conclusion that the Book of Mormon is an ancient record translated through supernatural means. Even for a number of faithful LDS scholars, Clark had crossed a line.71

71 A video file of Clark’s remarks is available at http://www.lds.org/library/display/0,4945,510-1-3067-1,00.html; see also “Events, Projects Mark Joseph Smith’s Bicentennial,” Sunstone, May 2005, 74. As the Library of Congress event concluded, Douglas Davies wondered aloud whether this had been an academic symposium or an evangelistic one. Jan Shipps subsequently remarked that the “highly orthodox” tone of some discussions at the symposium raised questions about whether LDS scholars “know how to operate in the professional world of history.” See “Events, Projects,” 74; Carrie A. Moore, “Scholars Moving to S.L.,” Deseret News, 21 June 2005, http://deseretnews.com/dn/view2/1,4382,600143054,00.html. Though I would not consider the Library of Congress symposium an academic forum, given that it had a primarily lay audi-
The scandal provoked by Clark’s presentation reveals that scholars united in their commitment to the faithful scholarship project disagree as to its rhetorical aims. Some, like Clark, want to champion LDS convictions; others, like Bushman and Givens, realize that prevailing discursive politics in the academy require a less assertive approach. If Mormon studies are to be successfully established in the academic mainstream — the goal of ongoing efforts at Claremont, Utah Valley State College, and Utah State University — then more assertive versions of faithful scholarship will have to be excluded from forums seeking academic legitimacy. That imperative may produce an ironic situation: faithful scholars, like Bushman, who faulted the New Mormon History for being insufficiently assertive about LDS perspectives, may now find themselves in the position of having to persuade LDS colleagues to be less assertive.72

All of this raises the question: What is the goal of the less assertive versions of faithful scholarship? Bushman and Givens understand that academic discourse conventions do not allow them to factually represent orthodox Mormon claims with the purpose of persuading scholars that those claims are factual. But if their goal is not persuasion, what does motivate their desire to represent orthodox claims factually? Is it to quiet their own consciences? Is it because bringing faithful scholarship into academic venues assures Mormons that their faith is credible regardless of whether anyone else is persuaded? Are efforts to take faithful scholarship to places like Yale or the Library of Congress primarily bids for status?

Bushman has recently questioned whether Mormons should settle for the “broad tolerance” with which most academics currently handle orthodox Mormon claims. “Wouldn’t we prefer,” he asks, “to be taken seriously enough to be directly opposed?”73 My analysis suggests that most scholars are not inclined to “take seriously” Mormon claims in the sense that Bushman uses that phrase. Neutrality toward Mormon claims, or at least the appearance of neutrality, is the preferred academic game. If faithful scholars resist playing by the rules of that game because they want to argue for the authenticity of the Book of Mormon’s claim to be a supernatural translation from tangible golden plates, it is difficult to see how they can avoid scandal. Perhaps Bushman is saying he would prefer scandal. But would that not hamper efforts to settle Mormon studies in non-Mormon academic institutions?

72 In 1966, Bushman complained that “religious faith has little influence on Mormon historians” because of a failure to “replace [their] conventional, secular American presuppositions with the more penetrating insights of our faith.” Bushman, “Faithful History,” 16; republished in Believing History, 8-9.

73 Bushman, Believing History, 269.
Appendix

This appendix contains the full bibliographic information for the fifty texts that constituted my pool for analysis. Inclusion in the pool required that a text meet the following criteria:

(a) contains a summary or narrative, even if brief, of the Book of Mormon’s coming forth (the angelic visitation, the recovery of the plates from Cumorah, the translation).
(b) appears in an academic publication outside the Mormon world. I defined “academic” publications to include journals associated with universities or widely recognized professional associations and books from presses that primarily market themselves as serving academic audiences.
(c) was published within the last quarter century, 1980-2005.

The texts are listed in alphabetical order by author’s last name. An asterisk (*) indicates that there is question about whether a text meets my criteria for an “academic” publication. I included these texts in the pool to give them the benefit of the doubt but have nuanced my conclusions when necessary to indicate these texts’ questionable status.


Introduction

In this paper I shall demonstrate the close relationship between the early Dartmouth College community and curriculum (see exhibits 2 and 3); the members of the extended family of the prophet Joseph Smith, who were an integral part of that community from 1771 to 1817 (see exhibit 1 and exhibit 4); and subsequent Mormon doctrine and community, which emerged under the direction of Joseph Smith (see exhibit 5). I shall proceed to develop a plausible intellectual development view of Joseph Smith from the perspective of his brother Hyrum Smith.

The early Dartmouth community organized in the 1770s and its expanding curriculum through 1815 provided a unique vantage point from which Hyrum, who entered the Dartmouth community in 1811 and left in 1816, could perceptively view as well as participate in future Mormon doctrinal and community development. The defining of the Dartmouth community and curriculum would soon be followed by the subsequent divining of the Mormon doctrine and community.

Early Dartmouth intellectual inquiry focused on philosophical and theological questions, which challenged America as it emerged from New England Puritanism to face the challenges of the Enlightenment. Many of these same questions would later be systematically answered by the prophet Joseph Smith.

The effort to build the Dartmouth community and curriculum by Dartmouth founder, Eleazar Wheelock, and his son, John Wheelock who succeeded him in 1800, chaotically came to an end with the campus political crisis from 1811 to 1819. The crisis was eventually settled by the Dartmouth College Case, the landmark United States Supreme Case, which preserved the sanctity of charters. This landmark decision marked the end of the Dartmouth’s “School of the Prophets” and its original mission to teach the Indians.

Fortuitously, Hyrum was able to observe this crisis as it literally unfolded before his eyes. He could assess the words and actions of as well as the results achieved by the warring factions. His later role as a peacemaker most likely
developed from this vantage point.

Subsequently, Hyrum and several members of the extended Smith family with ties to Dartmouth would go on to assist Joseph Smith in building Mormon doctrine and community. When crisis threatened his community in Nauvoo, Joseph Smith was able to responsively secure from the State of Illinois for the community a strong charter, which protected Nauvoo against its enemies, due to the precedent set in the Dartmouth College Case, until the threatened Mormon community was able to reach survival mass.

**John Smith and the Dartmouth Curriculum**

John Smith was born December 21, 1752 in Rowley, Massachusetts, to Joseph Smith and Elizabeth Palmer, both cousins of Asael Smith and Mary Duty, the paternal grandparents of the prophet Joseph Smith. Since Mary Duty grew up in Rowley where her family lived for generations before her marriage to Asael and subsequent move to nearby Ipswich in 1767, it is quite certain that she knew her mother’s first cousin Elizabeth, John’s mother. John, however, was sent off to Dummer Academy in Byefield near Topsfield and Rowley, Massachusetts, soon after his parents died when he was a young boy. At Dummer Academy, the first boarding school in America, John soon excelled in Greek and Latin under classicist Samuel Moody and read through Homer’s Iliad and Odyssey twice and the lesser Greek poets in Greek and Cicero and the lesser Roman poets in Latin. Samuel Moody, a friend of Royal Governor John Wentworth of New Hampshire, was invited to join the governor’s entourage and attend the first Dartmouth graduation in 1771 the same year that Joseph Smith Sr. was born to Asael Smith and Mary Duty in Topsfield, Massachusetts. Moody asked John Smith, who was scheduled to enter Yale in the fall, to join him. John was fascinated by the wilderness setting of the college and Eleazar Wheelock was very impressed with him and invited John to stay and enter the junior class.

John was soon studying Hebrew and ancient texts and graduated in 1773. From 1774 to 1778 John was appointed tutor in ancient languages and studied divinity under Eleazar Wheelock. In 1778 he was appointed the first Professor at Dartmouth. John and tutor Bezaleel Woodward helped keep the college functioning while tutors Sylvanus Ripley and John Wheelock were serving in the Revolutionary Army. Later that year, John Smith also prepared the natural philosophy lectures for Bezaleel Woodward who was teaching mathematics, acting as treasurer of the college and dabbling in local politics. Soon after,

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2 Unpublished manuscript biography of John Smith, Susan Mason Smith, (1842, Hanover, NH)
3 Susan Mason Smith.
4 George T. Chapman, 15.
John developed the ancient language course, which at first included Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Chaldaic, Syriac, Assyric, and later added Arabic and Coptic Egyptian. He was also co-pastor of the college church from 1780 to 1787 with Sylvanus Ripley until Ripley died in a sleighing accident in February 1787 and sole pastor thereafter until his death in 1809.\(^5\)

In 1787 he began developing a set of theology lectures, which were finally completed in 1804, a year before the prophet Joseph Smith was born in Sharon, Vermont, and John was preparing them for publication in 1809 when he passed away. He also wrote the Dartmouth Plays, which were designed to break the monotony of the recitation method of learning. His Hebrew grammar, which in 1773 but was rejected for publication because of his young age, was finally published in Boston in 1804 and his Latin grammar soon afterwards. His Greek grammar was in final stages of publication when he died in 1809.\(^6\)

In 1803 John Smith was recognized by Brown College with a Doctor of Sacred Theology degree for his many contributions.\(^7\) When 11 year old sophomore George Tichnor sketched the campus in 1805, Smith was represented in the portly figure in the lower right hand surveying his campus domain while now Dartmouth President John Wheelock the diminutive central figure is walking with his face in a book demonstrating Tichnor’s view of the relative importance of the two at that point in time.\(^8\) Smith also served as college trustee, college librarian, and still found time to run the town bookstore from his home. He built much of the early Dartmouth curriculum in close consultation with Wheelock. As revealed in Wheelock’s 1809 eulogy of Smith, they spent long hours coordinating the intricately correlated Dartmouth curriculum. Ancient language, ancient literature, ancient scriptural texts, and theology, were tightly integrated with Newtonian astronomy and earth science.\(^9\)

Smith and Wheelock were perfectly matched to work closely together for almost 35 years. It was Smith’s poor eyesight and scholarly methodology, however, which left the true legacy of carefully crafted and well annotated lectures that preserve the true richness of the early Dartmouth learning experience. He prepared his lectures with such care and diligence that simply reading them out loud as marked provides a deep reading of the man, his interests, his passions and his point of view.\(^10\) His favorite scripture with which he punctuates controversial material was, “For now we see through a glass darkly but in the end we shall all see eye to eye.”

The astronomy section of his Natural Philosophy lectures begins with

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\(^5\) The College on the Hill, Ralph Nading Hill, (1964, Hanover, NH), 58.

\(^6\) Susan Mason Smith.

\(^7\) George T. Chapman, 15.

\(^8\) Ralph Nading Hill, 56.

\(^9\) Eulogy of John Smith, John Wheelock, (1809, Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH).

\(^10\) Dartmouth Theology Lectures 1787-1809, [hereafter DTL] John Smith, (Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH).
Ptolemy and proceeds through Newton but ends with interesting speculations on multiple peopled worlds and the age of the universe. Smith speculated that if an infinite creator could make one perfect system, why not many and if many why not millions. The earth science section covers the known science through the late 18th century but ends with equally interesting speculations about the peopling of America with special notice given to the marble inscription in Canaanite found near Tangiers mentioned by the Roman Historian Procopius which states: “We fly from Joshua, son of Nun, the Robber.” Smith felt that if Canaanites could reach West Africa why not the Americas with favorable winds and currents.

**Early Dartmouth Students of Interest in Mormon Studies**

Solomon Spaulding, class of 1785, followed the above lecture material closely when he wrote *Manuscript Found* in 1812 in eastern Ohio. After graduating Solomon spent several years as an evangelist before his health and spirit failed. He soon became a Deist and joined his brother in commercial ventures near Cherry Hill, New York next to the Oneida and Stockbridge reservations before moving on to land speculation and other ventures in Ohio. After excavating some Indian mounds on his property, in which sophisticated ancient Indian remains were found, he decided to write his tale of the origin of the Indians, beginning with 2 odysseys following John Smith’s suggested Bering Strait crossing by land and an Atlantic sea crossing through the Mediterranean. Spaulding then added an Iliad focused on the Helen of Troy model but with a reverse ending. The prince of the south visited the king of the north and stole his wife. The king of the north in classic Homeric fashion raised an army and went to retrieve his wife. To explain the condition of the savage Native Americans, Solomon has the less civilized Trojan-type win.

Ethan Smith, class of 1790, also followed the lecture material including the early theology lectures begun by John Smith in 1787 when Ethan wrote *View of the Hebrews* in 1823. After graduating in 1790, Ethan studied with Dartmouth pastors Eden Burroughs, trustee, and Asa Burton, class of 1777, in Thetford, Vermont before beginning his first pastorate in Haverhill, New Hampshire, across the Connecticut River. In 1800 he took a new position in Hopkinton near Concord, New Hampshire. By 1811 he began his profuse writing career covering theology and prophecy.

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11 *Dartmouth Natural Philosophy Lectures 1780*, [hereafter, DNPL] John Smith, (Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH).
12 DNPL 1780, John Smith.
13 *Manuscript Found* Manuscript, Solomon Spaulding, (1812, Ohio).
14 George T. Chapman, 39.
15 George T. Chapman, 57.
16 George T. Chapman, 57.
Ethan’s many doctrinal works on such subjects as infant baptism, women in Zion, the Godhead, prophecy, etc. were soon well circulated on campus immediately at Dartmouth after they were well received on the Dartmouth pastoral circuit. His son Lyndon arrived in Hanover as a freshman in the fall of 1813 and seems to have promoted his father’s books to the campus literary and theological societies.\textsuperscript{17} Student names appear in a number of the library copies. In 1817 the same year that Lyndon graduated, Ethan took a new position in Hebron, New York between the Oneida and Stockbridge reservations in the area worked by Dartmouth missionaries in earlier times. From 1817 to 1822 he researched material for his \textit{View of the Hebrews} before he moved to a new pastorate in Poultney, Vermont, in 1822.\textsuperscript{18} The 1825 edition of the book contains more information from Elias Boudinot’s, \textit{A Star in the West}, and Alexander Von Humbolt’s 1814 work on Mesoamerica probably suggested by Lyndon from his study in John Wheelock’s class. Ethan used a standard Bering Strait crossing for his odyssey and war of attrition for his Iliad.\textsuperscript{19}

After studying with Asa Burton, Elijah Lyman, class of 1787, began his long pastorate in Brookfield, Vermont.\textsuperscript{20} After his brother Richard died in 1802 in Lebanon, New Hampshire, he brought Richard’s family from Lebanon, New Hampshire, to live with him in Brookfield, Orange County, Vermont just north of Tunbridge. Elijah trained Clarissa, Richard’s daughter from twelve years of age along with Dartmouth graduates who were preparing to go on missions to the Indians. In 1815 Elijah married Clarissa and John Smith while he was training Alfred Finney, Dartmouth class of 1814, before he left on his life long mission to the Western Cherokee in Arkansas.\textsuperscript{21} George A. Smith arrived in the new family in 1817 with Caroline and John Lyman to follow in 1820 and 1823. Clarissa and George A. would read the Book of Mormon when received from Joseph Smith Sr. in 1830 and recommend it strongly to John’s brothers. George even defended the book when challenged by local “professors” of religion.\textsuperscript{22}

\textbf{Dartmouth Theology Lectures: Source of much Mormon Doctrine?}

According to John Smith’s widow, Susan Mason, John Smith’s \textit{Theology} lectures represent his opus magna, which he was preparing for publication at the time of his death. She states in a short biography of her husband attached to the almost complete manuscript of his theology lectures that he felt it was the most challenging of his various undertakings and required 17 years to prepare

\textsuperscript{17} George T. Chapman, 190.  
\textsuperscript{18} George T. Chapman, 57.  
\textsuperscript{19} \textit{View of the Hebrews}, Ethan Smith, (1823/25, Poultney, VT).  
\textsuperscript{20} George T. Chapman, 46.  
\textsuperscript{21} George T. Chapman, 176.  
the original 34 lectures and another five years to reduce them to an edited manuscript.\textsuperscript{23} These lectures trace his evolution from Greek classicist to ancient text specialist to Arminian theologian and are probably best summarized in 20 topics as follows:\textsuperscript{24}

1. Greek philosophy provided his concept of the Preexistence
2. Atonement Covenant was made before the earth was
3. Plan of Salvation was agreed to in the Preexistence
4. Father, Son and sons of men were together in the Preexistence
5. Spiritual death was man’s condition after the Fall
6. Son’s Church would exist in all ages after the Fall
7. Types and shadows of the covenant found in Scriptures
8. Oaths and covenants serve as Deity’s legal structure
9. Light, borrowed light and the light of reason would guide
10. Melchizedek Priesthood is co-eternal with God
11. The Priesthood is the source of the Son’s authority
12. Aaronic Priesthood promised to Aaron’s descendants
13. Free Agency and the right to choose is integral to plan
14. Degrees of Glory is the structure of the Eternities
15. Consecration to Christ is required for highest exaltation
16. Revelation required to know ultimate nature of God
17. Spirit is a simpler form of matter
18. The prosperity cycle is the natural direction of history
19. Millions of peopled worlds
20. Father argues for justice and Son argues for mercy

The Tunbridge Cowderys: Why Oliver?

The Cowderys of Tunbridge were neighbors to the Mack and Smith Families and settled in Tunbridge, Vermont about the same time and both the Cowdery and Smith families intermarried with the Sanford Family. The patriarch of the Cowdery clan in Tunbridge was Jabez Cowdery, uncle of William Cowdery, Oliver Cowdery’s father, who settled in Wells, Vermont, near Poultney, Vermont. Many of Oliver’s family were members of Ethan Smith’s congregation in Poultney, Vermont and were aware of \textit{View of the Hebrews} and Ethan’s other works. The Cowdery family relationships and the Cowdery family awareness of Ethan Smith were especially good preparation for later events in New York and Pennsylvania that we shall study in more detail later in this paper. The later interaction of the Smith and Cowdery families will be integral to the bringing forth of the Book of Mormon.

\textsuperscript{23} Susan Mason Smith.
\textsuperscript{24} DTL, John Smith.
Hyrum Smith Enters Moor’s School

Lucy Mack Smith in her history of the Smith family noted that Hyrum entered into Moor’s Academy in 1811. John Wheelock, President of Dartmouth College and Moor’s Academy, would have interviewed Hyrum briefly at matriculation for the first of many periodic interviews they would have and would also teach Moor’s Academy one day a week as relief for the preceptor Joseph Perry, class of 1810. Stephen Mack, Hyrum’s cousin, was also a student at Moor’s Academy. John Ball, class of 1820, Hyrum’s Aunt Sally’s brother would enter Dartmouth in 1816 and in May 1832 would meet with the Mormon leaders in Jackson County, Missouri on his way to Oregon with the Wyeth Expedition. It is not certain whether Elijah Paine, Dartmouth trustee who held a mortgage on Solomon Mack’s farm in Sharon, Vermont, influenced this outcome or whether the phenomenon resulted from mere coincidence. Until March of 1813 Hyrum was exposed to this unique intellectual environment, which included Moor’s Academy, Dartmouth College and the Dartmouth Medical School and its new medical theatre, which was completed after his arrival on campus. A sick Hyrum returned home to a family already sick with Typhoid fever.

The 1813 Typhoid Epidemic and Joseph Smith’s Leg Operation

Sophronia almost died and Joseph suffered a complication, osteomyelitis, which required leg surgery. After initial surgery by relative Phineas Parkhurst, class of 1805, failed, Drs. Stone, Nathan Smith, and Cyrus Perkins from the Dartmouth Medical School completed a successful surgery by removing a substantial piece of infected bone. Cyrus Perkins, professor at the medical school, was also son-in-law of Professor John Smith and therefore another Smith relative. Hyrum would remain home for a year to attend homebound Joseph, who remained on crutches for the next four years and be tutored by Hyrum. Possibly when Joseph made a recuperative trip to Salem with Uncle Jesse, Hyrum was able to return to Moor’s Academy in 1814 as a charity scholar, a status shared by children of deceased members of the faculty, children of missionaries in the field, and those with promise to enter the ministry. Hyrum’s classmates included children of Drs. Nathan Smith and Cyrus Perkins and

25 The History of Joseph Smith, Lucy Mack Smith, (1845), 59.
26 George T. Chapman, 200.
27 Evening and Morning Star, (June,1832, Independence, MO).
28 Richard L. Anderson, 221.
29 Lucy Mack Smith, 59.
31 George T. Chapman, 124.
32 Moor’s School Records 1813-16, Joseph Perry, (Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH).
deceased Professors John Smith and John Hubbard as well as many Wheelock relatives. Twenty of his classmates would graduate from Dartmouth and one, Clement Long, would become Professor of Divinity at Dartmouth. Most of his schoolmates’ fathers were Masons including William Woodward whose grandfather Bezaleel Woodward founded the lodge in Hanover and father William Woodward was current head of the lodge. Hyrum would also attend over 1000 morning and evening Presbyterian chapel and Sunday services, which were mandatory.

Each day Hyrum observed the federal architecture of the buildings on campus including the construction of the Dartmouth Hotel, which was completed in 1814. Later buildings in Kirtland and Nauvoo for which Hyrum would be building overseer bear strong resemblance to the campus buildings. Hyrum even had the opportunity to observe such notables as Daniel Webster, class of 1801, who had a house in Hanover, and Thaddeus Stevens, class of 1814, a powerful figure in the House of Representatives during Reconstruction. In his final year in school, Hyrum experienced a yearlong revival that was punctuated by lightning and thunderstorms, earthquakes, and a well reported epiphany.

Affiliation with Freemasonry began early in Hanover with James Wheelock and Eleazar Wheelock Jr., John Payne and other townspeople in Hanover, who were not directly involved in college. Soon however in 1788 Professor Bezaleel Woodward, and Wheelock relative Davenport Phelps, class of 1775, petitioned for a lodge in Hanover, which was finally commissioned in 1796. By the time of Bezaleel’s death in 1804, his son William was a master mason and sons and in-laws of Sylvanus Ripley were actively involved. John Smith acted as chaplain and his son John entered in 1812.

In 1799 the board of trustees at the insistence of the ardent Calvinist Congregationalists on the board passed a resolution stating that if any student joined the Masons he would be expelled. John Wheelock, however, made no effort to enforce the resolution until 1812 when the Congregationalists on the board, who gained control in 1810, forced the issue and the Masons agreed to stop proselytizing students in 1812. From 1796 to 1812 over 115 students entered the lodge. Hyrum attended school with many children of Freemasons. These included William Woodward, John Smith, the Wheelocks, Cyrus Perkins, etc. At the time Hyrum’s name was still spelled Hiram. A better Masonic name could not be found for it ties in well with two of the three characters of the Masonic myth, Solomon, Hiram of Tyre, and Hiram Abiff the chief architect of Solomon’s temple. This spelling indicates that possibly Joseph Smith, Sr.,

33 Franklin Lodge Records.
34 George T. Chapman, 174.
35 Franklin Masonic Lodge Records.
36 Franklin Masonic Lodge Records.
37 Franklin Masonic Lodge Records.
Stephen Mack, or Asael Smith may have had some contact with the Masonic Lodge in Tunbridge, Vermont, or the one in nearby Randolph when it opened just north of Tunbridge, Vermont in 1798. However, Joseph Smith, Sr., was soon rejected by the Randolph lodge in 1801 possibly for his actual or perceived connection with Nathaniel Wood in nearby Rutland. After John Wheelock’s death in 1817 the lodge moved to Lebanon, New Hampshire.

The Campus Clash between Calvinism and Arminianism

The college church operated under Presbyterian style government but its doctrine was Arminian based on the ideas on free agency of Jacob Arminius, who succeeded John Calvin as Professor of Theology at the University of Geneva. Arminianism became an increasing item of contention and would lead to hostility between Wheelock and Smith on one side and the Calvinist board on the other and would culminate in the landmark Dartmouth College Case. The town church built in 1795 originally met the needs of both the town and the college.

By 1800, however, a rift had formed which caused the congregation to split between a Congregational and a Presbyterian faction that initially attempted to share the building. After 1804 an increasing number of townspeople joined the Congregationalist side when Roswell Shurtleff, recently appointed Professor of Divinity, renounced his Arminianism and joined the Calvinist Congregationalist side and refused with board support to preach at college services. The Presbyterian faction then chose to meet at a new location and the students returned to the college chapel for Sunday services.

The Campus Revivals of 1814-15 and Related Epiphanies

An interesting epiphany occurred during the yearlong revival that punctuated Hyrum’s last year on campus. Levi Spaulding, a Dartmouth student, class of 1815, and relative of Solomon Spaulding, felt unworthy, took a walk along the bluff above the river with a friend, knelt down in a grove of trees and prayed, saw a flash of light, felt forgiven and then spent the rest of his life in the mission field in India. This revival seemed to touch all students. John Wheelock in letters to his sister, brother-in-law and Scottish Missionary Fund trustee Jedediah Morse noted that he had not before witnessed such an outpouring of the spirit. Benjamin Hale, class of 1818 and later Dartmouth

38 Randolph Masonic Lodge Records.
39 Ralph Nading Hill, 58.
40 Ralph Nading Hill, 58.
41 Ralph Nading Hill, 205.
42 Letters to his Sister and Brother-in-law David McClure, John Wheelock, (1815, Hanover, NH).
chemistry professor further documented the extent of the revival from the point of view in letters to his father and uncle.\(^{43}\)

**Prelude to the Dartmouth College Case**

The battle between the Calvinist, Congregationalist dominated board and the Arminian, Presbyterian President John Wheelock simmered until 1810 when the deaths of John Smith and Lt Governor Peter Olcott gave the vocal minority a fortuitous majority of 1.\(^{44}\) The new majority proceeded to turn down Wheelock’s choices for successor trustees, William H. Woodward, Treasurer of the college, and Josiah Dunham, Lt. Governor of Vermont, simply because they were Freemasons and friendly to Wheelock.\(^{45}\)

John Wheelock then executed a defensive strategy from 1811-15 that led to his dismissal from his 35 year assignment of teaching the senior class at the end of 1814 and his removal from the presidency in 1815 after he published his *History of Dartmouth College and Moor’s School* in which he criticized various actions of the trustees. Wheelock then appealed to the New Hampshire legislature as successor charter grantor. The legislature chose to amend the charter by adding trustees and making the college a state institution renamed Dartmouth University. The old trustees appealed to the New Hampshire Supreme Court but lost.\(^{46}\)

When the old trustees chose to appeal to the United States Supreme Court, Wheelock asked Daniel Webster, class of 1801, to defend his case. Webster reviewed the case and then told Wheelock that the trustees had wronged him under the charter but that the remedy imposed by the New Hampshire Legislature, which unilaterally amended the charter by adding trustees, was a greater wrong. Wheelock knew his cause was lost and died early in 1817. After a long trial in 1819 the United States Supreme Court under Chief Justice John Marshall decided the case in favor of the old trustees and preserved the sanctity of charters. Joseph Smith in 1840 sought the Nauvoo Charter after the extermination order in Missouri “to save the Church.” Joseph relied on the Dartmouth College Case precedent and the careful wording in the Nauvoo Charter itself that it could not be rescinded unless State or Federal laws were broken.

**Smith Family Migrates from Dartmouth Vicinity to Palmyra**

After three difficult winters when over 25 percent of the population of

\(^{43}\) Letters to his Father and Uncle, Benjamin Hale, (1815, Hanover, NH).

\(^{44}\) Ralph Nading Hill, 59.

\(^{45}\) George T. Chapman, 51.

\(^{46}\) *Sketches of the History of Dartmouth College and Moor’s School*, John Wheelock, (1815, Hanover, NH).
upper Vermont left the State, by early 1817. Revivals were active in the area and it is likely that Hyrum would have been interested in them soon after arriving. Joseph’s recollection that at about age 12 soon after arriving in Palmyra that he was “concerned for his soul” suggests that possibly due to discussions with Hyrum, Joseph became interested in revivals. Lucy, Sophronia, and Samuel Harrison probably also attended the early revivals since they soon with Hyrum joined the Presbyterian Church as early as 1817. Early participation in revivals would correlate well with Hyrum’s revival experiences in 1814-15.

Hyrum’s affinity for Presbyterianism and Joseph’s preference for Methodism probably is best explained by Joseph’s sensitivity to the substance of doctrine and Hyrum’s past experience with form of worship. Hyrum may also have attended the Vienna revivals in 1819, but he may have joined with Presbyterians earlier. The exact dates are uncertain. Hyrum may well have even attended the book promotion presentation at the City Hotel in Palmyra in 1820 of *A Star in the West* by Elias Boudinot, Presbyterian President of the American Bible Society. The book deals with ancient America and was a source for Ethan Smith.

Joseph Smith’s First Vision, or visitation, of 1820, especially as described in his first published version, is quite consistent both with Hyrum’s experiences in Hanover and other local and regional restorationist phenomena. Hyrum and Joseph most likely had many long discussions about such things. Hyrum with his Moor’s School experience with Indians and their traditions would have been fully prepared to participate in the family discussions in which Joseph discussed life among the ancient Americans. Hyrum may have seen Ethan Smith’s *View of the Hebrews* 1823 and 1825 editions in the Palmyra library or in bookstore announcements in the Palmyra newspaper similar to the ones he had probably seen which appeared in the *Dartmouth Gazette* announcing the arrival of earlier Ethan Smith books at John Smith’s bookstore in Hanover.

### Hyrum Joins with Presbyterians and Freemasons

Though exact dates are uncertain, early attendance at revivals after arriving in Palmyra and early joining with the Presbyterians, as early as 1817, fit best with Hyrum’s past experiences in Hanover. Joseph’s independent study of Methodism is consistent with his adolescent development, which was well underway. Joseph told Lucy that Presbyterianism was wrong, after Hyrum had joined with them and after Joseph had studied Arminian Methodism, shortly after the First Vision. Hyrum, Lucy, Sophronia, and Samuel Harrison were

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47 *Migration from Vermont*, Lewis D. Stilwell, (1948, Montpelier, VT), 125-139.

finally dismissed from the Presbyterian Church in 1830\textsuperscript{49} after affirming the Book of Mormon. Hyrum also became an initiate and joined the Mt. Moriah Lodge #112 in Palmyra\textsuperscript{50} after joining the Presbyterian Church and appears to have advanced three degrees to Master Mason. The name Hiram has generally been closely associated with the Masonic myth concerning Solomon, Hiram of Tyre and Hiram Abiff the overseer of the building of Solomon’s temple.

**Hyrum Becomes a School Teacher and School Trustee**

Hyrum became a schoolteacher to support his wife in 1826 and soon after supported the rest of the family when the Smiths in 1829 lost possession of their new home for failure to make a timely last payment on an installment sale. Hyrum actually had two teaching jobs.\textsuperscript{51} As his Uncle Jesse had been school trustee\textsuperscript{52} in Tunbridge, Vermont, Hyrum was elected to the school board of trustees in Palmyra, New York. He soon was interviewing candidates for schoolteacher. Lyman Cowdery was his first choice. Perhaps, this was due to his acquaintance with Lyman’s cousins in Tunbridge, Vermont. Though Lyman was Hyrum’s first choice to be teacher, Lyman instead chose to work for the sheriff. Hyrum’s second choice was Oliver Cowdery. Lucy soon asked Oliver, a cousin of the Tunbridge Cowderys, to board in the new home in October 1828 with the whole family. Perhaps this suggests a closer relationship than the joint intermarriage of the Smiths and the Tunbridge Cowderys with the Tunbridge Sanfords. Several members of Oliver’s family from Wells, Vermont, attended Ethan Smith’s congregation in Poultney, Vermont. Oliver also had reason to read Ethan Smith’s *View of the Hebrews* while he still lived near Ethan in Vermont or after Oliver’s family and the Tunbridge Cowderys moved to Western New York from Vermont by 1828.

**Parallels Between Dartmouth Curriculum and Mormon Doctrine**

Oliver soon joined Joseph in New Harmony, Pennsylvania to act as permanent scribe to continue the preparation of the Book of Mormon. Oliver and Joseph would soon receive the Aaronic Priesthood in May 1829. It is somewhat curious that they did not receive the Melchizedek Priesthood until Hyrum arrived later in the month for baptism bringing his knowledge of the Melchizedek Priesthood from his Masonic connections. Early revelations for the Doctrine and Covenants continued to be received as needed. There are a number of interesting parallels between Dartmouth themes and those of the

\textsuperscript{49} Presbyterian Church Records.

\textsuperscript{50} Mt. Moriah Masonic Lodge Records.

\textsuperscript{51} *Hyrum Smith: Man of Integrity*, Jeffrey O’Driscoll, (2003, Deseret Book, Salt Lake City, UT), 25.

\textsuperscript{52} *The First Mormon*, Donna Hill, (1977, Salt Lake City, UT).
Book of Mormon (see exhibits 3 and 5). First is the focus on the Atonement. Then we see the prosperity cycle, admonition to avoid kings and elitist cliques. Types and shadows are continually emphasized. The structure of the book itself feature 3 *Odysseys* and 2 *Iliads* compared with Solomon Spaulding’s *Manuscript Found* which has 2 *Odysseys* and 1 *Iliad* while Ethan Smith’s *View of the Hebrews* has only 1 *Odyssey* and 1 *Iliad*.

The Books of Moses and Abraham, which catch Joseph’s attention after the Book of Mormon is finished also have many parallels with John Smith’s astronomy lectures especially the concept of multiple peopled worlds and focus on the stars and light. The Plan of Salvation is similar to the one in John Smith’s theology lectures along with the Enoch emphasis which has strong Masonic overtones. The Kirtland “School of the Prophets” with its focus on missionary training and the study of Hebrew are also quite similar to the Dartmouth “School of the Prophets.” Even the federal design form of the Kirtland Temple, the construction of which was overseen by Hyrum in good Masonic fashion, bares a strong resemblance to the federal design form of Moor’s School when the dormers from the Dartmouth Hotel, completed in 1814, are added to the third floor as a late addition to the building plan. The Kirtland Temple follows the First Presidency vision received by Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and Frederick G. Williams in substance but Moor’s School in form.

**Other Related Dartmouth Graduates**

In many ways John Wentworth,\(^{53}\) class of 1836, was as important to the survival of Mormonism as Governor John Wentworth was to the birth of Dartmouth. He showed a keen interest in the well being of the Church as early as May 25, 1840 when he providentially stated “let Illinois repeat the bloody tragedies of Missouri and one or two other States follow and the Mormon religion will not only be known throughout our land, but will be very extensively embraced.”\(^{54}\) It is quite certain that he knew that Albert Carrington,\(^{55}\) class of 1834, who joined the Saints in Nauvoo. Knowing that Mormon beliefs were in some ways similar to those of John Humphrey Noyes,\(^{56}\) class of 1830, Wentworth inquired of Joseph in 1842 about Mormon beliefs as he sensed a connection to Mormonism.

In response, Joseph prepared his well-known letter to John Wentworth in which he succinctly summarized the Book of Mormon and stated Mormon beliefs in the form of the “Articles of Faith.” When circumstances were approaching a crisis, then Congressman Wentworth even attempted to have Joseph appointed to lead an expedition to secure Oregon for the United States.

\(^{53}\) Charles T. Chapman, 288.
\(^{54}\) *Chicago Democrat*, John Wentworth, May 25, 1840.
\(^{55}\) Charles T. Chapman, 271.
\(^{56}\) Charles T. Chapman, 254.
In general, Wentworth was helpful while the church was growing to critical mass under the protection of the Nauvoo Charter which Joseph secured in 1840 based on the protections assured by the Dartmouth College Case. After Moor’s School Stephen Mack, Hyrum’s cousin, joined his father in Michigan to trade with the Indians but soon went on to Illinois and Wisconsin to become the chief trader for the American Fur Company with the Wisconsin Indians as well as their most trusted Anglo confidant and advisor.  

In 1843 the Chippewa Indians sold their timber rights above Black River Falls to Lyman Wight and George C. Miller for the “Pineries” project to supply lumber for rapidly growing Nauvoo where his mother and two sisters lived after the death of his father.

Summary and Conclusions

Dartmouth College had significant influence on the LDS Church, both direct and indirect. The Dartmouth College Case saved Dartmouth College and provided the legal precedent to preserve the LDS Church in Nauvoo long enough for it to grow to critical mass. The Dartmouth Medical School played a significant role in saving Joseph Smith’s leg. Hyrum’s education at Moor’s school provided a tutor for unschooled Joseph. Hyrum’s exposure to Dartmouth’s theology, cosmology, ancient language studies, architecture, Ethan Smith’s son Lyndon, and Solomon Spaulding’s nephew James Spaulding from Sharon, Vermont, who was attending the Medical School, all provided discussion material for tutoring Joseph during his long recovery from leg surgery that kept Joseph at home on crutches until the Smith family reached Palmyra. The future development of Mormon Doctrine so parallels the Dartmouth Lectures that it is hard not to perceive their stimulating possibilities. Perhaps those discussions prepared Joseph Smith in his 12th year to be “concerned for his soul” soon after the Smith family arrived in Palmyra and in a few short years to receive his First Vision. The rest we know as “Mormon History.”

57 Letters to his Sister Lovisa Mack Cooper 1818-50, Stephen Mack, (Bentley Library, Detroit, MI).
58 Diary of George C. Miller.
59 Stephen Mack.
60 Joseph Smith’s Personal History, Joseph Smith (Nauvoo, IL: 1842).
EXHIBIT 1: KEY SMITH FAMILY TIES TO DARTMOUTH

ROBERT SMITH

SAMUEL SMITH

JOHN PALMER

MARY PALMER

FRANCIS PALMER

First Cousins

Samuel Smith

Mary Palmer

Rowley, Massachusetts

Solomon Mack

Asael Smith m. Mary Duty

Robert Smith

Moor's Academy

Samuel Smith

Mary Smith

Samuel Smith d. 1813

Joseph Smith d. 1773

Joseph's Doctors in 1813

Solomon Aikens d. 1784

Mary Smith

Phineas Parkhurst d. 1805

Jesse Smith

Daniel Mack m. Polly Smith

Stephen Mack m. Polly Smith

Lucy Mack m. Joseph Smith

Joseph Smith

John Smith m. Clarissa Lyman

Elijah Lyman

Silas Smith m. Mary Aikens

Solomon Aikens m. Clarissa Lyman

Mary Smith

Phineas Parkhurst d. 1805

Cyrus Perkins d. 1800

Joseph's Doctors in 1813

John Smith d. 1800

Sally Ball d. 1811

Hiram Smith

Hiram Smith 1811

Hiram Smith 1816

Joseph Smith

George A. Smith

John L. Smith

Silas Smith

Joseph's Doctors in 1813

PHINEAS PARKHURST d. 1805

Jesse Smith

Joseph's Doctors in 1813

Stephen Mack m. Polly Smith

Lucy Mack m. Joseph Smith

Joseph Smith

Elijah Lyman

Mary Smith

Silas Smith

Joseph Smith

Moor's Academy
EXHIBIT 2: SCHOOLS OF THE PROPHET

THE PROFESSORS AND THE PROPHET

Defining Early Dartmouth Community & Curriculum

Divining Early Mormon Doctrine & Community

SPIRIT   NH→NY SPIRIT
REVIVALS   REVIVALS
EPIPHANY   THEOPHANY
PRESBYTERIAN   PRESBYTERIAN
FREEMASONRY   FREEMASONRY
HIRAM   FAMILY FOCUS   JOSEPH
TUTOR   HIRAM→MORONI   TUTOR
NATHAN SMITH   MEDICINE   ALVIN SMITH
MOOR’S STUDENT   SCHOOL TEACHER
TRUSTEES KNOWN   SCHOOL TRUSTEE
JABEZ COWDERY   ——— Enoch   ——— OLIVER COWDERY
THEOLOGY   THEOLOGY
ELIJAH LYMAN   CLARISSA LYMAN
PEOPLING OF AMERICA   BOOK OF MORMON
COSMOLOGY   ASTRONOMY   MOSES AND ABRAHAM
HEBREW   ——— SCHOOL OF THE PROPHETS   ——— HEBREW
STEPHEN MACK   STEPHEN MACK
JOHN WENTWORTH   ——— INTERESTING   ——— JOHN WENTWORTH
JOHN SMITH/ASAEL SMITH   ——— FAMILY   ——— HYRUM SMITH/JOSEPH SMITH
ELEAZAR/JOHN WHEELOCK   ——— RELATIONSHIPS   ——— CYRUS WHEELOCK
DARTMOUTH COLLEGE   NAUVOO UNIVERSITY
INTELLECT   INTELLECT
**EXHIBIT 3: EARLY DARTMOUTH CURRICULUM**

1769 - 1780

- *John Wheelock*
- *1817*

**RISE AND FALL OF NATIONS**
- Von Humboldt on Mesoamerica

**CIVIL & ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY**
- Intellectual & Moral Philosophy

**Dartmouth Seal**
- Active Freemasonry

**1770 - 1780**

- John Wheelock
- Active Freemasonry

**1787 - 1810**

- John Smith
- Natural Philosophy:
  - Astronomy
  - Earth Science
  - Peopling of America

**1769 - 1820**

- Languages:
  - Greek, Latin
  - Hebrew, Chaldaic
  - Assyric, Syriac
  - Coptic, Arabic, etc.

**1770 - 1820**

- Arminian Theology:
  - Atonement agreed to in the Preexistence
  - Aaronic & Melchizedek priesthood gov’t.,
  - free agency, Christ’s Church in all ages,
  - Law of Consecration, Degrees of Glory,
  - Nature of God known only by revelation, etc.

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**Manuscript Found**

- Solomon Spaulding d. 1785
- 1812
  - Contains John Smith material through 1785; Possibly available via Levi Spaulding d. 1815

- Ethan Smith d. 1790
- 1823
  - View of the Hebrews
  - Contains John Smith material through 1790
  - Plus his 1817-22 research at Oneida Reservation, etc.

- Joseph Smith d. 1844
- 1825
  - View of the Hebrews
  - Also contains John Wheelock material through 1815, probably from Lyndon Smith d. 1817 (Ethan’s son)

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**EXHIBIT 4: FAMILY AND COMMUNITY DISCOURSE**

**FREEMASONRY**

- Hiram named in 1800
- Joseph Smith Sr. rejected in 1801

**VERMONT**
- Universalism
- Nathaniel Wood
- William Bullard

**NEW HAMPSHIRE**
- Arminianism
- Jacob Osgood
- Jacob Cochrane

**WARs**
- Earthquakes
- Plagues
- Lightning Storms
- Cold Winters
- Revivals
- Epiphanies
Exhibit 5: Conceptual Comparison

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professor John Smith</th>
<th>Prophet Joseph Smith</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual Spirit</td>
<td>Spiritual Intellect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Search the Scriptures</td>
<td>Ask of God</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Primary Input**

- Greek/Roman Philosophy
- Hebrew Bible
- Ancient Scriptures
- Greek New Testament
- Newton
- Arminianism
- Freemasonry
- Inspiration
- Vision via Reading Glasses
- Moroni
- Moses
- Golden Plates
- Peter, James, John
- Abraham
- Universalism
- Freemasonry
- Revelation
- Vision via Spectacles, etc.

**Primary Output**

- Greek, Latin, Hebrew, Chaldaic Grammars
- Peopling of America Lecture
- Astronomy Lectures
- Theology Lectures
- Pastoral Sermons
- Dartmouth Plays
- Moor's School of the Prophets
- Hebrew Study
- Book of Mormon
- Books of Abraham and Moses
- Lectures on Faith
- Doctrine and Covenants
- King Follett Discourse, etc.
- Kirtland School of the Prophets

**Primary Common Ideas**

- God the Father and God the Son are separate beings
- Atonement Covenant made before the creation of the Earth
- Plan of Salvation agreed to in the preexistence
- Father, son and sons of men were together in the preexistence
- Spiritual death was man's condition after the fall
- Son's Church would exist in all ages after the fall
- Types and shadows of the covenant are found in scriptures
- Oaths and covenants serve as deity's legal structure
- Light, borrowed light, and the light of reason would guide us
- Melchizedek Priesthood is coeternal with God
- Melchizedek Priesthood is the source of the Son's authority
- Aaronic Priesthood promised to Aaron's descendants
- Free Agency and the right to choose are integral to the plan
- Degrees of Glory structure the eternities
- Consecration to Christ is required for highest exaltation
- Revelation is required to know the ultimate nature of God
- Spirit is simpler (finer) form of matter
- The prosperity cycle is the natural course of History
- Millions of peopled worlds and Son's role with each
- Father argues for justice and Son argues for mercy
PRIMARY DIFFERING IDEAS

GOD CAN BECOME A MAN ———— MAN CAN BECOME A GOD

CHRIST BECAME A KING THROUGH ———— MAN CAN BECOME A KING THROUGH
MELCHIZEDEK PRIESTHOOD ———— MELCHIZEDEK PRIESTHOOD

GOD CAN APPEAR AS AN ANGEL ———— A RESURRECTED MAN CAN APPEAR
AS AN ANGEL

ANGELS ARE DIFFERENT FROM ———— ANGELS ARE THE SAME AS
PREMORTAL MAN ———— PREMORTAL MAN

WITHOUT FALL MAN ———— FALL REQUIRED FOR MAN
REMAINS PERFECT TO BECOME PERFECT

TRANSLATION TO HELL ———— TRANSLATION TO HEAVEN

DISCUSSED HIGHEST ———— DISCUSSED THREE
DEGREE OF GLORY DEGREES OF GLORY

ASIANS ARRIVED IN ———— MIDDLE EASTERNERS ARRIVED IN
AMERICA FIRST BY LAND ———— AMERICA FIRST BY SHIP

CANAANITES LATER ARRIVED IN ———— ISRAELITES LATER ARRIVED IN AMERICA
AMERICA BY ATLANTIC CROSSING ———— BY ATLANTIC & PACIFIC CROSSING

MILLIONS OF PEOPLED WORLDS ———— WORLDS W/O NUMBER

SPIRIT IS SIMPLER FORM OF MATTER ———— SPIRIT IS FINER FORM OF MATTER

WARNED AGAINST UNFAIR ———— WARNED AGAINST UNFAIR
TREATMENT OF CHILDREN ———— TREATMENT OF WIVES & CHILDREN

STUDIED SCRIPTURES IN HEBREW ———— STUDIED SCRIPTURES IN HEBREW
GREEK, CHALDAIC, ASSYRIC, ———— AND REFORMED EGYPTIAN
SYRIAC AND COPTIC

INSIGHTFUL BUT UNORGANIZED ———— STRUCTURED AND HIGHLY INTEGRATED

THE LAST ARMINIAN ———— THE FIRST MORMON
Pauline Hancock and Her “Basement Church”

Jason R. Smith

The Latter Day Saint movement is well-known for its tendency towards schism. Of the several hundred groups that have arisen out of the Restoration Movement, Pauline Hancock’s Church of Christ (Bible and Book of Mormon Teachings) stands out as one of the most remarkable in both its history and theological innovations. Having been a member of three Latter Day Saint churches, Mrs. Hancock gained a reputation for teaching a modified restoration theology which relied heavily on the Bible and Book of Mormon, yet denied virtually all restoration distinctives — including the necessity of priesthood authority and the doctrines of apostasy and restoration. Her following grew as many people from various Latter Day Saint backgrounds joined with her group.

This paper will focus on three phases of Hancock’s Church of Christ. First, it will explore events leading to the origin of the church; second, Pauline’s leadership style and unique theological contributions will be detailed. The third section will demonstrate how her constant search for truth inspired her successors to abandon the Book of Mormon and eventually merge into the larger Christian community.

Pauline Bailey was raised in the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, the daughter of a church appointee missionary to Utah. She married Silas Hancock and the young couple moved from Warrensburg, Missouri to Independence in 1923. When the Hancocks arrived in Independence, the RLDS church was undergoing a great deal of internal strife as church president Frederick M. Smith, the Quorum of Twelve Apostles, and the Presiding Bishopric were involved in a power struggle that culminated in a document

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1 The Church of Christ (Bible and Book of Mormon Teaching) was often referred to by those in the Independence, MO area as the Basement Church due to the fact that the congregation never finished the building in which they met; rather, they met in the basement. In this paper, the church will also be referred to as the Basement Church.

2 Although the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints now uses the name, Community of Christ it will not be referred to as such as the name change did not occur until 2001.

giving Smith “supreme directional control” of the church in 1925.\textsuperscript{4} Many RLDS members felt the Supreme Directional Control policy was too oppressive and took advantage of the transfer option offered by the Church of Christ (Temple Lot), a church which was both theologically and geographically similar.\textsuperscript{5}

Others, like Pauline and Silas, chose to affiliate with a protest movement within the RLDS church. Finding refuge in the “Protest Group” led by disaffected RLDS Apostle T.W. Williams, Pauline got involved right away, even serving as the organization’s secretary.\textsuperscript{6} When Williams died, the Protest Group disbanded and the Hancocks transferred their membership to the Temple Lot Church. As she had done previously in the RLDS Church and the Protest Group, Pauline became quite involved and devoted much of her time to the church.\textsuperscript{7} Like many during this period, Pauline and Silas may have been drawn to the Temple Lot Church because of its doctrinal responses to contemporary issues within the RLDS Church. At its October 1925 conference, for example, the Temple Lot Church voted to abolish the office of presiding elder and rejected the use of the \textit{Book of Doctrine and Covenants} as scripture.\textsuperscript{8}

Pauline’s years with the Temple Lot Church were marked by exciting, yet turbulent times. Before the mid-1920s, the church had been a small organization primarily consisting of a handful of families. The transfers from the RLDS Church and Protest Group helped to increase the membership from a small remnant to more than three thousand by 1928. This infusion of new blood invigorated the Temple Lot Church, and for the first time in more than sixty years, the church selected new apostles.\textsuperscript{9} This honeymoon did not last long, as one of these new apostles, Otto Fetting, caused both excitement and dissention by the messages he claimed to have received from John the Baptist. These messages split the Temple Lot Church when they introduced the doctrine of rebaptism.\textsuperscript{10} After the significant loss of membership caused by Fetting’s innovations, the Temple Lot Church leadership became understandably sensitive to new teachings by the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{5} This group is also known as Hedrickites after its founder, Granville Hedrick.
\item \textsuperscript{6} Steven L. Shields, \textit{Divergent Paths of the Restoration} (Los Angeles: Restoration Research, 1990), 120-123.
\item \textsuperscript{7} Wood, ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{8} B.C. Flint, \textit{Outline History of the Church of Christ (Temple lot)} (Independence, MO: Board of Publications of the Church of Christ, 1953), 139. Mrs. Hancock continued to argue against the use of the Doctrine and Covenants throughout her life, stating that it was the basis for many false teachings in the Latter Day Saint churches. This position is best illustrated in her 5 February 1955 sermonette in the \textit{Independence Examiner}.
\item \textsuperscript{9} Flint, 139-141; \textit{Zion’s Advocate} 3:4, 1-7.
\end{itemize}
elders. Shortly after Fetting and his followers split with the Temple Lot Church, another apostle began presenting doctrinal innovations.

Samuel Wood was also one of the original seven Temple Lot apostles ordained in April 1926. While on a mission to England, Wood became involved with a “new” teaching on the godhead. Much to the chagrin of his fellow apostles, Wood began converting church members to his new “One God” teaching upon his return from the British Isles.\(^{11}\) One such member was Pauline Hancock. Pauline sponsored Wood in the writing and publication of *The Infinite God*, which expounded Wood’s new ideas.\(^{12}\) In 1935, Wood was called to appear before an elder’s court to answer for his unorthodox theology. Refusing to recant, he was disfellowshipped. In protest, Pauline and her husband left the church the same day.\(^ {13}\)

Having now left three churches, Pauline and Silas might have seemed unsure what to do next. She later wrote of this time that she tried to keep herself from thinking about religion by collecting and selling antiques, but she awakened from this self-imposed catharsis in 1946 by several significant spiritual experiences. Also about this same time, Pauline’s gift for teaching became evident. Several families began gathering with the Hancocks on Friday nights for prayer and study. Soon, the group began meeting on Sundays, as well. Pauline’s following grew and soon she and her class formed its own congregation.\(^ {14}\)

During this formative period, ministerial authority was a major issue with which the young church was forced to wrestle. Coming from Restoration backgrounds, no doubt many of the members must have wondered how the church would function without proper priesthood authority. Not only was the church operating outside the hierarchical priesthood structures of both the Temple Lot and RLDS Churches, it was also being led by a woman, which no latter-day saint sect (and few denominations outside the Restoration) at that time would have allowed.

For Pauline, her authority to preach and minister was based on several reasons. First, she claimed that her teaching authority was derived from the fact that God had called her to do it.\(^ {15}\) Her confidence in this calling may have been strengthened by her ability to relate to Jesus as a fellow-sufferer. Her spiritual experiences and scriptural studies led her to view Jesus not only as

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\(^{11}\) Though Wood’s teaching is not explicitly defined in the official Temple Lot history, it is stated that he taught a “‘One Person Godhead’ heresy ... of there being no trinity in the Godhead.” Flint, 142.

\(^{12}\) It should be noted that *The Infinite God* is still published and sold by the Church of Christ with the Elijah Message, based in Independence, MO.

\(^{13}\) Wood, *ibid*.

\(^{14}\) Pauline Hancock to James D. Wardle, 31 January 1950, H. Michael Marquardt Collection, Special Collections, Marriott Library, University of Utah.

\(^{15}\) *Ibid*.
Liberator and Equalizer, but also as a marginalized person, Himself.\textsuperscript{16} This is most clear in her tract \textit{Does God Call Women to Preach and Minister?} In it, she shares her testimony of being called to minister:

> God spoke to me then and said, “Now go and teach all people what I have shown you — for I am the way.” I answered Him that I couldn’t do that and He said, “I will be with you.” I said, “I am a woman and they won’t receive me.” He said, “I wasn’t a woman and they didn’t receive Me — go teach and I’ll be with you.”\textsuperscript{17}

Second, Pauline taught that spiritual authority comes from teaching correct doctrine. She wrote that “If we claim to have authority from God, we must also teach and walk as Jesus did.... All ministers come under two classes. TRUE AND FALSE, authority and priestcraft. GENUINE AND FALSE.”\textsuperscript{18} Third, Pauline also cited the ordination of Joseph Smith’s wife, Emma, as precedent for women in ministry.\textsuperscript{19}

The question of authority to administer church ordinances still plagued

\textsuperscript{16} Hancock often cited Galatians 3:28 as meaning that there should be no gender distinctions or barriers within the Christian community. Her view of Jesus as fellow-sufferer is most evident in her vision of Jesus being tortured and crucified and realizing that the world did not receive Him anymore than they would receive her.

\textsuperscript{17} Pauline Hancock, \textit{Does Call God Call Women to Preach?} (Independence, MO: Church of Christ, n.d.), 4. This topic is also explored in a series of sermonettes published by Hancock in the \textit{Independence Examiner} in January and February 1956.

\textsuperscript{18} Sermonette in the \textit{Independence Examiner} for 14 January 1956.

\textsuperscript{19} Pauline Hancock to James D. Wardle, 12 January 1957, H. Michael Marquardt Collection, Special Collections, Marriott Library, University of Utah.
Pauline and her group for some time. The issue was forced when several members of the study group, including Pauline herself, desired baptism. She tried more than once to get one of the men in the group to do the baptizing, but she said God prevented it each time. Finally, Pauline claimed that God spoke to her and told her that she was to perform the ordinance. Soon after the members were baptized in January 1950, Pauline wrote to a friend about the experience:

The second week in Dec. 1949 God spoke to me and told me that he had raised [me] to teach this people and that I was to baptize them all [sic]. I was stunned, it was against all tradition and belief I had ever had. I thought it just couldn’t be [.] I cried out to Him, I prayed and prayed telling Him in my anguish of soul that people would stumble [sic] over this. He answered me clear and distinct, that people had stumbled over Him.20

Gradually, Pauline became more comfortable in her role as pastor and teacher. According to one close friend and associate, she had a standard response whenever someone asked her why God would call a woman to preach. She would casually reply, “I don’t know. I guess you’ll have to ask Him.”21

Authority to minister was by no means the only Latter Day Saint belief which Pauline confronted in her teaching ministry. Other major doctrinal themes covered in her writings included the nature of God, the nature of man, grace versus works, eternal punishment, total apostacy of the Church, and varying degrees of heaven.

Perhaps Pauline’s most controversial doctrine was her view of God. Like Samuel Wood, she believed and taught that the Trinity (as she understood the concept) was a false doctrine. Her view, historically known as modalism, maintained that God does not exist in three persons, but rather in one person that has operated in three modes throughout history. To buttress her perspective, Pauline cited the many places in the Book of Mormon which supported her particular view. She placed great emphasis on the fact that the Book of Mormon had been changed in crucial places that seemed to change the nature of the godhead.22

20 Pauline Hancock to James D. Wardle, 31 January 1950, H. Michael Marquardt Collection, Special Collections, Marriott Library, University of Utah. Also see Pauline Hancock, Authority. What Is It? Who Has It? (Independence, Missouri: Church of Christ, n.d.),
21 Joy Wilcox Clow, interview by author, 22 February 2005, Independence, MO.
22 In her sermonettes appearing in the Independence Examiner during December 1950, Pauline pointed out the changes in RLDS 1 Nephi 3:54-59 (9 December), RLDS 1 Nephi 3:59-63 (16 December), RLDS 1 Nephi 3:86-93 (23 December), and RLDS 1 Nephi 3:192-200 (30 December); These sermonettes were repeated in January 1951 and in a letter from Pauline to James D. Wardle dated 4 February 1955. See also Pauline Hancock, The Godhead: Is There More Than One God? (Independence, Missouri: Church of Christ, 1961); Pauline Hancock, Is the God You Worship, the God Revealed in the Scriptures? (Independence, Missouri: Church of Christ, n.d.); Pauline Hancock, What Does the Word of God Teach Concerning Who Christ Is? (Indepen-
The nature of man was another major theme in Pauline’s sermons and writings. After a vision in October 1946 in which she saw the wicked being cast out of God’s presence, Pauline was unwavering in her position that mankind was in a fallen state and that people were born with an inherent tendency to reject God. This vision and her studies also informed Pauline’s doctrines about the eternal abode of man. She was very adamant in teaching that there was no opportunity to repent after death and that baptism for the dead was a false teaching. She also taught that there were but two possible destinations for man in the afterlife — heaven and hell, thus denying the concept widely held by all Latter Day Saint factions of three glories in the resurrection.

Pauline also had much to say about the doctrines of salvation and grace. She was resolute about the fact that salvation was by grace through faith rather than earned through one’s efforts. She rejected the idea that good works, taking the

dence, Missouri: Church of Christ, n.d.). This point is also explored in Pauline’s sermonettes in the Independence Examiner for 10 April 1954, 29 May 1954, 22 October 1955, 29 October 1955, 28 December 1957, etc.

sacrament, church membership, or any other action would merit salvation. She later came to teach also that water baptism was not necessary for salvation.24

In line with her view of authority, Pauline also rejected the Latter Day Saint concepts of a general apostasy of the church and subsequent restoration through Joseph Smith, Jr. She taught that “The gospel WAS NEVER RESTORED, for CHRIST IS THE GOSPEL and need not be restored. [emphasis in original]”25 This rejection of priesthood authority caused several of her male followers, including H. Luke Irvin and her assistant pastor Eugene Wilcox, to have their own priesthood credentials pulled by the RLDS Church.26

Despite her rejection of nearly every distinctive belief held by Latter Day Saints, Pauline held a firm belief in the movement’s cornerstone scripture:

The Book of Mormon IS CONSIDERED by nearly all churches today as belonging to Mormonism and to be the cause and principle basis of Mormon belief. THIS IS ABSOLUTELY FALSE. The Book of Mormon condemns all the principle teachings of Mormonism or Latter Day Saintism. For instance: the plurality of Gods as taught by the Mormon Church, the prison house or place of correction as taught by all Latter Day Saint factions or churches, different degrees of heaven as taught by all Latter Day Saints, and universal salvation as taught by many of them. All these and many other doctrines such as polygamy, baptism for the dead, sealing in marriage for eternity, temple ceremonies, etc., are in DIRECT CONTRADICTION TO THE BOOK OF MORMON AND THE BIBLE.27 (emphasis in original)

In contrast, Pauline taught that the Latter Day Saints, particularly the RLDS Church, were besot with many teachings because of the additional revelations found in the Doctrine and Covenants:

All these false teachings are found in the same book as baptism for the dead (the Doctrine and Covenants) and were given by the same author through the same means, purporting revelations. None of these doctrines are taught in the Bible or Book of Mormon — and at no time had God had to retract or drop any of the teachings that are contained in these two books.28

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25 Sermonette for 3 April 1954. See also sermonettes for 7 January 1956 and 31 March 1956.

26 Silencing and Elders’ Court letters for Luke, Wilcox, and others can be found in the James D. Wardle Collection, Special Collections, Marriott Library, University of Utah. It is interesting that Luke was charged with denying “the Trinity of the Godhead; tithing as a law of God; Joseph Smith as a prophet of God; the divinity of the High Priesthood and the Presidency of the church; baptism of children at eight years of age; consciousness after death, etc.” — all of which were teachings of Pauline Hancock.


28 Sermonette appearing in 5 February 1955 Independence Examiner. Among the teachings condemned were “working after death, a prison house where people hear the gospel after death,
Pauline’s new teachings soon began to reach outside of Independence. In 1950, she began exchanging letters and copies of rare publications with James Wardle of Salt Lake City. Wardle, a barber and member of the RLDS committee to modernize the text of the Book of Mormon, shared many of her beliefs yet never formally affiliated with the Church of Christ (Bible and Book of Mormon Teachings).  

Another significant correspondent of Pauline’s from Salt Lake City, Jerald Tanner, became acquainted with Pauline’s ministry and traveled to Independence to meet her in 1957. A year later, Jerald made a second trip to visit the church and Pauline baptized him. Jerald returned to Utah and became a missionary of sorts for the Basement Church. In March 1959, Jerald held a worship service in his parents’ basement, playing a tape of Pauline’s preaching. Also at the meeting was his future wife, Sandra, whom he met for the first time that night. In June of that year, Jerald and Sandra were married and in September they made another trek from Salt Lake City to Independence. It was on this trip that Pauline baptized Sandra. Throughout Pauline’s remaining years, the Tanners kept close contact with her.

It seems evident that the Tanners were influenced by Pauline, as many of their earliest writings emphasized the “One God” teaching that was at the heart of her ministry. Also, Pauline was active in filming and reproducing early historical documents years before the Tanners started their Modern Microfilm Company. Regardless of the extent of her direct influence on the Tanner’s ministry, Pauline did baptize and disciple, arguably, the two most well-known and successful critics of Mormonism in history.

In October 1962, the church reached the end of an era when Pauline succumbed to cancer. Her close friends and fellow-laborers, Eugene and Olive Wilcox, assumed leadership of the church. Also in 1962, the Tanners’ investigations led them to believe that the Book of Mormon was a fraud. This discovery severely strained their relations with the Independence group as the Wilcoxes continued Pauline’s ministry, including a strong dependence on the ‘glories’ or different degrees of heaven, a Trinity, man’s inherent goodness, salvation by works instead of grace, baptism of children, etc.” See also Pauline Hancock, Do the Latter Day Saints Teachings Agree with the Book of Mormon? (Independence, Missouri: Church of Christ, n.d.).

Wardle acted as a communications medium between members of many different sects and denominations.


Numerous letters between Hancock and James Wardle mention various documents and copies of documents germane to Latter-day Saint history passing back and forth between them.

Wood, ibid; “Church of Christ Pastor Dies,” ibid.
Book of Mormon. The situation changed, however, with the discovery of certain documents by the Rev. Wesley P. Walters in 1971. The items he uncovered, such as records of the court proceedings of young Joseph Smith, were enough to present a crisis of faith for many in the Basement Church.

After a period of intense study and prayer, the members of the church voted to discontinue their use of the Book of Mormon. On November 24, 1973 the Basement Church took out its regular ad in the Independence Examiner and announced that it no longer used the Book of Mormon and related the story of Rev. Walters and the newly discovered court documents.

Thus, the church entered another chapter in its history. Although Pauline had spoken out against many teachings of the LDS and RLDS churches during her ministry, she had always held firmly to the Book of Mormon. As much as she may have been disappointed with Joseph Smith’s later innovations, she still believed in the story of Moroni and the gold plates. Having abandoned the keystone scripture of the Restoration, the church no longer had any link to the Latter Day Saint movement. The aspect of their ministry that emphasized the Book of Mormon was replaced by a desire to show the world that the scripture was not inspired. Ads printed by the church from this time used the name, Church of Christ (Bible Teachings) and, eventually, Church of Christ (Non-denominational). At this point, the Basement Church had nothing unique to offer the Restoration community. Attendance gradually dwindled until 1984, when the membership voted to disband and sell the church property.

Despite the fact that her church eventually dissolved, Pauline Hancock was the first woman to lead a Book of Mormon-believing church and by far the most successful to date. Her deep convictions coupled with her gentle style drew many to her congregation. Above all, Pauline Hancock was a seeker after truth. This loyalty to the truth, as she believed it, led her to leave three churches and to start her own. It also allowed her to remain true to her calling as a minister. As she wrote of her life: “Blessed be the name of God. Yes He calls women, He called me, I know for He lives in my soul. I would rather have the love of God in my heart, today, than all this world affords. I’d rather have Jesus than anything.” Pauline’s passion for thorough investigation also remained with her flock after she was gone as they struggled with the historicity and validity of the Book of Mormon. Undoubtedly, her sincere disdain for falsehood must have played a role in the church’s abandonment of the Book of Mormon.

34 Letter from Terryberry to Marquardt; also Interview with the Clows.
36 A complete run of advertisements by the Church of Christ are available between the H. Michael Marquardt Collection and the James D. Wardle Collection, Special Collections, Marriott Library, University of Utah.
37 Shields, 296.
38 Hancock, Does God Call Women to Preach? 4.
“Surely There is a Vein for Silver and a Place for Gold:” Mining and Religion in the Nineteenth Century Intermountain West

Richard Francaviglia

By the late nineteenth century, two very different types of economic activities — industrial and agrarian — dominated large portions of the Intermountain West. Mining, which exploits non-renewable resources, transformed parts of the region as precious metals were extracted from its mountains. At the same time, the development of renewable resources was also a major signature of the region as — to paraphrase two passages from the Bible — cattle roamed a thousand hills, and the region’s desert valleys blossomed like the rose. As this renewable/non-renewable resource based drama played out in the Great Basin, even the casual observer could see its effect in the region’s landscape. Travelers often commented on the mercurial mining towns that stood in stark contrast to orderly agrarian Mormon villages.

These contrasts hinted at deep, underlying cultural values played out on a huge geographical stage. Viewed comprehensively at a larger, regional scale, the geographical personality of the Great Basin itself seemed to be split along two cultural fault lines in the latter half of the nineteenth century. In parts of the region, especially the eastern half along the Wasatch front (Utah), Mormon culture dominated. Here life was, and remains to this day, somewhat more sober and has an overriding communitarian quality. The other half of this region — the western portion containing Nevada — was and is characterized by individualistic activities, particularly mining and a related activity — gambling. Although the state of Nevada legalized gambling in 1931, the character of many towns here had long been built around games of chance — including one of the biggest risk-taking games of all, mining.

Painted with a broad brush, this geographic split-personality analogy does have some basis in fact; like most generalizations, however, it only goes so far. Any perceptive traveler will note that there is considerable overlap of mining and agrarian activities in many areas. Although Utah’s beehive symbol generally embraces the communitarian nature of Mormondom, and Nevada’s Silver State sobriquet does characterize that state’s mineral wealth, there are many exceptions. In reality, mining communities are sprinkled throughout Mormon country, and agrarian Mormon villages can be found in silver-rich...
Nevada. Ophir, Utah, is a good case in point. Although Ophir was a mining boomtown based on the exploitation of silver and gold, it lies not far to the west of Salt Lake City and is a stone’s throw from rural settlement near Clover and Grantsville. Even closer to the City of the Saints is Park City, a former mining town that has made the transition to a New West resort and retirement community. Park City’s history is as wedded to mining as the nearby Wasatch front communities are tied to agriculture.

In Nevada, Mormon and mining communities may also exist in close proximity to one another. This has been the case since the mid nineteenth century: In the early 1850s, the Mormons settled in Genoa (Mormon Station), and that same decade witnessed rambunctious miners developing nearby Dayton. Consider an even better example — two Nevada towns just a dozen miles from each other, but having personalities as different as night and day: Pioche, a silver-mining boom town perched in a rugged canyon of the Ely Mountains, has a helter-skelter town plan consisting of streets running at odd angles to each other. Just to the south of Pioche, at the base of the Ely Mountains, lies Panaca — a Mormon farming town laid out with all the sobriety, and rectangularity, that the Latter-day Saints typically mustered in the nineteenth century. The difference between these two Nevada towns is more than simply morphological. Differences in lifestyles and values between these two historic communities have lasted into the present.

About a century ago, it was fashionable to classify places like Panaca as within the realm of the Saints, and places like Pioche (with their gambling, whoring, and get-rich-quick schemes) within the realm of the sinner. To use historian Page Smith’s term, Pioche was a “cumulative “place based on commerce, while Panaca was a covenanted place based on a pact with God.¹ Most histories of this region suggest that there is an element of truth to the Mormons’ disapproval of the quick riches that so lured miners of precious metals. As western railroad historian David Myrick succinctly noted, early day Panaca faltered due to Indian hostilities and “Brigham Young’s disapproval of mining (for that area was still part of Utah [Territory] in those days).”²

In the Beginning . . . .

Both miners and agriculturists affected the worldviews and livelihoods of the region’s earliest inhabitants, and so the story naturally begins with the Native Americans. The natives did not practice sedentary agriculture, but were hunters and gatherers who sometimes occupied locales seasonally. They might best be called hunters and foragers, for many of them moved from place to place

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¹ See Page Smith, As a City Upon a Hill; the Town in American History (New York, Knopf, 1966).
consuming animals and plants as they went. Many of the Native Americans here did have established bases, for they fished the large fresh-water lakes and streams at the periphery of the region. The native peoples’ spirituality was closely tied to the region’s geographical features.\(^3\) Those native beliefs were animistic and contrasted with the Judeo-Christian beliefs of European Americans. Although the first whites (Spaniards) had explored the eastern edges of the Great Basin as early as the 1770s, it was the Anglo-Americans who stimulated interest in mining about seventy-five years later. The first Anglo Americans reached the area by the 1820s, but were mainly interested in securing furs and expanding trade. A generation later (that is, by the mid 1840s), whites on their way to Oregon and pre-gold rush California came in contact with the natives. Even though the natives had little apparent interest in mineral riches until the whites arrived, they did use various mineral pigments ceremonially and reportedly were aware of mineralized locales. Several stories of early mining here, as at Treasure Hill, Nevada, suggest natives played a role in finding rich locales that blossomed into mining camps. However, that occurred \textit{after} the arrival of Europeans, who brought into the region a well-developed knowledge of how to identify, mine, and smelt ores.

The region’s agrarian character begins with the first Anglo-American settlers to this area — the Mormons, or members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Arriving on July 24, 1847, they immediately established Salt Lake City and began transforming the region into an agrarian, self-sufficient empire they called “Deseret.” The Latter-day Saints did so, it is widely known, by emphasizing hard work over easy riches. Avoiding the temptation to mine precious metals, the Saints focused instead on developing sustaining industries, including agriculture. This statement, while generally true, is not as simple as it at first seems. It should be noted, for example, that the Mormons played a role early in the California Gold Rush.\(^4\) In recollecting the event that re-shaped the West — the discovery of gold in January of 1848 — General John A. Sutter noted that several industrious Mormons working as laborers at his sawmill were among the earliest to mine the gleaming metal. Tellingly, Sutter stated that “The Mormons did not like to leave my mill unfinished, but they got the gold fever like everybody else.” Sutter added that the Mormon laborers fared very well in their new-found activity: “After they had made their piles they left for the Great Salt Lake.” Sutter’s use of the term “piles” is ingenious, for he means they not only made fortunes, but also modified the topography in the process. Sutter went on to praise the hard work of these “industrious and


faithful laborers,” and in truth some of his own values were more aligned with the Saints than they were with the gentiles who would soon flock to the region. Like the Mormons, Sutter sought to build an empire that was self-sufficient, prosperous, and ordered. After praising the Mormons, Sutter braced for the throng of miners who flooded into the area and ultimately scuttled his vision of a self-sufficient empire. As he put it, “[b]y this sudden discovery of the gold, all my great plans were destroyed.”

Mormons as Miners

The Mormons’ early pursuit of precious metals should be clarified from the outset: Those Mormons who aggressively mined gold in 1848 California had stepped across an ideological divide that the Church would soon make very clear. As that ideology played out, the Saints were not categorically opposed to mining, but rather objected to mining precious metals. They based this aversion in part on their own scripture, notably The Book of Mormon, which contains several passages cautioning against the persuasion of precious metals. In that book, silver and gold, in particular, are equated with not only personal greed but the “great and abominable church” and its “devil” founder who leads worshippers astray. One almost lyrical passage from the Book of Mormon is especially instructive: “And I also saw gold and silver, and silks, and scarlets, and fine-twined linen, and all manner of precious clothing; and I saw many harlots.” This passage seamlessly equates adornment and wealth with dark alliances that “... destroy the saints of God, and bring them down into captivity.” The Mormon’s concern about the wisdom of mining precious metals is also linked to more secular philosophies. Consider the warning of Scottish economist and philosopher Adam Smith (1723-1790): “Of all those expensive and uncertain projects ... which bring bankruptcy upon the greater part of the people who engage in them, “Smith wrote, “there is none perhaps more perfectly ruinous than the search after silver and gold mines.” Comparing mining to a bad gamble, Smith concluded that, “It is perhaps the most disadvantageous lottery in the world....” Although written in 1776, Smith’s The Wealth of Nations was still widely read in the 1850s. To Utopian leaders, the “nations” in Smith’s title could refer to any people with a coherent identity and purpose — as in the “Nation of Israel.” Ironically, however, Smith’s philosophy underscores the role of self interest in ultimately doing what is best for the community. For their part, Mormon leaders constantly struggled to orient individual behavior

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toward the goal of sustaining the Church. Among non-Mormons, of course, Adam Smith’s concern about the folly of seeking precious metals went largely unheeded.

Thus it was that the region’s split personality, at least in popular culture, was roughly developed along religious lines by the late 1850s and early 1860s, with Mormons avoiding mining towns and flourishing in self-sufficient villages. Popular novels and films like “Paint Your Wagon” (1969) continued to play on this saints-sinners dichotomy a century later. Looking more carefully to see how this supposed dichotomy played out in particular locations often reveals some surprises. Although tensions between Mormon farmers and non-Mormon miners are often emphasized, evidence suggests a good deal of interaction, even reciprocity between these two populations in some locations. For example, at the southeastern edge of the Great Basin in Washington County, Utah, the mining town of Silver Reef sprang up near the Mormon farming villages of Leeds and Toquerville. In recounting the history of Silver Reef, LDS pioneers noted that “[f]rom the beginning of the town, people from the neighboring communities found employment there, and they were received very kindly, in most instances, even though they were ‘Mormons.’” That county history goes on to observe that although “occasionally, some little difficulty arose in regard to ‘water rights’ between the people of Leeds and those of Silver Reef, the differences were settled satisfactorily, and miners gladly came out to assist the people of Leeds to repair their water ditches.” The cooperation apparently even extended to more serious religious matters: “Frequently, Elders from Leeds were called to Silver Reef to preach or preside at funerals.” Miners might belong to any religion — or no religion at all — but the Mormons’ active proselytizing made them candidates for conversion.

The Mormons’ interest — or lack thereof — in pursuing mining enterprises demands closer scrutiny. The historical record confirms that the Latter-day Saints took an active interest in mining only when it would help in the physical building of Zion. This, too, had scriptural roots. In the Old Testament, Deuteronomy (8:9) emphasizes that the “good land” offers useful metals that can help build communities: “a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills you can dig copper.” That reference to iron and copper is significant, for the Great Basin is rich in these resources, as it is in another important non-precious metal, lead.

Let us first consider one of the base metals — iron — mentioned so prominently in Deuteronomy. This ferrous metal is closely linked to the building of civilizations generally, and the Mormon’s exploration and discovery of southern Utah in particular. Historians note that Brigham Young, “always on the watch for more resources to build the literal Kingdom of God,” spotted

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iron deposits in southern Utah. Sensing the area’s mineral potential, Young marched a group of pioneers to aptly-named Iron County as early as 1851 in search of metals to help in the building of Zion. As one source put it, the Saints on this mission hoped to “... build a new Pittsburgh in the desert.”

This reference to Pittsburgh is all the more ironic because the bawdy non-Mormon silver-lead mining town of Eureka, Nevada, was once called the “Pittsburgh of the West.” At any rate, the name Pittsburgh also suggested successful industry as that eastern city was transformed by the coal and coke that fueled an iron (and later steel) industry. These two mineral resources — iron and coal — were often developed simultaneously. In the mid nineteenth century, astute observers noted that iron was “the utilitarian sovereign of metals,” and that coal was “the grand auxiliary of the arts, which tends to enrich and civilize the world.”

These two mineral resources were civilization builders, and the Mormons sought to develop them as a way of building Zion.

Records of the Latter-day Saints’ Iron Mission, as it is called, confirm that the Church was involved in supporting integrated iron and coal mining efforts here shortly after the Saints’ arrival in Utah. This effort is tied to the very origins of present-day Cedar City, Utah. The iron-seeking group of Mormons constituted a “company” that was ordered to develop mineral resources. Leaving Provo on December 15, 1850, it reached Parowan on January 13, 1851. Many of the 120 frontiersmen involved in this mission were iron-manufacturing tradesmen from the British Isles, notably England and Scotland. The site they selected seemed ideal indeed: The iron deposits at Iron Springs provided the ore — dense, shiny, hard masses of specular hematite so rich that they turn the needle of a compass. Nearby, coal deposits at the mouth of Coal Creek would provide fuel; after treatment, the coal would be converted to coke. However, an abundant supply of cedar (Juniperus osteosperma) and piñon pine (Pinus monophyllus) was also available to provide fuel, if needed. Then, too, there was limestone (for flux) as well as sand (for casting). Another especially important resource needed in mining — water — was also available here. This area seemed, and actually was, naturally endowed as an iron-producer.

By 1852, a small furnace had been erected and the resulting activity proved that the ores here could be productive. Formed to exploit these resources, the Deseret Iron Company worked this area throughout the 1850s, but only with mixed results. People have long speculated as to why the Saints’ iron-producing operation here was never a commercial success. Some observers credit, or blame, a series of factors for the failure of early iron mining here. These include management inexperience, the workers’ lack of experience with

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12 In the twentieth century, this area west of Cedar City became a major producer of iron.
rich magnetite ores, poor location of the furnace, recalcitrant Indians, and the Mountain Meadows Massacre — the latter said to have cast a pall over the area. What other factors might help explain iron mining’s faltering start in southern Utah? The Mormons themselves had genuine concerns about, and problems with, some of the hostile Indians. Fortification thus took precedence over mining as safety was a major concern. Additionally, the record suggests that the Mormons were ambivalent about the success of mining here. Approaching this type of industry with considerable caution, and always keeping in mind that this industry existed only to support farming, their effort might be seen as half-hearted. Then, too, there were considerable tensions between local and Salt Lake City authorities, and between workers and managers.

Throughout the 1850s, the Iron Mission attempted to balance local community needs (such as fences and fortification) with church leaders’ expectations. President Brigham Young reminded the people in Cedar City that local iron product was important because purchasing manufactured items from non-Mormons was a “continual drain of our money.” He also reminded them of their “solemn covenant” to produce iron. The iron, in turn, would not only free the Mormons from dependency on the outside world, but also prove the Mormons’ talents and dedication. As Young put it, “the manufacture of Iron” was “... as sacred as any other Mission.” Hinting at some of the problems here, Young reminded the Saints that it was “a gentile custom to sell Knowledge” and that the production of iron “should be pursued as regardless of the consequences pertaining to pecuniary considerations as preaching the gospel.”

In reflecting on the problems faced by the Deseret Iron Company, foundryman John Chatterley suggested that the heavy hand of inexperienced management also played a role. Chatterley observed that “The business would have been successful if those that had a little authority would not have interfered with the practical workmen, who had in their native homes in old countries run out thousands upon thousands of tons of cast iron....”

These difficulties suggest that the Latter-day Saints needed more time to become efficient industrialists. One suspects that success in mining had to wait until agrarian enterprises were established. The major stipulation — that these resources be used for improving homes and communities — helped keep the Saints’ early mining activities in both perspective and in check. Then, too, other sources of revenue helped the Saints in the 1850s. One was indirectly related to mining: one might say that Mormons “mined” would-be miners. The Mormons in Salt Lake City and vicinity made considerable money off California-bound forty-niners, although very few of them succumbed to the temptation to join

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15 Shirts and Shirts, *A Trial Furnace*, 308.
the westward moving Argonauts in searching for gold.

In pursuit of metals to build Zion, the Mormons evidently became more astute and better organized after about 1860. Mining efforts continued in southern Utah in the late 1860s, where the Mormons had not given up hope of exploiting iron despite their faltering start. At Iron City, they created one of the rarest of all western settlement types — a Mormon mining town. According to some sources, Iron City began when Peter Shirts discovered a large iron deposit in 1868. The original plat was designed to ultimately hold 5,000 people — half the number of souls in the ideal City of Zion-inspired Mormon village. Although Iron City never reached the goal of 5,000, it rapidly grew into a bustling community of several hundred, and its ores were mined until the mid 1870s. In keeping with its industrial character, Iron City was also the location of a charcoal kiln that used local piñon pine and other wood. Alas, however, Iron City was unable to compete with other iron producing companies and mines, and it became one of the West’s many mining ghost towns. Once again, it appears that gentile mining enterprises could out-produce, and undersell, the Mormons.

Consider next another non-precious metal — lead. It, too, is important for building communities as it is used to manufacture a wide range of products, including bullets, paint, roof flashing, and window framing. As early as 1856, Mormon bishop Tarlton Lewis unsuccessfully searched the area around Beaver, Utah, for lead deposits that had been reported there. The next year, however, he reportedly encountered an Indian who led him to a deposit of “dry bone” ore that overlay a deposit of galena. Buoyed by this find, Tarlton Lewis organized a mining company that included Isaac Grundy, William Hyde, and James H. Rollins. Thus the Pioneer Mining District, and the town of Minersville, were formed. The mine reportedly yielded 3½ tons of lead bullion in the fall of 1858 and spring of 1859. Thereafter, it became known as the Rollins Mine, producing fourteen tons of lead by 1864. Prospectors encountering lead sulfide (galena) in the West knew that these deposits may frequently contain silver. A trained eye can even detect the curved crystal faces and cleavage planes that are a tell-tale sign of this silver-carrying argentiferous galena. It is believed that the galena at the Rollins Mine was argentiferous, but the mine produced only lead. In other words, the Mormons evidently disregarded the precious metal content of the ore. By contrast, gentile miners at this time were well aware that argentiferous galena pays handsome rewards; that understanding helped the mines at Eureka and White Pine, Nevada, boom at about the same time.

Mining and Temptation

Coincidentally, the strong gentile presence in Utah, a result of the Federal

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16 Bate, “Iron City ...”, 56-58
17 The dry-bone ore was highly oxidized, while galena is lead sulfide.
government’s attempt to control the Mormons in the late 1850s, had two immediate impacts on mining in the region. First, it led to aggressive prospecting, by gentile soldiers and officers, for precious metals in the vicinity of Salt Lake City. Although not well developed, many of these finds proved that the area was rich in precious metals. Secondly, although the gentile presence waned during the Civil War as U.S. troops were pulled back to participate in that conflict, the groundwork was laid for gentiles to exploit precious metals in the vicinity of Salt Lake City itself. This ultimately had an ironic, if not unintended, consequence: The Mormons’ own Salt Lake City, and its immediate environs, became a center of non-Mormon mining and smelting activity. That condition contributed to the city’s dual character as home of not only the Latter-day Saints, but also a vigorous gentile population bent on pursuing a non-Mormon lifestyle. This dichotomy was manifested in the city’s landscape, where the mansions and financial buildings of non-Mormon miners and the homes and enterprises of Mormons exist in separate parts of the city. Nearby, bawdy mining towns like Bingham Canyon, Park City, and Eureka sprang up in fairly close proximity to, if not in the immediate shadow of, the Mormon temple. Interestingly, too, the development of railroads after 1869 — some financed by Mormons — greatly facilitated the production of mines in the very heart of Mormon country.

Mineral deposits dot the mountainous landscape in the vicinity of Salt Lake City. As might be expected, the exploitation of precious metals became a controversy in Utah, and is vividly revealed through the lives of three men: one a gentile, the second a major church leader, and the third a Mormon who would be excommunicated for his stand on the issue. The first was Patrick Connor, who arrived in Utah Territory to support federal efforts aimed at reducing the Mormons’ strength as well as to advance his own interests. Strongly anti-Mormon in sentiment, Connor was a key factor in stimulating interest in mining. He reportedly exaggerated claims about the “rich veins of gold, silver, copper and other minerals” found in Utah. However, as church historian Leonard Arrington further observed, three factors helped prevent the rush of miners from overwhelming Utah as it had California. These included: (1) other richer finds elsewhere, especially in Montana; (2) Utah’s relatively greater distance to the Missouri River; and (3) the Mormon leadership’s outright discouragement of mining. For his part, Connor recognized that mining would not only stimulate the economy of Utah Territory, but would also undermine the power of the Mormons.

Although Mormon leaders discouraged the Saints from mining precious metals, the temptation must have been overwhelming at times. That leads us to the second figure — Brigham Young himself. In 1863, Young had asked the Saints a rhetorical question that got to the heart of the matter: “Can you not

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20 Ibid., 202-203.
see that gold and silver rank among the things that we are the least in want of?” Five years later, he pretty much re-iterated that theme, but was even more vehement by admonishing: “Instead of hunting gold we ought to pray the Lord to hide it up.” That admonition characterized precious metals, but Young was equally passionate about encouraging the correct type of mining enterprises. In Young’s words, the Saints needed “iron and coal, good hard work, plenty to eat, good schools, and good doctrine.”

The Mormons’ most controversial flirtation with the mining of precious metals occurred during the late 1860s, when the third figure in our drama — William Godbe — came to the forefront. So strong was the “Goldbeite heresy,” that it threatened to divide the Church. In opposition to Brigham Young’s admonitions about precious metals mining, Godbe urged the Saints to no longer resist becoming part of the mainstream economy but rather to instead “devote its labors in developing those resources which will command the largest outside market, and thus establish a basis for obtaining the money that it needs.” The answer to the Saints’ seemingly constant impoverishment, Godbe claimed, lay in acquiring money through commerce. Godbe contended that Mormons should pursue the one natural resource that “comes back from all parts of the Territory, ... MINERALS!” Utah, Godbe noted, was “... a country destitute of the rich advantages of other lands — a country with few natural facilities beyond the great mass of minerals in its bowels.” In urging that the Saints develop all mineral resources, Godbe specifically mentioned “coal, iron, and lead, and enough copper and silver to supply the world — to say nothing of the more precious metals.”

But Godbe did say more — much more — about those precious metals. He urged the Latter-day Saints to mine them as part of the natural bounty of the territory. In advocating mining for precious metals, Godbe became a highly-visible apostate by publicly disagreeing with Brigham Young. Not surprisingly, Godbe and his supporters were excommunicated. Through Godbe’s excommunication, the Saints reaffirmed their commitment to agrarian labors. For his part, Godbe went on to assist the gentiles in developing the Territory’s mineral resources. He invested in numerous mining properties in Nevada, including the booming mining town of Pioche. Godbe also had investments closer to his headquarters in Salt Lake City, under Brigham Young’s nose, as it were. Today, not far from Tooele, Utah, a stark obelisk marks the site of one of Godbe’s most ambitious enterprises — the Chicago smelter. That strategically-located facility could treat ores from the surrounding mountains. There is a note of irony here, for mining of precious metals in the nearby Oquirrh Mountains so championed by

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21 Ibid., 203.
22 Ibid., 241.
23 Ibid., 243.
24 Ibid., 243-244.
25 Ibid., 244.
Godbe and Connor has all but ceased, while verdant farmlands still cluster in the valley at the base of the mountains. Much of that farmland remains in the hands of Mormons to this day.

Several factors evidently kept the Mormons from aggressively plunging into mining enterprises. Inexperience stemming from the Mormon leaders’ early roots in notoriously poor mining country — New England — may partially explain some of their lack of success. Then, too, their near obsession with agrarian self-sufficiency was based on a strict interpretation of scripture. It led the early Mormons to emphasize farming to the detriment of mining even base metals in some locations. The Church may have been wary because mining enterprises tend to emphasize individualism, or at least individual gain, above the general social good. As such, mining ran counter to church policy that emphasized group, even communal, enterprises throughout Deseret and its subsequent incarnation, the Mormon-dominated portions of the shrinking Utah Territory.

Casting the Die

It is worth stepping back into Utah Territorial history for a moment to see how the Mormon-mining dichotomy developed in one place during one fairly short time period. One could find no better locale to see this play out than in the stark and imposing Oquirrh Mountains just west of Salt Lake City shortly after the arrival of the Latter-day Saints. In a sense, the development of Utah’s Oquirrh Mountains typifies mining’s tortured relationship to religion and state in this region. The die was cast here shortly after the Mormons arrived in 1847. Earliest attempts to settle in this rather forbidding mountainous area occurred in 1848 when two Mormon brothers, Thomas and Sanford Bingham, herded cattle and conducted some elementary prospecting for mineral resources under the direction of Brigham Young. Upon finding some valuable ores (evidently silver and gold) the Bingham brothers “were reportedly advised by Brigham Young not to engage in mining at that time.” After 1850, the brothers were sent on a mission to settle Weber County, with the result that “the ore finds were soon forgotten.” In 1863, however, an apostate Mormon named George Ogilvie and Archibald Gardner, bishop of West Jordan, were logging Bingham Canyon with several soldiers from Fort Douglas. The group located a rich ore that Ogilvie sent to none other than General Patrick Connor for assaying. The ore contained gold and silver, and a prospecting-inspired picnic to the site soon followed. While on this seemingly idyllic picnic, an unidentified woman found a piece of ore, and the soldiers soon found a vein and staked claims. From this effort, the Jordan Silver Mining Company was formed. Rules for a mining district were drawn up by Connor, and thus was created Utah’s first mining district, the West Mountain Mining District. A mining boom soon ensued, and other mining districts were created on the west slope of the Oquirrh Hills, including the Rush Valley Mining District. The mining town of Stockton (named by
General Connor himself after his hometown in California) was founded there. Ophir was also created nearby when prospectors had followed up leads that Indians here had mined gold, silver, and lead for jewelry and bullets. Farther south, the Tintic Mining District was created in 1870-1871.26

The events that played out in the Oquirrh Mountains were representative of a dynamic, almost counterintuitive, process: Mormons, ever on the lookout for mineral resources, found — but generally did not develop — precious metals. They left that task to others, usually Gentiles involved in military service or former California gold rushers who moved eastward to develop precious metals mines — sometimes within sight of Mormon communities. Thus it was that the Oquirrh Mountains, visible to the west of Salt Lake City, represented both a threat and a missed opportunity to Mormons. To their credit, most Mormons heeded Brigham Young’s words and courageously avoided the temptation to exploit mineral riches. History would show that they focused on a more enduring enterprise — building Zion — rather than lining their own pockets.

In doing so, the Mormons usually mined metals that proved useful to community-building rather than self-aggrandizement. In addition to non-precious metals mining, the Mormons actively searched for and mined coal, which proved to be an essential component of the early economy of the Great Basin. However, coal was not distributed throughout the region. Developable deposits were found only in the eastern portion of the region, more particularly portions of the Wasatch Mountains, which possessed significant coal measures.27 These “black diamonds” were essential fuel for smelters and mills, replacing charcoal made from piñon pine, juniper, and other trees by about 1890.28 The Great Basin is dotted with the ruins of charcoal ovens, notably at Wildrose Canyon (California), southwest of Ely (Nevada), and Frisco and Leamington (Utah). Most of these can be traced to non-Mormons, but the Saints did erect some. These ovens became relics when coal production replaced charcoal. As early as 1865, the Mormons exploited coal at Wales, in Utah’s San Pete Valley. However, by the 1880s, British capital had been invested in these mines. Once again, it appears that Mormons were not prepared to make the major investment in mining that was required to make it economical in the commercial marketplace. Similarly, the major coal deposits farther east in Utah at Price and Helper, were largely capitalized by gentiles. However, it should be noted that Mormons did serve as miners on a number of occasions — usually as a way of supplementing their income in late fall and winter, that is, in times that would not detract from their pursuit of agricultural activities.

26 Oquirrh Mountains, Utah History Encyclopedia, http://www.media.utah.edu/UHE/index_frame.htm
27 Some coal was found near Coaldale, Nevada, but it was relatively low grade.
In Gloom and Deep Darkness

Mining metaphors abounded in American popular culture in the 1850s. Abraham Lincoln freely used Biblical language to make the point that “… every man [is] a miner.” Closely associated with the push for Nevada statehood (1864) and beneficiary of the Silver State’s contribution to the Civil War effort, Lincoln elaborated on the human condition by noting that “the whole earth, and all within it, upon it, and round about it, including himself, in physical, moral, and intellectual nature, and his susceptibilities, are the infinitely various ‘leads’ from which, man, from the first, was to dig out his destiny.” Using the Book of Genesis as his model, Lincoln metaphorically noted that, “In the beginning, the mine was unopened, and the miner stood naked and knowledgeless, upon it.” Through “Discoveries” and “Inventions,” which is to say industry, Lincoln concluded, humankind improves its lot.²⁹ Mining also opens a Pandora’s Box of unexpected consequences.

Let us now return to the western Great Basin, whose mineral-rich mountains lured many. Here, in locations remote and challenging, prospectors flocked in the 1850s and 1860s after the California Gold Rush lost its luster. We should begin by asking a question: How did mining enterprises square with the religious philosophy of non-Mormons, or gentiles? Drawn from all corners of the globe, they pursued precious metals with considerable zeal, if not abandon, in the nineteenth century. One location in particular, the western edge of the Great Basin in western Nevada, resonated with their activity. It will be recalled that the Latter-day Saints had established one of the first communities in this part of the region, but were called back to Utah to defend the area around Salt Lake City from the threat of military invasion in the late 1850s. This move left the area wide open to Gentiles, specifically miners, who soon discovered a rich silver bonanza. In reality, some of those non-Mormon miners also had some second thoughts about mining precious metals, and so it is here that I would like to address their ambivalence. To do so, I shall call upon the words of J. Ross Browne, who was present during the early boom years of Virginia City, Nevada, and other towns in the Comstock mining district. Religion, or a lack thereof, was not far from Browne’s mind when he characterized the mining community just beyond Devil’s Gate. Browne noted that his sense of foreboding was confirmed first by the landscape, especially “[t]he deep pits on the hillsides” and “the blasted and barren appearance of the whole country.” As if characterizing some doomed community of sinners straight out of the Bible, Browne noted that the town presented a “horrible confusion of tongues” and “the roaring, raving drunkards of the bar-rooms, swilling fiery liquids from morning till night,” and “the flaring and flaunting gambling-saloons.” Everywhere Browne was confronted by “the mad speculations and feverish

thirst for gain — all combined to give a forcible impression of the unhallowed character of the place.”

This, it should be noted, was one of the earliest, if not the most vivid, of descriptions of the decadence of mining towns in the Intermountain West. It helped set the scene for the Sinners vs. Saints drama that played out on both the local and regional scale.

J. Ross Browne was not alone in his comparison of mining towns to Hades. Consider, for example, the words of Phil Robinson, the peripatetic Englishman who traveled through the Great Basin in the early 1880s. Robinson wrote about his experience in a fascinating, and revealing, book boldly entitled *Sinners and Saints*, which was published in 1883. If that title suggests Robinson’s tendency toward hyperbole and his propensity to see things in terms of polarities, Robinson’s book was highly readable precisely because it simplified a very complex situation. However, Robinson’s prose also reveals some underlying attitudes about mining that are worth examining in more detail. In the literary sense, Robinson was perceptive in using this “sinners” and “saints” metaphor, for it underscores a conflict that has a long tradition in the Great Basin. Like many travelers to the region in the mid to late 1880s, Robinson realized that the Great Basin had two personalities — a Mormon presence and another, seemingly less devout, side.

As Robinson traveled westward by rail along the Central Pacific, he contrasted Salt Lake City’s character with that of other places based solely on material gain. Robinson found much to criticize in Nevada’s bustling mining communities. He observed that the region’s Mormons “... though ‘Americans,’ refuse to make haste to get rich; to dig out the gold and silver which they know abounds in their mountains.” With that distinction, Robinson had identified the major philosophical split in the Great Basin. He saw a gaping divide between those who would live on the land as agriculturalists, and those who would mine its wealth. That split helped account for what Robinson called “rich and ugly Nevada.” As Robinson viewed the Silver State from a westward-moving train, he described miles of sagebrush-covered wasteland, punctuated only here and there by patches of green. According to Robinson, “[i]t is a far cry from the City of the Saints to the city of the Celestials [San Francisco], for Nevada stretches all its hideous length between them....”

These were not politically correct times. The dyspeptic Robinson not only threw vitriolic prose at Nevada’s forlorn scenery. He was especially put off by its increasingly ethnic population. Like many writers of the period, he made no secret of his strong racial prejudices, especially despising Blacks and Chinese. He was virulently anti-Chinese, no doubt a result of their racial characteristics coupled with their non-Christian beliefs. This anti-Chinese sentiment was

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nothing new, although some observers treated it a bit more philosophically. Back in June of 1864, Nevada’s Gold Hill News observed that Virginia City’s Chinese residents were “fitting up a church...” and that, “They worship their god through the medium of images that most closely resemble the devil, but even so, they doubtless average about as near right in their conception as the rest of us.”

Robinson encountered these “Celestials” in the mining camps of Nevada, including the booming Virginia City.

By the time Robinson traveled through northern Nevada along the Central Pacific mainline that followed the Humboldt River as it meandered between mineral-rich mountain ranges, numerous mining districts had sprung up nearby. Their names — Austin, Eureka, Battle Mountain — resonate in the region’s history. It was Nevada’s emphasis on mining — or rather quickly obtained mineral wealth — that absolutely repulsed Robinson. The comparison of hard working agriculturalists versus strike-it-rich miners helped him classify the Great Basin’s residents, and communities, as either virtuous or decadent. This distinction, too, can be traced to the Bible. The Book of Job, it should be recalled, devotes one chapter (28) to it. “Surely there is a vein for silver and a place for gold where they [re]fine it,” Job begins. As the first written document to explicitly depict the works of miners, Job further observes that “Men put an end to darkness, and search out to the farthest bound the ore in gloom and deep darkness.” To do so, “they open shafts in a valley away from where men live; they are forgotten by travelers....” In a remarkably prophetic statement, Job further notes that “Man puts his hand to the flinty rock, and overturns the mountains by the roots.” By these actions, the miner “... cuts out channels in the rocks,” and “... binds up the streams so that they do not trickle.”

Ministers in nineteenth-century Great Basin mining towns were very aware of these passages, and used them in sermons. So were journalists, who wrote sensationalistic stories for an eager reading public. When the isolated mining town of Treasure City, Nevada, experienced epidemics of smallpox and pneumonia in 1869, a correspondent there wondered “what in h--l will become of ...” the miners there? In response, an enthusiastic representative of equally isolated White Pine touted the town’s high altitude, at which “[s]mallpox and pneumonia are mere bagatelles,” and where “[s]ilver indications are the thing!” He further chided the weak-hearted correspondent, adding: “If our friend ... had ever opened a Bible he would have made the discovery that the 28th chapter of the Book of Job holds out hope for all who come to White Pine.”


34 Job, Chapter 28.

But the Book of Job did more than justify miners’ pursuing their craft in out-of-the-way places like the isolated mining camps dotting the rugged mountains of the Great Basin. As one of the most profound books in the Old Testament, Job is aware that mining empowers (and is empowered by) through the knowledge of the earth that miners gain: Through the act of mining, “the thing that is hid he brings forth to the light.” Yet, Job is careful to draw an important distinction between types of knowledge. That book cautions mankind that unearthing these previously-unseen treasures should not be confused with really bringing things to light — that is, discovering true wisdom and real understanding, which is to say heeding the word of God.

That type of immaterial wealth requires a different path, one consciously taken by the Mormons. When Job asks “but where shall wisdom be found?” he quickly dismisses the gold, silver, and other treasures that miners find. Making it clear that the price of wisdom and understanding are very high — higher than all minerals — Job observes that “it cannot be valued in the gold of Ophir, in precious onyx or sapphire ... nor can it be valued in pure gold.” Job concludes that only obeying the Lord is wisdom, and departing from evil is understanding.36 The book of Psalms is even more explicit: “Therefore I love thy commandments above gold, above fine gold.”37 In the Bible, gold is usually found somewhere other than in the chosen land, for it is often dispersed and hidden in remote locations here as well as in the Holy Land. Thus when Ezra refers to “... all the silver and gold which you shall find in the whole province of Babylonia...,”38 he implies that considerable searching will be needed over a huge area. To those experiencing the more remote parts of the Great Basin in the nineteenth century, this stark region had the character of the awesome wilderness mentioned in the Bible.

The Silver State’s wealth impressed the moralistic Phil Robinson as “... abominably rich, I know,” but he wasn’t content to end his critique there. Nevada simply disgusted Robinson, who noted that “there is probably more filthy lucre in it per acre (in a crude state, of course) than in any other state in the Union, and more dollars piled up in those ghastly mountains than in any other range in America.” Students of the Bible will here recognize that Robinson’s references

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37 Psalms, 119:127.

38 Ezra 7:16.
to the “filthy lucre” were inspired by I Timothy, 39 Titus, 40 and 1 Peter. 41 When a fellow traveler stated to Robinson that “that hill over there is full of silver,” he sarcastically fired back “Is it?” Robinson then characterized the hill as “the brute” (his emphasis), confessing, “I really couldn’t help it” for “its repulsive appearance was against it, and the idea of it being full of silver stirred my indignation.” Robinson’s reason? He compared these barren, mineralized hills with the wondrous fertility of pastoral regions elsewhere, including irrigated lands in Utah, which put to shame “… ugly, wealthy Nevada.” 42 Enchanted by the agrarian beauty of California’s golden hillsides and fertile farms on the west, and Utah’s disciplined agrarian beauty on the east, Robinson was not kind to the Silver State. In a devastating critique, he noted that “Nevada lies under the disadvantage of having on one side of it the finest portion of California, on the other the finest portion of Utah, and sandwiched between two such Beauties, such a Beast naturally looks its worst.” 43

Robinson not only despised mineralized desert places like Nevada for their wealth won by luck and knowledge, rather than sustained, disciplined work. He also despised the miner’s signature on the land — what Job calls the “overturned mountains” and “bound-up streams” that everywhere characterize mining. Job’s admonition is joined by numerous other references in the Bible that urge caution about pursuing and using precious metals like gold. 44 The statistics are telling: precious metals are mentioned frequently in the Bible; gold more than 400 times, and silver about 325 times. Yet, for all its warnings, the Bible is conflicted. Almost obsessed with mineral riches, it condemns precious metals while praising the wealthy patriarchs who possess them.

For their part, many Bible-reading non-Mormon miners were drawn to these metals and participated in “rushes” throughout the region. References to mining in the Bible may have motivated travelers in the region to visualize the mineral wealth of deserts, more particularly desert mountains, as being much like the magical Ophir mentioned in the Bible. Although King Solomon observed that “gold is where you find it,” or words to that effect, places like Ophir in Arabia were legendary. Ophir is mentioned no fewer than a dozen times in five books of the Old Testament — including Job, Chronicles, Isaiah, Psalms, and 1 Kings, where Hiram and servants of Solomon “… went to Ophir, and brought from there gold....” 45 These Biblical accounts were inspirational enough to place Ophir on the map among the many placenames for mining

39 1 Timothy, 3:3, 3:8
40 Titus, 1:7
41 1 Peter, 5:2.
42 Philip Stewart Robinson, Sinners and Saints, A Tour Across the States, and Round Them, With Three Months Among the Mormons (Boston: Roberts Bros., 1883), 260-261.
43 Ibid., 261.
44 One need only recall that some idolatrous statues were made of gold and silver.
45 See 1 Kings, 9:28 and 10:11.
towns and a number of mining claims and geographic features in Utah and Nevada. They include Ophir Creek, Ophir Hill, Ophir Mill, and Ophir Canyon. However, there is a note of irony here. Although the mining town of Ophir, Utah, retains its name to this day, Ophir as a town name vanished in Nevada despite its early prevalence. The early name for the Virginia City area was, in fact, Ophir; there was an Ophir along the Virginia & Truckee Railroad in Washoe County. Ophir City (about forty-five miles south of Austin, Nevada) was laid out in 1863 but it, too, is today a ghost town.\(^{46}\) Like much of Nevada’s mining heritage, this Biblical place name originated in California’s gold rush country and migrated eastward with miners who moved across the Sierra Nevada in search of riches in the 1850s and 1860s.

It is tempting to join Phil Robinson in thinking that mining lured only the sinful, until we remember its broad appeal. Many mining towns featured churches (the oldest standing Catholic Church in Utah is said to be in the mining town of Eureka), and most became fairly orderly places after their initial boom periods.\(^{47}\) Although the early Mormons generally shunned the search for precious metals, some devout and enterprising Saints like Henry William Bigler sought precious metals in addition to pursuing other varied careers.\(^{48}\) That not all Mormons were farmers is exemplified by folklore surrounding the “colorful ... Eilley Orrum, a Scottish Mormon convert who rejected polygamy and moved on to Nevada,” where “she allegedly used a crystal ball to locate silver and became known as the ‘Queen of the Comstock Lode.’”\(^{49}\)

In Virginia City, tension between miners and the Catholic Church played out in a frequently told story about John MacKay, who was from an Irish Catholic background, but was an even more fervent mining entrepreneur. When a fire threatened to destroy MacKay’s mine, he reportedly urged the destruction of St. Mary’s Church as a way of stopping the fire. “Damn the church,” MacKay reportedly responded, “We can build another if we can keep the fire from going down the [mine] shafts.” Just how much, if any, of the church was damaged by firefighters is unknown and actually “matters little,” according to historian Ron James.\(^{50}\) The folklore does suggest that mining and religion were powerful forces that did not always function harmoniously. Yet, mining and religion went hand in hand throughout much of the region.


Late 19th Century Mormons and Mining

It should be restated that not every mid-nineteenth century Mormon avoided the mining of precious metals, and that some otherwise faithful Saints did mine gold and silver on occasion. For the most part, however, most Mormons appeared to have heeded Brigham Young’s call to focus on farming and the orderly building of Zion. Those who did go underground did not hesitate to mine coal, lead, and iron provided that it would help the Saints build a self-sufficient empire. To a remarkable degree, Mormons tended to avoid precious metals in obedience to their leaders. However, a change in leadership often signals a change in policy. With Brigham Young’s death in 1877, things began to change in ways that would have concerned, possibly infuriated, the charismatic leader who had brought the Saints into the Great Basin thirty years earlier.

By the early 1890s, the church was poised to experience a dramatic transformation. Some indication of how things had changed for Mormons is evident from the Rand Mining District, California, at the southwestern edge of the Great Basin in the 1890s. There, a fine Mormon couple, Polly and Tom Duke, located in Goler and opened a boarding house. A historian of the district notes that, “Aunt Polly recalled she would go out and look for [gold] nuggets herself at Goler when she had spare time; that sometimes the men would give her a nice specimen.” What, one wonders, was a Mormon woman doing with this gold? She would surreptitiously place the smaller specimens “in her mouth until she reached home and would safely stow them away in an empty sugar bowl, Vaseline jar or tobacco can — whatever it was she used for her personal poke.” Speculating what might have happened to the gold, the historian noted that, “I feel sure that she figured out some way of tithing one-tenth of any nuggets or dust that came her way over to the Mormon Church.”

This would have seemed blasphemous in Brigham Young’s time, but there is evidence that the church itself was now part of this search for precious metals. Plagued by its political marginalization and hurt by the panic of 1893, the church crossed the Rubicon and entered into the risky world of precious metals mining in that very year. Tellingly, it invested in mines in southern Nevada, a state (of mind) away from Utah Territory. As was recently revealed by two Mormon historians, the Church’s involvement seemed serendipitous but was, in fact, engineered. While surveying for a Utah-California rail line in the early 1890s, two Mormon surveyors — Orson Smith and Leremiah Langford — learned about several promising mines. Meeting with the First Presidency (Wilford Woodruff, George Q. Cannon and Joseph F. Smith), the surveyors confidently predicted that at least $10,000 per month could be made from investing in...
the mines. Incomplete church records suggest that about $50,000 in funds was invested. Moreover, the church continued to put additional funds into these properties. By 1895, the situation worsened, for scarce church resources were essentially hemorrhaging in hopes that they would yield handsome returns. Finally, after the violent takeover of Sterling’s mines by roughians, and their retaking by force, the Mormon leadership reassessed the wisdom of the investment. Moreover, because the gold ores from the Montgomery district proved refractory, and much gold was lost in their processing, it seemed that both economics and nature had conspired against the Latter-day Saints. By 1896, the Church pulled the plug on this initiative. These failures almost seemed pre-ordained; at least one can imagine the ghost of Brigham Young smiling on them as the humbled Saints who disregarded his admonitions now licked their wounds and counted their losses.

By 1896, when a popular map by the Rio Grande Western Railway depicted the new state of Utah as the Promised Land in words and images, it built on a common stereotype. Utah was popularly portrayed as the equivalent of the Holy Land in the Intermountain West, its settlers living the injunction to thrive in the desert by hard work. That Rio Grande Western map, and the region’s social history, would mark a high point of the Mormon’s distinctiveness and their disassociation with mining enterprises. An old way of life was ending, and a new beginning. The Americanization of Utah was well underway. By the end of the nineteenth century, when Mormons began to become more aware of, and yielded to the temptation to develop more mainstream models of accommodation, they began to accumulate considerable savvy in investing outside of Utah. The changes at this time confirm that an era was coming to an end, and another about to begin as the Latter-day Saints became less self-sufficient in orientation and more corporate in action. The twentieth century would find Mormons increasingly associated with mining as they honed their skills at corporate management and investment. They would even periodically invest in mining ventures that would have made William Godbe smile, and Brigham Young frown, in the nineteenth century. But that is yet another story of mining and religion in the Intermountain West waiting to be told.


54 After 1900, the annals of western mining would reveal some Mormon investment in gold mines in the early twentieth century.
Soon after Dr. Wallace B. Smith became RLDS President in 1978 he appointed a committee to examine issues of sexuality. Smith, a medical doctor, was open to the possibility that the church might recognize committed homosexual relationships, and might want to consider it a civil rights issue that the church should advocate. But ultimately the church declined to endorse such progressive ideas and instead issued in 1982 a new policy statement which represented only a modest step forward from the previous policy Standing High Council policy statement of 1962. The 1982 policy, drafted by the Standing High Council statement allowed homosexuals to be priesthood members in good standing if they were celibate. That remains church policy today.²

The years following 1982 saw considerable change in the hearts and minds of many Americans, including church members, as the larger society paid more attention to the issue of homosexuality. One reason the church has had to face the issue in a more serious way was the creation of an organization called GALA, “Gay and Lesbian Acceptance,” which for the past two decades has done much to educate church leaders and members as well as to serve as a support group for gays and lesbians within the church.

¹ This paper is part of a larger history of the RLDS Church (now Community of Christ) has dealt with the issue of homosexuality since 1954. The larger paper is the introduction to a collection of stories of gays and lesbians and family and friends in the Community of Christ, entitled Homosexual Saints: The Community of Christ Experience, soon to be published by the GALA organization.

I am indebted to Allan Fiscus of Lansing, Michigan for loaning me what may be a complete set of the newsletters produced by GALA. The first newsletter in his collection is the AFFIRMATION/GALA NEWS, a two-page newsletter aimed at Gay/Lesbian Mormons and Gay/Lesbian RLDS.

² The 1962 Standing High Council statement was never published in its entirety to the church at large, except major portions of it were published in a “Question Time” column written by World Church Secretary Fred Young in the September, 1971 issue of the Saints’ Herald, at p. 457. The 1982 policy also was not published to the church at large until W. B. “Pat” Spillman responded to a query in “Question Time” in the Saints’ Herald for March, 1985, at p. 30, again excerpting significant portions of the policy statement. A young church appointee named Joe E. Serig had a letter in the December, 1971 Saints’ Herald at p. 8, criticizing the 1962 policy. Two members of the Standing High Council — Charles F. Grabske, Sr. and Arthur B. Taylor — replied to Serig in the March, 1972 issue at pp. 8-9. Two members of the council in 1962 who differed with the majority were Clifford P. Buck and Paul A. Wellington.
If one person can be cited as the “founder” of GALA it would be the late Bob Swoffer of Kansas City. Swoffer happened to be the primary coordinator for the Kansas City chapter of the LDS support network called “Affirmation.” In a November, 1983 letter to a friend, Swoffer said the Affirmation group was meeting twice a month with twelve in the group, ages 21 to 40. He identified eight as RLDS and four as LDS.

Meanwhile, David Gilfillan and others had begun meeting in the Bathurst RLDS Congregation in downtown Toronto. Gilfillan and several other Canadians who came to the biennial World Conference in 1984 made contact with Swoffer and Arthur Butler and others in the Independence area. This conference provided the first known opportunity for getting gay and lesbian saints together from diverse geographical locations. Invitations were spread by word-of-mouth, inviting people to a celebration at Arthur Butler’s home during conference week. Thirty people attended, about one-third from Canada. We decided to do some organizing,” recalls Ginger Farley. “Some of our friends were dying. The AIDS epidemic spurred us forward. This church we love was ignoring that we have homosexuals and some have AIDS.3

Every World Conference since 1984 has been a significant opportunity for GALA members to meet together for support, fellowship, and worship catered to their needs, and develop strategies for relating to the church.4

The group arranged to meet again in the fall in Independence. About forty people gathered for that meeting, which again included a significant contingency from Canada. Arthur Butler has written, “It was at this retreat that the GALA name was chosen.”5 More meetings were held in Canada and in the Kansas City area. Larry Windland, the RLDS Region President for Ontario, was very supportive of the GALA group, and used David Gilfillan and others in various leadership roles, trying to raise the profile in the Toronto area and establishing an attitude of normality, that homosexuality is part of who we are.6 “Larry [Windland] was fantastic,” recalls David Gilfillan. “He began awareness sessions in the church in the area.”7

Ginger Farley recalls being overwhelmed by how loving the GALA people were:

We had all been thrown away by family, friends, the church.... My biggest disappointment was with the church. We talk about being loving but we won’t love

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3 Ginger Farley, telephone interview with the author, January 2, 2005. In the early years of GALA there were two or three retreats at the Bathurst Church in Toronto. In the mid-to-late 1980s there was a reasonable-sized GALA group in Toronto, with 15-20 people at most social gatherings. A majority of the group were gay, but not all. There was some talk of organizing a congregation, but nothing came of it.


our gay and lesbian members. The church had always been my external family and when I came out I lost my family. That is a very ugly feeling to lose your family over something you can’t help. That’s the way God created me. That’s who I am. Once they found out who I am I lost them. I lost my sense of belonging. I am fifth generation.\(^8\)

In January 1986 the Kansas City people began publishing a newsletter entitled *AFFIRMATION/GALA NEWS*, but the association with the Affirmation organization soon faded away and the group identified themselves merely as GALA. The newsletter reported that GALA is “a group formed by RLDS members in Kansas City and Toronto ... to deal with issues unique to them. This includes dealing the World Church at all levels from the First Presidency to the local congregations.”\(^9\) “Many of us have struggled for years with inner turmoil over how we as gay persons fit God’s plan,”\(^10\) the newsletter stated. One inner turmoil was the agonizing question as to whether to come “out” as a gay man or woman. In the early years newsletters would typically use only the first names of persons, to maintain a reasonable level of anonymity. Some participants weren’t “out” to all of their acquaintances, and some didn’t want to jeopardize their relationship with the church. So a policy was adopted that no one would reveal who was participating or what anyone had said at a GALA meeting.

The three major geographical areas of GALA in the beginning were Kansas City, Toronto, and southern Michigan. Before long California would become a major source of GALA members and leaders.

In the early years meetings were usually held in private homes rather than in church buildings, partly because permission to use a church building was difficult to obtain, and partly because GALA members often wanted more privacy.

Some GALA members recall a meeting with First Presidency member Howard S. Sheehy, Jr., in 1986 or 1987. The GALA people wanted to get across the message that ministry to the gay population in the church was sorely needed, and that a lot of people had been very badly treated in the church, and that homosexuality is an issue that we need to be able to discuss publicly. GALA members recall Sheehy telling them that the most important thing in the church at that time was to get the temple built in Independence. They further recall Sheehy as saying that GALA cannot use the church name, including the acronym “RLDS,” because they are not officially recognized by the church. At that time, the church was engaged in legal disputes with fundamentalist RLDS groups which had split from the church but wanted to use the legal name “Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Saints” and the acronym

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\(^8\) Ginger Farley, telephone interview with the author, January 2, 2005.


“RLDS” because they contended that they were the true continuation of the RLDS Church that has existed since the 1850s.

In the April, 1988 newsletter an editorial by Rod Caldwell defended the use of the designation “GALA-RLDS” as the name of the newsletter. He contended that the acronym “RLDS” is not a legal name and “GALA-RLDS” merely makes it clear that it is an organization whose members are mainly RLDS. But six months later the newsletter dropped “RLDS” from the name, very likely due to the pressure from church officials.

Bob Swoffer died of AIDS in August of 1986. He was 37. “He had been the backbone of GALA and the key person pushing us to organize,” recalls Ginger Farley. His funeral was held at the historic Stone Church in Independence. Swoffer had helped found the Kansas City Interfaith Coalition, an interdenominational organization formed for cooperation and support for gay men and women of various faiths. Bob had this to say shortly before he died:

The God I believe in is a God of love and great compassion. Homosexuality is not a sin; promiscuity and sexual exploitation between human beings is what we should regard as sinful.

Weekend retreats for GALA members and supporters became perhaps the most important activity of GALA for most of its members. A major breakthrough came when Allan Fiscus of Lansing, Michigan received permission from the church’s Michigan Regional President, Gary Beebe, to hold a GALA retreat at Camp Manitou, in southwest Michigan, September 5-7, 1987. This was the first time GALA had been allowed to use a church campground for a retreat. Beebe does not recall having received any criticism for having let GALA use the campgrounds. At the 1987 retreat it was decided to formally organize, elect officers and approve a constitution and bylaws. Allan Fiscus from Lansing, Michigan was elected President.

A feature at most GALA retreats has been the sharing of personal stories, many of which are very painful to tell and to hear. Ray Biller recalls the healing

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12 Swoffer’s story, told by his sister Merlene Brush, and a letter Bob wrote, are in the soon-to-be published book, Homosexual Saints: The Community of Christ Experience.
15 GALA NEWSLETTER, 1 June 87, p. 1.
17 Bobby Phelps from Tulsa the secretary. Regional Facilitators were chosen for the four major geographical areas: Don Weiss for the Midwest, David Gilfillan for Toronto, Ray Biller for the Pacific Coast, and Allan Fiscus for the Great Lakes area. Fiscus’ story is chapter 15 in Homosexual Saints.
that occurred at the 1987 Camp Manitou retreat:

This small group came together, bruised and brokenhearted, and each shared his or her story of hurt and alienation they had experienced within the so-called loving embrace of the church. I cried with each one there as they described the paths of destruction they had taken after they felt abandoned by this church ... new appreciations for the worth of each person emerged.¹⁸

Biller recalls that there was voice given to the idea that GALA should be a protesting and disruptive group, in the style of the militant group, “Act Up.” But cooler heads prevailed, and the group agreed upon three goals for GALA: (1) to accept and affirm the worth of all persons without regard to sexual orientation, gender, race, or religious origins, (2) to offer spiritual ministry to other gays and lesbians through retreats and worship, and (3) to work with the church and help educate it to the awareness of the gay and lesbian members.¹⁹

John Billings is a long-time church appointee minister and one of the most active and outspoken advocates for inclusion of gays and lesbians in the church. Beginning in 1990 until the present, church leaders have approved a GALA-related forum or worship service at every World Conference. From 1990 through 2000, Billings was the planning coordinator, often sharing the planning and leadership with Ray Biller, who was GALA President during much of that time.

Early on, some members of the RLDS Council of Twelve took an interest in GALA. Ten years before he became an apostle, Joe Serig had criticized the very conservative 1962 church policy in a letter in the Herald. Shortly after GALA was organized, Serig and two other apostles — Phil Caswell and Ken Robinson — had a breakfast meeting with GALA people in Independence. Serig also recalls a meeting between GALA leaders and the Council of Twelve during the 1988 World Conference, with most of the apostles present.²⁰

A significant number of past and present church officials have participated in GALA retreats and other activities. A partial list would include First Presidency members Grant McMurray, Ken Robinson, and Peter Judd, and Apostles Joe Serig, Phil Caswell, David Brock, Linda Booth, Ken McLaughlin, and Dale Luffman as well as Presiding Evangelist Everett Graffeo. Numerous other highly placed church leaders include Don Compier, Carolyn Brock, Dick and Barbara Howard, Matt Naylor and Paul Davis, now a member of the Presiding Bishopric.²¹

World Conference Resolution 1226 was adopted in 1992 — the church’s strongest official statement on equal rights and opportunities. It contains

¹⁸ Taken from Ray Biller’s story in Homosexual Saints.
¹⁹ Ibid.
²¹ Davis’ story about the church in Boise is chapter 26 in Homosexual Saints.
an affirmative statement regarding homosexuality. Curt Filer, an openly gay priesthood member from San Francisco and a GALA leader, was one of the eight members of the World Church committee which drafted the resolution.\textsuperscript{22} During the debate at conference, Gail Biller, the mother of Ray Biller, gave the key speech in support of the resolution.\textsuperscript{23}

Many gay and lesbian couples have sought some alternate form of recognition of committed relationships in a religious setting, frequently supported by GALA. David Gilfillan performed a union service for a gay couple during the week of the 1986 World Conference.\textsuperscript{24} Gail Biller officiated at a union ceremony in Clearwater, Florida in 2001 for Mark Dixon and Guillermo Salazar, both medical doctors.\textsuperscript{25} At least twenty Community of Christ couples have had “union services” or “commitment ceremonies” where family and friends gather for a ceremony resembling a wedding.

Regarding priesthood, the 1982 church policy requiring homosexuals to be celibate if they are priesthood members has sometimes been ignored. There are a number of locations around the country where this is true.\textsuperscript{26}

In national politics no major party presidential candidate had ever dared to openly court the gay and lesbian vote until Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton did so in his 1992 campaign for President. The GALA newsletter urged readers to support Clinton, saying that,

... never before in history has the gay and lesbian vote been so critical to a presidential election as it is this year. We are the main controversy over ‘family values’ and the future of our community depends upon this election’s outcome. So, GET OUT THERE AND VOTE, and encourage others to do so.\textsuperscript{27}

After the 1994 World Conference GALA President Ray Biller wrote:

GALA seemed to gain a legitimacy within the RLDS institution which moves us onto another plain. We were very OUT and visible, and very well accepted. We were sharing our testimonies with many listening with receptive ears.\textsuperscript{28}

GALA meetings were announced in the official conference daily bulletins, which

\textsuperscript{22} I served on that committee with Curt.
\textsuperscript{23} Gwendolyn Blue Hawks chaired the committee. Gail Biller’s story is chapter 6 in Homosexual Saints.
\textsuperscript{24} Arthur Butler, telephone interview, October 25, 2004.
\textsuperscript{25} “Union Ceremony February 17, 2001,” galaNEWS, Spring 2001, p. 3. Mark Dixon’s story is chapter 21 in Homosexual Saints.
\textsuperscript{26} President W. Grant McMurray received a lot of criticism when he admitted in his 2002 World Conference Sermon that he had been present when openly gay members were being recommended for ordination and he did not stop them he felt their calls were genuine.
\textsuperscript{27} Unsigned, untitled editorial, GALA newsletter, Fall, 1992, p. 2.
meant a lot to GALA people. Grant McMurray, at the time a counselor in the First Presidency, helped facilitate this, along with World Conference Director Sue Sloan. At every subsequent World Conference GALA activities have been announced in the official conference bulletin.

Another milestone was reached when at the 1996 World Conference GALA received permission to share a booth with the Urban Ministries Group in the exhibits area on the lower level of the RLDS Auditorium, where the conferences are held. Here various organizations within the church pass out information and hold informal discussions with those who visit their booth. Thus, GALA was able to share information with conference delegates and visitors. At the next conference in 1998, GALA had its own booth, but this time in the Stone Church, a block away from the Auditorium, where the main events of the conference are held. GALA was located next to the John Whitmer Historical Association booth — both far from the action. But GALA organizers were thrilled when, at the 2000 World Conference, its booth was located in the basement of the Auditorium next to the conference registration booth, a highly visible location. Again, the John Whitmer booth was next to GALA’s. John Whitmer leaders appreciated being next to GALA because it brought more traffic to the Whitmer booth. GALA members say that the response from people was overwhelmingly positive, but not unanimously so. One evening when the booth was left unattended, someone with a razor blade made about twenty slashes in the GALA poster. Apparently GALA’s work of affirmation and acceptance was still needed.

The 1998 World Conference was a breakthrough in another way. Grant McMurray had become President of the Church in 1996. In his 1998 World Conference sermon McMurray made a statement about homosexuality which indicated that while we don’t have all of the answers to this difficult issue, we do know that we welcome all people into our fellowship with love, and we want to hear their stories.

As of this writing GALA has had a newsletter in operation for nearly twenty years, and it currently has more than 600 people who receive it. Another means of communication was created in the spring of 1997 when a GALA website was developed as an online brochure. Meredith Bischoff is the GALA webmaster.

The 1999 retreat held at Camp Doniphan, near Kansas City, featured Presiding Evangelist Everett Graffeo and Apostle Linda Booth as guest ministers. Both demonstrated strong support for the goal of gay and lesbian acceptance. Graffeo indicated a personal willingness as an Evangelist to bless committed, monogamous, same-sex relationships in the same manner that he would bless a heterosexual couple’s marriage. Graffeo also gave an Evangelist’s Blessing to the entire group at the closing worship service. During the same

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29 I personally counted nineteen slashes in the GALA poster.

30 Sharon Troyer, then GALA Executive Secretary, email to Bill Russell, May 14, 2004.
retreat, Apostle Linda Booth spoke at a special worship service held in the Community of Christ Temple sanctuary in Independence, attended by First Presidency member Ken Robinson. Many GALA members deeply appreciated being allowed by the church leaders to hold a GALA worship service in the temple sanctuary. My most enduring image from that visit to the temple is that of two gay men from the South — big guys, one black and one white — walking along in the temple holding hands. As the Apostle Paul wrote: “Christ breaks down walls of division.”

Possibly the most significant incident to date was the 2002 World Conference sermon by President McMurray, which included a strong personal affirmative statement on homosexuality, angering many conservatives in attendance. But there was probably not a dry eye among GALA people and their supporters in the conference chamber as McMurray gave what I regard as his most prophetic statement.

The following September, Grant attended the annual GALA international retreat held in Ohio. GALA people were very happy to have the president in attendance, and McMurray seemed comfortable and in good humor throughout the weekend. But GALA people felt betrayed, however, when in October the World Church Leadership Council issued a statement reaffirming the 1982 Standing High Council policy as still the policy of the church, thus suggesting that no new ordinations would proceed. The statement indicated that current priesthood would be respected, however. McMurray’s World Conference sermon was a personal statement that had not been shared beyond his two counselors, while the October statement was a joint statement by the 22-member World Church Leadership Council. Thus it was impossible for GALA people to discern whether the backtracking represented McMurray’s second thoughts or his yielding to pressure from the other leaders. Certainly McMurray had received a lot of negative and often hostile criticism regarding his World Conference statement, much of it from the American South.

Whatever GALA people thought of the conservative reaction of the leadership in October, 2002, most felt like they had lost a sympathetic friend when McMurray unexpectedly resigned as Church President on November 29, 2004. The special World Conference held in June, 2005 endorsed the Council of Twelve’s recommendation of Apostle Steven M. Veazey to be the new President and Prophet of the Community of Christ. Veazey is an unknown quantity to GALA people generally, so it remains to be seen if he is as sympathetic as McMurray, and tries to move the church forward toward “gay and lesbian acceptance,” the name and the goal of the GALA organization.

31 Ephesians chapter 2.
Sampson Avard and Danite Leadership
(June – October 1838):
A Reinterpretation

John E. Thompson

In the fall of 1838, there was civil strife between the Mormons and their Missouri neighbors, now called the Mormon War. The cause of the conflict was that the Gentiles had heard of the existence of a secret order among the Saints called Sons of Dan (the “Danites”). These Danites had reportedly taken oaths to absolutely support the First Presidency of the Church and eliminate dissent in the Church. And later reports suggested that they planned to pillage surrounding Gentile communities, particularly in Daviess County.

After the Saints finally surrendered to the Missouri Militia in October 1838, the Prophet Joseph Smith was incarcerated in the Liberty Jail (in nearby Clay County), while awaiting a preliminary hearing on charges of treason and other crimes. In jail, Smith had time to reflect on the situation of the Church. He knew that a number of the Saints had become disillusioned with his leadership and the Church itself. Some of them had already left it. Joseph apparently

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2 History of the Church, 3:167-168. John Taylor, of course, did honestly know nothing about the Danites. Luman Andros Shirtliff [Shurtliff] himself a Danite, stated that he dare not give a Danite signal with John Taylor present, since he knew Taylor was not a Danite. Luman Andros Shirtliff Diary, microfilm of holograph, LDS Archives. But, that does not mean there were no Danites. See Leland H. Gentry, “The Danite Band in 1838,” BYU Studies, 14, 4 (Summer 1974):421-450. For more on Marsh and Hyde’s apostasy and the reasons for it, see History of the Church, 3:171-172. The letter to Brother and Sister Abbott there referred to is actually preserved in Joseph Smith’s 1839 Letter Book, Historical Department of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 18. Marsh wrote: “I have left the Mormons & Joseph Smith Jr. for conscience sake, and that alone for I have come to the full conclusion that he is a very wicket man; notwithstanding that all my efforts to persuade myself to the Contrary. I also am well convinced that he will not escape the just judgments of an offended God who pleads the cause of the innocent.” Hyde expressed similar thoughts. Marvin Hill said: “Hyde told Brigham Young afterward that it was the Danites that repelled him. ...We have no record of his saying that his testimony in his sworn affidavit
recognized that he needed a scapegoat to protect the reputation of the Church, particularly that of the First Presidency, from disrepute.

Smith found such a man in Sampson Avard, the one prominent Danite leader to testify against him in the Preliminary Hearing. In a letter to the Saints dated December 16, 1838, the Prophet argued that the entire responsibility for the Missouri debacle, lay not with himself or Sidney Rigdon (both of whom were then in jail) nor even the militant Danite Movement as a whole (for most of its members were probably still loyal), but rather with Avard. According to Smith, Avard alone had created the Danite order without either the knowledge or authorization of the First Presidency. Thus, Avard, as head of this secret abomination, had single-handedly disgraced Zion before the world.

We may appreciate Joseph Smith’s dilemma in this situation and some of us may even feel, as Joseph must have felt, that blaming Avard was absolutely necessary to save the Church and its leaders from final disaster at the very difficult time. But, it is impossible for those of us who are Mormon historians to continue to assert that Joseph’s defense of his own behavior be treated as a serious historically verifiable account of the Danites. It is simply not believable or reasonable to declare that Sampson Avard was so extremely clever that

was a misrepresentation. ... Hyde’s finest hour may have come when he broke with group pressures to protest Danite wrongs." [Marvin S. Hill, review of Orson Hyde by Howard H. Barron, in BYU Studies, 18, 4 (1978): 585-586]. Hyde’s letter, however, states more than just opposition to Danites: “I have left the Church called Latter Day Saints for conscience sake, fully believing that God is not with them. And is not the mover of their schemes and projects.” [Orson Hyde, Letter to the Abbotts, October 25, 1838]. For a different interpretation of March’s behavior, which does not address Hyde at all, see Lyndon W. Cook, “I Have Sinned Against Heaven, and Am Unworthy of Your Confidence, But I Cannot Live Without a Reconciliation’: Thomas B. Marsh Returns to the Church,” BYU Studies, 20, 4 (1980):389-400; and Richard Van Wagoner and Steve Walker, “The Return of Thomas B. Marsh,” Sunstone 6, 4 (1981):28-30. See also John Corrill, A Brief History of the Church of Christ of Latter Day Saints, (Commonly Called Mormons): Including an Account of Their Doctrine and Disciplines; with the Reasons of the Author for Leaving the Church (St. Louis: Printed for the Author, 1839). Reed Peck, Reed Peck Manuscript (Salt Lake City: Modern Microfilm Co., n. d.). Others could be cited.

3 Sampson Avard, testimony in Senate Document 189 (Salt Lake City: Modern Microfilm Co., n. d.), 1-10, 21. Avard, in particular, was excommunicated from the Church with several others in Quincy, IL on 17 March, 1839. See History of the Church, 3:284.

4 Joseph Smith Letter Book, LDS Archives, 2:18. See Dean C. Jessee [ed.], The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1984), 380. In History of the Church, 3:221, Avard is singled out by Joseph as the leading teacher of the Danites and mentions other corrupt and designing characters as well, but Avard first. See also History of the Church, 3:179, where it says Avard formed “a secret combination by which he might rise [sic] a mighty conqueror, at the expense and overthrow of the Church.” Avard bound them to secrecy and to secret oaths and “Thus Avard initiated members into his band.” The same passage claims that Avard “would often affirm to his company that the principal men of the Church had put him forward as a spokesman, and a leader of this band, which he named Danites.” And he held meetings and bound them by oaths and instructed them, History of the Church, 3:179-180. Every account of Danites in History of the Church, except the affidavit of Sidney Rigdon [3:453-454] stresses and magnifies the villainy of Avard and the greatness of his work as Danite founder-leader, but such accounts are simply and completely inaccurate.
he created the Danite order without any assistance from the Presidency and in deep secret maintained their existence in Mormon Far West and Adam-ondi-Ahman for four months without the First Presidency ever suspecting or knowing a thing about it. There is too much evidence to the contrary, a portion of which shall serve as the focus of this study.

**Reed Peck on Danite Leadership**

Two of the most important pieces of evidence for reconstructing the order and function of the Danite Leadership are by Reed Peck. Peck was, by his own admission, a Danite officer (see chart), but he claimed to have dissented from the policies of the Band. Later, he left the Church entirely and prepared a manuscript called “Mormonism So-Called” which contained a list of Danite ranks for the higher leadership.\(^5\) This list flatly contradicts the December 16, 1838 Epistle of the Prophet from Liberty Jail in three important respects. First, Peck states that Sampson Avard was never the highest ranking officer in the Danite leadership. Second, he was not its sole founder. Third, Peck asserts that the Danites did not operate outside the knowledge and direction of the First Presidency.

Most important of all, the evidence that Peck gives in his manuscript enables us to reconstruct the chain of command of the Danite leadership for the first time, but General Officers and Field Officers. The Danites were commanded by the terrible brother of Gideon, Jared Carter, and its Captain, General Sampson Avard was Major General; C. P. Lott, Brigadier General; George W. Robinson, Colonel; “also a Lieut. Col. Maj. Secretary of War an Adjutant. Captains of fifties & Captains of tens and all these officers within the privates were to be under the presidency of the church and wholly subject to their commands.”\(^6\) Then in

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\(^5\) Reed Peck, “Mormonism So-Called,” an uncompleted manuscript. Original believed to have been in the collection of the late Fawn M. Brodie. A Xerox copy of the manuscript is at Brigham Young University, Special Collection, Provo, Utah. For an easily available typescript edition of the manuscript see Reed Peck, *The Reed Peck Manuscript* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Modern Microfilm Co., n. d.), 11-12. An earlier and less accurate transcript was published by Lu J. Cake in 1899.

\(^6\) Peck Manuscript, 11. It would perhaps be helpful to say more about the concept of command here. In saying herein that the First Presidency was in command (with Joseph Smith personally directing the situation) as during the visit to Adam Black, the term “command” is simply being used in its normal military sense to include planning actions, directing movements and overseeing troops. It should not be taken in any other sense, but this alone is enough to establish Joseph’s personal responsibility for what transpired. This understanding of the word *command* is comparable to the way Caldwell County Militia Colonel George M. Hinkle viewed the subject [in his testimony at the Pre-trial Haring of Joseph Smith et al in *Senate Document 189*, 23. Command, then, implies that Danite military units informed the Prophet of developments as necessary, giving briefings of a military intelligence variety, and that Joseph used the information they gave him in planning. His plans were then issued, most likely as verbal orders [of either a general or specific nature] which were put in to effect by others. This is not to say Joseph could not be the victim of misinformation, as was the case when he was told that Mormons had been killed at
the “forepart” of July. Peck reports that Jared Carter, having complained to Joseph Smith about a Sermon of Sidney Rigdon, was removed from power and replaced by Elias Higbee.\textsuperscript{7}

Some felt that Peck was less than a reliable source, because of his apostasy, but it is worthy of note that he also listed the Danite leadership on a second occasion under oath before Judge Austin A. King in November 1838, almost a year before he started work on the manuscript.\textsuperscript{8} There is only one discrepancy between the two accounts. In the court testimony, Peck listed C. P. Lott as Major General and Sampson Avard as Brigadier General. But in the Peck Manuscript, the order is reversed. For reasons that will become apparent further on, it is more likely that Peck gave the correct order in the courtroom under oath, which was also the earlier account.

At least three considerations support this conclusion. First, in both Peck’s court testimony and his manuscript, he gives the ranks in the same descending order: Captain General, Major General, Brigadier General. This is to say that he remembered the order while confusing the identity of the officers. Already, the problem is reduced to a scribal error. Second, it is natural to take Major General to be higher than Brigadier General as the practice of our military follows that order. Third, the Danite Constitution as testified by Sampson Avard, also shows that Captain General was the highest rank among the Danites:

\begin{quote}
Art, 8\textsuperscript{th}, All officers shall be subject to the commands of the Captain General, given through the Secretary of War; and so all officers shall be subject to their superiors in rank, according to laws made for that purpose.\textsuperscript{9}
\end{quote}

In addition in 1806, Nemesio de Salcedo was Captain General of the Interior Provinces of Mexico, his area of responsibility including the present state of Gallatin, but none were. Nor is it to say that he always commanded wisely. It may be, as well that he did not specifically order Lott and Avard to rough up Justice Black and that he never actually knew what they did before he came into the house. None of this, however, is inconsistent with the concept of military command.

\textsuperscript{7} Peck Manuscript, 11-12.

\textsuperscript{8} Senate Document 189 (Salt Lake City, Utah: Modern Microfilm Co., n. d.), 17-21.

\textsuperscript{9} From the Testimony of Sampson Avard, Senate Document 189, 6. As Reed Peck’s testimony and all other testimony cited from Senate Document 189, Avard’s testimony was given before the Hon. Austin A. King, Judge of the Fifth Circuit of the State of Missouri at the Courthouse in Richmond, Mo., sometime on or after November 16, 1838. In addition to appearing in Senate Document 189, Avard’s testimony can be found in the holograph form as kept by the court clerks in the Joint Collection of the Western Historical Manuscripts Collection of the University of Missouri and the Missouri State Historical Society, Columbia, Missouri. Leland H. Gentry, “The Danite Band of 1838,” BYU Studies, 14, 4 (Summer):432. For a fuller treatment of Gentry on the subject of the Danites see “A History of the Latter-day Saints in Northern Missouri (1838-1839),” Ph.D. dissertation, Brigham Young University, 1966, particularly Chapter 9 entitled “The Danites.”
Texas.¹⁰ So the rank would not be unknown to our period.

So Sampson Avard was, according to Reed Peck, never the highest ranking officer of the Danite Band. He was only a Brigadier General (or, even if one follows the manuscript, at most Major General) never the Captain General. His superiors were Jared Carter, and later, Elias Higbee, the two Captain Generals, and Cornelius P. Lott, Major General. Avard, then, never was the final authority in the Danite Band. Therefore, Joseph Smith’s December 16, 1838, letter from Liberty Jail was incorrect when it attributed to Avard sole responsibility for the crimes of the Danites. Avard’s superiors obviously shared the responsibility.

Peck also states that, while Dr. Avard was a prominent Danite leader from the beginning, he was neither its sole founder nor the originator of its doctrines. One would have thought that, if he had been, he would have made himself Captain General and named the Danites after himself. But that was not what happened. The Peck Manuscript asserts that, at one point, early in their brief history, the Danites were called “the brother of Gideon.”¹¹ This appellation was clearly intended to honor Jared Carter, the first Captain General of the Danite band, whose brother, Gideon H. Carter, was subsequently killed at Cooked River.¹² Such a name would have made absolutely no sense if Avard had been the sole founder and prime mover. After Carter’s fall, the order was most generally referred to as “Daughter of Zion” or the “Sons of Dan,” from which came the name “Danite.”¹³

However, this does not mean Avard was an unimportant and insignificant Danite. For, the Reed Peck Manuscript also states that Sampson Avard was one of three founding members. The other two were Jared Carter, the first Captain General and George W. Robinson, Colonel. Robinson was Sidney Rigdon’s Son-in-law, General Church Clerk and Recorder and Scribe for the “Scriptory Book of Joseph Smith J.” and he may have been liaison between the Danites and the First Presidency at times.¹⁴ Avard clearly played a key role in the inner circles of the band from its inception. No history of the Danites could be written without his name beginning a central location. But equally clear, he did not play the only significant role, even in the very beginning.

Beyond the role of the Danite Generals, Peck addresses the role of the First Presidency. The First Presidency certainly never took the Danite oath, for the Danites existed to serve and support them. But Peck stated that Jared Carter

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¹¹ Reed Peck Manuscript, 11.
¹² For Gideon Hadden Carter, see Donald Q. Cannon and Lyndon W. Cook [eds.], *Far West Record: Minutes of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (1830-1844)* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1983), 253. See also Gentry, “Danite Band,” 429.
¹³ Reed Peck Manuscript, 9-10.
¹⁴ *Far West Record*, 158-159. See also George W. Robinson, “The Scriptory Book of Joseph Smith Jr. — President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latterday Saints in all the World,” *Far West — April 12th 1838.* Original in LDS Archives, Salt Lake City, Utah.
was removed from office in the Danite band after complaining about Sidney Rigdon to Joseph Smith.\footnote{See Reed Peck Manuscript, 10-11. See also Senate Document 189, 17-21.} For that to be true, the First Presidency had to have been aware of Carter's role in the Danites at that point in time (July 1838) to have had him removed. No other explanation suffices. In addition, a difficult passage in the “Scriptory Book of Joseph Smith Jr.” may confirm the Presidency were not only aware of the Danites but perhaps, involved in their founding as well.

Thus far, according to the <revelator> order of Danites, we have a company of Danites in these times, to put to right physically that which is not right, and to cleanse the Church of very great evils which hath hitherto existed among us inasmuch as they cannot be put to right by teachings & persuasions, This company or a part of them exhibited on the fourth day of July. They came up to consecrate, by companies of tens, commanded by their captain over ten.\footnote{George W. Robinson, “The Scriptory Book of Joseph Smith Jr. — President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latterday Saints in all the World,” Far West — April 12th 1838,” 61. Microfilm of holograph, LDS Archives. For this difficult to read passage (it has been crossed over by an unknown hand), see the transcription by H. Michael Marquardt in Joseph Smith’s 1838-39 Diaries (Salt Lake City: Modern Microfilm, 1982). 14. With the exception of the word “Revelation” written above the line, which Marquardt read as “revel-r,” in his reading is as good as we could expect for this passage. What Robinson meant when he scribbled in the word “Revelation” is not that clear. If Robinson meant that “according to the order of the Danites we have a company of Danites,” he could simply been speaking of the existence of the Danite band [or could have meant the Danite Constitution was “the order of the Danites”]. However, if Robinson meant “according to the Revelation ‘the order of the Danites’ we have a company of Danites,” then it is just possible that he meant Joseph Smith established the Danites by means of a lost revelation entitled “the order of the Danites.” We do not know enough even to speculate further. This passage was found only in the “Scriptory Book.” The scribes of “manuscript History of the Church,” did not see fit to include this passage and the later printed edition of Joseph’s History also does not have this passage either. But that increases the importance of this passage in the “Scriptory Book” as a primary witness.} All of this evidence may appear to historians as questionable. After all, a man could perjure himself under oath as well. But, the problem is that Peck does not seem to be lying. On two occasions, less than a year apart, once under oath, he gives us the same information, with only one minor discrepancy. And the Danite Constitution and the Scriptory Book seem to support him. But there is also additional evidence extant, which demonstrates, beyond a reasonable doubt, that Peck was telling the truth. The Danite leadership was mentioned in connection with two very important incidents during the summer of 1838: the July 4th celebration at Far West and the visit to Adam Black following the Election Day scuffle of August 6, 1838 in Daviess County, Missouri.
The order of the day for the 4th of July, as directed by the committee of arrangements:

First, that President Joseph Smith Jr. be president of the day, Hyrum Smith vice president, and Sidney Rigdon orator.

Second that Reynolds Cahoon, be marshal of the day, and Col. George M. Hinkle and Major Jefferson Hunt, be assistant marshals.

Third, that George W. Robinson act as Colonel for the day; Philo Dibble, as Lieut. Colonel; Seymour Brunson as Major, and Reed Peck as Adjutant.

17 “Scriptory Book,” 46, (or Marquardt, 10). Compare History of the Church, 3:41.
18 For an account of the Liberty Pole and how it was afterwards hit by lightening, see Luman Andros Shirtliff Journal, under date, microfilm of holograph, LDS Archives.
19 For the text of Sidney Rigdon’s July 4, 1838 address, see History of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Independence, MO: Herald House, 1896), 2:157-167. The Reorganized Historians were following the text printed in Major Jefferson Hunt, Mormon War (St. Louis, MO: 1844), 167-180. The Reorganized Historians also had the following comments on the speech: “if it be granted that this speech is correctly reported by Hung [it is], the orator crossed the bounds of propriety and right in boasting, and bidding defiance to the mob; but he may be measurably excused when we consider how much persecution and oppression they had been subjected to; and how they had been driven from place to place, robbed, and despoiled of their homes, possessions, and sacred rights.” [Reorganized History, 2:158-161.] While sympathetic as we can be to any injustice, each person present must ask and answer the question whether or not such a person ought to be “measurably excused” at all.
20 History of the Church, 3:41. The account of the July 4, 1838 affair from History of the Church is derived from Elders’ Journal, 1, 4 (August 1838): 69, not the “Scriptory Book.” George W. Robinson, however, did mention in the “Scriptory Book” the events of that day in similar fashion, particularly noting that he had commanded the regiment that day [“Scriptory Book,” July 4, see page 10, Michael Marquardt transcription].
Fourth, that Jared Carter, Sampson Avard, and Cornelius P. Lott, act as Generals, before whom, the military band shall pass in review.²¹

It is remarkable the degree of agreement between this list and the Peck Manuscript.

**The Visit to Adam Black, J. P.**

Further confirmation of this Danite chain of command and its functioning are extant in the accounts of the visit to Adam Black on August 8, 1838. There had been an Election Day riot at Gallatin on the 6th. One of the candidates felt his best chance of election was to prevent Adam-ondi-Ahman Mormons from voting at Gallatin.²² Fisticuffs resulted, but no deaths.

But, afterwards, an express was sent to Far West which exaggerated the nature of the incident and asked for assistance from Caldwell County [Mormons] against the Missourians.²³

This is what happened according to the “Scriptory Book.”

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²² See History of the Church 3:56-58, It should be noted that this passage was not copied into “Manuscript History of the Church” until 15 Jan. 1845 or later, after the death of the Prophet. See Howard C. Searle, “Authorship of the History of Joseph Smith: A Review Essay,” BYU Studies 21, 1 (Winter 1981): 112. Searle’s article erroneously gives the date of this passage as 15 Jun 1845, but has it correct on p. 228 of his dissertation. See also Dean C. Jessee, BYU Studies 11, 4, p. 467 on this point as well.

²³ “Scriptory Book,” August 7, 1838. History of the Church 3:58-59. That expresses were used on this occasion, see William Swartzell, Mormonism Exposed: Being a Journal of a Residence in Missouri From the 28th of May to the 20th of August 1838 (Pekin, Ohio: by the author, 1840), 28-29. Expresses were apparently fast communications by horse used by the Mormons of that day for communications of a most urgent nature. At least one source of information then that Joseph Smith had at his disposal when he decided to go into Daviess county following the Election Day affray was internal (within the Church itself). Joseph Smith’s own affidavit regarding this affair did not specifically state the source of his information regarding what had happened in Daviess County, but it does state that Sampson Avard brought the information in the express to Joseph. The Prophet, in consultation with Avard, then, made the decision to go to Adam-ondi-Ahman. This is precisely what is meant by the command. See Joseph Smith, Affidavit in History of the Church vol. 3, p. 70. That Joseph Smith was not averse to either military title or military leadership can be demonstrated, as well, from other periods of this personal history. In the march of Zion’s Camp from Kirtland Ohio to Clay County, Missouri in the year 1834, Joseph Smith was Commander-in-Chief and Lyman Wight, General. This almost precisely parallels the situation in Far West and Adam-ondi-Ahman in 1838. But, even then, his love of military titles, pomp, and command in no way left him. In Nauvoo, he was not only in charge of the Nauvoo Police, but Lt. General of the Nauvoo Legion, the highest ranking militia officer in the State of Illinois.
This morning an alarm came from Gallatin the County Seat of Davis County that during the Election on yesterday at that place some two or three of our brethren were killed in consequence of the Mallign-ts of the Missouri-ns, it was reported that the citizens of Daviess County who were opposed to our religion, did endeavor to prohibit the brethren from voting at the election in that place, and that the men who were killed were left upon the ground and not suffered to be intered.24

Based upon the misinformation in this Express, the Prophet made a tragic miscalculation which Robinson recorded thus:

...under these considerations quite a number of us volunteered to go to the assistance of our brethren in that place accordingly some 15 or 20 men started from this place armed and equipt for our defense the brethreren [sic] from all parts of the County, followed after and continued to come and join us, and before we arrived at Col. Wights we had quite a large company Prest. Smith and Rigdon and H. Smith, all the first presidency, General Higbee Gen. Avard myself and may others tedious to mention at this time or in this record were in the company, it was put upon me to take the commanding consequence of my holding the office of Colonel, whose duty it is to command one regiment, we marched without much intermission until we reached Col. Wights, however some of our small parties were attacked, I think on twice in going over, but, no serious injury done, we reached Col. Wights that same evening.25

Here again, we see the names and ranks of the Danite leadership, to wit: “General Higbee Gen. Avard myself [George W. Robinson] and many others too tedious to mention at this time or in this record.” It is impossible that these men were operating under any other commission than Danite authority in this action. They held no commissions in the Missouri Militia.26 And they were, more importantly, operating in the physical presence of the First Presidency, and, as seems quite likely, under their command.

This same evidence in the Scriptory Book confirms Peck told the truth about the removal of Jared Carter from the office of Captain General. Since Carter was in command at the 4th of July Parade according to the Elders’ Journal, but had

24 “Scriptory Book,” August 7, 1838. Michael Marquardt transcription, see p. 16.
25 “Scriptory Book,” August 7, 1838. See also Michael Marquardt transcription under date.
26 The only men whom we have record of having held militia commissions during this period were (in Caldwell County) Lyman Wight and George M. Hinkle, both Colonels and Major Jefferson Hunt. So reference to these Generals obviously must be to Danite ranks since there is no record of any Mormon ever holding a higher rank than Colonel. See Leland H. Gentry, “A History of the Latter-day Saints in Northern Missouri: 1836-1839,” 1966. See also Elders’ Journal 1, 4 (August 1838), p. 69 for both Maj. Hunt and Col. Hinkle. See also Letter of George M. Hinkle to W.W. Phelps, August 1844, as reprinted in Pearl Wilcox, The Latter Day Saints on the Missouri Frontier (Independence, MO: 1972), pp. 346-349. See also Letter of Orange Lysander Wight, Bunkerville, Nevada, May 4, 1903 to Joseph I. Earl, p. 2 of photocopy or page 4 of typescript in Special Collections, Brigham Young University. Incidentally, what Wight claims that his father called out the militia to quell the Election Day Riot is undoubtedly erroneous.
been replaced by Elias Higbee by August 7 and 8 according to the “Scriptory Book,” we assume that Carter was replaced shortly after July 4, in the “fore part” of the month, precisely as Peck had placed it. Thus, it could well be that the “Sermon” that Carter complained to Joseph Smith regarding was actually Rigdon’s 4th of July speech.

But Joseph’s History of the Church, which borrowed from the “Scriptory Book” its account of this day, deleted all mention of the Danite leadership altogether. Why the scribes of History of the Church, years later, dropped the ranks of Danite Generals Higbee and Avard (as well as George W. Robinson’s rank of Colonel) is no great mystery. What is a mystery, however, is the way we continue to insist that this obviously incorrect explanation is what actually transpired. For the “Scriptory Book” has demonstrated the truth of the matter: the Visit to Adam Black was a Danite operation under the control of the First Presidency.

Nor is the “Scriptory Book” the only extant witness to the role of the Danite leadership in the affairs following the Election Day Riot. William Swartzell, for a time, a Danite resident of Adam-ondi-Ahman bore eloquent testimony to the involvement of the Danites during the visit to Justice Black in these words:

This day an express arrived from Gallatin, in Daviess county, that the Missourian had raised a mob against the brethren, and killed two of them, and would not permit them to be buried. There was a great fight on the election ground in Gallatin. Trouble was began in real earnest — for stabbing with knives, throwing of stones, clubs, staves, &c., is the order of the day in every direction. Brother Butler knocked down and laid open, in a frightful manner, the skulls of several citizens, with a bludgeon. As soon as this news was known, and express was immediately sent to Far West, and 180 armed men arrived in Adam-on-Diammon, for the purpose of resisting an attack that was hourly expected.28

The scene the next morning in Adam-ondi-Ahman was also described by Swartzell in some detail:

8th. The morning has come, and no mobs yet. About six o’clock in the morning every man appeared under arms. We all marched out upon the Prairie, where we formed a hollow square — the horsemen on one side, and the foot soldiers on the other, (the officers occupying the centre of the square). Brothers Smith, Rigdon, Cahoon, Eberly, White, Lot, and many other officers were all in uniform.29

Once again, the evidence suggests that the First Presidency were in command. The Danite leadership again can be seen, although Higbee, perhaps unknown to Swartzell, was not listed. But Lot was undoubtedly Cornelius P.

27 History of the Church 3: 56-58.
28 Swartzell, August 7, 1838, pp. 28-29.
29 Swartzell, August 8, 1838, p. 29.
Lott, Danite Major General and the man that Swartzell called “Eberly” was none other than Sampson Avard, since elsewhere, Swartzell referred to Eberly as “our Brigadier General” and he also had a tendency to confuse and misspell names.\textsuperscript{30} In further support of this assumption, Swartzell sated that Eberly threatened Adam Black precisely in the fashion Avard elsewhere is alleged to have done.\textsuperscript{31} This further supports the idea that Avard was Brigadier General and not Major General as some accounts have it.

Since the Armies of Israel were as yet uncreated, the blame for the disastrous events of August 7-8, 1838, must be laid directly at the feet of those who were in command, the First Presidency and, under them, the Danite Generals.

**Conclusion**

To what extent, then, can Reed Peck’s list of Danite leadership be historically supported? Is there sound evidence in support of his version? There is indeed, in the account of the events of August 6-8 in the “Scriptory Book,” Swartzell and other sources, as well as in the description of the events of July 4, 1838, in the Elders’ Journal, as printed in the August, 1838 issue from Far West, Missouri. And, since the Danite Constitution, mentioned in Avard’s trial testimony, correctly gave the rank of Captain General as the highest ranking officer in the band, we have to regard its contents more seriously than in the past. Sampson Avard still must be highly regarded as one of the founding members of the Danite band and, as one of its highest ranking officers, a Brigadier General, if not the Major General.

In view of all this, the traditional view which began with Joseph Smith’s December 16, 1838, letter can no longer be maintained. Avard simply cannot be made a scapegoat for everything that happened. And the First Presidency, in the light of new evidence, must be viewed as taking a much more active role in the direction of the Danites than any of us would have believed heretofore. In at least two cases, they appear to have been publicly associated with, and, in one case commanding them.

Statements such as those in Joseph’s published History, which state or imply that Avard formed “a secret combination” of his own make, must, in the light of the evidence, be taken as historically inaccurate. The facts were

\textsuperscript{30} Swartzell, August 8, 1838, pp. 29-30. Swartzell is clearly a good witness to whether or not Avard was Major General or, as he put it, Brigadier General. For more on Swartzell’s propensity for confusing and misspelling names see John E. Thompson, “Spring Hill and Adam-ondi-Ahman: A Reconsideration of the Date of Doctrine and Covenants 116,” *Restoration* 3, 4 (October 1984): 1: 5-8; and John E. Thompson, “A Chronology of Danite Meetings in Adam-oni-Ahman Missouri: July to September 1838,” *Restoration* 4, 1 (January 1985): 11-15. Here, of course, “Eb-erly” should be “Avard” and “Lot” “Lott.”

\textsuperscript{31} Compare Swartzell, p. 30 with Affidavit of Joseph Smith reprinted in *History of the Church* 3: 70-72. See also the Affidavit prepared by Justice Adam Black reprinted in *History of the Church* 3: 64-65. Note that Adam Black states that Cornelius P. Lott was there also.
otherwise. The Danite order “of the apostate Avard, which died almost before it existed” can by no means be written off and forgotten nearly as easily as the Prophet wished. For Sampson Avard, while undeniably an important Danite officer, was still only third in the order of the Danite leadership of an organization of which he was not sole founder. Nor was the Danite band run totally outside the awareness or direction of the First Presidency as we have seen. Joseph Smith’s comments are erroneous and deliberately misleading, the attempts of a consummate ecclesiastical leader to save face by anointing a scapegoat. But serious history they are not.

The leadership of the Danite Band was Jared Carter, Captain General (removed from office after July 4 but before August 6), followed by Judge Elias Higbee afterwards; Cornelius P. Lott of Adam-ondi-Ahman, Major General; Sampson Avard, Brigadier General; and George W. Robinson, Colonel. In consultation with the First Presidency of the Church, these four men initiated the policies of the Danites and placed them in action. Beneath them were a number of other officers: among them Philo Dibble, Lieutenant Colonel; Seymour Brunson, Major; and Reed Peck. Adjutant. This list of the Danite Leadership thus makes a cautious beginning toward identifying the members of the Danite band as well as a fresh understanding of the nature of its order and function.
“Why then introduce them into our inner temple?”: The Masonic Influence on Mormon Denial of Priesthood Ordination to African American Men

Michael W. Homer

When Mormonism was founded in 1830 the nation was in the midst of an intense debate concerning slavery. Both slaveholders and abolitionists appealed to the Bible to justify their positions. Although they disagreed concerning the morality of slavery many in both camps believed that Ham was the ancestor of black slaves. While Noah’s curse of Canaan, son of Ham, to be a “servant of servants” implied slavery it is less clear why it was connected to skin color as well. But, as Winthrop Jordan notes, “when the story of Ham’s curse did become relatively common in the seventeenth century it was utilized almost entirely as an explanation of color rather than as justification of Negro slavery.” Nevertheless, skin color became a convenient justification for slavery. For many, “slavery was perpetual also in the sense that it was often thought of as hereditary.”

Joseph Smith, as early as February 1831, retranslated portions of the Old Testament which reconfirmed that blacks were the descendants of Cain and

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1 Michael W. Homer acknowledges the contributions of Lavina Fielding Anderson, Newell Bringhamurst, Rick Grunder, Massimo Introvinge, H. Michael Marquardt, Gregory A. Prince, Gregory Thompson, and Kent L. Walgren.


4 Jordan, White over Black, 18.

5 Ibid., 54.
Ham.⁶ But, even though Smith believed in this genealogy, his views on slavery vacillated from “seeming neutrality,” “anti-abolitionist, proslavery sentiment to a final position strongly opposed to slavery.”⁷ Despite Smith’s changing views Lester Bush has demonstrated that “there is no contemporary evidence that the Prophet limited priesthood eligibility because of race or biblical lineage; on the contrary, the only definite information presently available reveals that he allowed a black to be ordained an elder, and later a seventy, in the Melchizedek priesthood.”⁸ Nevertheless, subsequent church leaders clearly believed that the exclusionary policy Brigham Young announced in 1852 was sanctioned by God, that it would have been approved by Smith, and that a revelation was therefore necessary to reverse it.

Most of those who have studied the origins of the Mormon priesthood ban (which prevented African Americans from attending the temple and receiving priesthood from 1845-1978) have not evaluated a possible Masonic influence on that policy. The policy to ban blacks from temple and priesthood was announced after a new temple endowment was made available to general church membership. This essay will consider evidence which suggests that the practices of Freemasonry influenced not only the content of the new endowment but the priesthood ban as well.⁹ For most of the nineteenth century, the lodges of Freemasons in the United States maintained a policy that prevented African Americans from joining their lodges or practicing ancient rituals in their temples. Joseph Smith believed that the ancient landmarks and practices of the Craft were “remnants” from an earlier time when masons were temple workers and that the new temple endowment, which was initially revealed to the Holy Order on the second floor of Joseph Smith’s Red Brick Store, was a restoration

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⁶ Old Testament Manuscript 1, p. 25, JST Genesis 9:30, does not appear in KJV or LDS Moses: “Canaan shall be his servant and a vail of darkness shall cover him that he shall be known among all men.”; Old Testament Manuscript 1, 15; JST Genesis 7:10, LDS Moses 7:8: “there was a blackness come upon all the children of Canaan, that they were despised among all people”; Old Testament Manuscript 1, p. 16; JST Genesis 7:29, LDS Moses 7:22: “save it were the seed of Cain, for the seed of Cain were black, and had not place among them.” Joseph Smith Translation, Community of Christ Archives. The last two references that the seed of Cain were black appeared in: “Extract from the Prophecy of Enoch,” The Evening and Morning the Star 1 (August 1832):2; and “Olden Time,” The Evening and the Morning Star 1 (April 1833): 5.


⁹ An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Mormon Studies Conference, University of Nottingham, Derby Hall, 6-8 April 1995, Nottingham, England; and at the Conference of the Center for Studies on New Religions (CESNUR), University of Utah, September 2002, Salt Lake City, Utah.
of the original temple ritual practiced in Solomon’s temple.\textsuperscript{10} If Joseph Smith believed that Freemasonry’s exclusion of African Americans from its temples was one of the surviving remnants of Solomon’s Temple then he might have extended that policy to the temples of Mormonism.

**Freemasonry’s “ancient landmarks” and African Americans**

One rationale for the exclusion of blacks by Freemasons and a justification articulated by American lodges for maintaining this policy can be traced to eighteenth century Masonic writings. The Grand Lodge authorized James Anderson, a Presbyterian minister, to write *Constitutions of Freemasons* in 1723. In *Constitutions* he outlined the legends of Freemasonry as well as its regulations or charges, including the “ancient landmarks.”\textsuperscript{11} Among these landmarks was the requirement that a candidate for Freemasonry “must be good and true Men, free-born, and of mature and discreet Age, no Bondmen, no Women, no immoral or scandalous Men, but of good report.”\textsuperscript{12} The history of Freemasonry, which Anderson took from various manuscripts which were written prior to the organization of the Grand Lodge, began with Adam and continued to contemporary times. According to these legends:

No doubt Adam taught his Sons Geometry, and the use of it, in the several Arts and Crafts convenient, at least for those early Times; for Cain, we find, built a city, which he called consecrated, or dedicated, after the name of his eldest son Enoch; and becoming the Prince of the one Half of Mankind, his posterity would imitate his royal Example in approving both the noble Science and the useful Art.... Noah, and his three sons, Japheth, Shem and Ham, all Masons true, brought with them over the Flood the Traditions and Arts of the Ante-deluvians, and amply communicated them to their growing Offspring.\textsuperscript{13}

\textsuperscript{10} Michael W. Homer, “‘Similarity of Priesthood in Masonry’: The Relationship Between Freemasonry and Mormonism,” *Dialogue, A Journal of Mormon Thought* 27:3 (Fall 1994), 1-113.


\textsuperscript{12} *Anderson’s Constitutions of 1723, with Introduction by Bro. Lionel Vibert*. Washington D.C.: The Masonic Service Association of the United States, 1924, p.51. According to one Masonic writer: “There is general acceptance in many places that the word [free] is used to indicate that the society is open only to free men — men under no form of bondage to others — for, at the time of Masonry’s first organization, servitude and slavery were still in existence... [I]t is true that Masonry has always been restricted to men who were free — and until 1848 the qualification in England was actually was to be born free.” Colin Dyer, *Symbolism in Craft Masonry*. London: Lewis Masonic, 1983, p. 10. This charge did not originally relate exclusively to black slaves since “the Old Charges were written in full consciousness of the existence of feudal serfdom.” Nevertheless, it eventually took on that meaning. In England slavery was not abolished until 1772 with full emancipation occurring only in 1833. See, Bernard K. Jones, *Freemasons’ Guide and Compendium*. N.p.: Dobby, 1956, 152-58.

\textsuperscript{13} *Anderson’s Constitutions of 1723*, 3.
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In 1738, Anderson wrote a second edition of *Constitutions* which, according to Masonic commentator Lewis Edwards, “followed the Scriptures more closely” and the wording is less tentative.\(^{14}\) Anderson also slightly modified the requirement for candidacy: “The Men made Masons must be Freeborn (or no Bondmen), of mature Age and of good Report, hail and sound, not deform’d or dismember’d at the Time of their making. But no Woman, no *Eunuch.*”\(^ {15}\)

Anderson’s legendary history prompted critics of Freemasonry (most of whom did not believe in its antiquity) to argue that Masons, in their own writings, claimed that the Craft was founded by Adam, after his encounter with the Devil, and that it was thereafter practiced by the wicked descendants of Ham. These critics also lampooned Freemasonry for claiming ancient origins.\(^ {16}\)

In 1726 an anonymous pamphlet published by a rival society called Khaibarites ridiculed, in verse, Anderson’s history of Cain and Ham:

\[
\text{Hence Cain was for the Craft renown’d,}
\text{And mighty Nimrod was a Mason.}
\text{Cain founded not his City fair,}
\text{Till mark’d for murthering of Abel:}
\]

\[
\text{...}
\text{Cain was their Head before the Flood,}
\text{And Ham the first Grand Master after.}
\]

\[
\text{...}
\text{No Ham accurs’d or Vagrant Cain,}
\text{In the *Grand Khaibar* can you see,}
\text{No Nimrod with Ambition vain}
\text{E’er taintèd this Society.}\]

A rival Grand Lodge of “ancients,” was organized in London in 1751, which remedied some of these “historical” difficulties. The “ancients” did not accept changes which had been made in the ritual in response to published exposés, and some lodges (which had never recognized the authority of the Grand Lodge) objected to the initiation of non-Christians and believed that the “Moderns” had deviated from the “ancient landmarks.”\(^ {18}\) Thereafter, until their eventual

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16 Ibid., 76-77. These included Dr. Robert Plot’s opinion in 1686 that the legendary history was “false and incoherent” and the poem lampooning the history by the author of *An Ode to the Grand Khaibar* in 1726.


union in 1813, there were two distinct, independent, and often hostile Grand Lodges in England. In 1756, Lawrence Dermott, published *Ahiman Rezon*, which was the rival Grand Lodge’s answer to Anderson’s *Constitutions*. In his book Dermott attacked the pretensions and authority of the Grand Lodge of England.¹⁹

But the Ancients and Moderns did not disagree about everything. The Ancients agreed with the Moderns concerning the requirements for candidates and with many of the legends summarized by Anderson. Significantly, Dermott modified the history as it pertained to Cain and Ham: “It is certain that Freemasonry has existed from the creation, though probably not under that name; that it was a divine gift from God; that Cain and the builders of his city were strangers to the secret mystery of Masonry, that there were but four Masons in the world when the deluge happened; that one of the four, even the second son of Noah, was not a master of the art.”²⁰ There was even less agreement about the history of Freemasonry in England and it has been noted that Anderson’s history “provoked...sarcastic references from Dermott in *Ahiman Rezon.*”²¹

The differences between Anderson’s *Constitutions* and Dermott’s *Ahiman Rezon*, concerning the legends of Freemasonry, and particularly whether Ham had been a Master Mason, were significant. Dermott’s history provided one foundation upon which some American Masons could rationalize that Ham’s descendants, who they believed were black, were ineligible to become Freemasons. This modification of Masonic legend provided a partial justification which explained why African Americans, even those who were free-born, “had been rendered unfit for membership in the Order by experience of servitude.”²² They were “cursed” and, as such, did not qualify under the “ancient landmarks.” Their skin color set them apart and, for many American Masons, this disqualification became perpetual and hereditary.

**Freemasonry and Blacks in America**

When Freemasonry was introduced in America, beginning in 1730, lodges were authorized by the Grand Lodge of England (the “Moderns”) and, after 1751, by the competing Grand Lodge of the Ancients. When the American colonies achieved independence from Great Britain, lodges were located throughout the eastern seaboard. The Grand Lodge of England appointed

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²¹ Knoop and Jones, *A Short History of Freemasonry*, 77.

twenty-three provincial grand masters and the Ancients Provincial Grand Lodge in Pennsylvania authorized over fifty lodges in North America and in the Caribbean. One of the lodges warranted by the Grand Lodge of England (Moderns) was African Lodge No. 459. In 1776, approximately fifteen African Americans residing in Massachusetts, who were probably initiated the previous year in Regimental Lodge No. 441 (a military lodge on the Irish Registry), formed African Lodge. These African Americans eventually applied to the Grand Lodge of England (Moderns) for a charter and on September 29, 1784 it was granted. When the charter arrived in Boston on April 29, 1787, the lodge was inscribed upon the register of the Grand Lodge of England as African Lodge No. 459. The lodge was thereafter regularly organized and Prince Hall was installed as Master of the lodge.  

Although African Lodge No. 459 was organized under warrant from England neither the Massachusetts Grand Lodge of Ancient Masons nor St. John’s Grand Lodge (Moderns) invited African Lodge No. 459 to join their grand lodges. St. John’s Grand Lodge excluded the lodge from its rolls even though African Lodge No. 459, like all its other lodges, had originally been warranted by the Grand Lodge of England. In 1792 the ancients and moderns united to form the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts. Again, African Lodge was not welcomed to participate in the newly unified grand lodge because the lodges in Massachusetts (like most American lodges) were unwilling to associate with “freeborn” African Americans.  

Despite its exclusion from the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts, African Lodge was able to maintain its regular lodge status because “it still corresponded with

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24 In 1791 Fleets’ Almanac published a list of Masonic lodges in Boston and stated that: “There is also a regular African Lodge in Boston.” Fleets’ Pocket Almanack for the Year of Our Lord 1792. Boston: T. & J. Fleet, 1791, 94-5. It was listed as a lodge under the jurisdiction of St. Andrews Grand Lodge which Thomas Smith Webb wrote was made up of Ancients, chartered by the Grand Lodge of Scotland, and which remained independent of the competing Grand Lodges when they unified. See, [Thomas Smith Webb], The Freemason’s Monitor; or, Illustrations of Masonry. Albany: Spencer and Webb, 1797, 196-206.  

25 The union of the competing grand lodges in Massachusetts took place more than two decades before the ancients and moderns united in England in 1813.  

26 In 1792 Fleets’ Pocket Almanack reported the unification of the two competing grand lodges and that “The African Lodge in Boston, meet the first Tuesday in every month at the Golden Fleece.” Fleets’ Pocket Almanack for the Year of Our Lord 1793. Boston: T. & J. Fleet, 1792, 80-82.
London as if it were a subordinate lodge.”

Because of its exclusion, African Lodge eventually began to refer to itself as African Grand Lodge and it even granted permits to other African American lodges. In 1808, following the death of Prince Hall, the African Grand Lodge changed its name to Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge. But after the Ancients and the Moderns in Great Britain formed the United Grand Lodge of England in 1813, African Lodge was erased from the rolls of the Grand Lodge of England.

Thereafter Prince Hall Grand Lodge and other black lodges were forced to establish separate organizations. Like contemporary African American churches, black Masons did not have any disagreements with Caucasian lodges over ritual. Instead they were forced to establish their own organization because of restrictive treatment. But, unlike contemporary black churches, which were considered separate but equal, Prince Hall Masons were given no recognition by their Caucasian lodge brothers because each state had a Grand Lodge, which had “exclusive jurisdiction” over all Masons. Under this practice, two Grand Lodges in the same state, one black and the other white could not co-exist. The Prince Hall Grand Lodge was therefore considered “clandestine” by white Masons and African Americans were not considered “true Masons.” The Prince Hall Masons believed that the practice of “exclusive jurisdiction,” which was an American innovation, was used as an excuse to deny them recognition.

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29 From 1792 to 1813 African Lodge continued to be referred to as a regular lodge in Boston. See, Fleets’ Pocket Almanack for 1794, 1795, 1796, and 1797; Fleets Register and Pocket Almanac for 1798, 1799, and 1800; and The Massachusetts Register and United States Calendar for 1801, 1802, 1803, 1804, 1805, 1806, 1807, 1808, 1809, 1810, 1811, 1812, and 1813. African Lodge was also mentioned, with other Boston lodges, in The Gentleman’s Pocket Register, and Free-Mason’s Annual Anthology, for the Year of Our Lord 1813. Boston: Charles Williams, 1813, 209-49. African Lodge was not mentioned in either The Massachusetts Register or The Gentleman’s Pocket Register after the unification of the Ancients and Moderns in London in 1813.

30 Within Masonry there was disagreement concerning exclusive jurisdiction. Albert Mackey argued in favor of the “legalistic” nonrecognition of black lodges. Joseph A. Walkes, Jr., Black Square & Compass, 200 Years of Prince Hall Freemasonry. Richmond, VA: Macoy Publishing & Masonic Supply Co., Inc., 1979, 62n40. German Masonic historian, Joseph G. Findel, wrote that Prince Hall Freemasonry was legally constituted before the concept of the “right of jurisdiction” had been created. J. G. Findel, History of Freemasonry, From its origin down to the Present Day, 2nd ed. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1860, 357. Albert Pike, a Confederate
In addition, most Grand Lodges refused to grant permission to lodges in their jurisdictions to initiate blacks into the Craft. White Masons could also prevent blacks from joining their lodges through the practice of “blackballing” under which any member of a lodge could “anonymously” prevent the admission of any candidate without giving a reason.

Although this segregation was based primarily on racial prejudice within the membership of the Caucasian lodges “there were few racial overtones in white Masons’ explanation for their denial that the black fraternity was real Masonry.” “Instead,” explains Lynn Dumenil, “white Masons justified their position on the basis of Masonic law, claiming that Prince Hall Masonry had not been legally established.” Their commitment to equality prevented them from addressing “the order’s de facto racial exclusion.” But even if most Masons advanced this legalistic argument to support their policy of exclusion, some Masons also justified the policy (particularly when African Americans petitioned for admission into white lodges) by arguing that the ancient landmark, which required a Mason to be “freeborn” (which appeared in Anderson’s Constitutions and in Dermott’s Ahiman Rezon) precluded all black Americans — slave and free — from becoming Masons. Although the legendary history (summarized by Anderson and Dermott) was dropped from Constitutions after the union of the two Grand Lodges in 1813, the Ancients’ belief, that “Cain and

31 In 1796 a black lodge was organized in Philadelphia but it could not obtain a charter and was therefore considered clandestine. Reason versus Prejudice, Morgan Refuted. Philadelphia: R. Desilber, 1828, 25. In 1827 a committee of the Grand Lodge of Vermont recommended that a charter not be granted to a lodge made up of black freemasons. See, Journal of the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Vermont. Montpelier, Vt: Geo. W. Hill, 1827. In 1831 the Grand Lodge of Maryland investigated whether masons were visiting black lodges and resolved to suspend or expel those who did. See, Proceedings of the R.W.G. Lodge of Maryland. Baltimore, 1831.

32 Lynn Dumenil, Freemasonry and American Culture, 1880-1930. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984, 10. Dumenil concludes that although “racism and anti-Semitism existed in Masonic circles” that “little or no racism appeared in the Masonic press or official transactions. Masonic leaders’ desire to be consistent with Masonic principles constituted the major impediment to overt racism. Central to Masonic ideology, of course, was the belief in the equality of man.” Dumenil, Freemasonry and American Culture, 123. Upton notes that “race prejudice is, and always has been, the real fons et origo of the opposition to our negro brethren.” Upton, Negro Masonry, 32. See also Haffner, Workman Unashamed, 24 (“It must be acknowledged that there are many racists in American masonry.”); and Fred L. Pick and G. Norman Knight, The Freemason’s Pocket Reference Book. Third (Revised Edition) London: Frederick Muller Ltd, 1983, p. 233. (“Within the regular Craft in America and South Africa a colour bar exists and this would seem to be a negation of the universality taught by our masonic forefathers.”)

the builders of his city were strangers to the secret mystery of masonry” and that Ham “was not a master of the art,” was incorporated by David Vinton in his *The Masonic Minstrel*, which was published in Massachusetts in 1816. This legend supported American Masonry’s claim that African Americans, as descendants of Ham, were generally ineligible to join their lodges.

After the disappearance of William Morgan, and the anti-Masonic hysteria which followed in the late 1820s, seceding Masons recognized the dichotomy in the claims of Freemasonry concerning Ham. Henry Dana Ward, a seceding Mason, and editor of New York City’s *Anti-Masonic Review and Magazine*, noted in 1828, that “There is a discrepancy [sic] in the traditions respecting Ham,” that the Moderns taught “the first stage of Masonry was originated in the mind of Adam, descended pure through the antediluvian ages, was afterwards taught by Ham, and from him flowed, unpolluted and unstained with idolatry, to those of our times,” whereas the Ancients taught that Ham “was not a master of the art,” i.e. Ham was not “a master Mason.” Like Masonry’s first critics, who ridiculed the legends of Craft one hundred years earlier, American detractors used Masonry’s own history to argue that it had iniquitous origins. John G. Stearns, a Mason who withdrew from the movement in 1826, observed that Freemasons (William Hutchinson, Salem Town and Joshua Bradley) claimed ancient origins and from this he concluded that the Phoenicians and Egyptians were “the descendants of Ham” and through “these filthy Canaanites and Egyptians the world has received the mysteries of Masonry.” He also opined that “it must appear with a high degree of certainty, that the ancient and honorable institution of freemasonry, originated among the wicked descendants of Ham.” In response, American Masons vehemently

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34 David Vinton, *The Masonic Minstrel*. Dedham, Mass: H. Mann and Co., 1816, p. 337. According to Knoop and Jones “the views of the two Grand Lodges on the subject were so divergent that the historical section was omitted when the sixth edition of the *Book of Constitutions*, the first to be issued after the union of the two Grand Lodges in 1813, was published in 1815, and it has been omitted from all subsequent editions.” Knoop and Jones, *A Short History of Freemasonry*, 77. Nevertheless in 1823, George Oliver, a British Mason, adhered to this notion of Ham’s curse and its impact on his and his son Canaan’s, practice of Freemasonry. See, George Oliver, *The Antiquities of Free-Masonry*. London: G. and W.B. Whittaker, 1823, 132-35.

35 [Henry Dana Ward], *Freemasonry*. New York, 1828, 27. For the view of the Moderns, Ward quoted William Hutchinson, *The Spirit of Masonry*. London: Wilkie and Goldsmith, 1775, 169-70. (“Masonry ... was originated in the mind of ADAM ... was afterwards taught by HAM”) which is consistent with James Anderson. (The actual page citation used by Ward (119) is from the first American edition published in 1806.) But Hutchinson also taught that “the family of Cain (who bore the seal of the curse on his forehead) was given up to ignorance” (p. 7) and that the posterity of Ham forsook the doctrines of their predecessor.” (p. 11) For the Ancients Ward cited Ahiman Rezon, 13. Significantly, Ward also cited David Vinton’s *The Masonic Minstrel*. Dedham, Mass: H. Mann and Co., 1816, 337, for the position of the Ancients.

36 John G. Stearns, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Tendency of Speculative Free-Masonry*, 2nd ed. Westfield, [NY]: H. Newcomb, 1828, 36-7. Another anti-Mason, Solomon Southwick, gave an oration in 1828 in which he sarcastically suggested that “Masonry was the sole cause of introducing sin into our world, in the Garden of Eden!!!!” *American Masonic Record and Albany Satur-
safeguarded their temples from African Americans who they also considered to be Ham’s descendants.

Not surprisingly, in the midst of this anti-Masonic hysteria, that swept the United States from 1826-1836, and the continued refusal of Masonic lodges to allow blacks to join their lodges despite dramatic decreases in their membership, Prince Hall Freemasonry drafted its own “Declaration of Independence” which proclaimed that it was “free and independent of other lodges.” One of the signers of this declaration was Walker Lewis, a former Master of African Lodge, and a future convert to Mormonism.

**Masonic Influence on Mormon Denial of Priesthood Ordination**

Shortly after Joseph Smith retranslated portions of the Old Testament in 1831, which indicated that blacks were the descendants of Cain and Ham, he dispatched a new member named William Wines Phelps (who had renounced Freemasonry in New York after the Morgan affair) to publish *The Evening and the Morning Star* in Jackson County, Missouri. Although Phelps was no longer a Mason he continued to believe that African Americans were descended from Ham. In July 1831 Phelps attended a meeting at which several blacks were present and he observed that they were “descendants of Ham.”

Two years later Phelps embroiled the church in controversy by publishing material concerning the legal requirements for the emigration of free blacks into the state. He editorialized in *The Evening and the Morning Star* that: “In connection with the wonderful events of this age, much is doing towards abolishing slavery, and colonizing the blacks, in Africa.” He also reported that

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38 I am relying on Connell O’Donovan’s essay in this issue for all of the information and references concerning Walker Lewis. See, Connell O’Donovan, “The Mormon Priesthood Ban and Elder Q. Walker Lewis: ‘An example for his more whiter brethren to follow,’” in this volume.

39 Joseph Smith met William Wines Phelps on December 24, 1830. See, *Latter Day Saints’ Messenger and Advocate* 1 (April 1835): 96. When they met Phelps was editor of the *Ontario Phoenix*, an anti Masonic newspaper in Canandaigua, New York. But in April, 1831 Phelps became embroiled in a fight with other anti-Masons over a debt and he left New York the following June. This controversy is described by Phelps in a letter he wrote to *The Geneva Gazette and Mercantile Advertiser* which was republished by Egbert B. Grandin in *The Wayne Sentinel*. See, “Retribution,” *The Geneva Gazette and Mercantile Advertiser* 22 (11 May 1831), 2; and *The Wayne Sentinel* 8 (13 May 1831), 3. Phelps arrived in Kirtland, Ohio in June 1831.

there was “no special rule in the Church, as to people of color.”

This material was interpreted by local citizens as an invitation by Phelps to free blacks to join the LDS Church and to immigrate to Missouri. They therefore drafted a list of grievances against the Church. Phelps reacted by publishing an “extra” edition of his paper in which he claimed that the material he had previously published was intended to discourage the immigration of blacks into the state “to prevent them from being admitted as members of the Church” and that “none will be admitted into the Church.”

Phelps’ inept treatment of this sensitive issue created friction between Mormons and their neighbors, which resulted in their expulsion from Jackson County, and the transfer of the *The Evening and the Morning Star* to Kirtland.

Even so the Mormon attitude toward African Americans continued to be confusing. On February 6, 1835 Phelps wrote a letter to Oliver Cowdery that “Ham, like other sons of God, might break the rule of God, by marrying out of the church [had] ... a Canaanite wife, whereby some of the black seed was preserved through the flood.”

This was followed in August by a statement of church policy “to [not] interfere with bondservants, neither preach the gospel to, nor baptize them contrary to the wish of their masters.”

But the following month Joseph Smith published a letter to missionaries in which he reaffirmed the mission of the church to preach “both to old and young, rich and poor, bond and free” and he also stated that masters who prevented their slaves from joining the church would be responsible for their decision.

The following year a non-Mormon abolitionist spoke in Kirtland. Joseph Smith did not want to repeat the mistakes made by Phelps in Jackson County three years earlier, so he published a letter in the April 1836 issue of the *Latter Day Saints’ Messenger and Advocate* (which he had written to Oliver Cowdery) in which he tried to distance the church from the abolitionist activities. In the letter Smith identified African Americans with the sons of Canaan and Ham and wrote that they were cursed with servitude. He also instructed the traveling elders to “search the book of Covenants, in which you will see the belief of the church concerning masters and servants.”

Warren Parrish and Oliver Cowdery also wrote articles in the same issue in which they also opposed abolitionism. Parrish argued that slavery was premised on the curse of Ham.

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43 *Latter Day Saints Messenger and Advocate*, 1 (March 1835):82. (Italics in original).

44 *Doctrine and Covenants*, section 102 (currently D&C 134:12).


and that it would continue until God removed it. Cowdery, in an editorial, noted that: “The fourth son of Ham was cursed by Noah, and to this day we may look upon the fulfillment of that singular thing. When it will be removed we know not, and where he now remains in bondage, remain he must till the hand of God interposes. As to this nation his fate is inevitably sealed, so long as this form of government exists.” He also queried: “Must we open our houses, unfold our arms, and bid these degraded and degrading sons of Canaan, a hearty welcome and a free admittance to all we possess!”

Despite Smith’s belief that blacks were descended from Ham, he did not enunciate a doctrine or policy that prohibited all blacks (particularly those who were free) from being ordained to the priesthood. To the contrary, an African American named Elijah Abel joined the church in 1832, was ordained an elder soon thereafter, and on March 3, 1836, was given a renewed elder’s license. The following May Joseph Smith, Sr. gave him a patriarchal blessing in which he was promised: “Thou shalt be made equal to thy brethren and thy soul shall be white in eternity and thy robes glittering: thou shalt receive these blessings because of the covenants of thy fathers.” On December 20, 1836 he was ordained a seventy, and that same year he was allowed to participate in the ordinances given in the Kirtland Temple.

But, despite these developments Smith wrote, in the July 1838 issue of the *Elders’ Journal*, that “we do not believe in setting the Negroes free.”

After Smith arrived in Nauvoo he began to refine his teachings concerning priesthood and temple. In October 1840 he announced that “Persons of all languages, and of every tongue, and of every color; ... shall with us worship the Lord of Hosts in his holy temple.” But later statements concerning blacks and priesthood must be evaluated in the context of the developing endowment. During the final four years of Smith’s life W. W. Phelps was both his clerk and trusted confidante. During this same period Smith repeated and redefined the teaching that Ham was cursed. On November 7, 1841 he mentioned the curse of Ham and noted that Noah cursed Canaan “by the priesthood which he held... and the curse remains upon the posterity of Canaan until the present day.”

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49 General Record of the Seventies Book A. Meeting of December 20, 1836. LDS Archives.
50 *Elders’ Journal of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints* 1 (July 1838): 43, Far West, Missouri.
52 *History of the Church*, 4:445-6. This entry must be treated with some caution since it is not taken from either Wilford Woodruff’s Journal, which was written contemporaneous to the events described, or from the Manuscript History, which was written in 1845, which were the sources used by Roberts for other entries during this period. Instead it was added to the Manuscript History in an addenda book which was started in October 1854, almost thirteen years after the relevant time period and more than ten years after Smith’s death. See, Addenda Book, p. 19.
During a two month period in 1842 there were three developments which would have important consequences for priesthood and temple eligibility: Joseph Smith published the *Book of Abraham*, he became a Freemason, and he introduced the endowment to the Holy Order. On March 1, 1842, the Mormon prophet began publishing his translation of certain Egyptian papyri. The *Book of Abraham* contained teachings which connected, for the first time, the curse of Ham with priesthood eligibility. Specifically it taught that the “king of Egypt was a descendant from the loins of Ham, and was a partaker of the blood of the Canaanites by birth” and that from “Ham, sprang the race which preserved the curse in the land” and that Pharaoh was “cursed ... as pertaining to the Priesthood.”

Two weeks later, on March 16, 1842, Smith became a Master Mason. Most other church leaders also became Masons in Nauvoo. Some had already joined the Craft before becoming Mormons, including W. W. Phelps, Heber C. Kimball, George Miller, Hyrum Smith and Newell K. Whitney. With the exception of Phelps, these men had not renounced Freemasonry during the 1820s, and they joined the Nauvoo Lodge when Smith became a Mason. When Hyrum Smith, Heber C. Kimball, and W. W. Phelps became Freemasons in New York (before the Morgan episode) the Grand Lodge prohibited blacks from becoming masons. Two decades later most Masonic lodges, including those which were organized in Illinois after anti-masonry began to subside in the mid 1830s, continued to maintain the same policy. Mormon Masons, including Smith and Young, were certainly aware that some justified this exclusionary policy because blacks were believed to be descendents of Cain through Ham, were not inherently freeborn, and were therefore ineligible to enter their temples. This policy was followed in free and slave states and in lodges where there were anti-slavery and pro-slavery Masons.

On May 4, 1842 Smith introduced a new endowment to nine followers (all of whom were Master Masons) which became the Holy Order. Because they were Masons it would not have been possible for any African American to be an original member of the Holy Order. During the remaining two years of his life Smith gradually increased the membership of the Holy Order to include both men and women. He planned to introduce this new order of priesthood to church leaders before making it available to the general church membership in the Nauvoo Temple. From May 4, 1842 until June 27, 1844 (when Joseph Smith was murdered in Carthage, Illinois) 37 men and 32 women had been

But the entry does demonstrate how strong the tradition of Ham’s curse was in LDS thought during this period.

53 *Book of Abraham* 1:26-27. *Book of Abraham* 1:1 to 2:18 was dictated to scribes in November 1835. *Book of Abraham* 2:19 to 5:21 and explanations of the facsimiles were dictated in Nauvoo in 1842. The *Book of Abraham* was first published in *Times and Seasons* 3:9 (1 March 1842):705. *The Book of Abraham* was not canonized until 1880. Nevertheless, the passage relating to Ham was alluded to by Parley Pratt to justify the exclusion of blacks from priesthood as early as 1847. See footnote 81 and accompanying text.
initiated into the Holy Order. All but three of the men were Masons and all of the women were their wives or plural wives. During the same period when these momentous events were taking place, Walker Lewis, a Prince Hall Mason, and a resident in Lowell, Massachusetts, was baptized. He was later ordained an elder by Mormon Apostle, and Joseph Smith’s younger brother, William Smith.

Even if Smith did not prohibit African Americans from being ordained to the priesthood before he introduced the endowment, the Masonic policy which prohibited blacks from entering their temples may have influenced Smith’s thinking concerning who would be eligible to be endowed in the Nauvoo Temple. During the creative two-month period from March 1 through May 4, 1842 Smith may have connected his longstanding belief that blacks were descended from Ham, with the teaching of Abraham that the descendants of Ham were “cursed” as pertaining to the priesthood, and the Masonic practice which prohibited African Americans from entering their temples.

The Exclusion of African Americans from Illinois Freemasonry

After Joseph Smith died Brigham Young continued to invite new members to join the Holy Order in preparation for the dedication of the Nauvoo Temple. During this same period the Grand Lodge of Illinois became embroiled in a controversy which sheds light on Masonry’s rarely discussed exclusionary policy. These events in Illinois demonstrate that even Masons who lived in Free states, and were opposed to slavery, were convinced that blacks were not entitled to enter their temples because of their racial heritage. Brigham

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55 The only men who were not Masons were Orson Pratt, Almon W. Babbitt, and W.W. Phelps. Phelps had previously renounced the Craft.

56 O’Donovan, “The Mormon Priesthood Ban and Elder Q. Walker Lewis,” in this volume. O’Donovan believes that Lewis was baptized by Parley Pratt during the summer of 1843 and that he was ordained an elder by William Smith later that same year.

57 Concurrent with temple restoration Joseph Smith instructed missionaries who were preaching against the works of John C. Bennett to confine themselves “to the free States & mostly to New England & the canidas [sic] [and] not to go to any of the indians or Slave States.” *Wilford Woodruff’s Journal*. Midvale, Utah: Signature Books, 1983, 2:186-7, (10 August to 19 September 1842). A broadside *Affidavits and Certificates* was published to respond to John C. Bennett’s letters published in the *Sangamo Journal* (Springfield, Illinois).

58 From Joseph Smith’s death to the introduction of the endowment to the general church membership in the Nauvoo Temple on December 10, 1845 an additional five men and sixteen women became members of the Holy Order. When endowments were given in the Nauvoo Temple the Holy Order consisted of 42 men and 48 women. See, *Joseph Smith’s Quorum of the Anointed*, xxxviii.
Young, and other Mormon Masons, were undoubtedly aware of these events which were taking place in the lodges of their Masonic brethren. It is therefore plausible that they may have influenced Young’s decision, shortly thereafter, to adopt an exclusionary policy concerning temple eligibility.

In the spring of 1845 an African American man named A. B. Lewis, who was a Master Mason in a lodge located outside of Illinois, was admitted as a visitor in the lodges of Chicago. In May 1845, one of these lodges, Apollo Lodge No. 32, received the petitions of two black candidates (named Johnson and Davidson) to be initiated as Freemasons. Within days of receiving these petitions the lodge voted to take no action until it had procured “an expression of the Grand Lodge on the subject.” On November 21, 1845, following proceedings of the Grand Lodge in October, Apollo Lodge No. 32 appointed a committee which reported favorably on the petitions. However, when a member of Apollo Lodge, who attended Grand Lodge, reported that he had not “obtained an expression from the Grand Lodge on the subject” the lodge passed a resolution, unanimously, that the two petitioners should be allowed to withdraw their petitions for initiation into the lodge.

Despite this decision Harmony Lodge No. 3, of Jacksonville, passed resolutions on December 2, 1845, which stated, in relevant part, that “we cannot recognize any individual of the African race as being ‘free-born,’ as they are, by the constitution and laws of our country, denied the rights and privileges of citizens. Neither can we extend to them the hand of fellowship and brotherly love, believing that by so acting … we would be trampling upon all the landmarks of the Institution.” Significantly, this resolution stated that all blacks, slave or free, were not “freeborn” as required by the ancient landmarks, and that they were therefore disqualified from becoming freemasons or entering Masonic temples. The lodge authorized the publication of fifty copies of these resolutions which were sent to the other lodges in Illinois. The lodges reacted to these resolutions with near unanimity by expressing their agreement with the general proposition that African Americans should not be allowed into any Masonic lodge in Illinois. Nevertheless, the specific rationale used by each lodge ranged from the position taken by the three lodges located in Chicago (which met together to address this issue), i.e. a “desire to respect the feelings and scruples of a portion of the members of the Fraternity, and to continue that harmony which is the strength of our Institution,” to the belief of Friendship Lodge No. 7 of Dixon, that the admission of blacks would be “in opposition to

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the fundamental principles of Masonry.\textsuperscript{64}

The rationale used by some lodges was similar to justifications later given by Brigham Young and other apostles for denying black Mormons the right to be endowed in Mormon temples. For example, St. John’s Lodge No. 13 of Peru, Illinois passed a resolution that “the admission of negroes to such privileges would in our opinion be in violation of ancient usage, and that the legal and other disabilities under which they labor, will forever prevent their admission upon equality with others.”\textsuperscript{65} St. Clair Lodge No. 24 of Belleville, Illinois concluded that the “Masonic tie is too sacred, the Union is too close, to admit to the inner chamber of our hearts, those whose blood the Almighty has by an immutable law declared should never traverse our veins.”\textsuperscript{66} But the most striking rationale was articulated by the Grand Lodge itself when it met in October 1846. Reacting to what it perceived as the Chicago lodges’ argument “in favor of the rights of negroes to admission, basing their views on the oft-repeated declaration, that whoever is in possession of our universal language is entitled to admission into our halls throughout the habitable globe” the Grand Lodge adopted a resolution that lodges must do nothing “that would tend to create social discord and disrupt the political relations of the confederate state” and that the “Author of all has placed a distinguishing mark upon them, clearly indicating that there was a distinctiveness to be kept up; and it is repulsive to the finest feelings of the heart to think that between them and us there can be a mutual reciprocity of all social privileges. And why then introduce them into our inner temple, where the closest connections are inculcated and solemnized? Other objections might be urged, but your committee deem the above hints sufficient.”\textsuperscript{67}

Six years later the Grand Lodge of Illinois passed a resolution which stated categorically that “all subordinate lodges under this jurisdiction be instructed to admit no negro or mulatto, as visitor or otherwise, under any circumstances whatever.”\textsuperscript{68} Grand lodges in other free states in the North also adopted written

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\item \textsuperscript{64} Reynolds, \textit{History of Masonry}, 368.
\item \textsuperscript{65} Reynolds, \textit{History of Masonry}, 371. (Emphasis added).
\item \textsuperscript{66} Reynolds, \textit{History of Masonry}, 375. (Emphasis added).
\item \textsuperscript{67} Reynolds, \textit{History of Masonry}, 390. (Emphasis added). This statement is similar to Oliver Cowdery’s concern, expressed ten years earlier, that emancipation would require white men to open their homes to African Americans and to allow “free admittance to all we possess.” See, “The Abolitionists,” \textit{Messenger and Advocate} 2 (April 1836):301. When temple rites were opened to women it undoubtedly added a new complexity to the fear that blacks and whites would associate together in the temple. In fact, Connell O’Donovan believes that one of the main catalysts for Brigham Young’s decision to prohibit African Americans from participating in the temple was the 1846 inter-racial marriage between Walker Lewis’ eldest son and a white Mormon woman in Cambridge, Massachusetts. See O’Donovan, “The Mormon Priesthood Ban and Elder Q. Walker Lewis,” in this volume.
\item \textsuperscript{68} Chase, \textit{Digest of Masonic Law}, 212; Upton, \textit{Negro Freemasonry}, 34. For the complete resolution see \textit{Transactions, The American Lodge of Research Free and Accepted Masons} IV: 1 (October 29, 1942-April 27, 1944, 129-30.
\end{itemize}
policies, which confirmed long standing practices, excluding blacks from their temples. In 1852 the Grand Lodge of New York passed a resolution which provided that the exclusion of “persons of the negro race ... is in accordance with masonic law and the Ancient charges and Regulations” and that it is “not proper to initiate them in our lodges.” Similar resolutions were either recommended or passed by Grand Lodges in Ohio (1847), Rhode Island (1848), Iowa (1852), and Delaware (1867).

Of course these resolutions not only prohibited African Americans (slave or free) from being admitted into regular lodges of Freemasonry but also prevented black Masons, who had already been initiated in Prince Hall Freemasonry, from being admitted into white lodges as visitors. In 1855 Albert Mackey, a Masonic commentator, noted that in America, to be considered freeborn, one “must be in the unrestrained enjoyment of his civil and personal liberty, and this too, by the birthright of inheritance, and not by its subsequent acquisition, in consequence of his release from hereditary bondage.” A decade later George Wingate Chase, another Masonic writer, specifically applied this standard to African Americans: “It is an ancient rule, that candidates for Masonry must be free-born. A slave cannot be made a mason. It is established as a general rule, in the United States, that persons of negro blood should not be made Masons, even though they may have been free-born.” More recently, Joseph A. Walkes,

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69 Upton, Negro Freemasonry, 34 (Emphasis added); Chase, Digest of Masonic Law, 212-13.
70 Upton, Negro Freemasonry, 34. (“Resolved, That, in the opinion of this Grand Lodge, it would be inexpedient and tend to mar the harmony of the fraternity to admit any of the persons of color, so-called, into the fraternity of Free and Accepted Masons within the Jurisdiction of this Grand Lodge.”). See also, Chase, Digest of Masonic Law, 212. (“No Grand Lodge has authorized subordinates to initiate negroes.”)
71 See, Abstract of the Proceedings of the M.W. Grand Lodge of the State of Rhode Island. Providence: Joseph Knowles, 1848. A committee recommended that the “Grand Lodge deem it inexpedient ... for subordinate lodges ... to initiate in the mysteries of Masonry persons of color” but that they could admit them as visitors if they were initiated masons from other jurisdictions.
72 Upton, Negro Freemasonry, 34. (In 1852 “the Grand Lodge of Iowa adopted a report on foreign correspondence which embodied and endorsed the action of the Grand Lodge of New York.”)
73 Upton, Negro Freemasonry, 35.
75 Chase, Digest of Masonic Law, 1864, 211. (Emphasis added). But Chase did caution that this policy was “a matter which most Grand Lodges have wisely refrained from legislating upon, as it is at least doubtful whether they can interfere with the right of the individual members of a lodge to select their own members. Within the United States there are no regular lodges of negroes, and but few regular Masons among that class, though there are many irregular lodges and irregular masons among them. The abstract right of a lodge to initiate a negro, mulatto, Indian, Chinese, or individual of any blood or complexion, cannot be denied. The question of such admission
Jr., a Prince Hall Freemason, observed that “American Masons reasoned with Judge Taney that there are ‘slave races,’ that black men were by right as well as by law, slaves, and that they could never be participators in the institutions intended for the benefit and happiness of white men. This was the generally accepted sentiment of American Masons, and they knew no ‘higher law.’”

The Ban of Priesthood to Blacks

While Freemasons in Illinois were discussing their policy which prevented blacks from entering their temples, Mormon Church leaders made at least two statements which echoed the Book of Abraham. In April 1845 the Times and Seasons published an unsigned article which referred to: “The descendants of Ham, besides a black skin which has ever been a curse that has followed an apostate of the holy priesthood, as well as a black heart, have been servants to both Shem and Japheth, and the abolitionists are trying to make void the curse of God, but it will require more power than man possesses to counteract the decrees of eternal wisdom.” During the same month, on April 27, 1845, Chase’s advice was not always followed. Even after the Civil War, many Grand Lodges continued to prohibit black members and even passed resolutions which had the effect of prohibiting lodges from entering into regular correspondence with any Grand Lodges (even those that were recognized as regular) if they admitted black members. In 1866, the Grand Lodge of North Carolina complained that the Grand Lodge of New York had authorized the establishment of black lodges in North Carolina, not realizing that the black lodges being authorized were Prince Hall lodges which were not recognized by the regular Grand Lodge of New York. The Grand Lodge of New York denied that it had authorized such lodges and recognized that southern Grand Lodges, for more than half a century, had denounced northern Grand Lodges, “who admitted blacks into their lodges as visitors, who had been made Masons in foreign countries and by lawful authority.” “Negro Lodges,” The Mystic Star: A Monthly Magazine, 4:6 (June 1866), 162-3. The Grand Lodge of New York also asserted that the words “free born” meant that the mother must have been free at the time of the birth. “This would, of course, exclude all the negroes of the South who were born into slavery; and this fact should quiet the nerves of our brethren of the North-Carolina committee against having their sensibilities disturbed by being required to take their former slaves into their embraces as brethren, should there ever arise such a preposterous movement as they so credulously attribute to the Grand Lodge of New York.” Ibid, 163. In 1870 the Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Mississippi wrote that “Negroes are not Masons, but by the laws of Congress, they are voters.” Walkes, Black Square & Compass, 81. Nevertheless, some Grand Lodges — mostly in the north — took the extraordinary step of extending some recognition to Prince Hall Lodges after the Civil War. When the Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Missouri claimed in 1871 that it had received some form of recognition from the Grand Lodges of Missouri, Minnesota, Illinois, Iowa and other states, a Freemason from Mississippi wrote that it would not happen in his state and he challenged the legitimacy of all black lodges by contending that “the Founder of this negro — so called Masonic colony, if he received any fees” then they were “at the expense of his fellow descendants of Ham.” Walkes, Black Square & Compass, 85.


77 “A Short Chapter on a Long Subject,” Times and Seasons 6 (1 April 1845):857.
Apostle Orson Hyde, a New Englander, characterized “the curse upon the blacks” as “among the mysteries of the kingdom.”

In December 1845 the new endowment was finally given to the general church membership in the Nauvoo Temple. From December 10, 1845 until February 8, 1846 an additional 5,000 men and women were endowed. Regardless of the statements made in the *Times and Seasons*, and by Orson Hyde, concerning the curse, it is unlikely that any African Americans requested their endowments in the Nauvoo Temple since there were only a handful of black members and neither Elijah Abel nor Walker Lewis, who had previously been ordained, were living in Nauvoo.

After the endowment was given in Nauvoo church authorities gradually began to discuss the new policy which made all blacks ineligible to either receive the new temple endowment or to be ordained to the priesthood. On April 15, 1847, Parley P. Pratt mentioned a “Black man [William McCary] who has got the blood of Ham in him which lineage was cursed as regards the priesthood.” The following month William Appleby, a Mormon missionary, wrote that while he was in Lowell, Massachusetts, he encountered Elder Walker Lewis “a coloured brother” who had been ordained an elder “contrary though to the order of the Church or the Law of the Priesthood, as the Descendents of Ham are not entitled to that privilege.”

After Brigham Young arrived in Salt Lake City he continued to discuss the “curse.” On February 13, 1849, Young instructed the Twelve Apostles that “the Lord has cursed Cain’s seed with blackness & prohibited them the priesthood that Abel and his progeny may yet come forward & have their dominion Place and Blessings in their proper relationship with Cain & his race in a world to come.”

Several years later, in September 1851, one of the two African Americans


79 See, *Joseph Smith’s Quorum of the Anointed*, xxxviii. See also *The Nauvoo Endowment Companies*.

80 Elijah Abel was not living in Nauvoo when the endowments were introduced in that temple. He moved from Nauvoo to Cincinnati in 1844 and did not immigrate to Salt Lake City until 1853.


82 Journal of William Appleby, 19 May 1847, LDS Archives, quoted in Bush, “Mormonism’s Negro Doctrine,” 56n85. O’Donovan cautions readers about relying on this journal entry to conclude that the “curse” of Ham was used as a rationale to exclude blacks as early as 1847. He notes that this journal entry was apparently not written until the mid-1850s, and that Appleby made an entry twelve days later which referred to a letter to Brigham Young in which he asked whether the ordination of Blacks was tolerated in the church. O’Donovan, “The Mormon Priesthood Ban.”

83 Record of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, February 13, 1849, 12-13. Brigham Young, *Journal History* (13 February 1849), LDS Archives, quoted in Bush, “Mormonism’s Negro Doctrine,” 25. Newell Bringhurst has written that “Brigham Young alluded to this same position during the fall of 1847 when he suggested that blacks in general were ineligible to participate in certain
who had previously been ordained an elder arrived in Salt Lake City. Walker Lewis received his Patriarchal blessing from Church Patriarch John Smith on October 4, 1851 and he was told that he was of the “tribe of Canan [sic].”

During Lewis’ short stay in Utah Brigham Young spoke openly to the territorial legislature about his views on slavery and he finally publicly announced that African Americans could not hold the Priesthood. On February 5, 1852, the same year the church began giving endowments at the Council House, Young addressed the Utah Territorial Legislature, and stated that “any man having one drop of the seed of [Cain] in him cannot hold the priesthood & if no other Prophet ever spake it before I will say it now in the name of Jesus Christ.” Young also insisted that this policy could only be reversed by revelation from the Almighty. Although there is no record concerning Lewis’ reaction to these events, he returned shortly thereafter to Lowell, Massachusetts where he reopened his barber shop.

Elijah Abel, the other African American priesthood holder, arrived in Utah in 1853. When he became aware that endowments were being given in the Council House he asked the church president if he could receive his endowments. Young denied his request but he did allow Abel to continue to function in his priesthood office and as a member of the Third Quorum of Seventy. In 1880 Abel made the same request to John Taylor who also denied him access to the Endowment House. When Abel died in 1884 he still held the priesthood but he was never allowed to receive his endowments.

The shrouded origins of the Priesthood ban

Eventually the policy of excluding African Americans from the Mormon Priesthood caused some anxiety within the church prior to its reversal in 1978. Since Elijah Abel and Walker Lewis were ordained to the priesthood during Joseph Smith’s lifetime, and since Abel was allowed to participate in the Kirtland Temple (when women were excluded), many have asked when “the ‘Negro doctrine’ actually originated.” While Elijah Abel was ordained, and he

sacred temple rituals.” Newell G. Bringhamurst, *Saints, Slaves and Blacks: The Changing Place of Black People within Mormonism.* Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981, 86. Although Bringhamurst cites to a document in the possession of Ron Esplin he does not specifically identify it. Young made numerous references to the servitude of Can, Ham and their descendants before he officially announced that African Americans could not be ordained to the priesthood. See, e.g. Wilford Woodruff’s Journal, 4:39 (1 June 1851); 4:43 (29 June 1851).

85 Wilford Woodruff’s Journal, 4:97-99 (16 January 1852), quoted in Bush, “Mormonism’s Negro Doctrine,” 26; and quoted in Esplin, “Brigham Young and Priesthood Denial,” 400-01. Young’s address was summarized in the *Deseret News* on April 3, 1852,
87 See Council Meeting Minutes, June 4, 1879; Journal History of the Church, LDS Archives.
88 Lester E. Bush, Jr., “Whence the Negro Doctrine? A Review of Ten Years of Answers,” in Lester
participated in the Kirtland temple, it is also true that priesthood and temple changed dramatically in Nauvoo.89 Because of these developments and the untimely death of Joseph Smith scholars disagree concerning whether Smith or his successor introduced Mormonism’s exclusionary policy and whether it was based on revelation or racial prejudice.90

Ronald Esplin believes that Joseph Smith revealed the policy to the Holy Order. He notes that many, if not most, of Smith’s teachings — particularly on temple-related subjects — were private rather than public and that the doctrine of priesthood denial, because of its links with the temple, would have been treated cautiously by Smith while the temple was still under construction. The numerous private sessions Smith held with the Twelve and others, especially during 1843-1844, “were the proper forum for the teaching of the ‘mysteries of the kingdom’ those temple-related teachings that were not to be taught abroad and could not go to the broader membership of the Church until the completion of the temple and the removal of the Church to the relative isolation of the West.”91 The private nature of these teachings, according to Esplin, explains why Brigham Young articulated the policy only after the endowment was made available to the general church membership. Young would have had a “private understanding” of Joseph Smith’s teaching on this subject even if it was not publicly announced until 1852.92

In contrast, Lester Bush, Newell Bringhurst, and others have argued that the practice of denying blacks priesthood ordination did not begin until after the death of Joseph Smith and the exodus to Utah. They note that Brigham Young, not Joseph Smith, first articulated the policy of priesthood denial, that Brigham Young never specifically attributed it to Joseph Smith and, perhaps most significantly, that the underlying motivation for the policy was Young’s racial attitudes. They also note that although “the evidence for ‘racist’ attitudes among nineteenth century Mormon leaders is indisputable”93 that “Brigham

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89 Gregory A. Prince, Power from on High: The Development of Mormon Priesthood (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1995).
90 Ronald K. Esplin, has argued that “the doctrine was introduced in Nauvoo and consistently applied in practice at least by 1843.” Esplin, “Brigham Young and Priesthood Denial,” 399. But Esplin also admits that the problem in attributing the priesthood policy to Joseph Smith is that “one cannot point to a specific date or place where Joseph Smith taught the principle.” Esplin, “Brigham Young and Priesthood Denial,” 399. See also, Klaus J. Hansen, Mormonism and the American Experience. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), 186-87.
92 Ibid., 398.
Young was more willing than Joseph Smith to embrace certain anti-black racial concepts and practices prevalent in American Society.” Bringhamurst maintains that there was an “intensification of Mormon anti-black attitudes during the 1840s,” and that Young reacted negatively to “the flamboyant activities of William McCary.” Thereafter, “the exposure of the Latter-day Saints to a large number of blacks — both slave and free — following the Mormon migration to the Great Basin” was a catalyst Brigham Young’s decision to announce the policy of black priesthood denial in Utah. 

Clyde Forsberg has argued that Mormonism’s priesthood ban was based on the policy which excluded blacks from Masonic temples, and that both Joseph Smith and Brigham Young believed that Masonry had preserved valid practices which began in the Temple of Solomon. According to Forsberg “the debate over whether the priesthood ban was a practice or a doctrine, whether Smith — who ordained a few black men — would approve or disapprove, may indeed be somewhat beside the point. If the Temple is the priesthood, then those who contend for a gentler, kinder Smith on the issue of blacks in priesthood do not have a single leg to balance on.” Although Forsberg did not analyze the evidence which supports this connection he did recognize that it was relevant in studies concerning the policy of priesthood denial.

While the debate concerning the origins of priesthood denial subsided after the policy was reversed, and some even maintain it is now irrelevant, others continue to believe that it is still important to understand the origins of this policy in order to determine if it ever had any revelatory underpinnings or if it was based on anachronistic legends that were widely believed during the nineteenth century but which have been subsequently debunked.

The Connection between the two bans

Since Joseph Smith was killed before he achieved his goal of introducing the endowment to the general church membership, and there is no direct evidence that he taught the exclusionary policy, we shall never fully know his innermost thoughts on this subject. But Smith, as a newly initiated Mason understood, at

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95 Ibid., 134-37. According to Bringhamurst Parley P. Pratt reported that between 1830-39 there were only a dozen black members of the church.
96 Clyde R. Forsberg, Jr., Equal Rites: The Book of Mormon, Masonry, Gender and American Culture (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 220. Forsberg concluded that: “Mormon-ism could and would discriminate against men of color in good faith as the cursed offspring of Cain and the apostate priesthood — Sons of Perdition. That Smith ordained black men to offices of the priesthood but drew the line at the Temple suggest that he and Young were in agreement. Men of African (Cainite/Cainanite/Canaanite) were apostate Masons and thus to be barred from priesthood. For Smith, however, the priesthood was the temple. Under Young, it was extended to include the offices of deacon, teacher, priest, elder, seventy and high priest. Young’s was not a harder line but rather a broader one.” Forsberg, Equal Rites, 223. Smith did not ordain black men and he failed to provide any evidence to support this connection.
least by March, 1842, that African Americans were not permitted to enter the temples of Freemasonry. During the same month, he published *The Book of Abraham*, which contained new teachings which connected, for the first time, his longstanding belief that blacks were descended from Ham with the belief that his descendants were “cursed . . . as pertaining to the Priesthood.” Shortly thereafter, Smith introduced an endowment similar to Royal Arch Masonry in which his closest associates (who were all Masons) were anointed in the Holy Order of the High Priesthood.  

Brigham Young could have made the same connections as Smith. The new Mormon Prophet carried out Smith’s plans and prepared to introduce the new endowment to church members in the Nauvoo temple during the same year that the lodges of Freemasonry in Illinois debated their exclusionary policy. While no African Americans attempted to enter the doors of the Nauvoo Temple, Young finally declared in 1852 that African Americans were not eligible to receive the Mormon priesthood and he refused to allow them to receive their endowments in the Council House.

It is questionable whether Brigham Young would have introduced an exclusionary policy unless he believed that Smith would have supported it. Although Young did not claim that Smith introduced the ban he did state that “if no other prophet ever spake it before I will say it now in the name of Jesus Christ.” Thus, even if Young “showed none of the variability” on the subject of slavery that was “manifest by Joseph Smith,” he clearly felt he had a celestial mandate and he undoubtedly believed that Joseph Smith would have agreed with the policy because of similar policies followed by many lodges in Freemasonry.

Even after blacks were emancipated (Amendment XIII), given citizenship, guaranteed due process and equal protection (Amendment XIV), and received the right to vote (Amendment XV), neither the temples of Freemasonry nor the temples of Mormonism were opened up to them. Nevertheless, the rationale for the bans adopted by these institutions gradually eroded. Clearly, it became more difficult for Freemasons to argue that blacks were not “freeborn” especially two or three generations after the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment. In addition, when the Authentic School of Masonic History debunked the notion that the rituals of Freemasonry originated before

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97 Homer, “Similarity of Priesthood in Masonry,” 40.
98 *Wilford Woodruff’s Journal*, 4:97-99 (February 1852).
100 It is ironic that Joseph Smith III, the son of Joseph Smith and President of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, received a revelation in 1865 which authorized “ordinating men of the Negro race.” This revelation was included in the *Doctrine and Covenants* in 1878. See, *Reorganized Doctrine and Covenants*, section 116. Although the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (now the Community of Christ) followed the teachings of Joseph Smith in ordaining men to church offices it did not adopt the temple endowment as a church practice.
the Middle Ages it became difficult to argue that a pre-existing curse prevented blacks from being considered freeborn.\footnote{101} Finally, after the full flowering of the civil rights movement, and internal pressure within Freemasonry, many white lodges began to modify their exclusionary policies and allowed blacks to join and visit their lodges.\footnote{102}

A similar pattern is evident in the eventual abandonment of the Mormon priesthood ban. After Brigham Young’s death church leaders continued to believe that it was based on something more than Young’s personal racial beliefs. Otherwise, it is difficult to explain why they consistently insisted that a new revelation would be necessary before they could reverse the policy. In 1900 Lorenzo Snow candidly admitted to the Quorum of Twelve Apostles that he did not know whether Brigham Young’s justification for withholding priesthood from black members was based on revelation or “what had been told him by the Prophet Joseph.” Five months later Snow’s counselor, George Q. Cannon, assured the First Presidency that John Taylor claimed that the doctrine was taught by Joseph Smith. During the same meeting Cannon also “read from the Pearl of Great Price showing that negroes were debarred [sic] from the priesthood.” And Joseph F. Smith “said that he had been told that the idea


\footnote{102} Many Masons now recognize the right of African Americans to become masons. Some have even recognized the regularity of Prince Hall Masonry. British commentators Fred L. Pick and G. Gordon Knight have noted that “in several states ... there has been dialogue and there have been occasions when, outside their respective lodges, white and negro brethren have been able to co-operate in community projects.” In addition “The two Grand Lodges of Connecticut have removed all barriers and intervisitation is now permitted.” Pick and Knight, \textit{The Pocket History of Freemasonry}. Ninth ed. London: Hutchinson, 1992, 301. In 1871, the Grand Lodge of New Jersey approved the charter of a lodge founded by white masons with the intention of initiating blacks. Alpha Lodge No. 116 now consists of almost entirely black masons. Henry Wilson Coil, \textit{Coil’s Masonic Encyclopedia}. New York: Macoy Publishing & Masonic Supply Company, 1961, 441. Coil also identifies six African Americans who were initiated into Freemasonry (but not Prince Hall lodges) from 1872 to 1940. Coil, \textit{Coil’s Masonic Encyclopedia}, 441-42. Nevertheless, some Masonic writers believe that race prejudice still exists among some Freemasons. Walkes, \textit{Black Square & Compass}, 81, quoting Sibley, \textit{The Story of Freemasonry}, 72. While the situation has improved since 1904 when one Masonic writer believed that race prejudice still existed among some Freemasons (Walkes, \textit{Black Square & Compass}, 81, quoting Sibley, \textit{The Story of Freemasonry}. Gallipolis, OH: The Lions Paw Club, 1904, 72), it is also true that the great majority of black masons in the United States are member of Prince Hall Freemasonry. Ironically, some black Freemasons now claim that the origins of Freemasonry can be traced to the earliest period of the Ethiopian and Egyptian dynasties, that it was first practiced by blacks, and that its rituals are an allegory for their slavery and emancipation. Walkes, \textit{Black Square & Compass}, 119-20; Mustafa El-Amin, African-American Freemasons: Why They Should Accept Al-Islam (Jersey City, N.J.: New Mind Productions, 1990). In fact, Masonry has grown rapidly in some parts of Africa, particularly among government bureaucrats.
originated with the Prophet Joseph but of course he could not vouch for it.”

These same leaders were willing to reinterpret the policy, both in the context of temple and priesthood, in very pragmatic ways when new factual situations arose. For example, blacks were allowed to perform baptisms for the dead soon after the dedication of the Salt Lake Temple. George Albert Smith authorized the ordination of a native group in the Philippines (“Negritos”) because even though they had black skin they had no known African ancestry. David O. McKay made similar decisions concerning White South Africans, Fijians, Australian aborigines, and Egyptians, when there was no evidence that they had black African ancestry. McKay also allowed black men to serve in leadership roles in church auxiliaries and continued to allow black children to participate in proxy baptisms. Harold B. Lee approved a policy under which adopted black children could be sealed to their white parents in the temple.

Despite these modifications church leadership always insisted that a new revelation would be necessary to completely reverse the policy. But after the civil rights movement began, and the United States Supreme Court determined that a policy of “separate but equal” was unconstitutional, it became more difficult to ignore the issue. Even though the LDS hierarchy refused to reverse the policy, it effectively abandoned arguments — that the descendants of Ham were cursed — which had previously been advanced to justify it. David O. McKay’s statement in 1954 that “There is not now, and there never has been a doctrine in the Church that the Negroes are under a divine curse,” but that there was scriptural precedent that would “some day be changed” demonstrates that the hierarchy was struggling to find a rational explanation for the policy as well as a viable solution to the problem. Fifteen years later the First Presidency

103 Lorenzo Snow’s observations are contained in Council Meeting, March 11, 1900, George Albert Smith Papers, Manuscript Division, Marriott Library, University of Utah. George Q. Cannon’s remarks are recorded in Council Meeting, August 11, 1900, George Albert Smith Papers, Marriott Library.

104 Armand Mauss, “The Fading of the Pharaohs’ Curse: The Decline and Fall of the Priesthood Ban against Blacks in the Mormon Church,” in Bush and Mauss, Neither White nor Black, 186n73. See also Council Meeting, November 10, 1910, George Albert Smith Papers, Marriott Library. (“President [Joseph F.] Smith remarked that he saw no reason why a negro should not be permitted to have access to the baptismal font in the temple to be baptized for the dead, inasmuch as negroes are entitled to become members of the Church by baptism.”)


107 Prince and Wright, David O. McKay, 95.

108 Kimball, Lengthen Your Stride, 206.

109 Prince and Wright have demonstrated that although David O. McKay struggled with the rationale for the policy he always insisted that a revelation would be necessary to reverse it. See Prince and Wright, David O. McKay, 60-105.

110 Prince and Wright, David O. McKay, 79-80.
admitted that the exclusionary policy was taught by Joseph Smith “for reasons which we believe are known to God, but which he has not fully made known to man” and that it could only be changed by revelation.111

But even during the civil rights movement there was little internal pressure to reverse the policy. While it was always framed in the context of priesthood, the real catalyst for the practice was the temple endowment. Thus, a turning point did not occur until 1975 when Spencer W. Kimball announced that the LDS Church would build a temple in Brazil. Although Kimball later said “he was not thinking in terms of making an adjustment” when he made known that the temple would be built he certainly recognized that the continuation of the exclusionary policy would create great difficulties in Brazil since it would be necessary to differentiate between members who had black ancestry and those who were otherwise eligible to receive their endowments. This produced internal pressure—from the top—to reverse the policy.112

Three years later, when Kimball received a revelation, he could dedicate the São Paulo Temple without fear that the exclusionary policy would complicate or even disrupt temple work in Brazil. Since the only surviving justification for excluding African Americans was that the policy could only be modified through revelation there was no attempt to repudiate prior folklore that African Americans were descended from Ham or that they were cursed “as pertaining to the priesthood.” Instead, the church determined that it was sufficient to reverse the long-standing policy by announcing the revelation without further explanation.

Although Lester Bush and Newell Bringhurst are undoubtedly correct that there is no direct evidence that Joseph Smith originated the Mormon policy of priesthood exclusion, there is an apparent connection between that policy and the ban of blacks from the lodges of Freemasonry. The exclusionary policies of Freemasonry and Mormonism prevented blacks from entering temples whose rituals were believed to be similar to those practiced in Solomon’s Temple, both were premised, in part, on the notion that blacks were somehow disqualified from entering temples because they were descended from Cain and/or Ham, but neither policy was premised on a consistent rationale, and both became increasingly controversial during the Civil Rights Movement. Regardless of whether Mormonism’s policy was decreed by Joseph Smith or Brigham Young, if it was inspired by Masonic legends, it is easier to understand why the rationale for the policy was abandoned when it was recognized as an anachronism, and why the policy only continued until a formalistic prerequisite (unconnected to the prior rationale) was realized.

111 Prince and Wright, David O. McKay, 101.

112 See Kimball, Lengthen Your Stride, 214-24. As early as January 25, 1940 J. Reuben Clark observed that “he was positive that it was impossible with reference to the Brazilians to tell those who have Negro blood and those who do not, and we are baptizing these people into the Church.” Council Meeting, January 25, 1940, George Albert Smith Papers, Marriott Library.
The Notorious Hodges Brothers: 
Solving the Mystery of Their Destruction at Nauvoo

Bill Shepard

Introduction

On the night of 10 May 1845 a Mennonite minister was murdered and his son-in-law was mortally wounded in a botched robbery at West Point, a small settlement in Lee County, Iowa Territory, roughly thirty miles from Nauvoo, Illinois. When word spread that the murderers were Mormons, angry Gentiles vowed to drive the Latter Day Saints from Nauvoo if they did not immediately turn the murderers over to Iowa officials. When the Mormons promptly released William and Stephen Hodges to Sheriff James L. Estes it was apparent they were members of a family known for their criminal activities.¹

On 23 June 1845, the day after William and Stephen were sentenced to be hanged, their brother Ervine Hodges threatened to kill Brigham Young after he would not assist in freeing his brothers from the Burlington, Iowa Jail.² Ervine was stabbed and beaten that night while walking through a corn field

¹ Mormon Apostle John Taylor observed the brothers “had frequently been warned to forsake their evil practices, but this good counsel they would not hearken to.” [The John Taylor Nauvoo Journal — January 1845-September 1845, edited by Dean C. Jesse, Brigham Young University Studies (Summer 1983):59, (cited hereafter as John Taylor Nauvoo Journal.)] Edward Bonney, who was present at the arrest of William and Stephen, said the Hodges were suspicious characters and were “without any visible means of subsistence.” [Edward Bonney, The Banditti of the Prairies or, the Murderer’s Doom!! A Tale of the Mississippi Valley (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, New Edition, 1963), 32-33, (cited hereafter as Banditti of the Prairies).] This anti-Mormon book was first published in 1850, went through ten editions by 1900, several more additions followed in the Twentieth Century, and has been printed serially an unknown number of times. Bonney was one of three Gentile members of the Council of 50 and was an aide-de-camp to Joseph Smith, Jr. but at the time of the assault on the Mennonites he had become disenchanted with the Mormons and was living in Montrose, IA. His exploits in the capture of William and Stephen Hodges and the murderers of Colonel George Davenport were the basis of his book in which the Mormons were unfavorably portrayed. Although his history is generally accurate, he magnified his role in the arrests of William and Stephen and overemphasized Mormon hostility toward him.

² Statement of Zina Diantha Huntington Jacobs in “‘All Things Move in Order in the City’: The Nauvoo Diary of Zina Diantha Huntington Jacobs,” edited by Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, Brigham Young University Studies 19 (Spring 1979):314, (cited hereafter as Diary of Zina Diantha Huntington Jacobs.)
near Young’s home and, although he was mortally wounded, managed to enter Young’s yard where he collapsed. He refused to tell who assaulted him, saying only they were “friends from the river.” Within days, Ervine’s brother Amos disappeared and was presumed murdered.

The brothers were members of a loosely knit criminal society which ranged along the Mississippi River from Wisconsin to Missouri that stole horses, passed counterfeit money, and robbed homes and businesses. On a local level, however, the dozen or so hardened Mormon criminals and a similar number of Gentile thieves operated as a unit from Nauvoo — they were inseparably linked by oaths which bound them to rescue their associates from custody or kill any member who divulged secrets. This Mafia like code was enforced when Ervine was murdered after he threatened to reveal gang secrets and William and Stephen accepted death by hanging rather then turn states’ evidence.

As Brigham Young and his captain of the Nauvoo Police Hosea Stout have been accused of being involved in Ervine’s murder, this issue will be examined. A second item which requires examination is that of Apostle William Smith, the only surviving brother of Joseph Smith, Jr., who inexplicably gave the appearance of being in league with the Hodges.

This article will also follow the stormy journey of the Curtis Hodges, Sr. family through Mormonism. From their conversion and baptism in late 1832 until being forcibly driven from Missouri, they appear to have been a typical Mormon family. They loved and supported their Prophet; and, like the majority of their fellows, suffered persecution, privation, sacrifice, and tragedy. However, unlike most Mormon families, they disintegrated at Nauvoo under the weight of lifestyle changing decisions which included stealing. Out of this quagmire emerged the Marietta Walker, the youngest of thirteen children, who became one of the most memorable ladies in the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints [RLDS].

Tragedy at Nauvoo

William and Stephen, and their brothers-in-law Darius Campbell and Truman Wait were accused of stealing a horse from Robert Wright, in Des Moines County, Iowa in 1842. Stephen was found guilty but his punishment is unknown. On 10-12 April 1843, a conference at Nauvoo, presided over by the Twelve Apostles, assigned missionaries and regulated the affairs of the churches outside of Nauvoo. The LDS History of the Church account of the conference included: “Elder Curtis Hodges (who has a wife in this place,) was cut off from the Church for his anti-Christian conduct in Warrick county, Indiana.” The

3 John Taylor Nauvoo Journal, 58.
4 Incomplete trial documents in Des Moines County Court House at Burlington, IA, District Court Box A 76, October 1842.
5 History of the Church, 5:350, emphasis retained.
original minutes state: “Zebidee Coltrin Stated that Curtis Hodges, in Warrick Co. Ia. [Indiana] (who has a wife here) & has married another[.] Jessee D. Hunter testified to the first. Truman Wait said he had seen Hodges wife this day in Nauvoo. & that his wife said Hodges said when he went away he did not care a damn about Mormonism or any thing else but money.” Brigham Young moved that “Hodges be cut off from the Church” and the conference unanimously concurred.  

The identity of this Hodges is presumably Curtis Jr. as Genealogist and Historian Harold Eaton of Playa Del Rey, California documented a Curtis Hodges marrying seventeen year old Emily Jane Roderick in Knox County, Indiana on 8 February 1843. In this context, Curtis would have remarried after the death of his wife Lois at Quincy and abandoned his family at Nauvoo when he set out for Indiana. This assumption is strengthened by a notice Truman Wait placed in the 15 February 1843 *Times and Seasons*: “Notice is hereby given, that Elder Curtis Hodges, jr. is requested to return immediately to them, for they stand in great need of his assistance.”

A notice in the *Times and Seasons* in February 1844 said Curtis Hodges, Sr. had fleeced the Saints in Tennessee the previous November. Curtis apparently would tell the different branches he was a traveling Elder who had been wounded in the Battle of Crooked River but was destitute as thieves had stolen his possessions. The notice implied that after Curtis made appointments to preach he would ask the brethren for help. Once that was provided he would move to another congregation without keeping his appointments.

Curtis Hodges Sr. must have made restitution to the church as he was given a Patriarchal blessing by Hyrum Smith on 8 May 1844. Also during 1844, Amos Hodges was designated to take a mission to Vermont; Emeline Hodges Campbell’s husband Darius died of consumption at Nauvoo; Ervine and Stephen were suspected of robbing a man named Smith in Lee County, Iowa.

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6 General Church Minutes, April 10, 1843, Selected Collections from the Archives of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Brigham Young University Press, 2002.

7 Email from Harold Eaton to the author, 20 February 2006.

8 “Notice ...” *Times and Seasons* 4 (15 February 1843):106.

9 “To the Editor of the Times and Seasons,” *Times and Seasons* 5 (1 March 1844):461.

10 Patriarchal blessing index, Archives of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah.


13 Testimony of John Walker at William and Stephen’s trial on 19-21 June at Burlington, IA in “Trial for Murder,” *Burlington Hawk-Eye* 7 (26 June 1845):2-3, (cited hereafter as *Trial for Murder.*) This account was reprinted in the *Warsaw Signal* 2 (9 July 1845):1. This is the best
and Truman Wait’s priesthood was removed by the Nauvoo High Council for frequenting grog shops.\textsuperscript{14}

Truman and Sarah Wait, Samuel and Lucy Billings, Marietta, James and their parents left Nauvoo for Pennsylvania in early 1845. Amos and Lydia continued to live in a poor section of Nauvoo near the Mississippi River and they shared their home with William and Stephen. Amos was President of the Thirteenth Quorum of Seventy\textsuperscript{15} yet he could not enter Iowa “because he had been indicted for robbery.”\textsuperscript{16} Ervine Hodges, who was characterized by Apostle John Taylor as having a “poor character for unrighteousness” lived with his wife Luzette at Mechanicksville\textsuperscript{17} some thirty miles from Nauvoo in Hancock County; and Eliza Ann Hodges and her sister Emeline Campbell presumably lived together in Nauvoo.

The John Miller [Johannes Mueller] family, a Mennonite family who had emigrated from Germany, was targeted for robbery after rumors reached the criminal element that Miller had $1,000 in cash. Twenty-five year old William Hodges,\textsuperscript{18} twenty-three year old Stephen Hodges, Thomas Brown, who was about twenty-one years old,\textsuperscript{19} and thirty-six year old Artemas Johnson,\textsuperscript{20} believed the Mennonites would be easy marks.

On 8–9 May, William and Stephen, and Brown brazenly went to Miller’s isolated house near the tiny village of West Point in Lee County, Iowa Territory and asked directions; they also approached Miller’s neighbors with the story record of the trial as the trial minutes at the Burlington, IA Court House have been stolen. This summarized account excludes the testimony of several of the individuals paid for appearing for the prosecution.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{14} \textit{Nauvoo High Council Minutes}, 23 Nov. 1844, typescript, LDS Archives.
\item \textsuperscript{15} \textit{Seventies Record; Book A, 13\textsuperscript{th} Quorum}, LDS Archives, 6.
\item \textsuperscript{17} \textit{John Taylor Nauvoo Journal}, 58.
\item \textsuperscript{18} \textit{The Seventies Record; Book B, 13\textsuperscript{th} Quorum}, LDS Archives, 43, indicated William was an Elder.
\item \textsuperscript{19} Thomas Brown was born in Steuben County, NY to Alanson Brown and Cynthia Dorcus Hurd. A person using the pseudonym “Alpha” wrote: “Brown, though scarce twenty-one is notorious in Hancock and the adjoining counties. He has been in jail, in Brown County, for stealing. His father was expelled from the Mormon Church, six years ago, and forcibly driven from the community.” [“Shocking Murder,” \textit{Illinois State Register} 6 (23 May 1845):3] Brown fled Nauvoo following Miller’s murder, evaded lawmen and bounty hunters and joined the Mormons on their trek to Utah. He was killed at Winter Quarters in 1848 under mysterious circumstances. See Bill Shepard, “Stealing at Mormon Nauvoo,” \textit{The John Whitmer Historical Association Journal} 23 (2003):92-93, 98-99.
\item \textsuperscript{20} Artemas Johnson was born on 18 April 1809 at Oneida, New York; was ordained an Elder on 5 October 1839 at Nauvoo, married Almira Ayers in November 1839 and was driven from Nauvoo for stealing from fellow Mormons in late 1840. He was living in the Nauvoo area in May 1845 and after the murders managed to avoid arrest and joined the Mormons on the way to Utah. [Ibid. 92, 98-99.]
\end{itemize}
they were looking for lost oxen and would ask about Miller. A neighbor named John Walker testified that William attempted to get him to join their gang which consisted of “a good many [men]” and alluded to a criminal code which required the members to get each other out of legal difficulties “one way or another.” Walker was warned that if he ever told of the conversation he would be killed. William’s threats must have terrified Walker as he only revealed their conversation after neighbors told him they “would raise a mob” and punish him if he withheld information.21

John Miller, his wife, their two daughters and their husbands Henry Leisi and Jacob Risser were sleeping on the floor when Mrs. Miller heard someone opening their door latch about midnight. She later testified through an interpreter that three men with darkened faces silently entered the house holding a “dark” lantern and attacked Miller and Leisi with clubs. Confluent accounts indicate the stoutly built fifty-eight year old Miller gained his footing and started beating the assailants with his unloaded shotgun and died when a bowie knife pierced his heart. Leisi was in the process of choking one of the robbers when he was stabbed with a knife and was mortally wounded by a gunshot.22 The unnerved robbers fled but William left his distinctive cap which was trimmed with fur but did not have a front piece.

At dawn, Sheriff James L. Estes and a Doctor Holmes joined the grieving survivors and the frantically mad neighbors at the murder scene. Holmes did what he could to keep Leisi alive and then determined Miller had been stabbed in the chest with a huge knife which “would have gone through the body of any ordinary person.” Meanwhile, Sheriff Estes, and other woodsmen who had been raised in Kentucky followed four sets of tracks which ended at the Mississippi River across from Nauvoo.23

The brothers asked Brigham Young “what they should do” the next morning and Young, who believed William and Stephen “to be murderers,” told them to “fulfil [sic] the law.” They responded by threatening to kill him.24 Then, in spite of being warned by Apostle William Smith to get out of Nauvoo, they went to Amos’s house. Brown and Johnson, on the other hand, were more in touch with reality and fled Nauvoo. James M. Monroe, a school teacher who boarded with Emma Smith, said he heard Smith preaching on the eleventh and observed he did not “seem to approve of the harsh measures now going on to get rid of our enemies.” The following day Monroe observed “I have heard today that two men had been murdered by our people a short distance from here.”25

21 Testimony of John Walker in Trial for Murder.
22 Banditi of the Prairies, 30 and Testimony of Mrs. Miller in Trial for Murder.
23 Testimony of Sheriff James L. Estes and Doctor Holmes in Trial for Murder.
25 James M. Monroe Diary, 12 May 1845, 121-22, holograph, Beinecke Library, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.
Iowans infiltrated Nauvoo on 12 May and observed Stephen with blood on his clothes and William without his customary cap. This, combined with Miller’s neighbors saying that William and Stephen were in the neighborhood shortly before the murder, influenced them to approach Stephen Markham, an officer in the Nauvoo police, to help them arrest the brothers. Hosea Stout was at Brigham Young’s home when he was informed of the search and, no doubt with Young’s blessing, joined the hunt. A Nauvoo informant known as “Alpha” said the police “repaired to the house of a man, by the name of Hodge, who had long been suspected by them of being in the horse stealing and bogus business.” Amos’s house was surrounded at one o’clock in the morning of the thirteenth and the heavily armed brothers surrendered after sunrise and were arrested and held in the Mansion House by the Nauvoo police. At an undisclosed time, William Smith unsuccessfully attempted to get the police to set them free. Iowa officials hastened to West Point and, as the District Court of Lee County, Iowa was in session, testimony was given before a Grand Jury. An indictment was issued against William and Stephen and Brown for murder and was filed on the fifteenth.

A preliminary hearing was in session on the fifteenth at Nauvoo, with William and Stephen being represented by Mormon lawyer Almond Babbitt, when a large contingent of angry Iowa officials and citizens arrived. After wrangling between lawyers, the Mormons willingly released the brothers to Sheriff Estes who told them they could be held at the Carthage Jail and “await a requisition” or be removed to Iowa. They choose Iowa over the jail where Joseph and Hyrum Smith were murdered. Hosea Stout said the Iowans were convinced the Mormons would not release the prisoners but once they received the brothers “declared that we were abused and misrepresented....”

William and Stephen were held in the Iowa Penitentiary at Fort Madison

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26 The [Burlington] Iowa Territorial Gazette and Advertiser 8 (17 May 1845):2, under the heading “Murder and Attempted Robbery,” said “The cap left at the theatre of bloodshed has been recognized as belonging to one of them and the [red] hair which adhered to the gun used upon one of them by Miller corresponds precisely with that of one of the persons arrested.”


29 John Taylor Nauvoo Journal, 62.

30 Banditti of the Prairies, 36-37. Hawkins Taylor, who was from West Point, IA and had been a member of the Territorial Legislature, said the trial was held in the upper story of the Masonic Temple and related how he told the Mormons that if the murderers of Miller were not released the Iowans “would join the people of Illinois in the destruction of their beautiful city.” [Autobiography of Hawkins Taylor, typescript, 55. Typescript is located in Archives and Special Collections, Western Illinois University Library, Macomb, Illinois, (cited hereafter as Autobiography of Hawkins Taylor.)]


32 Diary of Hosea Stout. 1:44.
and at West Point where Mrs. Miller, Mrs. Risser and Henri Leisi, shortly before he died, picked them from a line up.\textsuperscript{33} A change of venue was granted and Burlington, Des Moines County, Iowa was designated at the trial site. Meanwhile, the Mormons attempted to distance themselves from the accused murderers by saying in the 21 May \textit{Nauvoo Neighbor} “Let it be known throughout the land, that \textit{these two young Hodges are not Mormons, nor never were}; neither are Johnson or Brown.”\textsuperscript{34}

On 11 June the brothers were taken in chains from Fort Madison to Burlington by steamer where they were greeted by “a vast crowd.” They were handed over to Sheriff McKenney of Des Moines County and taken to the Burlington jail.\textsuperscript{35} The following day an affidavit for continuance on account of the absence of material witnesses was sworn before the District Court of Des Moines County which would delay the trial until additional witnesses could attend the trial was rejected along with a request for separate trials. Three of the would-be-witnesses, John and Aaron Long and Judge Fox, were Gentile criminal associates of the brothers and would participate in the murder of Colonel George Davenport at Rock Island, Illinois on 4 July 1845.\textsuperscript{36} On 9 October 1845, when commenting on the Long brothers and Fox being chosen as witnesses, the \textit{Burlington Hawk-Eye} said this association was proof the Hodges and the three Gentile thieves “were doubtless linked together.”\textsuperscript{37}

Ervine and Amos Hodges joined with Mormons William A. Hickman,\textsuperscript{38} Return Jackson Redden,\textsuperscript{39} W. Jenkins Salisbury,\textsuperscript{40} and Gentiles William F.

\textsuperscript{33} Banditti of the Prairies, 46 and testimony of Mrs. Miller and Mrs. Risser in \textit{Trial for Murder}.

\textsuperscript{34} “The Iowa Murder,” \textit{Nauwoo Neighbor} 2 (21 May 1845):2, emphasis retained.

\textsuperscript{35} “Great Crowd — Arrival of the Prisoners,” \textit{Burlington Hawk-Eye} 7 (12 June 1845):2.

\textsuperscript{36} “The Murder of Miller and Leiza by the Hodges,” \textit{The [Keokuk] Gate City} (24 May 1876):31. The Longs and Fox were members of the infamous William W. Brown gang of Bellevue, Iowa which was scattered on 1 Apr. 1841 by vigilantes after a gun battle resulted in Brown’s death. [See Susan K. Lucke, \textit{The Bellevue War: Mandate of Justice or Murder by Mob?} (Ames, IA: McMillen Publishing, 2002).


\textsuperscript{38} Hickman was a leading member in the criminal gang operating in and around Nauvoo. His thieving activities in Iowa are minimally covered in Hope A. Hilton, “\textit{Wild Bill}” Hickman and the Mormon Frontier (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1988), 10-11. Edward Bonney frequently referred to him as being in league with the Hodges and the murderers of Colonel Davenport in \textit{Banditti of the Prairies}.

\textsuperscript{39} Redden was born on 26 September 1817 at Hiram, Ohio to George Grant Redden and Adelia Higley Redden. He was baptized in 1841, moved to the Nauvoo area and was a member with the Hodges in the criminal gang.

\textsuperscript{40} Wilkins Jenkins Salisbury’s stormy passage through Mormonism is traced in \textit{Lucy’s Book}, 861-62.
Louther,41 and R. Blecher42 on 17 June 1845 to transfer land valued at $1,000 to highly regarded Attorneys Frederick D. Miles and Jonathan C. Hall of Burlington, Iowa to defend William and Stephen.43

Jurors were empanelled on 19 June and the trial began the following day at Burlington in the Old Zion Methodist Church under the supervision of Judge Charles Mason and with Hugh D. Reed the District Attorney pro Tem. as prosecutor. Jonathan C. Hall, Frederick D. Mills and George Edmunds, Jr. of Nauvoo, who was a law partner of Almond Babbitt, defended the brothers. Jacob Risser, Mrs. Risser, Mrs. Leisi and Mrs. Miller testified about the robbery and murder; Dr. Holmes and Sheriff Estes testified about Miller and Leisi’s wounds; and Estes testified about tracking the brothers to the Mississippi River across from Nauvoo. Several witnesses said they knew the brothers and swore they were in Miller’s neighborhood prior to the assault. Stephen Markham said he had seen William wearing a hat like the one left at Millers, and fellow Nauvoo policeman John Scott testified he found a pistol on Stephen and a pistol and a bowie knife on William during the arrest. Elbridge Tufts, also a Nauvoo policeman, was paid for being a witness but his testimony has not survived.44

In rebuttal, Eliza Jane Hodges “swore unhesitatingly to the presence of her brothers in Nauvoo at the time of the murder”45 and others gave out similar testimony. The second strategy was to swear the cap left at Miller’s could not be William Hodges. For example, Emeline Campbell, said her brother James used to have a cap like that [pointing at the cap left at Miller’s] but “in February last I burned up the cloth cap James had without a fur piece.”46 Other testimony about William’s cap was equally so illogical and contradictory the jury believed the witnesses were lying.

Judge Mason said that during the trial Amos’ wife Lydia approached Jonathan C. Hall, the brother’s lead lawyer, and said she had been told to swear William and Stephen were in Nauvoo when the murders were committed. She told Hall “for God’s sake do not call me to prove it” because “they were gone

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41 William W. Louther was a Gentile thief Bonney identified as being on a stealing expedition with Return Jackson Redden and joining with Amos Hodges, Return Jackson Redden, Aaron and John Long, Judge Fox, O. P. Rockwell and others to plan the robbery of Colonel George Davenport at Rock Island, Illinois on 4 July 1845. [Banditti of the Prairies, 85, 214.]

42 Robert H. Birch was Gentile thief who was arrested for the murder of Colonel George Davenport and used the alias Blecher and Bleeker. Birch was involved with Amos Hodges in a Nauvoo robbery in June 1845. [Banditti of the Prairies, 12, 72.]


44 “Abstract of compensation to Witnesses for their attendance at a District Court held at Burlington Des Moines County for the District of Iowa Territory ... the suit of United States vs Stephen and William Hodges,” Burlington, Iowa Court House.

45 Life and Letters of Charles Mason, 91-3.

46 Emeline Campbell testimony in Trial for Murder.
all night, came home in the morning, said they had been unsuccessful, and perhaps got themselves into trouble.” She also “assured Mr. Hall that the cap in evidence was the identical one she made herself for this Hodges boy.” She did not testify.\(^{47}\)

During his brother’s trial Amos teamed with Gentile thieves Robert H. Birch and Judge Fox to plan the robbery of a Nauvoo merchant named Rufus Beach. Bonney in *Banditti of the Prairies* said Amos advised Brigham Young of the planned robbery and Young, in turn, told Beach of the threat. Beach positioned armed guards in his store that interrupted the robbery when they shot at Birch and Fox.\(^{48}\) They both escaped but Amos was arrested. John Taylor said on 21 June “A man of the name of Amos Hodges was taken up on a charge of theft. I am afraid he is connected with a gang of villains that are lurking about, stealing on our credit.”\(^{49}\)

Closing arguments took place in the brother’s trial on 21 June and the Jury retired to make their decision. The following morning the Methodist Church was crammed with spectators when the Jury delivered a guilty verdict and Judge Mason sentenced the brothers to die by hanging on 15 July “at some convenient place” in Des Moines County between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.\(^ {50}\)

Following the sentencing, Ervine Hodges publicly threatened at Burlington he would tell all he knew about Mormon stealing if Brigham Young did not help him get his brothers out of jail. On 22 July he confronted Young at his home and threatened his life after he refused to help free his brothers. Ervine then had an altercation with Policeman Elbridge Tufts “for acting against his brothers at Burlington,” and that night shortly before he was assaulted was seen talking with William Smith.\(^ {51}\)

\(^{47}\) *Life and Times of Charles Mason*, 91-3 & 91-4.

\(^{48}\) *Banditti of the Prairies*, 55-56. In “A Brother of the Murderers Murdered,” [Burlington] *Iowa Territorial Gazette and Advertiser* 8 (28 June 1845):2, the editor was told that Ervine made plans with others to rob a store but then told the store owner who placed a guard on the premises who shot at the thieves. The betrayed thieves then “sought vengeance” and killed Ervine. This account is confusing Ervine with Amos.

\(^{49}\) *John Taylor Nauvoo Journal*, 53.

\(^{50}\) As recorded in *Trial for Murder*. Jonathan C. Hall told Judge Mason after the sentencing he “had no idea of applying for a new trial” as the brothers were guilty. [*Life and Times of Charles Mason*, 91-4].

\(^{51}\) *Banditti of the Prairies*, 50 and *John Taylor Nauvoo Journal*, 58. Zina Diantha Huntington Jacobs, a plural wife of Brigham Young recorded: Last night at about 10 o’clock [sic] Irvine Hodge was stab[bed] 4 times in his left side, also 4 blows on the head, done not far from Pres. B Youngs [sic] in the field. He leaped 2 fences after it was done and expired in the road in about 10 minutes... The said Hodge was direct from Burlington. He has a Brother there, sentenced [sic] to be hung on the [blank] of Sept next for Murder. said Hodge has threatened Brigham Youngs life which He was a man of unbounded temper. [*Nauvoo Diary of Zina Diantha Young Jacobs*, 314. The editor left out the underlined portion which Jacobs had crossed out of her Diary.”]
Ervine was cutting through a corn field near Young’s house about 10 p.m. when policemen Allen Stout and John Scott heard “a few blows struck as if some one was beeting [sic] an ox with a club which was followed by shrieks [sic][.]” Ervine, dying from stab wounds, managed to climb over Young’s fence and collapsed near his door.\(^\text{52}\) When Scott asked who stabbed him, Ervine said “they were men whom he took to be friends, from the river.” When Scott asked their names Ervine’s strength failed and he did not answer. After Scott raised the alarm a crowd gathered around him and a Gentile by the name of Clapp asked Ervine who stabbed him. His dying response was “he could not tell.” William Smith arrived with others shortly after Ervine died.\(^\text{53}\)

An inquest the next morning determined Ervine “came to his death by violence, but by some persons unknown to the Jury....” The Jury added that Ervine had cuts and bruises on his head caused by clubs and four cuts in his left side “measuring from one inch to one inch and a quarter supposed to have been inflicted by a bowie knife.”\(^\text{54}\) Hosea Stout found the knife used to murder Ervine in the corn field.\(^\text{55}\)

Then, in an act that defies logic, William Smith beat-up policeman Elbridge Tufts when he would not release Amos from custody\(^\text{56}\) and then secured his release by giving bail.\(^\text{57}\) On 25 June Brigham Young publicly chastised Smith for demanding the police release William and Stephen from custody and for spreading the story that he “was the instigator” of Ervine’s murder.\(^\text{58}\)

On 28 June word reached John Taylor that Jonathan C. Hall was in Nauvoo “making use of language, wherein he wanted to implicate Elder Young in the murder of Hodges.” Taylor labeled Hall “a blackleg” and compared him with Dr. A.[biathar] B. Williams of Montrose, Iowa who “had said the same things of Brother Young, and we know him to be a blackleg, and a very wicked, bad man.”\(^\text{59}\) The following day, Young was charged with saying from the stand: “I

\(^\text{52}\) Allen Stout Reminiscences and Journal 1845-1889, 23 June 1845, LDS Archives.

\(^\text{53}\) John Taylor Nauvoo Journal, 58. The Nauvoo Neighbor, in “Further Particulars,” 3 (25 June 1845):3, said “Mr. Hodges was asked by bystanders, before he died, if he knew who had stabbed him — His answer was ‘It was as I supposed, my best friend.’” Judge Mason said Ervine “had full opportunity to make known the perpetrator of that crime, he refused to make any revelation and died with the secret in his heart.” [Life and Letters of Charles Mason, 91-2.]


\(^\text{55}\) Diary of Hosea Stout, 1:49.

\(^\text{56}\) History of the Church, 7:429.


\(^\text{59}\) Ibid., 65. The Quincy Whig said Dr. Williams went to Nauvoo and was “whittled” out by Orrin Rockwell “and a gang of villains.” It concluded: “The doctor had shown too much anxiety to ferret out the Lee county murderers, and for this monstrous offence he was warned never again to visit the city.” [“Another Outrage in Nauvoo,” Quincy Whig 8 (11 June 1845):2.]
don’t know nor care who killed him [Ervine] for if he liv’d [sic] he would have added sin to sin.”

Amos disappeared and most certainly was murdered after being released from custody. The *Warsaw Signal* of 23 July 1845 inadvertently confirmed Amos’ disappearance when they wrote: “it appears that Amos Hodges who was under arrest in Nauvoo was permitted [sic] to escape or [is] held as a hostage, for he has not been publicly heard of since the murder of his brothers.” William Smith, then a bitter enemy of Brigham Young, said in November 1846 that “Amos Hodge was murdered, it is said, between Montrose and Nashway, in Iowa by Brigham Young’s guard, who pretended at the time to escort him out of Nauvoo, for his safety, under cover of women’s clothes, who then pretended that he had run away.” A more likely scenario is Robert A. Birch and Judge Fox killed Amos for betraying them when they attempted to rob Rufus Beach in Nauvoo.

The *Territorial Gazette and Advertiser* of Burlington, Iowa considered several rumors about Ervine’s death on 28 June 1845 and concluded: “The supposition of many is that he was murdered by a gang of scoundrels to which he and his brothers are supposed to have belonged, to prevent disclosures which it was feared the execution of Stephen and William might provoke.”

The following day a Nauvoo Mormon named William Huntington recorded that Ervine was murdered “by some ruffians — as Hodge was supposed to be of the same gang.” Reverend Milton Kimball of Augusta, Illinois, which was near Ervine’s home at Mechanicksville, wrote his brother Solon Kimball in Michigan on 21 August 1845 that Ervine was killed after threatening to expose the “big line of thieving operations.” Strangely, he added that he had recently seen a letter from the “father of this family of vilains [sic] in which the old man declares that shortly after the death of Irvine, he came to him at Pittsburg and

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60 Testimony of Charles B. Thompson, J. Sawyer, and Joseph Younger at James J. Strang’s 6-9 April 1846 High Council trial at Voree or Burlington, WI for the “Brighamite” Apostles. [“Hodge Brothers Papers, RE: Hanging of,” P-11-6, f1 of 1, Library Archives of the Community of Christ, Independence, Missouri.] William Smith said, in “A Proclamation,” *Warsaw Signal* 2 (29 October 1845):1, “And he [Young] said further that it was far better for Alvine Hodge to die, then to live any longer in sin, for that he might now possibly be redeemed in the eternal world. That his murderers had done even a deed of charity for that such a man deserved to die.”


in an interview of three hours gave him all the facts of his murder, &c&c.”

July was ushered in by interesting commentaries about Ervine’s death. On the 1st the *Warsaw Signal* weighed in with the opinion the Nauvoo police knew who murdered Ervine but were not telling.

On the 2nd the *Iowa Capital Reporter* announced they had learned Ervine was seen with one or two of the Twelve Apostles “who had taken him aside from a crowd, apparently to reason with him, relative to threats in which he had been loudly indulging.” The *Sangamo Journal* explained on the 3rd that Ervine was murdered because of his threats to “turn State’s evidence and expose the gang of thieves, robbers, &c, at Nauvoo.” Two days later the *Bloomington Herald* chided Burlington residents for procuring 100 rifles to “protect themselves from the Mormons.” The notice said if their friends “down the creek ... are ‘skeared’ [sic] the Muscatine Dragoons would protect them.”

During this confusing and angry time Gentile criminal associates of the Hodges, John and Aaron Long, Robert H. Birch, and Judge Fox, were joined by a Gentile thief named John Baxter at the isolated cabin of Grant Redden and his son William on Devil’s Creek some five miles from Montrose, Iowa and made plans for another robbery which would go horribly wrong. This time the victim would be the elderly Colonel George Davenport, a wealthy pioneer fur traitor, businessman and founder of Davenport, Iowa who lived at Rock Island, Illinois. On 4 July 1845, he died after being accidentally shot while being robbed by the above named individuals and another Gentile thief named Granville Young.

As the hanging of William and Stephen was the most important social event at Burlington in its first hundred years of existence, people of all walks of life

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65 “Dear Solon,” Clark Historical Library, Central Michigan University, Mt. Pleasant, MI.
68 “Murder at Nauvoo,” *Sangamo Journal* 14 (3 July 1845):2. On the same page a letter signed by a person using the pseudonym “Junius” included: “There is fear that the [Nauvoo] police which they illegally keep in the city murdered Irvine Hodges to prevent him from making disclosures of those who were concerned in the Lee County murders.” Ironically, a day earlier, the *Quincy Whig* concluded that Ervine was murdered “to prevent his revealing the fact that a gang of robbers and murderers were in existence in and about Nauvoo.” [*More Trouble Brewing,* *Quincy Whig* 8 (2 July 1845):2.]
70 George Grant Redden, son of Christopher and Margaret Grant Redden, was born 8 Nov. 1790 at Bernardstown, N. J. He married Adelia Higley in 1816 in Portage County, Ohio and they had eight children which included Return Jackson and William Harrison Redden. A baptized Mormon, Grant and his son William were affiliated with the Hodges, Birch, and the Longs.
71 The *Burlington Hawk-Eye* described Reddens’ house as “a rendezvous of the whole Mormon gang and the Hodges were frequenters of that house.” [*The Davenport Murderers,* *Burlington Hawk-Eye* 7 (9 Oct. 1845):2.]
made their travel plans to attend the hangings. For example, the *Bloomington Herald* ran this advertisement:

The two Hodges are to be executed in Burlington on Tuesday next, the 15th inst. The Steamer *Mermaid*, Cap. Cleim in order to accommodate such as wish to be present at the execution, will make a trip from this place to Burlington on that day, leaving Bloomington at 5 o’clock, A. M. *precisely* and returning at an early hour of the evening. Cap. Cleim always gives his passengers plenty to eat and drink, and all who wish to go cannot find a better opportunity.\(^73\)

Meanwhile, the brothers’ situation at Burlington was desperate. Isolated from each other, they would have learned of the murder of Erwine and the disappearance of Amos from Judge Mason, visiting clergy, the jailors, and possibly their sisters. One of the brothers is reported to have attempted suicide the day following Erwine’s murder.\(^74\) To make matters worse, at some time between their trial and hanging Eliza Jane Hodges eloped with a married Doctor from Fort Madison and went to Texas.\(^75\)

Judge Mason almost got William to reveal the names of the gang members in exchange for a limited prison sentence for him and Stephen. When Mason told him he believed he had been pressured by others to pursue a life of crime, William cried and acknowledged that was correct.\(^76\) After telling Mason he would provide the names the next morning, William stipulated that Amos’ widow Lydia would have to be removed from Nauvoo and placed under guard “as they [the gang] would kill her the moment they knew he had made a confession.” Mason found William in “great agitation” the next morning and was told he could not give the names of his criminal associates as “it would bring destruction upon all his friends — that the lives of his parents would be placed in jeopardy in Pittsburgh and that even the walls of the Penitentiary would furnish no protection to himself.”\(^77\)

From eight to ten thousand people gathered at Burlington on 15 July to watch the hangings. The reporter for the *Burlington Hawk-Eye* praised the

\(^73\) “The Two Hodges,” *Bloomington Herald* 1 (12 July 1845):2, emphasis retained.


\(^75\) Judge Mason said: “Not long after the trial an Iowa acquaintance abandoned his wife and family and fled with this young [Hodges] girl to Texas....” Some ten years later Mason learned the couple were living at San Antonio, Texas and Eliza “was a leader of fashion in the town and a promoter of the benevolent institutions that were organized there.” [Life and Times of Charles Mason, 91-4.] Dr. James H. Lyons was mayor of San Antonio for several non-concurrent terms; a successful doctor; an officer in the Mexican War; and the Lyons belonged to the Episcopal Church. They had two children; Lucy married Rufus Ressegue and Lydia married John Atkinson. Eliza died in 1859. For information on Dr. Lyons see “Handbook of Texas Online, s.v. ‘Lyons, James H.’”

\(^76\) William is described on several occasions being “tender,” and, as he could not sign his name, he may have been of borderline intelligence.

attendees by saying “Never have we seen more decorum or better behavior exhibited at a public execution.” The Bloomington Herald, however, cynically remarked “one thousand [viewers] of whom were females — we almost said ladies — witnessed the spectacle, a majority of them with as much interest and moral reflection as they would a circus or traveling menagerie.” The Hawk-Eye proudly announced the steamer Mermaid brought an “immense load” from Burlington; the Shockoquon brought a similar crowd from Illinois; the Caroline “came loaded to the guards” with passengers; and the New Purchase arrived late with a “large multitude from Nauvoo.” The crowd gathered at the newly built gallows west of Burlington in an area which served as a natural outdoor amphitheater and a festive atmosphere prevailed as picnics were enjoyed and politicians made their pitch.

The brothers, with their hands manacled and dressed in their death shrouds, were removed from jail and seated on their coffins in a wagon. The procession started about noon and slowly made its way towards the execution site as people kept pace or strained to see the doomed brothers who were described as being very pale and in quiet conversation. Sheriff McKinley, who believed the Mormons might stage a rescue attempt, stationed a heavily armed militia force around the wagon. A band playing a funeral dirge followed the wagon. Upon arriving at the site of the execution, the procession made its way through a vast throng surrounding the gallows. Once on the platform the brothers would have seen thousands of persons packed around the gallows, on elevated areas, and even in trees.

An eye witness remembered one brother telling Reverend Coleman, the Methodist Minister, he would confess if he could talk with his brother but after the conversation “he refused to name anything because it might implicate others.” Stephen, “violent in his gesticulation and biter and even vindictive in his words” asserted their innocence and charged they were being hanged because they were Mormons. It was reported “froth issued from his mouth and he gave other signs of extreme rage and madness.” William calmly said they were innocent and that he was “going home to glory.” A religious service followed in which ministers of four faiths extorted the crowd to forsake sin and not end up like the brothers. At their request the 51st psalm was read which began with “Have mercy upon me, O God ... blot out my transgressions.”

80 “The Execution,” Burlington Hawk-Eye 2 (23 June 1845):2. Accounts indicate that as the New Purchase arrived late at Burlington it blew it whistle in a pleading manner but the passengers apparently were able to hasten to the execution site in time to witness the hangings.
81 “Remarkable Story of the Hanging of the Hodges,” Burlington Hawk-Eye 201 (25 Jan.1914): 1. In “Irvine Hodges,” Warsaw Signal 2 (23 July 1845):2, the editor substantiated this story by saying “It appears from what they said on the gallows that the brethren found means to keep them still by threatening that if they did confess their whole family would be murdered.”
After the brothers thanked the sheriff and the jailors for their kindness, the chains were removed, the ropes were adjusted to their necks, caps were pulled over their faces and when the drop fell William died instantly. 

Eye-witness Henry Smith said:

He [Stephen] stood near the north end of the trap and when the south end fell, it made an inclined plane down which his feet began to slide, until the tightening rope checked the motion. The consequence was his neck was not broken, and he died of strangulation. He struggled in his agony, drawing up his limbs, relaxing them and again drawing them up, his muscles twitching and his body in contortions. It was a sickening sight and I never want to see the like again. The crowd gazed on the gruesome spectacle with horrified interest, varying of course with temperament and age. One woman fainted. It was said she was their sister.

Newspaper accounts were unified in their anger towards the brothers because they refused to name their accomplices. For example, the Quincy Whig wrote “they had made up their minds to die with as much display as possible, that they might acquire the reputation of dying like heroes, looking death in the face.” Recalling they had previously said they had taken an oath of silence opinioned “they might as well die with the secret as to break that oath.” The Whig openly wondered what “horrid secrets and oaths binding these secret societies ... sets human life and common human allegiance at defiance.”

Emeline Campbell brought the bodies to Nauvoo and buried her brothers in the Nauvoo cemetery, presumably near Ervine. On 20 July, Apostle John Taylor said at a Sunday meeting at the stand he had been requested to facilitate the removal of their bodies from the cemetery. William Smith countered that he sympathized with Emeline and opposed the move because the evidence which convicted the brothers was “not sufficient test:[imony] to hang a dog on.” Brigham Young responded “I have nothing in her favor — I be.[lieve]They were not innocent men — but murderers — let them go — I am glad there is three of them gone — Amos is the only good one in the entire family.” John Taylor then called a vote which said “they should be removed.”

According to the Warsaw Signal, Luzette Hodges visited Nauvoo to question

86 Leonard J. Arrington Papers, Series 9, Box 12, Fl. 2, p. 26, Special Collections and Archives, Utah State University, Logan, Utah. Young’s referral to Amos in the present tense suggests he was unaware Amos had disappeared from Nauvoo.
87 John Taylor Nauvoo Journal, 78. The Nauvo Neighbor announced “the Hodges are to be removed from the graveyard of the saints, to a place to be specially purchased for that purpose.” [Removal of the Hodges,” Nauvo Neighbor 2 (23 July 1845):2.] The Lee County Democrat 5 (26 July 1845): 2 said “The bodies of the Hodges have been removed from the burial ground at Nauvoo by the people.”
Mormon leaders about Ervine’s death and rather painfully admitted “she was perfectly satisfied that the saints were not to blame for the transaction.” Also on the 23rd Attorney D. F. Miller, an associate of Jonathan C. Hall wrote Judge Mason and assured him that William and Stephen Hodges, Artemus Johnson, and Thomas Brown murdered Miller and Leisi. He added that Ervine “was killed unquestionably by one of the Band which numbers I have every reason to believe 50 or 100 within 20 miles of this place. He was murdered because he threatened exposure.”

As these events were transpiring lawmen and bounty hunters were closing in on Davenport’s murderers. Edward Bonney’s investigation began by checking the list of would-be-witnesses who wanted to testify in favor of William and Stephen and singled out John and Aaron Long and Judge Fox. He soon learned that Robert H. Birch had joined these men at Grant Redden’s at Devil’s Creek and trailed them from that site. Posing as an outlaw on the run he infiltrated the criminal society and arrested Judge Fox, Robert A. Birch and John Long. John Baxter, Granville Young, and Aaron Long were arrested by other lawmen. These individuals were indicted by the Rock Island Circuit Court on 6 October 1845 for murder. Grant and William Redden were indicted “as accessory to the murder of Davenport before the fact.”

During Birch’s trial he testified against the others and said Davenport’s robbery “was held in Joseph Smith’s old council chamber in Nauvoo.” According to Birch, those in attendance included Judge Fox, John and Aaron Long, Jack[son] Redden, Amos Hodges, O. P. Rockwell, John Ray, and Wm. Louther. He also testified that Redden murdered Ervine “out of his fear of his confessing.”

Birch and Fox avoided punishment as they escaped from or bribed their guards. Baxter was sentenced to life in prison, William Redden received a one year sentence, and Grant Redden escaped prison when one juror refused to find him guilty. John and Aaron Long and Granville Young were hanged on 19 October 1845.

Birch’s disclosures led the Rock Island, Illinois Court to issue a warrant for the arrest of Return Jackson Redden. As Mormon homes were being burned in the countryside and Mormons serving under Sheriff Backenstos were using deadly force against Gentle house burners, they concluded the only way Redden could be taken was by subterfuge. Lyman E. Johnson, a former Mormon Apostle living at Keokuk, Iowa was asked to get Redden to a Nauvoo landing where he

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89 “Hon. Charles Mason,” 23 July 1845, typescript, Iowa State Historical Society, Des Moines, Iowa.
90 *Banditti of the Prairies*, 94-95.
91 Ibid., 214.
might be arrested. Johnson was a perfect fit as he also was from Hiram, Ohio, was related to Redden and had previously served as Redden’s lawyer. On 25 October 1845, Redden was waiting at the upper stone house wharf at Nauvoo to meet with Johnson to “consider arrangements” for bailing his father and brother from jail. While Johnson was talking with Redden, Sheriff Kimball approached him with a warrant for his arrest and attempted to take him into custody. When Redden resisted, Kimball called upon the crew and passengers to assist him and people from the steamer rushed to his assistance. Seeing the struggle, an overwhelming number of Mormons came to Redden’s assistance with canes, loaded whips, and bricks. In the resulting melee Johnson was “struck with great violence with a brickbat on the side of his face” and Kimball suffered injuries to his head and face. To make the situation more bizarre, Dr. Robert D. Foster, an ex-Mormon who was a prominent dissenter at the time of the destruction of the Nauvoo Expositor, who for unknown reasons was on the Sarah Ann, “shot his pistol at the brethren but hurt no one.” The Sarah Ann left Nauvoo without Redden.

Three days later Major Warren, the Illinois militia leader assigned to keep the peace between the Mormons and Gentiles, met with Brigham Young and other Apostles. According to the Warsaw Signal, the militia officers were told “Redding [sic] had gone to Michigan.” Shortly after this encounter, William Smith charged in the Sangamo Journal that “Jack Redding [sic] the supposed murderer of Arvine Hodge” has been protected by Brigham Young and “has been running at large in Nauvoo.” The Journal included an undated statement from the Quincy Whig which charged that Redden “is said to be the one that murdered Irvine Hodge in Nauvoo, to prevent a revelation of the crime of the gang to which he belonged.”

93 Former Mormon Apostle Lyman E. Johnson was excommunicated from the Mormon Church in 1838 at Far West, MO and by 1845 was a successful lawyer, land speculator and member of the social elite at Keokuk. He represented Ervine and Amos Hodges, Return Jackson Redden and others when they transferred land to lawyers Mills and Hall to represent William and Stephen Hodges. Redden was the nephew of Lyman’s Aunt Nancy Jacob Redden.


96 History of the Church, 7: 486-87.

97 “Last Visit of Major Warren to Nauvoo,” Warsaw Signal 2 (5 Nov. 1845):2. See also “Minutes of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, 28 October 1845, LDS Archives.

98 “A Faithful Warning to the Latter Day Saints,” Sangamo Journal 14 (6 Nov. 1845): 2. Redden is prominently mentioned as a scout and hunter on the trek to Utah. However, the following documents show he remained a hardened criminal. James Bridger complained in a letter dated 16 July 1848 to Brigham Young or John Smith, President of the Salt Lake Stake that “Jack Redding [sic] who Passed two five Dollar Bogos [sic] gold Pieces upon us last fall.” [“Mr President Sir,” Brigham Young Collection, LDS Archives.] Dale L. Morgan, in The Humbolt, Highroad of the West (New York, Farras and Reinhart, 1943), 213-14, cited a letter to Luke Lea, commissioner
The Hodges after Nauvoo

Marietta Walker said nothing about the destruction of her brothers at Nauvoo. She simply skipped to some future time in which her father, mother, and Curtis Jr. were living along the banks of the Monongahela River in Pennsylvania. She also failed to mention that Sidney Rigdon ordained Curtis Sr. to the office of High Priest at his 6-11 April 1845 Conference at Pittsburgh and that James and Emeline’s future husband Elijah Banta were in Rigdon’s Elders’ Quorum in April 1846. Also omitted was that either Curtis Sr. or Curtis Jr. took a long mission for Rigdon through the interior of New York state and Ohio in 1845.

According to Marietta, Curtis Jr., full of faith in God and the resurrection, died, presumably in 1847, in “a small village situated far up among the hills of Pennsylvania….” A year later Curtis Sr. after testifying to the truth “of the latter day work,” also died at Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania.

Throughout Marietta’s many years as author, editor, mother, and matriarch, the RLDS community and her children were unaware she was related to the Hodges. Mark H. Siegfried, an RLDS official who lived at Nauvoo in 1910, recalled in a 1943 letter, that he took Marietta on a tour of Nauvoo and learned for the first time “she was a sister of these [Hodges] boys.” After viewing the downstairs of the Brigham Young home, Marietta said Young sent her brothers on a “marauding expedition” which resulted in the deaths of Miller and Leisi and asked “how do you think you would feel if your oldest brother walked out of that door toward which you are looking and before he reached the place where we are standing he was shot in the back and killed.”

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99 “Minutes of a Conference … held in Pittsburgh, 6th … 11th April,” Messenger and Advocate of the Church of Christ 1 (1 May 1845): 186.

100 “Minutes of a conference … held in Pittsburgh, 6 … 8 April 1845,” Messenger and Advocate of the Church of Christ 2 (June 1846):466.


102 “With the Church in an Early Day, 311-17. They presumably died in the 1846-1848 period.

103 “Mark H. Siegfried, to Pres. Israel A. Smith,” 17 August 1945, Hodges Brothers Papers, typescript, P11-6, f1, items 4, 5, Library Archives of the Community of Christ, Independence, MO, (cited hereafter as Siegfried to Smith).
A Mrs. Mary Hines, then 74 years old, of Independence, Iowa alleged in a statement published in the *Cedar Rapids Gazette* on 7 January 1910 that her deceased husband, John P. Hines, whom she married in 1855, confided to her that he had been “a very wicked man” and was a member of Edward Bonney’s criminal gang circa 1845. Hines said her husband told her William and Stephen Hodges were innocent as he, George W. Martin, and an unidentified man murdered Miller and Leisi. On 26 January 1910 Joseph Smith III obtained a deposition from Mrs. Hines containing claims her husband allegedly made about Bonney, the Hodges, and the murders of Miller, Leisi, and Davenport. When Marietta saw the deposition, which she believed absolved her brothers, she is reported to have said “Now Lord, let thy servant depart in peace!”

**William Smith and the Hodges**

We will never know if Smith was a criminal associate of the Hodges. Brigham Young, however, came to that conclusion as he said on 2 April 1846: “William was in the murder with the Hodges in Iowa for which two were hung ... That Amos Hodge was also accessory.”

Smith arrived at Nauvoo on 4 May 1845 after a year’s absence and told anyone who would listen his year in the eastern states was marked by furthering the cause of Zion as he edited a church newspaper, presided over the Saints and defended the church against apostates. He left out his power struggle with Apostle Parley P. Pratt, his being sued for liable, his adulterous conduct with female Saints, and retaining part of the money given him by the eastern Saints for church projects for his personal use.

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104 Inez Smith Davis wrote Mark H. Siegfried that her father, Joseph Smith III, saw Hines’ notice in a Des Moines, Iowa newspaper and “went immediately to Independence, Iowa, and came back with this affidavit, which he presented to Sister Walker. He would have liked to have had it published but Sister Walker said she was sensitive about having the matter opened up, until her death...” [“Mr. M. H. Siegfried, Office Dear Brother,” 15 November 1929, Miscellaneous Letters and Papers, P13, f1600, Library Archives of the Community of Christ, Independence, Missouri.]


106 Siegfried to Smith.

107 *The Diary of Hosea Stout*, 1:147.

Smith seemingly went out of his way to alienate Brigham Young when he aligned himself with the Hodges at Nauvoo. After Young told William and Stephen to surrender to the law, Smith told them to get out of town. He went beyond the mark by beating up policeman Elbridge Tufts and even further alienated himself from Young by bailing Amos Hodges out of jail. Then, instigating a battle he could not win, he publicly opposed the other Apostles and the will of the vast majority of the Saints at a public worship service when he insisted that William and Stephen were innocent and their bodies should remain in the Nauvoo cemetery. This allegiance to the Hodges only makes sense if Smith was a participant with or was supportive of their illegal activities. As Smith stole money from the tithing in 1844, sealing from Gentiles or supporting those who did in 1845 would be an easy progression.

Smith was with Ervine a short time before his murder and was at the murder scene just after he died. Was this coincidence, or was he present when Ervine was murdered? The downside to this speculation, however, is Edward Bonney, Hawkins Taylor, James M. Monroe, and individuals who were familiar with Smith at this time did not mention Smith in a criminal context. Add to that, the *Warsaw Signal*, with its network of spies, frequently described Smith’s erratic behavior and his problems with the hierarchy but never charged him with being a thief, much less a murderer.

**Who murdered Ervine Hodges?**

William Smith was spreading the rumor Young ordered Ervine’s death immediately after the murder,\(^{109}\) repeated the charges in newspaper accounts in 1845\(^{110}\) and 1846,\(^{111}\) and episodically repeated that message for the rest of his life. Edward Bonney implied Young ordered Ervine’s death\(^{112}\) and William Hall, who lived among the Mormons at Nauvoo and wrote the anti-Mormon book *Abominations of Mormonism Exposed*, alleged that Young gave the order to have Ervine killed and that Hosea Stout told him he killed Ervine with his own knife.\(^{113}\) Dr. A. B. Williams of Montrose and Jonathan C. Hall of Burlington\(^{114}\)

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\(^{109}\) *John Taylor Nauvoo Journal*, 62.


\(^{111}\) “To the Editor of the Sangamo Journal,” *Sangimo Journal* 16 (5 Nov. 1846):2.

\(^{112}\) *Banditti of the Prairies*, 50-51.


\(^{114}\) See footnote 85.
sought incriminating evidence in Nauvoo which would connect Young with Ervine’s murder, and others in Illinois and Iowa believed the police had a role in Ervine’s death.

D. Michael Quinn in his epic history *The Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power* examined Ervine’s murder and determined “I am convinced that he [Hosea Stout] either participated in the murder of Irvine Hodge, concealed his brother Allen Stout’s participation, or both.” This conclusion is logical as Stout’s journal indicates he may have been paranoid as he believed his fellow policemen would harm him and imagined “false brethren” would take the lives of the Twelve Apostles. Quinn strengthened his thesis when he traced Stout’s propensity to authorize or use violence. A sampling includes Stout defending his police for almost beating a man to death in the Nauvoo Temple on 3 April 1845; Stout’s hitting a suspected spy in the back of his head so hard with a rock on 9 January 1846 it “came very near taking his life;” and his near murder of a man named Hill at Salt Lake City on 17 March 1848. At his same day trial before the Salt Lake High Council Stout said “It has been my duty to hunt out the rotten spots in this K[ingdom but] … I av [have] tried not to handle a man’s case until it was right.”

Hosea and Allen Stout, who are listed by Quinn as Danites, had the motive, opportunity and mind-set to kill Ervine Hodges in a social climate that would have endorsed their actions. Quinn theorized Ervine was attacked by policemen with a bowie knife and police clubs — Hosea Stout, Elbridge Tufts, and Allen J. Stout were Quinn’s prime suspects.

Quinn’s indictment of Hosea Stout’s brother, Allen is also logical as he swore after viewing the bodies of Joseph and Hyrum Smith: “But I there and then resolved in my mind that I would never let an opportunity slip unimproved of avenging their blood upon the head of the enemies [sic] of the church of Jesus Christ.”

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115 See Stout’s 24 Jan. 1846 diary entry where he stayed at night in the Temple “for it was not safe for me to stay at home at night because of my [Mormon] enemies [within the police].” [*Diary of Hosea Stout*, 1:109, 111.]

116 See Stout’s 19 Feb.1845 letter to Apostle Willard Richards where he says it was the duty of the police to guard the Twelve against “midnight assassins.” His 25 Feb.1845 diary entry said he would take “efficient measures” to keep “false brethren” from harming the Twelve. [*Diary of Hosea Stout*, 1:23, 31.]

117 Ibid.l:32.

118 Ibid. l:103.

119 Ibid. l:305-06.

120 *Origins of Power*, 428. Stout said in a trial for J. P. Packer at Council Bluffs on 13 March 1847: “I could fellowship any man that could be suffered to live amongst us and when we could not stand it any longer to cut him off behind the ears — according to the law of God in such cases.” [*Diary of Hosea Stout*, 1:241.]

121 *Origins of Power*, 217, 651.

However, Quinn’s charge that Ervine Hodges was murdered by Hosea Stout is illogical as the evidence indicates Ervine was killed by members of his criminal gang to prevent him from revealing secrets. His saying his attackers were “friends from the river” diminishes the possibility of police involvement and, even though he had enough awareness to tell a mixed group of Mormon and Gentiles who assaulted him, refused to implicate anyone. This suggests he believed his family would be harmed if he divulged secrets. With Ervine’s death, Amos was either killed for betraying the gang or because he was considered a threat to turn state’s evidence.

Surprisingly few people charged Brigham Young and the Nauvoo police with murdering Ervine Hodges. A much larger number took it for granted Ervine was murdered to keep him from revealing gang secrets. William and Stephen, like their brother Ervine, accepted a terrible death instead of informing on their criminal associates. They obviously believed gang members would not only harm their family, they would be killed in prison. The fact that William Hickman, Return Jackson Redden, William F. Louther, and Robert H. Birch sold land to pay for the brother’s defense speaks volumes about the criminal gang concept. Add to that, gang members John and Aaron Long and Judge Fox, who would soon be murderers, were requested to appear as defense witnesses and testify they were with William and Stephen at Nauvoo on the night of Miller’s murder.

Finally, Return Jackson Redden was widely believed to have murdered Ervine and his wife Luzette Hodges apparently did not believe Young or the Nauvoo police had a role in her husband’s death.

**The Hodges Family**

Curtis Hodges, Sr. was born on 9 August 1787 at Cambridge, Washington County, N.Y. and Lucy Clark Hodges was born at Sanford, Bennington, County, Vermont on 19 September 1790. Marietta explained that the Clarks [Hodges] had been Methodists and left Vermont to settle “in the western part of the state of New York, as early as 1831.”

The family was located at Girard Village in Erie County, Pennsylvania by late 1832 and Curtis and Lucy were baptized at Kirtland on 6 November 1832. Presumably ordained an Elder on the day of his baptism, Curtis guaranteed a council of Elders on 13 December 1832 “it was

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123 With the Saints in an Early Day, 5. In this book, Marietta disguised the identities of her family and excluded so much pertinent information her children could not determine how much was historical. It is certain that Mr. and Mrs. Clark are Curtis Hodges, Sr. and Lucy Clark Hodges. Curtis Hodges, Jr. and his wife Lois appear to be the frequently mentioned Daniel and Margery Clark.

124 According to her obituary, Lucy Clark Hodges was baptized on 6 November 1832 at Kirtland, Ohio. It is assumed Curtis was baptized at the same time and place. [“Died,” The True Latter Day Saints’ Herald 12 (1 Oct. 1867):114.]
his determination to labor in the vineyard.” His missionary endeavors are unknown but Amos Hodges, his oldest son who was roughly twenty years old, “baptized some seven [persons] in Erie County in December 1832.” In mid-February 1833 Amos fellowshipped with missionary William Smith, a younger brother of Joseph Smith, Jr. at the Taylor settlement in Erie County. In January 1834 members of the Hodges family, now living at Painesville, Ohio area, testified against Doctor Philastus Hurlbut after he threatened Joseph Smith with violence.

Hurlbut was ordained an Elder on 18 March 1833; was excommunicated by the Kirtland High Council on 3 June 1833; was reinstated eighteen days later; and was again excommunicated on 23 June 1833 partially because of the testimony of a “Bro. Hodges.” After Hurlbut lectured against and gathered unfavorable information about the Mormons a preliminary hearing was held on 13 January 1834 at Painsville, Ohio to consider his threats against Smith. Curtis Hodges, Sr., Amos, daughter Sarah and her husband Truman Wait testified against Hurlbut. The Justice Court ruled in favor of Smith and set the

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126 Incomplete biographical information on the Hodges children includes: Sarah L. Hodges, born 27 Jul. 1809 at Pompey, NY and was baptized in late 1832. Married Truman Wait in Dec. 1833; they were driven from Clay and Caldwell Counties, MO; lived in Nauvoo, IL until early 1845 when they moved to Pittsburgh, PA; Truman died in St. Louis, MO in 1847; Sarah married Lt. Col. Lucky in 1864 and they lived in Sandwich, IL and Lamoni, IA where she died a member of the RLDS in 1895. Lucy Ann Hodges was born circa 1817; married Samuel Dwight Billings; both signed The Scroll Petition; Lucy was a member of the Nauvoo Relief Society; left Nauvoo in early 1845; and she and Samuel died in 1849 during the Cholera epidemic at St. Louis, MO. Curtis Hodges, Jr. is rarely mentioned. He was an Elder at Nauvoo; left Nauvoo in early 1845; and died at Elizabethtown, PA circa 1846-1847; Amos Hodges was president of the Thirteenth Quorum of Seventy at Nauvoo where he was murdered in late June 1845. Ervine Hodges married Luzetta Benson, daughter of Luther Benson and Mary Stiles, on 28 Feb. 1841 and was “29 years, 7 months, and 5 days old” when he was murdered at Nauvoo on 23 Jun. 1845. William Hodges was an Elder; was accused of stealing in Iowa in 1842; and was twenty-five years old when he was hanged at Burlington, IA in Jul. 1845. Stephen Hodges was convicted of stealing a horse in IA in 1842; and was twenty-two years old when he was hanged along side William at Burlington, IA. Eliza Jane Hodges testified in favor of William and Stephen at their trial but before their hanging eloped with a married Doctor to Texas and died in San Antonio in 1859; Emeline Hodges was born at Bath, Steuben County, NY on 10 Oct. 1826; married Darius Campbell who died at Nauvoo, IL in 1844. Moved from Nauvoo in early 1845 to Elizabethtown, PA where she married Elijah Banta in 1846; they lived at Sandwich, IL and Lamoni, IA where she died in 1876 a member of the RLDS. James Hodges left Nauvoo with his parents in early 1845; was an Elder in Sidney Rigdon’s Church in 1845; died of Cholera at St. Louis, MO in 1849; Hyrum Hodges and an unknown child evidently died young; Marietta was the last born.

date for a trial before the Court of Common pleas.\footnote{128}{See David W. Grua, “Joseph Smith and the 1834 D. P. Hurlbut Case,” Brigham Young University Studies 14 (2005): 40, (cited hereafter as Brigham Young University Studies 14).}

Curtis Hodges, Sr. was called before the Kirtland High Council on 19 February 1834 to answer charges which alleged he spoke so loud and illegible during services it “was calculated to do injury to the cause of God.” Additional testimony included Curtis “talked so loud at a prayer meeting that the neighbors came out to see if someone was not hurt” and that he was “hallowing” so loud he lost his voice while preaching. After the charges were sustained, Curtis told the Court he was “thankful” for being corrected and said he had learned more during this trial than he had “since he came into the Church.”\footnote{129}{Kirtland Council Minute Book, 31-32.}

Curtis Sr., Sarah and Truman Wait, and Ervine Hodges\footnote{130}{He is listed as Irvin in these trial documents and is also called Irvine and Arvine. However, he signed his name on legal documents as Ervine or E. C. Hodges.} testified against Hurlbut during a trial before the Geauga County Court of Common Pleas in Chardon, Ohio on 2-3 April 1834. The Court ruled that Hurlbut was a threat to Smith and was placed under a $200 bond “to keep the peace and be of good behavior towards the citizens of Ohio generally and especially toward Smith for six months.”\footnote{131}{D. P. Hurlbut Case, 44-49.}

Following Amos Hodges’ participation in Zion’s Camp in 1834\footnote{132}{Roger Launius, Zion’s Camp: Expedition to Missouri, 1834 (Independence: Herald Publishing House, 1984), 175 and John Taylor Nauwau Journal, 48 n. 178.} the family made their way to Clay County, Missouri by 1836 where Curtis Sr. and Amos respectively owned 120 acres and 40 acres. Curtis claimed the loss of $200 when he was “driven by the mob from Clay County.”\footnote{133}{Mormon Redress Petitions: Documents of the 1833-1838 Missouri Conflict, edited by Clark V. Johnson (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1992), 464, (cited hereafter as Mormon Redress Petitions.)}

Marietta said her father and two unidentified brothers served under the military command of Apostle David W. Patten at Far West, Missouri and were participants in the Battle of Crooked River on 25 October 1838. During Patten’s charge against elements of the Ray County militia he, Gideon Carter and a non-Mormon guide were killed. Curtis Sr. was found “leaning against a tree, pale and bleeding from a wound in his side, but still alive.” Marietta’s only comment about the exodus from Missouri was: “Shall we quietly submit to see our families driven from their homes, exposed to all manner of hardships, without food or shelter from the storms of winter.”\footnote{134}{With the Church in an Early Day, 227-31, emphasis retained.}

Curtis said he was “wounded by the Mob” and was driven from Missouri “in consequence of his Religion.” He claimed the loss of nearly $3,000 in Caldwell County and wrote the figure $75.00 by the itemized statement “3 months
sickness of a wound inflicted by the mob, and yet a cripple[.] [sic]” By the figure $2,000 he wrote “having to leave the state precipitately by order of his Excelency, [sic] the Governour, [sic], to secure my own life, and the lives of my family, &c. &c[.]”\textsuperscript{135} Curtis Sr. and Lucy; Ervine and wife Luzette; Amos and wife Lydia; and the unmarried Stephen Hodges signed the Scroll Petition.\textsuperscript{136}

In \textit{With the Church in an Early Day} Marietta explained that Daniel fled Far West in the company led by the Prophet’s brother Samuel Smith and they endured terrible hardships before they arrived at Quincy, Illinois. In this account, Daniel arrived immediately after his infant daughter died and shortly before the death of Margery.\textsuperscript{137} This account is based upon fact as an article about early Quincy Cemeteries lists: “Hodges, Mrs. Lois; 23 years, Quincy, Lot 23, 28 Apr 1839” and “Hodges, Louisa, child of Mrs. Lois; 3 months, Adams County, Lot 23, 12 Jul 1839.”\textsuperscript{138} As Ervine and Amos’ wives are listed above and William and Stephen were unmarried, Curtis Hodges, Jr. appears to be “Daniel” in \textit{With the Church in an Early Day}.

\textbf{Marietta Walker}

Frederick M. Smith, President of the RLDS, said “no person has done more for the development of the work of the Reorganization than has Marietta Walker.”\textsuperscript{139} She started the children’s periodical \textit{Zion’s Hope} and founded \textit{Autumn Leaves}, a periodical designed for young people. Her “Mothers Home Column” in \textit{The Saints’ Herald} was widely read and she assisted in the preparation of the manuscript of the Joseph Smith translation of the Bible. She is also remembered for the donation of land and financial support for Graceland College at Lamoni, Iowa and the initiation of organized woman’s work in the RLDS.

Born on 10 April 1834 to Curtis and Lucy Hodges, Sr. a few miles from

\textsuperscript{135} \textit{Mormon Redress Petitions}, 464.
\textsuperscript{136} \textit{Redress Petitions}, 590.
\textsuperscript{137} \textit{With the Church in an Early Day}, 289-304. Mother Lucy Smith referred to the flight of Samuel and his company who left their families and fled Far West. [\textit{Lucy’s Book: A Critical Edition of Lucy Mack Smith’s Family Memoir}, edited by Lavina Fielding Anderson (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2001), 691-92, (cited hereafter as \textit{Lucy’s Book})] In an email to the author dated 27 November 2005 Anderson said “That group who high-tailed it out of Far West was on the run because of the battle of Crooked River, but there was a strong presumption that they were also Danites. That would certainly fit the Hodge brothers’ profile.” D. Michael Quinn, in \textit{Origins of Power}, 482, listed Curtis Hodges, Sr. as a Danite.
\textsuperscript{139} Cleo M. Hanthorne, “Marietta Walker: A Woman with a Clear View,” \textit{The Saints’ Herald} 90 (Apr. 1943):452. Joni Wilson in “Marietta Walker Accomplishing the Impossible,” \textit{The John Whitmer Historical Association 2002 Nauvoo Conference Special Edition}: 61, correctly said Marietta was “the most significant woman in the nineteenth-century Reorganization, even more than Emma Smith....”
Kirtland, Ohio at Willoughby, Marietta accompanied her family to Clay and Caldwell Counties, Missouri and Quincy, and Nauvoo, Illinois. In early 1845, she moved with her parents to Pennsylvania where they were members of Sidney Rigdon’s Church. Following her father’s death, Marietta and her mother lived with her sister, Lucy Billings, at St. Louis, Missouri where she attended the Austin School for Girls. After graduating from Oxford College for Women in Ohio in 1859 she moved to San Antonio, Texas in 1860 to care for the children of her deceased sister Eliza Jane Lyons. She was principal of the San Antonio Female College and following the death of her husband, Robert Faulconer, made her way to Sandwich, Illinois where she joined her mother, sister Emeline and her husband Elijah Banta. As they were members of the RLDS, Marietta prayed over the truth of that religion and was baptized in 1865. She was married to Samuel Fry Walker from November 1869 until his death in 1889. This magnificent lady was 96 years old when she died a faithful member of the RLDS in 1930.\(^{140}\)

Conclusions

The criminal activities of William, Stephen, Ervine, and Amos Hodges at Nauvoo are not a reflection of the Nauvoo Mormon’s mores or religiosity. Their meteoric destruction was an aberration as the vast majority of the Mormons in and around Nauvoo was law abiding and detested the criminal element which dishonored them as a people. For every William A. Hickman, Return Jackson Redden, Artemas Johnson, Thomas Brown, or Amos Hodges hundreds of their fellows were their moral opposites.

The disastrous Missouri experience may have been the reason Curtis Hodges, Sr. and his four sons turned to the dark side. We can speculate if the Danite belief that it was permissible to consecrate the goods of the Gentiles influenced a criminal life style. Or was it the loss of property and possessions or the brutal winter exodus from Missouri that derailed the family? Perhaps seeing Apostle David W. Patten mortally wounded and Curtis’ being shot in the side tipped the scales. It is also possible Curtis Sr. was a sociopath and members of his family followed his example. Whatever the reason or reasons, these men represented the worst elements of Mormonism.

The family continued to recognize Joseph Smith as a Prophet and, even though they continued to slide out of mainstream Mormonism, retained their

Mormon identity. Yet, even in this transitory period, family members were criminals and were forging alliances with Gentile thieves. With the Prophet’s murder part of the family moved to Pennsylvania in an attempt to reclaim their elusive early Mormon testimony. In the meantime, the brothers remaining in Nauvoo had become “notorious for thieving.”

William Hodges boasted to John Walker preceding the attempted robbery at Millers “there was a better way to make money than by work … and [we] meant [mean] to have it.” This statement is a fitting memorial for Amos, Ervine, William and Stephen Hodges. However, when I think of a memorial for Marietta Walker, I am drawn to J. Spencer Cornwall’s explanation of beauty:

More perhaps than any other hymn in our collection, “Now Let Us Rejoice” reminds us of the lily — not the one that “grows in the field” and that Jesus bids us to “consider” but rather the one that springs out of the lime of the open miasmatic pool. This is the most beautiful of flowers, the most delicate, the most artistic in its shape and coloring. Yet it is produced out of the most unpromising of materials; it grows where one would never look for beauty and grace and loveliness. Somehow it manages to suck up only the makings of perfection from the mud, to transform this on the way up its long, slender stem, and then to exhibit its wonder to the eye of the passer-by.

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141 John Taylor Nauvoo Journal, 48.
142 Trial for Murder.
143 J. Spencer Cornwall, Stories of Our Mormon Hymns (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1971), 123.
Grateful Acknowledgement

This paper was originally written at the invitation of *Clio’s Psyche: Understanding the “Why” of Culture, Current Events, History, and Society*, and a smaller version will be one of ten articles of their “Retrospective” on Fawn Brodie. The biographer of Fawn McKay Brodie is Newell G. Bringham, recently retired instructor of History and Political Science at the College of the Sequoias in Visalia, California. Dr. Bringham has written extensively on Mormon history and has served as president of the Mormon History Association. He graciously supplied me with a number of papers pertaining to Fawn Brodie, and spent a number of hours in direct discussion about my summarizing her life, mostly from his biography¹ and his anthology of seven articles reviewing different aspects of her first book from different scholars.² Almost all quotes may be found in these two works. While Dr. Bringham’s biography is comprehensive, perceptive, sensitive and fluidly written, I am responsible for the psychological interpretations in this summary.

In Brodie’s own words, it is an “exaggerated act of arrogance” to write a biography, “especially” a psychobiography that tries to explain the inner workings and motivations of an individual.³ Condensing such an attempt into a brief review moves this into foolishness. Compound this problem with a bias of admiration for this woman — who not only tolerated conflict, but charged into it — and whose effect on me has been similar to psychotherapy.

Fawn McKay Brodie spent her life in exploring and explaining male sexuality and its associated immoral or conflicted behavior. She had a “preoccupation with truth and lying, and we [can] detect a pattern of love and envy, attraction and aversion, admiration for and bafflement about the public figures (all of them male, incidentally) she chose to write about.” Her works resulted in “honors

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³ Biography, vii.
and acrimony in about equal measure. She came to know more notoriety than anonymity, scorned in some quarters, celebrated in others." In repeated cycles she was castigated, vilified, and then eventually vindicated.

A Childhood of Paradise

She was born into what appeared to be an idyllic setting, today frequently sought by those wanting to retire, or as a second gracious home in a small town — and who would ever think of locking their door? The town was Huntsville, about fifty miles northeast of Salt Lake City and up a canyon subjected to the three months of severe winters, although the other seasons each had their distinct beauty which at times reaches glory. She descended from patrician stock that have converted in the 1850s and ’60s in Scotland or Eastern United States, and had become the elite of the Mormon Church. The home reflected their superior status, one of the two largest in the town with its rock and frame walls containing fourteen rooms, and white picket fence in front. Her maternal grandfather became president of Brigham Young University, but more importantly, her uncle, David O. McKay, an educator and legislator, rose through church services and missions to become a Mormon Apostle, and eventually President of the Church. His tall, white haired and distinguished appearance with eloquence in speaking revived, by common membership usage, the term “Prophet,” little used since the days of Joseph Smith. His brother, Thomas E. McKay, Fawn McKay’s father, tall in stature, also distinguished in appearance, was also an educator, businessman, farmer, commissioner for public utilities, and state senator and eventually, through church leadership and missions, was ordained one of the “Assistants to the Twelve Apostles.” The McKay men did not take plural wives, but in the late nineteenth century, helped hide polygamists from the federal authorities in the “Mormon underground.” Fawn grew up in a devout home in a town where all worshipped together, with religious meetings throughout the week in the nearby chapel, blessings before every meal, and family prayers on knees every evening before bed.

All of the religion centered around the Prophet Joseph Smith who, a century earlier, had “restored” God’s only true church to the earth by receiving revelations and visitations of Jesus and angels, following 1600 years of faulty man-made religion. One of these angels directed Smith to ancient scripture from pre-Columbian America, written on gold plates along with a type of miraculous translating glasses, all allegedly buried in a hill near his home. Smith “read” this translation through the miraculous glasses (the “Urim and Thummin”) and the Book of Mormon, covering (mostly) a thousand year Judeo-Christian history was published in 1830. It is considered sacred scripture and a companion to the Bible by members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,

nicknamed Mormons, with headquarters in Salt Lake City. Joseph Smith was, in the words of Fawn Brodie, “the first cause — the explanation for Mormon Country — the reason in fact for one being born at all. I cannot remember the first time I heard of his visions and his golden plates, and the shocking tale of his murder in Carthage jail. I seem always to have known him.”

Fawn was named after her mother who came from polygamist background. Her grandfather, George Washington Brimhall, had converted in the 1840s with his wife, but whom he left with two children when she refused to migrate west. Living south of Salt Lake City, he took five new wives and fathered fourteen children. He authored his own experiences in a straightforward work entitled _The Workers of Utah_. His oldest son, George H. Brimhall became an educator, ultimately president of Brigham Young Academy, and under his leadership, Brigham Young University. He married two women polygamously, but with some need. With his first wife, Alfina Elizabeth Wilkins, he fathered six children, but following the last birth, she developed “brain fever” and spent the rest of her life in Provo State Hospital. He then took a second wife, Flora Robertson, Fawn Brodie’s grandmother, who raised the six children and gave birth to nine more, including Fawn’s mother, Fawn Brimhall, born 1889. So Fawn Brodie’s mother grew up not just with the tensions of a polygamist home, but also with the added difficulty of her mother hiding from federal authorities in the Mormon underground until the church formally abandoned plural marriage.

Fawn’s mother met her future husband while she was traveling in Europe and he was President of the Swiss-Austrian mission. She was twenty-three and he thirty-six when they married in the Salt Lake Temple in 1912. At that time, the secret Temple ceremony, similar to some Masonic rites, still continued the Oath of Vengeance against those who had murdered Joseph and his brother, Hyrum, in Carthage, Illinois in 1844. More personally, the seriousness of the Temple was represented in hand gestures indicating a willingness to be killed in gruesome fashion if the participant ever revealed the secret ceremony symbols. And, perhaps most importantly, the wife took an oath to obey her husband.

**Education and Intelligence**

Fawn McKay (Brodie), the second of five children, was born on 15 September 1915 into this home of paradisiacal beauty, but with unspoken seeds of corrosive tension in adequate doses to create an author who would seek to solve mysteries and drive headlong into controversy her whole life. Before we backtrack to a more careful view of the home environment, let us pause at her intelligence that approached or reached genius levels. She was “outspoken, inherently inquisitive, always asking questions, always curious and always wanting to

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learn.” Fear of whooping cough led to home schooling by her mother who used advanced and encouraging techniques. Fawn was memorizing poetry by the age of three; by the age of six she was reading fourth grade books. She was rapidly advanced, showed competitiveness, and wept when she lost a spelling bee to a twelve year-old boy almost twice her age. She showed no disruptive tendencies, but had hay fever that conveniently kept her inside, allowing her to indulge her love of books. Through them she had her first view of an alternate world outside of Huntsville. She had childhood beliefs in her religion; and, as expected, in the Sunday testimony meeting, spoke with absolute certainly about the truth of the Mormon Gospel and Joseph Smith’s claims. Her first published poem in a Mormon children’s periodical was about the need to be immediately obedient to her mother.6

When Fawn was nine years old, the family moved to Salt Lake City for three years as a result of her father’s position on the State Public Utility Commission. She received excellent schooling as part of a training program at the University of Utah, earned five dollars for a published poem, and gave a speech on the Mormon owned radio station. Her father had some serious problems with tuberculosis, and the family moved back to Huntsville — to a large home and farm mortgage they were paying, but which had never, and would never be, their own home.

A Family with Hidden Conflict

The problems had begun before the marriage. Fawn’s father, Thomas E. McKay, was the second of eight adult children, in a family of strict discipline and absolute unity and religious beliefs. To preserve family unity, the grandparents had turned the home into a legal corporation, owned by the McKay children, but with decisions determined by a “phalanx” of four sisters and governed by the determined oldest brother, David O. McKay, who had the church position that emphasized his “inspired” actions and decisions. He was, said Fawn later, “like a Chinese Patriarch.” Fawn’s father, Thomas E. McKay, generous and soft-spoken, spent his life avoiding confrontation. His style of never raising his voice, showing anger, and appeasement may have served him well in business, politics and church, but led to his family’s needs being always subservient to his dominant siblings. Fawn’s mother, not a McKay by birth, had no say over the house. Her family of five children and parents was relegated to two bedrooms out of the nine, and in summer all the sibling’s families would come at any time to enjoy their home, bedrooms and environs, and staying for weeks. “I don’t know how my parents put up with it,” recalled Fawn’s sister. Fawn commented that “It was always [father’s] way to run away from trouble rather than facing up to it,” and all family tensions were held in check by “the seemingly invincible discipline of Love.” All fled from any genuine argument and “worked with

6 Biography, 19-26.
religious intensity at preserving an atmosphere of tranquility.” The farm had not been big enough when divided, so was taken over by Fawn’s father who took out a high mortgage on the farm, with which he paid off his three brothers. While the details are unclear, the four brothers borrowed money on the land and invested it in speculative commodities and lost everything, with the main burden on Fawn’s father. This left the family in genteel poverty with the father bearing the relentless debt over thirty years “like Atlas, without hope and without lament.” They had to take in boarders, father worked excessive hours, and they bought simple school dresses on credit, which on two occasions was refused. As a result, the more affluent McKay’s looked down upon the Thomas E. McKay’s as not living up to the McKay image as family gentry. Yet no one helped with indoor plumbing, and an outhouse in summer might be part of the quaint country living, but in fierce winter chamber pots were used which froze and had to be thawed on the kitchen stove before being emptied in “Mrs. Grundy,”—the outhouse. In contrast to this, Fawn had seen in Salt Lake City the comfortable, even wealthy, lives of the rest of her father’s siblings; meanwhile her view of the alternate world outside Huntsville had expanded.

**Turmoil Through Generations**

Mormon scripture warns that if children are not brought up in the faith, “the sin is upon the heads of the parents.” Along with some doubting Mormons, I have wondered how infrequently children leave the faith if both parents are firm believers, for being a Mormon is not just attending Sunday school, but a total way of life. The tensions in this McKay family, partly hidden under a fraudulent façade of tranquility, were further exposed by the travails of Fawn’s mother. Years later, after her mother had made a third, successful, terrible suicide attempt by fire, Fawn wrote,

I still feel that much of her suffering was unnecessary, and that she could have had some pleasant years at the end, but she was caught in a Victorian society and trapped in the patriarchal traditions of the Mormon Church.... The worst thing, I think, was that there were so few to whom she could speak honestly, and so she turned her hatreds and furies inward, and this proved in the end to be a corrupting thing.⁹

Fawn’s maternal grandfather, George H. Brimhall, who had developed an academy into full-fledged Brigham Young University, was a “nominal religious” Mormon living in a day of less thinking restriction than the church allows today.

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⁷ *Biography*, 17-19.
⁸ *Biography*, 16.
⁹ *Biography*, 160.
He was “free spirit” with a fine mind, and “independent in his attitudes.”\textsuperscript{10} It appears that, as the church became more restrictive, that these attributes forced him out of the presidency of the University. But he also suffered from apparent emotional instability, along with increasing physical disability, characterized by intense chest and abdominal pain which increased until he “splattered” his brains by gunshot — this occurring when Fawn was sixteen years old.\textsuperscript{11} Such acts in fundamentalist churches are suspected to be the result of lack of some degree of faith, or even of sin. His polygamous wife, caring for the first wife’s six children, and the nine of her own, must have felt overburdened and abandoned, and with a physical body worn down by deliveries. We are told she disapproved of the doctrine of polygamy, an attitude that carried down to Fawn’s mother. George H. Brimhall’s emotional instability may have also transferred down, for Fawn’s mother experienced repeated bouts of depression that contributed to her suicide. One other quality filtered down as well: her father’s willingness to explore thought, ask questions and tolerate varied opinion, for, said Fawn’s sister, “the greatest thing that mother gave us was a need for intellectual honesty.”\textsuperscript{12} Intellectual honesty is not very compatible with rigid religious dogma that the McKay side of the family brought to the marriage.

This whispered history probably contributed to Fawn’s mother’s inferior status with her husband’s extended family. Was she cornered? Inferior by sex, inferior by being an in-law, burdened with debt and a husband who would not fight for her, restricted to a few rooms in their “home,” and blocked from open discussion of her problems, and under her temple oath to obey her husband, she became a “secret heretic,” a “thorough going heretic” and, later, Fawn’s secret confidante in her first major — heretical — writing. She remained a closeted person who could not develop her full self. Her hatred turned against herself and the Mormon doctrine. She was a “social Mormon,” doubting the Mormon view of eternity and “hated the temple ceremony so bad that it was just ghastly.” She wondered how the secret Mormon temple garments [underwear] could be sacred when they’re worn next to a dirty body.”\textsuperscript{13} Fawn’s older sister, Flora believed that her mother “hated sex,” and defended herself in her home by sleeping in one bed with two daughters while her husband slept in another bed with a son.\textsuperscript{14} Partly, this reflected the church’s position that sexual relations were always to be accompanied with the possibility of pregnancy. This was not just a Roman Catholic/fundamentalist position.

What Fawn McKay (Brodie) did not know was that the Church had taken on the burden of sanctifying Joseph Smith’s polygamous marriages with fourteen-\textsuperscript{10} Biography, 14.  
\textsuperscript{11} Biography 46.  
\textsuperscript{13} Biography, 21.  
\textsuperscript{14} Biography, 34.
year-old girls and already married women by insisting he did it only for holy
reasons, commanded by God, and personally — literally — threatened by angels
with swords if he did not obey taking plural wives. The church members had
to confirm his righteousness by also having sex only out of obedience to God’s
commands, and eliminating any sexual act for pleasure. (This continued into
the 1980s when a Stake [diocese] President in my area had Apostle Mark
E. Petersen speak to a group of married couples, defining proper bedroom
behavior. This was limited to penile thrusting in the vagina, and he lauded a
colleague who had never seen his wife naked. This private large meeting with
“no recording” was reported to me by three of my patients at the time.)

**Sexual Tensions and Education**

When puberty came, Fawn confessed to wanting to “feel [her own] vagina.”
Mother, shocked, responded that she should “never touch it. Never touch it!”
Fawn responded with the self-inflicted compulsion of wiggling her big toes to
keep away from her “privates.”

Besides these maternal instructions and Fawn’s obedience, do we have any
indication of Oedipal conflicts? Without further evidence, such ideas require
extreme speculation: might we wonder if Fawn’s adolescent sexual struggles,
(and later frigidity, discussed below) had also to do with sensing her father’s
libidinal dissatisfactions and reflect the wishes from many years previously
of a small daughter’s wish to comfort her father? The only other clue in this
direction, again highly speculative, would have been Fawn’s resentment that
her older sister, Flora, had a warm and close relationship with her father, and Flora was not sexually inhibited. But we have no evidence of resentment.
Instead, Fawn and Flora were lifelong close friends.

We should not be surprised that when puberty started, Fawn saw herself
as deformed. It took the displaced concern over being too tall — she reached
5’10” and slumped over to diminish this aberration. For a thirteen year old with
this background, the deformity would have been her genitals, now bleeding
intermittently and perhaps with cramping. Today, partly disagreeing with Freud,
we know that such attitudes are not the result of anatomy and physiology, but
an absence of a mother model pleased with herself. But how often, especially in
this cultural setting, would such a pleased self-view be possible?

Fawn, taller than the boys her age (thirteen), received the attention of a
youth, Dilworth Jensen, in college and five years her senior. It was a good
relationship, with common interests in books and excelling in school. Fawn

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15 Robert D. Anderson, *Inside the Mind of Joseph Smith: Psychobiography and the Book of
Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1999), 129-130, 164n15.

16 *Biography*, 34.

17 *Biography*, 27.
“adored being with him.”\textsuperscript{18} Despite her age, there was some talk of marriage. Even so, her family resisted because of their elite status and his Scandinavian background. Fawn’s grandfather, past president of Brigham Young University addressed her graduating class when she was fourteen, and she spent the next two years at the Mormon owned Weber College, and met some students from outside Utah. She took broadening courses, directing herself toward English composition and literature. She also took a course on the Book of Mormon from her favorite teacher, Leland Monson, a loyal and devout Mormon. There were skeptics in the class, but she was not one of them.

Fawn was good at public speaking, and the school sponsored debates. Fawn and a partner represented the school, traveled throughout the Midwest and argued on two topics. One centered on compulsory unemployment insurance (the nation was in depression); and the question of free trade vs. tariffs to stimulate the economy. Over a three-week period, their win record steadily increased. They took a side trip to Illinois and visited Carthage Jail, a Mormon shrine where Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum had been murdered. At the former Mormon town of Nauvoo, Illinois, she had a startling debate with a pastor from a smaller sect of Mormons (\textit{The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints}, now \textit{the Community of Christ}), that had not gone west and had Presidents from the progeny of Joseph Smith. They opposed Brigham Young and the Utah church, and denied the Mormon Temple ceremony or that Joseph Smith had ever practiced polygamy. From him Fawn learned for the first time that Utah Mormons believed Joseph Smith had had twenty-seven wives. “I was dumbfounded and had to confess absolute ignorance.”\textsuperscript{19} While she was only fifteen years old, this was the first time, among many, of increasing awareness that being kept from information is a form of being deceived.

Fawn was busy with school activities, and her relationship with her boyfriend was temporarily severed as he left on a two and a half year mission to Swiss-Germany. She received her diploma from her father because of his position as head of the Weber Stake.

\textbf{Exposure to Alternate Ideas}

For practical reasons, she attended the University of Utah from the age of seventeen to nineteen. “I was devout until I went to the University of Utah,” she once said. “There was nothing very spectacular about it…. It was a quiet kind of moving out into…the larger society and learning that the center of the universe was not Salt Lake City as I had been taught as a child.”\textsuperscript{20} The school was bigger, and some of the faculty was antagonistic to the Mormon Church, its policies and its leaders. Although there were relatives in the city, this was the first time

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\textsuperscript{18} Biography, 35.
\textsuperscript{19} Biography, 41.
\textsuperscript{20} Biography, 45.
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she became known for herself, and not her family’s church positions.

Important in her developing her independent thinking was an uncle, Dean R. Brimhall, son of George H. Brimhall, past president of Brigham Young University. He and his wife were both well educated and led two separate careers while maintaining a successful marriage. He had a doctorate in Psychology from Columbia University, and she was a professor of speech and theatre at the University of Utah. Perhaps most importantly, her uncle assumed his wife’s equality and encouraged her career, a contrast to Fawn’s hometown environment. Her uncle, despite a Mormon background and mission, was a religious skeptic, and the experience jarred her at first. She initially believed he lacked the strength that could only come from a “belief in revealed religion.”

Over time, their relationship grew and he became her closest confidante in the family. She participated in the debate team, and traveled to California — “the fleshpots of Egypt” — and discovered Californians could be devout in their own beliefs. She quit debate because of her developing integrity, for she believed the participants would select documents only for the purpose of enhancing their potential win, and avoid a balanced view of the need for unemployment insurance — all while there were long bread lines in the midst of the Great Depression.

Courses in ethics and child psychology cast doubt on her beliefs. And for the first time she realized that the majority of anthropologists believed the Native Americans were Asian. She worked in a library, and read broadening — non-believing — books about Mormonism and Joseph Smith. Her shock was at two levels — doubt that such stories about Smith could be true, and developing fury at being lied to by the censoring of information. A cousin-in-law, Alice Smith McKay, wrote a master’s thesis on a few prophecies of Joseph Smith that the church leaders declared were “beyond the human power to discern or to calculate.” Instead, her cousin had realized that at least one prominent prophecy concerning the future Civil War had simply come from information commonly available at the time. Her cousin believed that “in the absence of [tangible] information,” Smith could not utter prophecies to his people. She further postulated that his “prophecies” were accepted when Smith’s people were in need of his command for their welfare, and desperate for his leadership.

Her boyfriend, Dilworth Jensen, returned from his Swiss-Austrian mission, and their relationship resumed despite their religious differences “that we could not discuss.” There were renewed plans to marry, and Fawn sought solace from her doubt, anxiety and turmoil in her academic studies. But now we catch a rare glimpse of her inner struggles in her first and only published work of fiction, entitled “Experiment.” She entered in a literary competition of

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21 Biography, 48.
22 Biography, 49-50.
23 Biography, 51-52.
24 Biography, 52.
the Associated Students of the University of Utah. The story, with similarities to Shaw’s *Pygmalion* concerned a doctor who claimed the ability to achieve human perfectibility — all by “revolutionizing a human subject in terms of appearance, behavior and personality.” Challenged by a colleague, he insists that he had already raised an “utterly commonplace girl” who lived in a small rural community known as “Hilltown,” to perfection. Despite this work’s importance to understanding Fawn McKay, the story won no awards, and a critical teacher told her she had no talent for fiction.25 But we might wonder why she had not yet developed a more tolerant view of her own expectations, and how, in her own inner view, she could ever achieve perfection with only a woman’s body. She was elected to Phi Kappa Phi honor society and graduated in June 1934 with high honors.

She returned to Ogden, Utah, and taught English at her Weber College, teaching “rings around” many of the long-established teachers, and gaining respect. Her older sister taught grade school, and between them they were able to rent a small house that was big enough to accommodate the whole McKay family in the winter months, providing them with indoor plumbing and regular heating. Her relationship with her devout returned Mormon missionary, Dilworth Jensen, continued; he transferred from The University of Utah to Utah State University — the latter institution with better programs in zoology. He was subsequently awarded a graduate fellowship at the University of California at Berkeley. Fawn received a similar fellowship at the same school, and there was talk of marriage. But her parents encouraged her to attend the University of Chicago for several reasons: first, Chicago had a vigorous Mormon youth group; second, her father knew the president of the school. Fawn’s parents were not yet prepared for her to marry; and they wanted her to avoid Berkeley. It was a mutual decision for Fawn, despite fondness for her longstanding boyfriend. She wished to be on her own, and had growing doubts about his devotion — or her lack of it.

**Apostasy and a Forbidden Marriage**

Entering the University of Chicago brought her an “enormously exhilarating...sense of liberation [and] the confining aspects of the Mormon religion dropped off within a few weeks.... It was like taking off a hot coat in the summertime.”26 Her leaving Mormonism was a quiet gradual process, without sturm und drang. She participated pleasantly with the local congregation. Meanwhile, her university studies focused on various literary figures, including D. H. Lawrence, on whom she wrote a “master’s essay.” This process provided her with training in historical methodology, and within a year she had her Master’s degree in English literature. She was twenty years old.

25 *Biography*, 53-54.

26 *Biography*, 59.
During that year, she had an epiphany brought on by an inquisitive roommate. When Fawn explained the “golden plates” of the Book of Mormon, and Joseph Smith’s miraculous translation of them, the woman asked, “What happened to these golden plates,” and Fawn replied, “An angel came and took them back to heaven.” The roommate rolled her eyes, and Fawn — capable at that moment in identifying with the roommate’s disbelief, appreciated the absurdity of the story.\(^{27}\) Now all that was needed was support in her expanded doubt, and someone with insightful challenging inquiry.

On that same day of her graduation, she married Bernard Brodie after a six-week whirlwind courtship. She caught his eye when she was waiting on tables in the University cafeteria. His Jewish parents had emigrated from Latvia, and he grew up in tenement housing on the West side of Chicago. His father provided for the family as an itinerant peddler with a horse-drawn wagon. Bernard was dynamic, passionate, intelligent, with a driven thirst for knowledge, and quick to show his feelings and emotions. His language was eloquent, and he had a fondness for lyrical poetry, good music, and beautiful flowers. He recognized her classic beauty and intelligence.\(^{28}\)

The only family member who attended the wedding was Fawn’s mother. Earlier, Bernard had almost broken all contact with his family, who strongly disapproved of his marriage to Fawn. Her own family united in trying to fight off this marriage, with anti-Semitic letters and fasting and prayer. Her uncle, future LDS president David O. McKay, traveled to Chicago to dissuade her. Her longstanding Mormon boyfriend, Dilworth Jensen — they had communicated by almost daily letters — was stunned at her unexpected announcement of her intent to marry, and felt she dependently changed her personality to suit different environments. Out of courtesy to her family, they married in the Chicago Latter-day Saint chapel.\(^{29}\)

By this time, Fawn had formed her disbelief, centering on the naturalistic fact that Native Americans had Mongolian features and all evidence proposed their arrival across the Siberian land bridge five to ten thousands of years earlier than Book of Mormon peoples. These groups had supposedly arrived in two periods — around 600 BCE from the land of Israel, and from Mesopotamia around 2500 BCE — and the earliest group, we are told, had come to a land “where never man had been.”\(^{30}\) Her bitterness at this discovery will provide the beginning energy for her intellectual rebellion.

**No Small Matter**

It may help, in trying to clarify the impact of this discovery, to compare it to

\(^{27}\) *Biography*, 59.

\(^{28}\) *Biography*, 59-60.

\(^{29}\) *Biography*, 62-63.

\(^{30}\) *The Book of Mormon* (Palmyra, NY: E. B. Grandin, 1830), 541, now Ether 2:5.
the Roman Catholic miraculous Shroud of Turin, which appeared to have the faint image of Jesus’ face and body, and was believed to be the shroud in which he was buried. Between 1978 and 1988, the Catholic Church allowed it to be examined by scientists. What was believed to be blood turned out to be paint pigment; what was believed to be an ancient linen cloth dated, by radiocarbon assay, from no earlier than the 13th century. And there was an incomplete and unconfirmed story of an artist that confessed to its creation. One would think that would end it. Instead, it just began the arguments that have continued to our day. The important distinction is this: the Shroud of Turin is of little consequence to the Catholic Church: a moving confirming miracle if true; a curious and pleasant excursion in history and methodologies (that sometimes begin with supernatural assumptions) if not. Either way, the Church is not troubled, and will continue on its way.

But that is not the case with the Book of Mormon. It is, and remains the prime external source of evidence for the claims of Joseph Smith and continues to be studied in weekly meetings and in the home by all members of the family. Within the Book of Mormon, an early American prophet living around 590 BCE, saw the birth of Jesus to a virgin, and the replacement of His early Christianity with (similar to Protestant views in the early 18th century) “a church which is most abominable above all other churches.” It had lost all its divine qualities. Joseph Smith claimed, while producing the Book of Mormon, that various angels, well known in New Testament history, returned to earth and, by the laying on of hands, restored to earth the authority of God to men. These included John the Baptist, and Peter, James and John. This would make the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints the only true church of God, and its President also Prophet, Seer, and Revelator for the world, if it will only listen. Secondly, this “priesthood” has been passed from Smith and disciples down through the Mormon Church, and all male members are expected to receive its various levels by the laying on of hands throughout life. The ubiquitous Mormon missionaries (supported by family and friends), and all local officers — ministers (Bishops), heads of dioceses (Stake Presidents), etc. are unpaid, and only the top echelon — Apostles, support staff, educators and mission presidents — receive a salary. Each male member, living righteously, has the right to receive revelation (or its minor form, inspiration), for his leadership in his particular church assignment; and the priesthood of the males makes them the leaders and directors in the family, again, along with their assumed “inspiration.” Women are subjected to this authority, and by inference and despite argument, also inferior.

In Fawn’s case, this included her uncle, Apostle and later President, David O. McKay; and her father, elevated to be an “Assistant to the Twelve Apostles” in the early 1940s. Fawn McKay Brodie was raised in an unusual situation with family members who had the highest authority; and therefore held strong claim

\[\text{[31] The Book of Mormon (1830), 25-31, now 1 Nephi, chaps. 11-13.}\]
to being “inspired” in their acts and decisions — both within and without their families. But now she wondered if they were devoting their lives to a fraudulent institution, and more to the point, were they also lying by covering up or rewriting history? Now she was facing her issue: men, anatomically complete — even “perfect” — were not only not perfect, but seriously flawed.

**Support, Encouragement, and Move from Apostasy to Heresy**

Fawn’s husband provided an inquiring mind from a neutral position. Interested and curious about the religion, he spurred her puzzlement as well. After their marriage, she took entry-level jobs, but ended up in a library that allowed her to begin quiet research. But some of the same forces driving her into inquiry and heresy were also interferring with the intimacy in their marriage. She was restricted and perhaps frigid with him. Her sister advised to just “let go” in sex, and Fawn replied, “How can I let go?”

But when one is beginning to shuck off the control and domination of the male world, could she allow a man to control the overwhelming and forbidden explosion of the center of her physical being? Again, Oedipal conflicts remain highly speculative.

She did a researched inquiry of the church welfare system, entitled “Mormon Security,” and found misrepresentation vis-à-vis government relief programs. She published her study in *Nation* under a pseudonym to avoid family embarrassment. But again, she was disillusioned by the church’s behavior, which heightened her curiosity about Joseph Smith, and, finding no scholarly biography available, decided to write one. During this period of time, her husband finished his Ph.D. dissertation, they moved three times, and she became a mother to the first of three children. She had already come to the conclusion “that the whole Book of Mormon story was false,” and that Joseph Smith was a “conscious fraud.” She never lost those views.

If the Book of Mormon came out of his own background in western New York, which he insisted came from golden plates, then what kind of man was this? The whole problem of his credibility, I thought, was crying out for some explanation.... It was a piece of detective work that I found absolutely compelling. It was fantastic! I was gripped by it...and was fascinated the whole time. I was baffled by the complexities of this man and remained somewhat baffled even after the book was finished... [but much later with the psychiatric literature] I felt I had some more explanations.... The fraudulent nature of the Book of Mormon is, I think unmistakable [and] fraudulently conceived.

Her son later said that she “felt an intense sense of betrayal but was [also] working through in a way an equally intense childhood love for [Joseph Smith]

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32 *Biography*, 68.

33 Shirley E. Stephenson, “Biography of Fawn McKay Brodie,” by interview. Fullerton, California: California State University Oral History Program (O.H. 1523), 1975, 7-9, hereafter *Interview.*
who had been vitally important [to her].”34 She could share her ideas with her uncle, Dean Brimhall, who had become a non-believer as well, and wrote him that with her perusal of ancient newspapers that Joseph Smith would have read — “an absolute goldmine” — she was “able to trace almost every idea in [the Book of Mormon] right down to Ontario Co. New York 1827 [including] the lost tribe theory, the exterminated race theory, anti-Masonry, anti-Catholicism — the whole gamut of sectarian religious controversy.”35

In addition to her uncle, two other people were critically important to her, and enhanced her book greatly. The most important was her husband. She later said,

The volume would have been a harsher indictment of Joseph Smith had it not been for [Bernard’s] influence. I was angered by the obvious nature of the fraud in his writing of the Book of Mormon…. His revelations had nothing to do with God… [and] his libertine nature…was to me quite shocking. My husband kept urging me to look at the man’s genius, to explain his successes, and to make sure that the reader understood why so many people loved him, and believed in him. If there is real compassion for Joseph Smith in the book, and I believe there is, it is more the result of the influence of my husband than anyone else.36

The second was Dale Morgan, a non-believing Mormon historian of note who became her mentor and careful critic, and personal friend until his untimely death. He also modified her writing: “Your own point of view…is much too hard and fast, to my way of thinking, it is too coldly logical in its conception of Joseph’s mind and the development of his character. Your view of him is all hard edges, without any of those blurrings which are more difficult to cope with but which constitute a man in the round. I am particularly struck with the assumption your MS. makes that Joseph was a self-conscious imposter.”37 But Morgan’s perceptive view of Joseph Smith almost suggests he knew object-relations theory: “Regardless of how he got started with the Mormon affair, he came to believe absolutely in what he was doing; his sincerity can hardly be challenged. I think he had an extreme capacity for fantasy, and ultimately the fantasy may have become more real to him than reality itself, to the point that it displaced reality.” And how did this happen? “The responsibility [of his followers] in the make of their prophet, in the proliferation of his legend, is not to be dismissed. Their hunger for miracle, their thirst for the marvelous, their lust for assurance that they were God’s chosen people, to be preserved on the great and terrible day, made them hardly less than Joseph, the authors of his

35 Interview, 5, Biography 72.
37 Biography, 87.
history. His questionable responsibility is the faithful image of their own.\textsuperscript{38}

**Cover Up by the Authorities**

As she moved forward in her research, she wanted to examine a little known 1832 diary of Joseph Smith in the Mormon archives Salt Lake City. She was confronted by her uncle; the discussion was acrimonious, and she was forbidden. But the next day she received a note from him authorizing her entrance. But now she knew she could not use her family connection, and never did. And perhaps she had hoped that, if allowed to examine this particular diary, she would be allowed other searches. The whole incident suggested to her perception that the hierarchy was involved in a cover-up of information.\textsuperscript{39}

**Patriarchal Dissonance and Inner Turmoil**

Where were her parents in all of this? Early in her research, she started sharing her ideas with her mother who had become “a thorough going heretic” and that it was “almost as much fun to discuss the Church with her” as with her uncle, Dean Brimhall. But her father remained emotionally and intellectually unavailable. In previous discussions, he had replied, “you’ve just got to believe.” Now he refused to discuss the book with his daughter or even acknowledge its existence. Later she said,

> My father never did read the Joseph Smith biography.... I always felt...that his not reading it was an act of real hostility...and his refusal to discuss it hurt me more, I think, than an angry argument about the contents would have done. At any rate, we both found it impossible to communicate on the subject, as on most others. \textsuperscript{40}

If there was Oedipal conflict in Fawn’s makeup, this is perhaps the strongest evidence for such extreme speculation. Her father had a warm, close relationship with Fawn’s older sister, Flora,\textsuperscript{41} and some of Fawn’s fury in her life might have been a result of the emotional barrier — rejection — from her father. Had both of them drawn lines because of an undercurrent of sexual tension?

And then, as the book was in its final stages, her father suffered a heart attack. Had her work contributed to his threatened life? “The consequences for my own peace of mind would be simply unbearable,” she said, adding, “If I didn’t have such an affection for my father, who is the soul of kindness, perhaps

\textsuperscript{38} Dale Morgan on Early Mormonism: Correspondence and a New History, ed. John Phillip Walker. (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1986, 260).

\textsuperscript{39} Biography, 84-85.

\textsuperscript{40} Biography, 102.

\textsuperscript{41} Biography, 27.
I wouldn’t be so troubled.”

These are unilateral conscious thoughts, and her ambivalence toward her father is hidden. Her father slowly recovered, but then she identified with his potential death and her guilt led to a fear that she might be killed in some kind of accident. She and her father continued to act as if the book did not exist, and she feared the unpleasantness the book would create for her father. Now the denial: “I suspect some Freudian would explain my whole five-year toil on the basis of an unconscious desire to wound him.... God knows the compulsion I have been laboring under has been emotional rather than intellectual, but it doesn’t have its roots in that kind of complex.”

Well, yes it does. At various layers, she was intent on destroying the fraud and corruption of Joseph Smith, including his abuse of women; she also was intent on exposing the cover-up and manipulation of history by the Mormon male hierarchy that continued to support Smith; and she was attacking her father who was part of that system, but also, within their home, had taken a submissive role to his McKay background, and left his wife and family in disadvantage.

Hers was an attack on sexism and inequity, sustained by religious dishonesty. These are social issues, but then we are left with a deeper unanswerable question as to how she felt being a woman. Eleven months before the book was published, she suffered a miscarriage. “I had all the pain and misery of childbirth without anything to show for it.”

The physical inequity of men and women in reproduction is not social, but natural. She has every right to be furious at the social inequity, but if she was furious with the natural dissonance that leaves men relatively unencumbered, she would have been in warfare with her own being. And she was envious of men. Somehow, the work on the book had contained and balanced this struggle; but now she desired the continuity that men had in work; in contrast “once you have raised a child to the ripe age of three and sent him off to nursery school there isn’t anything else to turn [to] except to having another — which is of course satisfying enough in itself, but only for another three or four years. There where are you?” And she reached the “dreadful day for a woman” — her thirtieth birthday — three months before the book was published.

Three years later she was struggling with “inertia.” “If one wanted to discover the laws of inertia the best place to go for data [is] the female mind...So many fathers pass their genius on to their daughters, but as a general rule the talents lie dormant and are passed on to flower in the sons.” A woman fails to live up to her intellectual potential because of the “extraordinary satisfaction a woman gets from taking care of small children. It makes ambition seem ridiculous, and shows up fame for the hollow thing it is.” Then the children grow up, and a woman’s life is “utterably barren, and too

\[42\] Biography, 93.

\[43\] Biography, 95.

\[44\] Biography, 96.

\[45\] Biography, 99.
late to fill it up with anything.”

This first conundrum asks if, besides the sexism in her rearing, did she have an inherent drive antagonistic to her gender? Or did this also come from her environment in her first year or two, and leave a residual of an impossible demand for perfection — associated with maleness — in her work? Was she ever able to relax and enjoy a casual life, partly because she could never attain manhood? How would she compensate for her anatomical (and sociological) inferiority?

**Fulfillment and Condemnation**

When the book was published, she received praise and condemnation “in about equal amounts,” and mostly along religious lines. Within six months she was excommunicated which brought tears, but she emphasized, mostly because of the effect on her parents, and we might suspect public rationalization or denial for her personal pain. She was now a national figure. The book is a marvel to read, at times like a historical criminal investigation; at times with a grace of a flowing stream; at times with energy that simply propels one forward. But there was another reason the book made such waves. And perhaps a second comparison may be useful. If one wants to inquire into the beginnings of Christianity, one stumbles over the lack of available information. One can argue philosophically about belief in miracles, or one can inquire into the internal inconsistencies within the gospels, or puzzle over fragments of manuscripts. Beyond that, speculation grows fast.

But Joseph Smith came of age in a day of railroads and newspapers. And what the Mormons couldn’t believe was her documentation. Up to that time, the studies of Smith, by outsiders, were condemning and scurrilous; by insiders, they were apologetic Sunday school manuals. Yet she had a view of Smith that allowed her to perceptively evaluate the materials that she found that no one else even suspected were out there. In an obscure outdated religious encyclopedia, she found a report of a trial of Joseph Smith, taken from a courtroom docket book, and dated 1826, four years before publication of the Book of Mormon. This report had found him guilty of “disorderly conduct” and described his fraudulent behavior in simple magic trickery and deceit, and money-digging rituals. But the original source of the report had disappeared. Nevertheless, the report fit her view of Smith, and with courage she included it in her biography, and, as expected, received accusations from the devout historians of creating history by using forged documents. “How could this deceitful man described in these pages [from the docket book] become a prophet of God?” the devout asked. But she had accurately measured her man: shortly after her book was published, she found another lengthy written report of this trial; and eventually

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46 *Biography*, 125-126.
47 *Biography*, 113.
three other confirmations surfaced — including an original holograph — which supported her view. She later commented that if the first document had proved to be a forgery, she would have had to make major revisions on one of her chapters. These court reports give us information about Smith that is not available anywhere else.48

**Confirmation of Unresolved Conflict**

The work on her book was done, and she wondered whom she would write about next. One person after another was tossed aside. No woman met her criteria. But which man? “Why is it, I wonder, that I prefer someone I can tear into? Is it because until I was twenty I was such a supremely good and obedient child that I am still trying to make up for lost time?” If she was in warfare with her physical being, then some of her attack on the men in her histories was probably projection and envy. The two issues — social inequity and nature’s physical bias — now came together four and a half years later in another frightening miscarriage that required hospitalization and she came close to death. Some of the McKay family had indicated that the loss of the child and near-fatal illness were “just punishment” for her “sins.” She responded with a depression that took the form of “pessimism & bitterness…. If all the venom that accumulated in my soul could have been harnessed in some kind of explosive [the whole] state [of Utah] would simply have been blown to nothing.” Then the struggle between writing and motherhood tipped the other way with her plans to have another baby. “This is priority number one, and everything else is going to be sacrificed to it.” 49

But it was becoming clear that writing about Joseph Smith had not fully exorcised her demons about male control and duplicity. Her father had had a second, serious heart attack four years after the book on Joseph Smith had been published. His health declined, and five years later he developed inoperable cancer on his neck. He became an enfeebled and blind invalid, but refused care from home-health people, and her mother was deteriorating with the burden. Fawn Brodie was in the midst of her own psychoanalysis when her mother attempted suicide, appeared to improve, and then made another suicide attempt. Fawn could not communicate well with the psychiatrist, who used shock treatment, but little personal intervention, and she found another therapist for her mother, but the depression was severe.

She blamed her father for her mother’s condition because of all his demands on her. “My disillusionment with my Father reached the lowest possible point... absolute bottom,” she wrote to her uncle Dean Brimhall. “Maybe in years to come I can be more forgiving, but he makes any kind of detachment so difficult because of continuing pretensions to purity and saintliness. And of course I

48 Brodie (1971), 16, 427-8, 440-441; Biography 121, 291n16, Anderson, Inside the Mind, 76-87.
49 Biography, 126-127.
started out as a child thinking he was next to God in gallantry and goodness. Then, too, there is the factor that I have hurt him, and having hurt him I must believe the worst about him lest I suffer too much from guilt myself.” She could list many factors for her mother’s depression, and one she imagined was an intolerable secret desire to have her husband dead — and again, we must wonder about projection.50 Her mother improved in dramatic fashion with shock treatment, but her husband continued to deteriorate, and died two years later at the age of eighty-two. Two years after that, she succeeded in suicide by setting herself on fire, suffering in critical condition for several days, and died at the age of seventy-one.

Her Last Thirty-five Years: Four Biographies, Infidelity and Dying

During these years, her husband advanced in recognition of his writing on national military strategies; she co-authored From Crossbow to H-Bomb with him. His work required repeated relocations (Dartmouth College, Yale, Pentagon, RAND Corporation), but they eventually settled in Pacific Palisades in California. They raised three children successfully. Although her only degree was a Master’s in English, she achieved tenure as a professor of history at UCLA, but not without a bitter fight that contained some sexism and rigidity against those without Ph.D.’s in their chosen field, or felt there was little place for psychological interpretation in history. She was a liberal Democrat, an environmentalist, and a quiet feminist who knew she was underpaid compared to her husband. Her works became increasingly psychological. Through her husband’s work, they were acquaintances with the politically prominent such as Henry Kissinger, but through her own work, she began associations with the psychoanalytic institutes in Los Angeles. She entered a two-and-a-half year psychoanalysis when she was forty years old. In an interview twenty years later she was effusive about the application of psychoanalytic thought in biography. She described such attempts as “treacherous,” but when done well, very rewarding.51 Each of her last four biographies was a variation of her work on Joseph Smith. There was a focus on a powerful man, his sexual life, and deception and cover-up. She was initially interested in Thaddeus Stevens: Scourge of the South because of the racial issues with blacks — a continuation of the Mormon issue. She believed she would be dealing with a scoundrel similar to Smith, but

the more I read about Stevens, the more I felt he had been abused and vilified, that this man really had elements of greatness. So, in a way it was the reverse of Joseph Smith. Here, I was rebuilding a reputation that had been abused. With Joseph

50 Biography, 142-144.
51 Interview, 18-21.
Smith, I felt this man whom I had been brought up to respect as a deity did not deserve that reputation. It was a total about face in terms of intention. It was good to be doing a positive thing rather than the destructive thing, because I had always felt guilty about the destructive nature of the Joseph Smith book.\(^{52}\)

She investigated his childhood, speculated about the sexual significance of his clubfoot, and corrected the view of him as a “malignant and vindictive old man.” Her work, though commercially unsuccessful, altered the traditional view of Southern Reconstruction.\(^{53}\)

Her third biography focused on Richard Francis Burton, the British explorer and eccentric scholar, linguist and sexologist of the nineteenth century. She was invited to write an introduction to an edition of his *City of the Saints (1862)*, one of his forty books, which had dealt with the Mormons and polygamy. She became “lost to this man, who was fascinating beyond belief...A fun book to write and to research.” She identified with his driven compulsion, entitled the biography *The Devil Drives: A Life of Sir Richard Burton* and was fascinated by his sampling of “everything in the sexual market” in the countries he visited. Conflict did exist, but mostly between Burton and his devout Roman Catholic wife, who loved him, yet was repelled by his interest in sex. She provided the deception and cover-up when she burned his forty-year collection of manuscripts and diaries, and then wrote a sanitized biography of him.\(^{54}\)

By the time she was fifty, Brodie had completed the book on Burton, and had achieved national recognition as a prominent author and biographer. Her earlier works were republished, she had articles published in distinguished journals and magazines, and the Utah State Historical Society gave her its most prestigious honor by making her a fellow. Meanwhile, devout historians continued to attack her work on Joseph Smith, finding “some real errors...and plenty of things [they choose] to call errors.”\(^{55}\) But the evidence about Joseph Smith and his claimed translations — including that of an ancient Egyptian papyrus, which had served as the basis for the Mormon Book of Abraham scripture — was refuted by direct scientific evidence, and she could go on the attack, accusing the Mormon Church of manipulating the past by rewriting history.

She reached her apogee of writing ability combined with psychological insight with her seven-year work on *Thomas Jefferson: An Intimate History*. She also achieved broad based acclaim, stunning publication numbers, and a degree of financial wealth. Her Thomas Jefferson work was a 600 page The-Book-of-the-Month club selection and on *The New York Times* best seller list for thirteen weeks. She clearly loved this man and his genius, and was ready

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\(^{52}\) *Interview*, 14-15.

\(^{53}\) *Biography*, 116-154.

\(^{54}\) *Interview*, 16-17, *Biography*, 155-184.

\(^{55}\) *Biography*, 161-184, on 179.
to delve into his conflicts. She had dreams of being married to him and told her son, “If I had been a man, I would have been a man like [Jefferson].” She introduced the world to Sally Hemings, his African-American slave and mistress of twenty-eight years, and mother of seven of his children. The denial and hiding by his descendents and admirers replicated her experience with Smith and the Mormon devout. Once again, she was that “horrible Brodie woman.” Fawn acknowledged, “and here [with Jefferson] we have a deity as important to many Americans as Joseph Smith is to many Mormons... [But] I am prepared for incomprehension as well as controversy. I am prepared for distortion and am prepared for indignation. But I still think the time is ripe for what I have written, and that in general the response will be favorable, and good. It may even be overwhelmingly enthusiastic.” She was correct, for she was writing in the midst of the civil rights movement. She publicly debated Gary Wills, who said Sally Hemings was only a “healthy prostitute,” instead of a real love involvement. And she helped us understand Jefferson’s [in]action that affects us even today. As Bringhurst summarized,

If he freed his slaves in conformity with his self-proclaimed ideals of liberty and equality, they would have been banished from the state as freedmen in accordance with Virginia law. Thus, the only way Jefferson could maintain his relationship with Sally Hemings was to keep her enslaved. This made the larger issue of slavery too complex to deal with. And so Jefferson drifted along apathetically through the remainder of his life, leaving it to later generations of Americans to content with the slavery issue.

And, once again, as with Smith, she was vindicated by DNA studies, but this time not until many years after her death.

During the time she was writing about Jefferson’s secret life, she discovered her husband had a secret life with another woman. With her life long preoccupation and fury about the sexual immorality and deceit of men, it is hard to imagine anything that would have been more painful for her. She was mortified, thought of divorce, but felt the marriage had so many positive aspects through their long relationship, the marriage survived. Let us pause here for a speck of contemplation. While placing full responsibility for her husband’s dishonesty and deceit on his shoulders, we might wonder if in some way her sexual struggles unconsciously set up the framework for his behavior. Did he feel her force and drive as a competition that threatened his masculinity? She was ascending in accomplishment and recognition, while his own career had leveled, perhaps even faltered. And he had been jealous of

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56 Biography, 222.
57 Biography, 213.
58 Biography, 186.
59 Biography, 187.
his wife’s involvement with Jefferson, weather or not he knew of her dreams of being married to him. “God, I’m glad that man is out of the house,” he reportedly said as the book was finished. And is this tied to another puzzle in her life concerning her imbalanced involvement in racism and sexism? In at least three of her books she attacked racism, and it is possible that she, along with other critics, provided pressure for the 1978 “revelation” to the Mormon Prophet allowing black men to hold the priesthood.

It isn’t that she didn’t attack sexism, but this was the issue in her personal history, and seemed to get the short end of the stick. Her attitude in feminism was inquired in an interview in 1975, and she acknowledged her quiet feminism and irritation at the pay discrepancy compared to her husband, but then she added,

I don’t pay very much attention to [the feminists]; really, a lot of them are shrews. I guess I am terribly old-fashioned in that respect. I agree with my husband when he quotes, I guess it’s King Lear, “Her voice was ever soft, gentle, and low, an excellent thing in a woman.” And yet, I can’t help but admire what they are doing. I believe that women have been abused and are still being abused.... It is just that...I work alone.61

So, besides infidelity, her supportive husband wasn’t supportive in some important areas. Even with distinguished, moderate, thoughtful authors, there is a place, on occasion, for “I am woman. Hear me roar.” Her whole life would have justified an outburst. Did she emphasize her “femininity” side as reaction-formation to her wish for masculinity?

She was becoming more and more alone with her writing. Her closest mentors and friends, Dale Morgan, and uncle, Dean Brimhall, died. Her relationship with her husband was strained — “a difficult marriage;” they bickered in front of family and friends; he complained about her cooking and could be crotchety, and he continued to be flirtatious.62 In the midst of this she began her last work on Richard Nixon: The Shaping of His Character, a man she despised. Private comments included statements like, he was “a plain damn liar,” “a rattlesnake,” “a total obscenity.”63 And it became personal, for she believed that Nixon had authorized the break-in of Daniel Ellsberg’s psychiatrist, Louis Fielding, and he had been Brodie’s analyst as well. Nixon reminded her of Joseph Smith, but Nixon’s imposturing lacked charm. She tried to find evidence of homosexuality in Nixon, even evidence of “latent” homosexuality.64 In the midst of this, her husband developed cancer, underwent treatment, improved,

60 Biography, 222.
61 Interview, 47.
62 Biography, 235.
63 Biography, 223-225, 244.
64 Biography, 229-231.
faltered, deteriorated, and died a year later, in November 1978. Her bitterness and deep love for her husband turned her grief to depression from which she never recovered. She missed him terribly, felt helpless in her work and dreamed of walking and eating with him. She continued to work on Nixon, but we must wonder how much of the intensity of her hatred was a displacement and/or expression of underside of her ambivalent fury stirred by her husband’s infidelity, layered on top of Joseph Smith, and equally ambivalent feelings toward father, uncle and many others. And was the search for Nixon’s latent homosexuality partly a result of her own unresolved urge toward masculinity? Her work on Nixon would be criticized for being too speculative and because of her hostility that showed through her work.65

Now, toward the end of her life, she wondered why “I keep driving myself, a compulsive woman racing around frantically, tracking down trivia to build a biographical mosaic. Why do I do it? Because I am unhappy when I’m not doing it.”66 But perhaps we can make more sense out of it and put the puzzle together. All of her books were about so-called “perfect” men who, instead, were flawed. And her own flawed, anatomically incomplete self? She could compensate for that as long as she was accomplishing excellence — “perfection” — in work.

In September 1980, she was diagnosed with cancer. Her various treatments exhausted her, and she entered a race to finish at least one volume before she died. She sent off the last revision, and the book was published eight months after her death on 10 January 1981. Her daughter recalled, “I never knew her to be so relaxed as she was when she was dying,” and later added that it wasn’t “until she...lay dying that she learned to...value life for the living, instead of for the working.” By then, it was “rather late.” Her son, a clinical psychologist, reflected that somewhere deep in his mother’s psyche was the feeling that she “should have been a man.”67

Criticisms of Her First Book

Many of the devout have objected to her bad “psychologizing” that imposed ideas into Smith’s mind. We now know that her list of wives for Joseph Smith was flawed by her ill view of the man, and we can firmly document only thirty-three wives, including fourteen year-old girls and already married women.68 Some have suggested that her “fictional” writing style undermined the historical aspects of the book;69 that she was extreme in her view of Smith and did not

65 Biography, 260-265.
66 Biography, 268.
67 Biography, 269.
explore the “broad middle ground” between fraud and prophet. Some devout historians vigorously object to any study of Smith that refuses to consider the [believed valid] “supernatural” elements in his life. Other, more kindly reviews suggest it is time to move on to other issues.

Positive Consequences of Her Work

Her work, directly or indirectly, helped modify Mormonism. She embarrassed every devout Mormon historian, and forced Mormon studies to a higher plane. She contributed to the muting of racism that allows black men to hold the priesthood. The secret temple ceremonies have mellowed with the removal of the ridiculing of Protestant churches; the elimination of inappropriate touching, nudity, and the gruesome mimicry of body mayhem; and the changing of the oath for wives from obedience to “following their husbands as their husbands follow the Lord.” BYU professors, (along with the connected and apologetic Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies) have their backs against the wall while continuing to champion the Book of Mormon as ancient scripture. Because Brodie’s statement that the evidence of Asian origin for Native Americans is “overwhelming” is now an understatement, their acts are to cast doubt on science and obfuscate. They are good at it, their arguments are fascinating to read, and remind one of the arguments for the antiquity of the Shroud of Turin. But, over the last fifty years, the importance of Joseph Smith has diminished in comparison with the emphasis on Jesus and the New Testament. And, distorting historical documentation, many now believe that Smith’s “translation” of the gold plates had to run through his thinking and emotions, thus corrupting the translation with 19th century American influences. These changes allow for a fudging of absolute belief in Smith as Prophet. I think she would have been pleased with the slow modification and compromises that are being made concerning Joseph Smith, but I don’t think she would have smiled. She would have viewed these adjustments as continued deceit, avoiding looking at leaders who value power more than truth, or the painful self-exploration that challenges the continued belief in improbabilities that science has turned into impossibilities.


71 Roger Launius, “From Old to New Mormon History: Fawn Brodie and the Legacy of Scholarly Analysis of Mormonism,” in Reconsidering, 195-220.

72 Interview, 9, 10.

Postscript and Contrast

She refused to return to the “swamp” 74 of Mormon history and do a full re-write on Joseph Smith when her book was republished twenty-five years later, but she added an updated supplement. She commented that she had earlier missed the “fratricide” that exists throughout the book, and that she had not had the training to delve into Joseph Smith’s identify problems.75 I like to think, as some concepts crystallized in psychoanalysis, that she would have recognized the destructive results of childhood surgical trauma in the adult Joseph Smith and which pervades the Book of Mormon; and she would have actively used the concepts of narcissism, narcissistic personality disorder, and malignant narcissism in understanding his identity problems. Here is my personal speculative brief summary: Joseph Smith, raised in poverty and a dysfunctional, unstable, probably alcoholic family, capped by a terrible childhood illness and godawful traumatic leg surgery; resulting in regressive rage that led to identity diffusion, followed by a false superimposed self with magical, then prophetic powers encouraged by his family; an imagination of fury and destructiveness, which combined rage with versions of his surgery in a book of terror, hatred and destruction. His goal with his book and supernatural claims was to avoid any touch of helplessness by gaining power and control over others, and his belief in his false self solidified with the convictions of his followers, and he became who they wanted him to convince them that he was. Fawn Brodie saw his polygamy as “disguised whoredoms,” and partly a result of his hypersexuality. But he maneuvered both men and women, demanding all of their time, talent, and possessions — including, on occasion, their wives; and when offered, Smith would be briefly reassured. We ask a broader deeper question, and puzzle if he was capable of loving himself or anyone else.76

Autobiographical Comparison

There are elements of autobiography in all of her five works, but the most revealing is the one on Joseph Smith. Fawn Brodie compared her childhood family background with the childhood home of Joseph Smith. The Smith family suffered repeated financial setbacks, which included losing a farm to speculative investments, (specifically the herb ginseng, believed to cure many ailments), repeated bouts of poverty bordering on hunger, repeated moves in attempts to find stability, and the increasing involvement into magic money-digging (for treasures buried in the earth) as a way to gain stability. After their move from New England to upstate New York, the Smiths started to build a framed-in house, but failed to make adequate payments, and lost it, requiring

74 Interview, 23.
75 Brodie, 413-421, Interview, 7,8.
76 Anderson, Inside the Mind of Joseph Smith, passim.
the whole family of eleven moving back into a small log cabin, and Brodie
believed Smith wrote the Book of Mormon partly for economic reasons. Brodie
makes the transition to her family background with the comment, “There is, of
course, a gold mine or a buried treasure on every mortgaged homestead.” As
mentioned, her family was under relentless mortgage pressure because of the
extended family’s investment in speculative commodities, and their subsequent
collapse, just as the Great Depression was underway. Her father was away for
long periods in attempts to gain some stability, and they raised a wide variety
of animals. Her father

Talked periodically about prospecting on our rangeland for gold [on]...a barren
knoll.... He called it, without irreverence, the Hill Cumorah, after the hill where
the first Mormon prophet had found his legendary golden plates. [When summer
showers produced rainbows] we would rush to show it to my father, and he
would gravely say, “There’s where I’ll find my pot of gold.” We took it all very
seriously.”

Such similarities, however, don’t go very far. The Smith father was probably
alcoholic, ended up in jail for failure to pay debts, their home and farm were
described in unflattering terms, and over fifty of the townspeople took out
sworn affidavits accusing them of laziness, drunkenness, and being “destitute
of moral character...” In contrast, the McKay family was part of an extended
family with high regard in the community, a large home, religious leadership,
and emphasis on education. Their conflicts were internal having to do with
inequity and financial strain, not gross moral and financial failure.

The real similarities between Joseph Smith and Fawn Brodie was rage, but
from different levels of development, intensity, expression and consequences.
Smith’s rage came from all stages of childhood development and was a result of
his dysfunctional family, childhood illness and leg surgery when he was about
six or seven years old. These elements reappear in the Book of Mormon and
include the destruction of two civilizations. The intensity of his rage can be
measured by his documented deceit and manipulation to gain control of every
one of his followers. In real life, his church had repeated violent confrontations
that required repeated relocations, then a martyrdom and pioneer relocation;
then a United States Army to force compliance with laws, while his devoted
followers committed the worst act of organized violence (against innocent
men, women, and children) in the American West; then confrontation by the
Supreme Court; and a slow molding by external forces to the more moderate
church that exists today. Joseph Smith came from a family that engaged in
magic incantations, divining rods, mystical seer stones, animal sacrifices and
digging in the ground for buried treasures — actions and beliefs that required

78 Brodie, 432-440.
deception of self and others, and reached down to primitive ritualization — the antithesis of rationality.

In contrast, Fawn Brodie came from a family whose mother (and later uncle) emphasized intellectual honesty. Her conflicts came from a later stage of development, and her bitterness was selective and limited: directed at her father and her father’s institution that blocked or altered information, and the results of this misinformation that led to gross inequity in her home. This included selective superiority of one family over another (partly the result of church hierarchy), and especially of men over women, strong enough to leave her with sexual identity conflicts. Whereas Joseph Smith’s fury resulted in the use of fantastic fantasy claims to impose his will on, and control over, others, Fawn Brodie’s compensation for her feminine “incompleteness” was her work of excellence, and her fury gave her drive to uncover historical truth that might have an influence on others. Instead of playing on the fears and desperations of “everyman,” she offered a painful evaluation of reality without compensation, suggesting the ultimate in rationality and the highest respect for the individuality and abilities of others.
Defending the Prophet

Review by Roger D. Launius

Joseph Smith remains an enormously significant figure who continues to appeal to biographers, especially to those claiming allegiance to his religious ideals. His role in the creation of the Latter-day Saint religion is so significant that believers tend to confuse their theology with their history and assign near infallible status to the actions of imminently fallible human beings such as the Mormon prophet. In that sense the Joseph Smith of Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling has a much more smoothly polished surface than appropriate, probably one so polished as to be unrecognizable either to the historic Joseph Smith or the people surrounding him.

This new biography of Joseph Smith, the Mormon founding prophet, is a loving tribute to the legend of Smith. It will be uniquely satisfying to believing Latter-day Saints, infuriating to those knowledgeable about his life but less committed to the faith founded by him, and perplexing to the larger historical community. Appearing at the time of the two-hundredth anniversary of Smith’s birth, Rough Stone Rolling is the capstone of Richard Lyman Bushman’s distinguished historical career. As one of the most thoughtful, skillful, and crafty historians of his generation, Bushman’s study will be long remembered as a pinnacle of his labors. Along with From Puritan to Yankee: Character and the Social Order in Connecticut, 1690-1765 (1967), Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling may well have an effect on the historiography more significant than any of his other many books.

This may be because the book’s basically reverent approach represents a retelling of a specific myth and in that retelling the biography performs a specific seminal purpose. Duke University professor Alex Roland once said of books like this that it is not so much history as it is a restatement of “tribal rituals, meant to comfort the old and indoctrinate the young.” The epic nature of this mythical explanation illuminates every chapter of this elegant work. Indeed, throughout one finds that Bushman struggles to maintain an epic aura of Joseph Smith and the church he founded. It is an eloquent and moving assignment of virtue,

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prophethood, and vision to the Mormon prophet and represents the final legitimization of Joseph Smith and the movement he founded. In the end, Smith expressed in hubris a fatal flaw that led to his downfall rather than a new beginning and no amount of heroic prose can overcome that ironic plot twist.

Bushman has long been identified with a position first expressed in his 1969 article, “Faithful History,” arguing for the necessity of viewing the history of Mormonism through the lens of faith. Rough Stone Rolling is an excellent example of this “faithful history” and presents an elegant, eloquent, exacting, and exasperating exposition of Joseph Smith and the faith he founded. In Rough Stone Rolling Bushman deals in an exceptionally faithful manner with the career of Joseph Smith, attempting to address, but ultimately failing to resolve, many of the thorny historical issues swirling about Mormonism’s creation mythology. How convincing his analysis may be is very much a matter of whether or not one accepts Joseph Smith as a prophet of God. Bushman does and demonstrates it on virtually every page. At his best Bushman does what Walter Kirn claims: “By showing the inadequacy of reason in the face of spiritual phenomena, Bushman seems to be playing a Latter-Day-Saint Aquinas. It appears he wants to usher in a subtle, mature new age of Mormon thought — rigorous yet not impious — akin to what smart Roman Catholics have had for centuries.” At his worst, he is an apologist for a simplistic, faithful master narrative of the rise of the religion and the life of its founder. Bushman is more often an apologist than not, although he occasionally demonstrates remarkable flashes of brilliance in defending the prophet.

Within the bosom of Mormonism Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling has been eagerly awaited for years. Bushman’s sensitivity to Joseph Smith the prophet, theologian, and visionary, as well as to Joseph Smith the city-builder, secular leader, and public figure ensured that expectations about it would be high. Many people assigned definitive status to this biography long before Bushman had completed his research — never mind that it was probably unfair to attach such anticipation to it — but Bushman has carried this burden with dignity. What resulted is an important reinterpretation of Smith’s life, buttressed as it is by perhaps the most extensive research that an army of research assistants could ever assemble on the prophet. It is far from a definitive biography, however, and will be acceptable mostly to believing Mormons such as Bushman himself.

Rough Stone Rolling is an exemplar of the battleground that is Mormon historiography at the beginning of the twenty-first century. I am uncertain if believing LDS scholars can write anything but “faithful history” any longer, emphasizing exclusively the sacredness of the story of Mormonism. From John Whitmer to the present, and increasingly so in the last two decades,
most writing on the Mormon past has been oriented toward producing a
narrative of use to the membership. The result is an overwhelming thrust
of historical interpretation that emphasizes God’s word as defined by the
Mormon prophets spreading throughout the world in a never ending advance
of the church. Most LDS historians have accepted this interpretation because,
as Klaus J. Hansen has suggested, most of them are members of the Latter-
day Saint faith community, and they must overcome years of religious training
that predisposes them to view the church, its leaders, and its institutions as
righteous and just.4 LDS Apostle Boyd K. Packer has even invoked an espousal
of the progress of Mormonism as a religion as the primary purpose of historical
investigation, telling church educators in 1981 that “Your objective should be
that they [those who study Mormon history] will see the hand of the Lord in
every hour and every moment of the Church from its beginning till now.”5 With
such a perspective, church-mandated interpretations of the Mormon past
are not easily overcome. And while Bushman is certainly an able and elegant
historian with special skills in presenting the faith story, his book represents a
statement of the official position on Smith’s life.

A decade ago I wrote an essay on the path-breaking biography of Joseph
Smith written by Fawn M. Brodie6 in which I commented: “A fully rounded
portrait of Mormon culture has been slow to appear, in part because Brodie’s
powerful book channeled later research into directions that would respond
to it. Like so many trends in historiography, it at first seemed fresh and alive
with insights about early Mormonism only to eventually become a straight-
jacket for investigators of the Mormon past.”7 Richard Bushman’s Joseph
Smith: Rough Stone Rolling, published by the same house that issued Brodie’s
work, demonstrates the pervasive power of that earlier work, for he engages its
arguments throughout his long treatise.

Bushman tackles at the beginning the story of Mormon origins. This includes
the story of the “First Vision,” the message of the angel Moroni, the recovery
of “plates unto the likeness of gold” on which was written a spiritual history
of ancient Americans, and the translation and publication and power of the
Book of Mormon as a work of scripture. Bushman focuses his keen historical
mind on these issues; using traditional scholarly tools to piece together a story
which he suggests cannot be understood using traditional scholarly tools.

4 Klaus J. Hansen, “The World and the Prophet,” Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought 1,
no. 2 (Summer 1966): 106.
5 Boyd K. Packer, “The Mantle is Far, Far Greater than the Intellect,” Brigham Young Universi-
ity Studies 21 (Summer 1981): 261-78, quote from p. 262.
6 Fawn M. Brodie, No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith, the Mormon Prophet
7 Roger D. Launius, “From the Old to New Mormon History: Fawn Brodie and the Legacy of Scholar-
ly Analysis of Mormonism,” in Newell G. Bringhurst, ed., Reconsidering No Man Knows My
History: Fawn M. Brodie and Joseph Smith in Retrospect (Logan: Utah State University Press,
1996), 197.
Always an apologist for the faith, he insists that despite significant findings to the contrary that believers “refuse to concede that the Book of Mormon is no more than inspiring sacred fiction. For them, the value of the book goes beyond the inspiration offered readers. Its historicity is the foundation for believing that Joseph Smith was commissioned by God” (pp. 93-94). He argues, as he has done in previous articles and in his 1984 *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism* that the Book of Mormon, with its judges and kings and odd culture, reflects a worldview strikingly far removed from the early American republic. Consequently, he discounts those who see the book as representative of the mind of Joseph Smith. Bushman acknowledges that there is debate over the nature of the Book of Mormon, offering synopses of arguments over its historicity and divinity. He contends that “On point after point, the [modern] proponents answer the critics and assemble their own evidence.” He also contends: “Unlike the critics, they do not claim their case is conclusive, but they go on accumulating support” (p. 94). He is most assuredly misinformed on this point. If there is one thing that Louis Midgley and the lords of FARMS are convinced of, it is that their “case is conclusive” and that all should agree with them.  

Bushman also insists that the Book of Mormon demonstrates beyond all doubt that the Latter-day Saint faith is “anchored” in “orthodox Christianity.” Despite the theological innovations of the Nauvoo era — temple rituals, plurality of gods, eternal and plural marriage, strange bindings of generations, and the like — Bushman insists that “the Saints never left basic Christianity behind; the Book of Mormon, their third testament, held them to the fundamentals” (p. 109). Indeed, Bushman suggests that this “anchor” served to preserve Mormonism from the questioning of the “higher criticism” of scripture. “The higher criticism could not unsettle people who had overcome much greater difficulties in accepting the Book of Mormon” (p. 109), he noted without a serious effort to demonstrate the point.

Of course, to question the historicity of the Book of Mormon — which has been raised in many settings and by many people, even the Mormon intellectual B. H. Roberts — does not cast into doubt the legitimacy of the religion nearly so much as Bushman seems to believe. All religions — all ideologies — are predicated on myth and symbol and they are not any less useful, compelling, and true because of it. “Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day

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Saints should confess in faith that the Book of Mormon is the word of God but also abandon claims that it is a historical record of the ancient peoples of the Americas,” wrote one LDS in a recent compilation of articles on the scripture. I agree, and I must confess that I fail to understand what all the fuss is about. I would agree with the conclusion of non-Mormon William P. Collins that “When I examine the Book of Mormon for truth rather than facticity, my reading reveals powerful, eternal, and relevant truths which are capable of changing and guiding men’s lives.” The claims of scripture can be made for the message contained in Joseph Smith’s Book of Mormon, which many can testify as being divinely inspired notwithstanding the questions of its historicity and coming forth. But Bushman firmly comes down on the side of its historicity, but still threads a needle by allowing for the possibility of doubt.

Bushman has much to say, as he should, on the idea of community and Zion, apocalypse and millennialism, theocracy and doctrine, politics and principle. For the church to thrive as Joseph Smith believed inevitable in such places as Nauvoo, but also earlier, it had to govern and secular systems had to take root. These instances have often been viewed as the closest approximation the church had to the ideals of Zion carried in scripture and doctrine. Balancing concern for the sacred with the reality of the secular proved an important dynamic in the life of Joseph Smith, and Bushman rightly expends considerable effort in seeking to explain this duality in *Rough Stone Rolling*. But there is a dark side of political power present in the life of Joseph Smith, and his story is laced with episodes of corruption, influence-peddling, and the complexity of political choices. Clearly, Bushman is uncomfortable with Smith’s authoritarianism, with his militarism, and with his certitude of always being right about any subject. Clearly, as might be expected from a believing Latter-day Saint, Bushman seeks to smooth the rough edges of the stone that was the life of Joseph Smith. Sometimes he is successful, at other times, less so.

Take the example of Mormon militarism. There is no question, but that Smith embraced the use of military force to achieve ends that he believed appropriate for his followers. And he did so early in his career and repeatedly engaged in it, often and repeatedly taking a belligerent stance. The history of Joseph Smith and the LDS is that it mobilized armies and engaged in combat operations at least by 1833, did so with Zion’s Camp in 1834, and did so again with catastrophic results in Missouri in 1838. This culminated in Nauvoo with the establishment of a large and capable militia, the Nauvoo Legion, which terrified the non-

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Mormon population. Joseph Smith III made a fascinating confession about this Mormon militarism in his memoirs. “Looking back along the pathway,” he wrote, “I feel it was a pity that such a [martial] spirit crept in among them, however, and a still greater one that the leading minds of the church partook of it.” He admitted that this had been the wrong approach, and I give him high marks for doing so. Not so Richard Bushman.

Bushman makes some remarkable statements about Mormon militarism, essentially denying the role of the Nauvoo Legion and the martial spirit present in the kingdom on the Mississippi. Bushman argues that Joseph Smith realized that the situation got out of control in western Missouri in 1838 and that he intended for it not to happen again. Accordingly, in Nauvoo Smith “kept control of the key institutions. He served as major and took command of the Nauvoo Legion. Under his direction, the legion restricted itself to parades, ceremonies, maneuvers, and speeches. No engagements ever occurred” (p. 375). This, of course, is incorrect. Although it did those as well, the Legion did not confine itself to pomp and circumstance. Bushman contradicts himself on this matter by describing the mobilization of the Nauvoo Legion to rescue Smith from Missouri officials when they arrested him in Dixon, Illinois, in 1843 and the prophet’s biting, inflammatory speech after his return to Nauvoo: “I will lead you to battle & if you are not afraid to die & feel disposed to spill your Blood in your own defence you will not offend me” (quoted on p. 513).

Likewise, Joseph Smith used the Nauvoo Legion to demolish the opposition press in 1844, the incident that led to his undoing. In a meeting of the city council Smith called the Expositor a “treasonable” threat to the city’s “chartered rights,” asserted that the dissenters publishing it wanted to incite violence against Nauvoo, and called for its destruction no less than four times during the meeting. And when a council member had the audacity not to follow his lead, Smith showed his disapproval, remarking “that he was sorry to have one dissenting voice, in declaring the Expositor a nuisance.” He insisted on total compliance with his plan for removing the Expositor from his community, just as he wanted total compliance from the leaders of the dissenting movement — especially William and Wilson Law — but could not obtain it.

Clearly, the purpose of the city council meeting was not to seek the truth, or to administer justice, but to eliminate critics and to purge from the community an influence Smith considered heretical, because the dissenters’ reform proposals challenged central Mormon concepts and Smith’s increasingly radical theological conceptions. Nothing else that the Mormons did revealed

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14 *Nauvoo Neighbor*, June 19, 1844, 2-3.
so convincingly to the non-Mormon community around Nauvoo the threat to democracy present in Joseph Smith’s theocratic government and willingness to engage in violence.

Obtaining the city council’s vote, Smith used his mayoral power to order the city police to destroy the press, and then he acted as Lieutenant General of the Nauvoo Legion to mobilize it to support the institutionalized violence. The press was destroyed without prior notice on the evening of June 10, 1844. Afterward, the men involved returned to the Smith’s home, where, as he told them, as recorded in his journal, “I gave them a short address and told them they had done right,” and assured them “that I would never submit to have another libelous publication...established in this city.”15 The men cheered him and went home.

This is a sordid episode in LDS history, not the finest hour of Joseph Smith, and it led directly to the arrest of Joseph Smith in 1844 and his vulnerability to a mob in Carthage on June 27th. Bushman narrates the story well and offers some truly extraordinary observations on its meaning:

Among their nearest neighbors, Mormons were as generally detested as abolitionists in the antebellum South and, later, black freedmen during Reconstruction. One can only speculate on the reasons. It was not a hatred of the alien; the role of a prophet was well known to every believer in the Bible. It was more a fear of the familiar gone awry. Joseph was hated for twisting the common faith in biblical prophets into the visage of the arrogant fanatic, just as the abolitionists twisted the principle of equal rights into an attack on property in slaves. Both turned something powerful and valued into something monstrous and dangerous. Frustrated and infuriated, ordinary people trampled down law and democratic order to destroy their imagined enemies (pp. 558-59).

This is a conclusion deserving of deconstruction. Let me offer a few observations. In a truly fascinating turn of phrase, Bushman succeeds in linking Mormonism with the revered, at least in the modern era, antislavery crusade. By drawing a parallel between those opposing slavery and the Mormons he has “presto-chango” equated Mormonism with something usually viewed today as a positive good. At the same time, he has linked non-Mormons with those who chose to keep other humans in chattel bondage.

At the same time, without stating it explicitly, he has invoked the myth of Mormon persecuted innocence. This involved a vision of a widespread and sinister conspiracy seeking to destroy Joseph Smith personally and the Mormon church collectively. It created an “us versus them” mentality that remains to the present. It also represented paranoia about the way in which the world worked. The logical conclusion of this mindset was that Mormonism constantly came into conflict with American society. Joseph Smith failed to understand this,

and labeled everything that happened to him as persecution.

When Smith extended his religious ideology into temporal affairs — by holding all the important offices in Nauvoo, controlling the political life of his community, directing the voting behavior of his followers, and leading the Nauvoo Legion — he placed Mormonism on a collision course with the rest of America. His assassination, as illegitimate as that act was, bespoke a conflict between Mormon theocracy and republican ideology. It was not just that non-Mormons hated the Mormons for their religion.  

Bushman’s final section of this book speaks to the legacy of Joseph Smith. He states that Smith was a man of “peace and righteousness” who engendered opposition and conflict everywhere he went. He finds that Smith’s own statement about himself — that he sought to “lay a foundation that will revolutionize the whole world” (quoted on p. 567) — may be his most fitting epitaph. Although Bushman tends to emphasize the triumphant nature of Smith’s life, he steers clear of an interpretation that concludes that Joseph Smith “completed” his work of restoration of the gospel before his death. Bushman wisely refuses to make play the theologian concerning these matters, and refuses to state categorically that Joseph Smith’s religious innovations are his central legacy.  

According to Bushman, “Perhaps his most signal trait was trust in his own inspiration. He knew he was no more than a rough stone cut from a Vermont hillside” (p. 567).

The uncertainty of this conclusion offers tantalizing possibilities for other historians to ponder Bushman’s meaning. Does that suggest that Bushman is indecisive about the place of Smith in the creation of the Mormon movement? After all, the second generation leaders had an enormous task in trying to cohere Smith’s disjointed efforts at institution building. Perhaps Brigham Young and Joseph Smith III and others deserve more credit than they usually receive. Does it distance the LDS church today from some of the ideas of Smith and make possible a reinterpretation of history and theology? These and a host of other even more sublime questions might be pursued.

There is much of value in Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling and it is clearly a benchmark in the historiography. There are also parts of it that are disconcerting. It is certainly not the final word. I await further study of the subject.


17 This is present in the recent restatement of the master narrative by Glen M. Leonard, Nauvoo: A Place of Peace, A People of Promise (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book/Brigham Young University Press, 2002).
Bushman’s *Rough Stone Rolling*  

*Comments* by Dan Vogel

In *Believing History*, Richard warned that “the unbelieving reader wants an explanation of Joseph Smith that will not be forthcoming in [his] study ... because the believing side of [his] mind does not find that explanation plausible” (282), and in the Preface to *Rough Stone Rolling*, he frankly admitted that he is a “believing historian” who “cannot hope to rise above these battles or pretend nothing personal is at stake” (xix). For me, the most interesting parts of the biography were the situations where Richard’s personal commitments were most at stake, where Richard the professional historian struggled with Richard the devout LDS patriarch. Richard is quick to state that “pure objectivity is impossible” when dealing with “a character as controversial as [Joseph] Smith,” but we all know that “pure objectivity is impossible.” Period. And so I will confess that I found Richard’s analysis most convincing when he was in agreement with mine, and somewhat less persuasive when he disagreed.

I was pleasantly surprised, for example, to discover that there was significant interpretive agreement, especially about Smith family dynamics. Among the best parts of the book, for me, were Richard’s discussion of the Smith family’s religious conflict (23, 25, 26, 37); his acknowledgment of Joseph Sr.’s drinking problem and emotional reticence (42); his description of Joseph Jr. as family healer, unifier, and restorer of patriarchy (26-27, 46, 55, 110); and his recognition that treasure-seeking lore about guardian spirits may have made it “easier” for Joseph Sr. to believe his son’s “fabulous story about an angel and gold plates” (50, 51, 54). Yet, in these and other discussions, I found curious lapses.

One significant lapse, for example, is Richard’s failure to acknowledge Joseph Sr.’s sustained belief in universal salvation (as William Smith described) and the probable role it played in the religious “rift” the family experienced in the years following Alvin’s death. However, I was pleased that Richard acknowledged the presence of anti-Universalist rhetoric in the Book of Mormon, as well as the “perplexing reversal” of Smith’s March 1830 revelation (D&C 19), which (in Richard’s words) explained that despite scriptural phrases like “eternal torment” and “endless punishment,” “torment for sins would be temporary, just as the Universalists taught” (199-200). But I was disappointed that he skipped over a discussion of the obvious implications of this revelation, specifically the idea that Joseph Smith’s God intentionally uses misleading language “that it might work upon the hearts of the children of men” (D&C 19:7).

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18 These comments were presented as part of a panel discussion at the Mormon History Association Meeting in Casper, Wyoming, on 27 May 2006.
The Irenic Approach

In the Preface, Richard cites Karen Armstrong’s biography of Muhammad as a model for his approach to Joseph Smith. Armstrong’s book has been acclaimed more for its attempt to help westerners understand Muhammad and Islam from the perspective of believers — which Richard calls the “irenic viewpoint” — than for its critical analysis of sources and insights about the man. I suspect Richard’s scholarship is better than Armstrong’s; even so, his biography is open to similar complaints.

Like Armstrong, Richard wants to treat Smith’s accounts of his visions and revelations “as if they actually occurred” (xxii). By doing so, he believes he has “unimpeded access to his mind” and is able “to think as Smith thought” (xxii). Richard is aware that an irenic approach to Smith necessarily involves thinking like a believer and setting aside “the contradictions and incongruities in the Prophet’s record” (xxii). In this regard, Richard has done a good job of representing the Joseph Smith of faith — at least as held by a majority of those who currently call him a prophet — even if there are serious questions about its correspondence to the Joseph Smith of history.

The irenic approach, in my view, cannot deal with the complexities of Joseph Smith and his claims. Unlike Muhammad’s revelations, the Book of Mormon is susceptible to historical testing. If the historian decides it has no historical basis, then Smith’s claims about the angel and gold plates cannot be taken at face value. Moreover, how should we handle his revelations when some of them advocate the use of inspired deception or misdirection? How do we treat his account of visions when within the same history he deceptively handles his concurrent activities as a treasure seer? Is it wise to adopt an uncritical approach with a man who, according to Richard, believes “that any moral rule, any commonsense limitation on any human constraint, could be overthrown by a revelation” (442)? Isn’t our access to such a mind impeded by our own unwillingness to deal with the contradictions and incongruities?

First Vision

The shortcomings of the irenic approach are apparent in Richard’s handling of Joseph Smith’s First Vision story. While Richard recognizes a shift in meaning between Smith’s 1832 and 1838 accounts — from a story about “personal conversion” to one that became the “founding story” of the one true church — he tries to harmonize rather than acknowledge “the contradictions and incongruities in the Prophet’s record.” He begins with the speculation that in 1832, Smith “abbreviated the experience” and “as Joseph became more confident, more details came out” (40). This theory controls what is then quoted and what is left out.

The irenic approach cannot tolerate “contradictions and incongruities,” because they raise doubts about the notion of having “unimpeded access to
[Joseph Smith’s] mind,” and the propriety of treating his accounts of visions and revelations “as if they actually occurred” becomes questionable.

**Money-digging**

The irenic approach also runs into trouble with Joseph Smith’s misrepresentations about his early activities as a treasure seer. Contrary to his promise to “put all enquirers after truth into possession of the facts ... in truth and righteousness, as they have transpired” (DHC 1:56), Smith misrepresented his involvement in money-digging as a one-time event in 1825 as one of Josiah Stowell’s hired hands. In fact, however, by his own admission elsewhere, he was a leader in many such operations over a period of at least three years, locating the places to dig with a seer stone. Skipping over Smith’s prevarication, Richard offers the following apologetic:

“With Joseph’s realization of himself as a prophet, the rearrangement of memory began. When Joseph tells his story from 1828 on, his search for treasure as a boy became an irrelevant diversion of his youth. Treasure-seeking did not lead to the person he had become. His true story began with his search for a church and his plea for forgiveness” (69).

Of course, the “rearrangement of memory” was quite intentional. Smith decided to counter “the many reports ... put in circulation by [what he considered were] evil designing persons” by putting into circulation his own false report. Whether or not Smith regarded his treasure-seeing as “an irrelevant diversion of his youth,” he obviously didn’t want us deciding that for ourselves. Acknowledging such deliberate deception makes it difficult to justify the uncritical trust the irenic approach wants to extend to Joseph Smith and his version of events.

**The Plates**

Regarding Smith’s bringing the plates home wrapped in his frock, Richard acknowledges that “for most modern readers, the plates are beyond belief, a phantasm, yet the Mormon sources accept them as fact” (58). Richard mentions the counter explanations offered by “unbelieving biographers,” namely me and Brodie, but dismisses them as “speculations” and “fabrications,” and then argues: “Since the people who knew Joseph best treat the plates as fact, a skeptical analysis lacks evidence. A series of surmises replaces a documented narrative” (58).

However, because the plates were covered, the statements of Smith’s family and friends are only evidence of their trust. Nothing more. In short, their testimonies cannot be used to eliminate speculation altogether because they are themselves speculations.
Moreover, Richard should have recognized that my discussion of the plates did not begin with a wild speculation about how Joseph Smith could have made them out of tin, but rather, as explained in my introduction, with the assumption that the Book of Mormon is not real history. Thus, to the extent that one believes the evidence points to a non-historical Book of Mormon, it also points to something other than real gold plates under the cloth. The two are inseparably connected.

Deciding to tell the story from the point of view of believers, specifically the one currently enforced through threat of excommunication by the Utah-based LDS Church, is one thing, but presenting that point of view as less speculative than that held by skeptics is another. Richard continues, “Incredible as the plates were, hunting for deception can be a distraction. It throws us off the track of Joseph Smith the Prophet” (58). Not necessarily. It might throw us off the track that leads directly to Salt Lake City and their definition of prophet, but, as I have argued, it may very well put us on another track that leads to a more complex understanding of Joseph Smith and a different definition of prophet.

Conclusion

While I have focused on some of the drawbacks to an irenic approach, I nevertheless think Richard has made a valuable contribution to the study of Joseph Smith’s life. In addition to helping non-Mormons understand what Joseph Smith means to most believers, Richard’s biography also provides an entree into some of the competing views and controversies among current interpreters. Despite some reservations, I enthusiastically welcome Richard’s biography to the unending dialogue about Joseph Smith and our search for both genuine consensus and legitimate disagreement.


Southerton’s Losing a Lost Tribe

Reviewed by Thomas W. Murphy

Joseph Smith boldly claimed to tell the history of ancient Native America through the translation of a set of gold plates purportedly containing the history of ancient Semitic migrations to the Americas. The Book of Mormon,
the product of Smith’s translation, has spawned its detractors from its initial publication in 1830. Yet, the most profound evidence challenging the scripture’s claims of an Israelite origin for the American Indians began appearing in scientific journals after 1985. Simon Southerton, a former Latter-day Saint bishop and an Australian scientist specializing in molecular biology, offers the reading public the first book-length summary of the challenge DNA research poses for historicity of the Book of Mormon.

The accessibility of Southerton’s narrative, his commitment to the scientific method, the breadth and depth of the data he summarizes, and his forthright portrayal of the difficulties this new science is posing for his own faith community is a refreshing contrast to the poorly argued, intellectually dishonest, ahistorical, and scientifically unsound apologetics that have emerged from the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS) at Brigham Young University since the publication of my article, “Lamanite Genesis, Genealogy, and Genetics” in 2002. Southerton compiles genetic profiles from more than 7,300 indigenous individuals from throughout the Americas to demonstrate that it is no longer tenable to claim that Lamanites are the “principal ancestors of the American Indians,” a proposition that appears in the current LDS introduction to the Book of Mormon. Ultimately, though, Southerton’s honesty would contribute to his excommunication from the LDS Church in July of 2005.

Southerton begins by placing the Book of Mormon’s claims within the historical context of race relations in colonial and antebellum America. He moves from the Americas to the Polynesian Islands, following the development of Latter-day Saint folklore linking Polynesians to descent from the scripture’s patriarch Lehi. He follows his historical summary with an accessible description of the science and research methods unveiling human molecular genealogies. He focuses on the value of the Y chromosome as an indicator of paternal lineage and mitochondrial DNA as an indicator of maternal lineage, outlining the geographic spread of these genetic markers and their human hosts out of Africa within the last 100,000 years and across the world and into the Americas with the last 20,000 years. The last third of his book outlines the “troubled interface between Mormonism and science” through an examination of the LDS Church’s overwhelming restraint on scholarship and academic freedom at Brigham Young University, the rising influence of new limited geographic interpretations of the Book of Mormon, and a critique of the most recent apologetic literature.

Southerton critically evaluates the apologists’ proposal that the events described in the Book of Mormon occurred only in a limited geographic region in Mesoamerica. “In fact,” he counters, “the DNA lineages of Central America

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resemble those of other Native American tribes throughout the two continents. Over 99 percent of the lineages found among native groups from this region are clearly of Asian descent” (191). He reminds readers that the source of the apologists’ certainty comes not from science, but from feelings they have experienced while praying about the text.

Most Latter-day Saints have accepted the Book of Mormon based on what they feel about its message. Some now question the book because of what they know about its historical claims. Many are unsettled by the book’s portrayal of a dark, corrupted race and the doctrine that America is God’s promised land, issues that are reminiscent of the widespread prejudices of Joseph Smith’s time. After decades of Mormon and non-Mormon academic research and LDS apologetics, the rank- and-file are beginning to find themselves faced, not only with the fact that these Israelites made no discernable contribution to the gene pool of native peoples, either on the continent or across the expanse of Polynesia. Many Latter-day Saints, discovering this for the first time, are disquieted by how far the Book of Mormon is from reality, as well as by how far the apologists have strayed from traditional Mormon beliefs. (200)

Southerton offers the approach of the Community of Christ to the Book of Mormon as a contrast to the intolerance of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The Community of Christ, he writes, “tolerates a range of opinions concerning the Book of Mormon.” He further explains:

The Community of Christ discarded the problematic Book of Abraham when the papyri Joseph Smith used to “translate” the record were discovered and studied. Some of the Missouri church’s senior leadership consider the Book of Mormon to be inspired historical fiction. For leaders of the Utah church, this is still out of the question. The Brethren, and most Mormons, believe that the historical authenticity of the Book of Mormon is what shores up Joseph Smith’s prophetic calling and the divine authenticity of the Utah church. (201)

While Southerton’s honesty ultimately cost him his membership in the LDS Church, his book should make a lasting impact on the debates about the historicity of Latter-day scriptures within and beyond restoration communities. It is unfortunate when communities proclaiming to represent Christ, cannot muster the courage to tell the truth about their own histories. Southerton’s book is a reminder, though, that some among Latter-day Saint scientists and local leadership are willing to acknowledge past failings, discard unnecessary prejudices, and hold their church to a higher standard. His book is a necessary addition to the library of anyone studying the Book of Mormon in the twenty-first century.
Marquardt’s *Rise of Mormonism*

*Review by Melvin T. Smith*

History can never capture an objective reality completely, since the records of history are neither entirely objective nor complete, and because the historians bring a personal perspective to their observations and analyses of those data. All history is somewhat autobiographical.

Two important, recent examples of scholarship dealing with Marquardt’s subject, “Mormonism,” are the Joseph Smith biographies of Dan Vogel and Richard Bushman. To their credit, both authors apprise their readers of the “paradigm” being used. Vogel’s premise is “naturalism,” the supernatural being, for him, beyond the ken of history. His explanation of Joseph Smith reflects his use of extensive historical data, with insights derived from a “Family Systems Analysis” paradigm.

Bushman, on the other hand, admits his believer biases, and sees Joseph Smith as a prophet of God, both historically and as a “revelator” of God’s Will and Word. His skillful, but sometimes biased use of “historical” data, guides readers through Joseph’s transition from “peep stone” to “seer stone” to “Revelator” who produced new “scriptures,” and who established a new religion of continued significance. Both authors can be read more fairly, if readers acknowledge their admitted “points of beginning.” Where thinking starts, there it ends.

Michael Marquardt’s research and writing on early Mormon history is extensive, with two volumes of particular note. The first, *Inventing Mormonism: Tradition and the Historical Record* (1992), he co-authored with Wesley P. Walters. Mike notes that the first several chapters in *The Rise of Mormonism: 1816-1844*, rely heavily on information in that first volume, with emendations added to update as needed.

His second book, *Joseph Smith’s Revelations: Text and Commentary* (1999) examines the Prophet’s “revelations” en toto, nothing when they were given, by whom, and for what purpose. This rich firsthand familiarity with both the history and the “revelations” of Joseph Smith allow Marquardt to “speak (write) as one having authority.”

The author’s “paradigm” expects messages from a Divine Being to be the “truth and nothing but the truth,” and to be consistent, not needing to be elaborated on or explained to express a different meaning. And, when God’s word is expressed as “prophecy,” it should be “acted out in human history as prophesied.” Marquardt’s God is “not a man that he should lie.”
With this implied “paradigm” in place, the author begins his careful scrutiny of the *Rise of Mormonism, 1816-1844*. First he locates the Smith family in Palmyra and Manchester area, noting that the location of their residence is important to dating when certain events were supposed to have happened. His sources support his conclusion that the official organization of the Church of Christ, which Marquardt sees emerging out of the Smith family itself, along with the religious revivalism in the area, and Joseph Smith’s own religious precocity, occurred in Manchester, not Fayette, New York as reported in “official” histories. The Fayette as location story likely resulted from a conflation of information put together in 1835, in Kirtland, when Church leaders were under great stress caused by the “community’s” economic struggles, and because of the apostasy and excommunication of the numerous Mormon leaders.

The location of the Angel Moroni’s visit could not have been in the “Smith family frame house” as believed for many years, but in the log home located nearby. Nor was there a major religious revival in the region between 1819-1820, which “Joseph’s Story” claims triggered his initial inquiry of God for “wisdom.” A major revival did occur during the 1823-1824 dates, with the “people” involved that both Joseph and his family identify. The “official” 1838 “history” edited and revised the earlier 1832 and 1835 accounts.

Marquardt uses a number of themes to carry his history of Joseph’s emerging religious movement. When discussing the translation of the *Book of Mormon*, he shows that Joseph did not use the “gold plates” directly, but seemed to read the “translation” from a “seer stone” placed in his hat. He also reviews the process Joseph did not, and could not, translate ancient languages. What he did was give his “inspired” version of “translation.” Why, then, did Joseph use “artifacts”? The author suggests that these “materials” were used to give his followers some “tangible evidence” of Joseph’s “divine” calling; namely, that he was speaking for God, and that both revealed and secular history was witnessing to that mission. Joseph’s mission was to “restore the plain and precious teachings” of God to His Prophets throughout human history, teachings which were lost or altered, and needed to be “restored” in their pristine purity in this “last dispensation.”

Early in the new “movement,” Joseph picked up on the Puritan idea of a “New Jerusalem.” Both the “Book of Ether,” and “Third Nephi” noted that concept. It also coupled that expectation to the *Book of Mormon* remnants. The American Indians or Lamanites were to have a special role in setting up Zion, and Joseph’s first major missionary assignment was directed toward the “Lamanites.” Subsequently, Missouri was designated as the location for the New Jerusalem, with prophetic declarations about its being the place of gathering for the Saints in preparation for Zion’s establishment. The missionaries went, few were converted; the Saints gathered, conflicts grew; prophetic promises failed, but the Saints’ sins and lack of faith explained why. That principle became a basic premise in Mormon theology. Thus, the burden of prophecy lay with the Saints, more than the Prophet.
There are a number of other themes that Marquardt reviews with similar detailed documentation. One is the need for the endowment of power through priesthood authority, with priesthood offices and a chain of command that centered authority more and more in the “prophet, seer, and revelator,” Joseph Smith. That “commission” included the appearance of angelic beings, the washing and anointing in various temple rituals, and even the “Word of Wisdom” for a clean and healthy body. Specific “endowments” began in the Kirtland Temple in 1836, but were extended once the Saints had settled in Nauvoo. Then, sacred, secret ordinances were instituted that promised not just salvation but exaltation.

One of the unwelcome dividends of this “chosen people” paradigm, was the animosity of neighbors, in Kirtland, and again in Missouri, and later in Nauvoo, where Joseph was able to set up his “Kingdom of God” on Earth, with the secret “Council of Fifty” assigned to build the Earthly dimension of that Kingdom. With the help of John C. Bennett, and others, the Nauvoo Charter, (Joseph’s “theocracy”) had, in effect, replaced American democracy. When “polygamy” and other secret actions alienated prominent Church leaders, they set up their own church, and published the Nauvoo Expositor, which Joseph’s theocratic “dictate” destroyed, he had, in effect signed his own death warrant. He and Hyrum were killed in June, 1844 at Carthage.

Marquardt documents the use of violence by Church leaders and the Saints, their lying under oath, especially when trying to cover up the practice of polygamy in Nauvoo. Most “good” Saints seemed to make these choices in good conscience. Marquardt’s detailed use of the historical record, and his familiarity with Joseph Smith’s “revelations,” helps this reviewer understand how the faithful came to see history as a witness to their faith. Joseph used artifacts, documents, revelations and prophecy, and set them in history. Those “aids” confirmed Joseph’s “theology,” thus “history” would seem to confirm that the believer’s beliefs were true. Theology became the arbiter of what the history meant, if not what history actually was.

Reading this book is like doing research in original sources. What does the actual history tell us, and what did the original versions or scriptures and revelations actually say? Marquardt’s approach provides many keen, new insights. But, because of his attachment to his original sources, the “history” of the movement is somewhat fragmented. Marquardt shows us Joseph’s “feet of clay” as it were. He is less successful in explaining the “power” of the movement the Prophet Joseph set in motion.

While numerous misspellings and incorrect suffixes can be noted, the large print is a positive for aging eyes. This book is an important contribution to the “Restoration Story,” now in celebration of the Prophet Joseph’s 200th birthday.

**Bolton’s Apostle of the Poor**

*Review by Jan Shipps*

*Studies in Mormon history, 1830-1997: An Indexed Bibliography* suggests that practically everything there is to know about Mormonism is already in print somewhere. In taking stock, however, it is obvious that two critical things are missing from the literature about the Latter-day Saints. One is a dearth of general information about the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (now the Community of Christ) and the other is information about the internal workings of both of the major LDS institutions, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the Community of Christ. While much is known about the internal workings of the First Presidencies and the Councils of the Twelve during the nineteenth century, far less is known about what has transpired at the center of the LDS and RLDS/CofC churches in the twentieth centuries.

With the recent publication of a fascinating “life and times” biography of David O. McKay by the University of Utah Press, a window into the world of the LDS Council of Twelve is now available. One of the great contributions of this biography of Charles D. Neff is that it provides a comparable window into the world of the RLDS/CofC Council of Twelve who reside in Independence, Missouri. While Neff was not church president, this biography reveals that he was, in fact, the “apostle-prime mover” in the transformation of the RLDS Church. Although his story, as skillfully reconstructed by Matthew Bolton, is much more concerned with Neff’s missionary and humanitarian activities than with his activities as a member of the Council of Twelve, it allows readers to get an intriguing and reasonably well-rounded picture of the inner workings of this Midwestern institutional form of Mormonism.

In my 45 years of studying Mormonism, I settled on referring to the members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as the “Mountain Saints” and to the members of the RLDS/Community of Christ as the “Prairie Saints.” About 20 years along the way I also realized that, contrary to the notions of many Mountain Saints, the story of Mormonism is incomplete without taking into account what has happened to the Prairie Saints. Although lots of Mountain Saints regard the Prairie Saints as schismatics – as a group that separated itself from the “real” church – this is not what occurred. Instead, these two groups have what might be described as a common parentage. They issue from the same stock, but as is often the case with fraternal twins, they are
virtually mirror images of each other. This means that knowing what occurred within the community of Saints in the Midwest permits one to know what might have happened in the Mountain West, and vice-versa. In size, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints dwarfs the Community of Christ. But the full story of Mormonism is incomplete without the story of the Reorganization. Actually, Bolton's biography of Neff is much more than a window into the inner workings of the RLDS Council of Twelve. In fact, that engrossing element is almost incidental to a narrative that sheds much light on Mormonism by focusing on the following:

- The life story of a convert who was so gifted and so committed to being a proper Christian that he was quickly brought into the very center of institutional authority of the church he had joined.
- A fascinating description of the expansion of the RLDS missionary program during the post-World War II period.
- A history of convert communities in parts of the world outside the United States and how those communities were brought into communion with the larger RLDS movement.
- A tale of the development of an RLDS humanitarian movement and a related search for peace in the world.
- The story of what this talented author calls the “RLDS Vatican II” when the church distanced itself from its Mormon roots by moving toward becoming an idiosyncratic form of Protestantism.

Neff was an adult convert who joined the RLDS Church after he married a woman whose family was RLDS and who had been a member of the Reorganization her entire life. Neff had been a Baptist. As a convert, he had to adjust to a new religious tradition. While Mormonism in its several manifestations is clearly Christian, it is neither Protestant nor Catholic. Consequently, converts from other forms of Christianity have to adjust to an entirely new church organization, as well as to different modes of exercising authority. In addition, Prairie Saints as well as Mountain Saints imbibe the religious culture of Mormonism along with their mother’s milk. This means that converts – especially adult converts – are often at a disadvantage in fully understanding the tradition and the way it works because they were not born into Sainthood and hence they do not share the church’s history in the same way as those who were born in the covenant.

This does not seem to be much of a problem for converts who participate simply as members of local congregations. But as Neff’s life story makes clear, when an adult convert is called into the higher reaches of the church hierarchy, all his actions are magnified. Sometimes that made what Neff did seem ever so slightly “unSaintly.” Especially was this the case when, as a missionary to India, he baptized and brought into the church several polygamous families, an action that brought members of the RLDS Church face to face with their
past. After all, a critically important element of RLDS identity until 25 to 30 years ago was the belief that polygamy was not only wrong, but it was also un-Mormon since it had been introduced into the tradition by Brigham Young, not Joseph Smith.

Students of Mormonism are all aware of the vigorous missionary effort undertaken by the LDS Church in the immediate post World War II period. This biography of Charles Neff reveals that the RLDS Church undertook a parallel missionary effort, although in the latter instance more of the missionary endeavor was directed to foreign than to domestic missions. As a member of the Council of Twelve, Neff was a key figure in RLDS missionary work in East Asia, and later Africa and other parts of the so-called Third World.

In terms of numbers of members, this form of Mormonism has never begun to equal the membership of the LDS Church. But the success of post-war RLDS missionary work in which Neff played a central role was such that by 1980, the membership of the RLDS Church was more than 300,000. (At that point the ratio of Mountain Saints to Prairie Saints was about 10 to one, a high point in the numbers game that many scholars of Mormonism play. Today the ratio is more like 60 or 65 to one.)

This biography recounts Neff’s life story in chronological order. That means that all through the story, readers can envision the part Neff played in what amounted to a transformation of the RLDS Church that, on the one hand, started the process of turning its members into a “prophetic people” rather than a “people with a prophet,” and, on the other, has brought it much closer to Protestantism than ever before. Beyond all doubt, the story of this transformation is the story of the RLDS Church/Community of Christ in the modern era. This biography permits us to see that story from the perspective of an insider who was at once playing a critical role in what was happening and, at the same time, trying to fully comprehend what was going on.

Finally, as Richard Howard’s Foreword makes clear, Neff was an “advocate for economically deprived peoples wherever he went.” This apostle was not merely an important church leader. He was an indefatigable humanitarian and campaigner for world peace. The author has captured this dimension of Neff so well that this biography is inspiring as well as interesting.

Because Neff was so important to the RLDS history, this biography will certainly appeal to JWHA members. In addition to being of interest to those who are interested in the history of the Community of Christ, this convert’s story should appeal to those who are interested in Mountain Mormonism. As more and more Saints from outside the valley and the intermountain region are called into the LDS ranks of “ecclesiastical middle-management,” i.e., Councils of Seventy, there are bound to be converts among them and this story is one that tells how an outsider became an insider will be very useful in describing the complications faced by converts who become General Authorities.

Across the past 20 or 30 years, I have read lots of manuscripts in order to prepare reader’s reports for various presses. Rarely have I come to the end
of one and realized that I had been “blown away” by tone of them. But that is precisely the way I felt after reading the manuscript of this significant study of a great man.

Bolton’s *Apostle of the Poor*

*Review by Peter A. Judd*

The publication of Matthew Bolton’s book on Charles Neff is significant for at least two reasons. First it honors the life and ministry of one of the major leaders of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (now Community of Christ) during one of, if not the, major periods of transition of that denomination. Secondly, it provides the kind of detailed portrayal of its subject — covering both his strengths and his weaknesses — that is not normally found in publications focusing on church leaders. By contrast, the many biographers of the Restoration’s founding prophet, Joseph Smith, Jr, have for the most part been either laudatory or hyper-critical. Bolton’s approach skillfully integrates both the pluses and the minuses of Neff’s ministerial career.

Bolton brings his own passion for peace and justice to his work about Neff. Although the author’s parentage should not be entirely credited or blamed for whom he is, it is not coincidental that his father is Andrew Bolton who serves as coordinator of peace and justice ministries at the Community of Christ headquarters in Independence, Missouri. For his young years, Bolton has already worked for several international humanitarian agencies, including Outreach International that was founded and shaped by Charles Neff. Bolton is currently pursuing a doctorate at the London School of Economics, after having received a master’s degree from that distinguished institution. His interest in history generally and Community of Christ history in particular was stimulated during his undergraduate study in history and religion at Graceland University in Lamoni, Iowa. So with this impressive background, Bolton presents us with a very readable, interesting, and let me say inspiring tale of the life of this major player in the last half of the twentieth century in the Community of Christ.

Bolton describes Neff’s key role in expanding the RLDS Church from an inward-looking, “one true church” sect to a Christian denomination currently having members in fifty nations. He shows Neff as a courageous, passionate advocate for changing the church’s narrow view of the gospel to one that makes room for, even insists on, the sharing of each nation’s and people’s perspective and experience of Christ from their unique cultural standpoints. Neff discerned during 1960, his first year in Japan, that it was no longer acceptable for the USA and other Western churches to be the givers, and the developing nations the receivers, of Western versions of Christianity and the church. Neff insisted on
a fully two-way exchange, which would lead to the mutual enrichment of both East and West. Such a view was not popular among many of Neff’s colleagues in the leading councils of the church, particularly those who were steeped in and comfortable with traditional ways and understandings. Tensions arose and disagreements were expressed; and Bolton is not afraid to lay these out for his readers.

The author cites the change in the office of president as a crucial time of strain in relationship between Neff and other church officers, particularly the First Presidency. He describes how Wallace B. Smith, who became president in 1978, only two years after becoming a full-time minister, admitted to being intimidated by the much more experienced Neff. Added to this, Smith’s appointment of Howard S. Sheehy, Jr, to be one of his counselors put the latter in a supervisory position over Neff, to whom he had previously reported as a member of the Council of Twelve. Bolton describes how the Presidency tried to place restrictions on what they considered Neff’s extensive influence. In turn, Neff resented what he saw as the Presidency’s desire to centralize control.

Bolton’s research for this work is extensive. He has read every published source available, reviewed archival material including correspondence and official records of church quorums, and conducted a number of personal interviews with members of Neff’s family and others who knew him well, including several church officers who did not agree with him. He has the advantage of the objectivity of one whose work is not biased by having a close personal relationship with his subject, who died when the author was only a child. Yet the connection that Bolton feels to Neff is obvious, the former now doing the work of peace and justice at a time in the life of the church when such work has now become much more acceptable than it was during Neff’s time. This is an example of how Neff’s life and ministry continues to inspire the present generation.

Community of Christ historian emeritus Richard P. Howard provides an excellent foreword. There, Howard, who with his wife Barbara were longtime friends of the Neff family, describes Bolton’s work as “an eminently readable and thought-provoking analysis of the major dimensions of Charles Neff’s remarkable career as RLDS apostle and advocate for economically deprived peoples wherever he went” (vi). Having the endorsement of one who served the church in the important capacity as historian through most of the years of Neff’s apostleship speaks well of the fairness, accuracy, and usefulness of Bolton’s work.

Although Bolton places Neff as one member of a team of church leaders who spearheaded the major changes in RLDS image and identity beginning around 1960, the author goes a step farther to assert that Neff was the primary player in this drama. Although some might nominate Clifford Cole, Duane Couey, Maurice Draper, or some other church leader for this dubious distinction — or perhaps suggest that no single person should be so recognized — I think that Bolton makes a convincing case for thrusting Neff into the spotlight.
One of the strengths of Bolton’s work is that he provides adequate background about the subject’s upbringing and pre-church-officer life and shows how, for example, his upbringing in a poor family during the Great Depression in the United States instilled within him a life-long identification with the poor around the world. Likewise, Bolton does not stop at Neff’s retirement from church office in 1984, but continues the story until his death in 1991 at the relatively young age of 69. The author’s description of Neff’s struggle to find a place for himself during his last few years as an apostle and in his remaining years afterward — during which time he felt, to say the least, underappreciated — are as important to his life story as the accomplishments of his earlier years.

The book concludes with an Afterword containing Bolton’s reflections on Neff’s legacy and an Appendix that reprints choice paragraphs from some of what the author considers to be Neff’s most significant writings. These are followed by a ten-page bibliography containing, if my count is correct, 275 entries: a monument in itself to his subject, but more so to Bolton’s painstaking commitment to leave no stone unturned in his search for a comprehensive understanding of the place and impact of Charles Neff’s life in the church’s recent history.

The publication of this book is a helpful reminder to those members and friends of the Community of Christ who have in recent years awakened to God’s call to serve the poor that Apostle Charles Neff was their forerunner, their mentor, and their example. He was a voice for the poor and downtrodden before it was acceptable in church circles to talk about such things, let alone take action. The John Whitmer Historical Association is to be commended for publishing this important book. My hope is that other works of equal significance will follow, both from the JWHA and from the scholarship of this excellent author.


**Beck’s Leaving the Saints**

*Review by Jeanne Murphey*

In this book Martha Beck tells two stories. One story is that of her spiritual journey during her years as a “faithful” Mormon, and also during her years as an “apostate” Mormon. The second story is about ritualized sexual abuse and how it impacted her life.
The format of the book is such that it emphasizes this duality. It is 1993 in the opening chapter when she begins her story by relating the experience of confronting her ninety-one year old father. Martha wants him to tell her why he sexually abused her when she was five years old. In chapter two Martha reverts back in time, to five years before this confrontation. It is in this chapter that she begins to give some of her life history. “My husband, John, and I had gone AWOL from Harvard, where we had been enrolled, first as undergraduates and then as Ph.D. candidates, ever since we finished high school.... Our two-year old daughter, Katie, was strapped into her car seat behind John. Next to Katie ... sat the main reason we were here, our three-week-old son, Adam” (8). Adam was a Downs-Syndrome child, and Martha and John decided that they needed the nurturing support of their Mormon roots as they undertook the task of raising Katie and Adam. Martha and John had grown up in Provo, Utah and their birth families as well as their church “family” lived there.

In chapter three Martha returns to the 1993 confrontation experience with her father. In chapter four she continues the story line introduced in chapter two. This pattern of alternating time periods continues throughout the book. I found her story somewhat difficult to follow because of this disjointed/dissociative form of presentation. In order to put together an orderly, coherent story I felt that I needed to be a detective, gathering information in many places. After collecting that information here is her story, as I understand it.

Martha grew up in a large family, one of eight children. Her father (who is never named in the book) was Hugh Nibley, a highly respected academician in the Mormon Church. He was a brilliant man, and one of his talents was his ability to speak several languages. Martha tells how he and she used a form of conversation that she calls “Dueling Allusions.” They didn’t use complete thoughts and sentences. He would give a literary line from Shakespeare or some other writer. That line would be a shorthand way of referencing the entire episode from which the line was taken. Martha would then think of some other literary reference, and she would give her father a line from that author. And so their dialogue continued without ever completely voicing the meanings of what they were “discussing.”

Martha tells how poor her family was. Her father was employed at Brigham Young University and was highly respected, but was paid a pittance. He and the family wore second-hand clothes and they lived in the poorer part of town. They had very little in the way of material possessions. The siblings took care of each other, and had loving relationships with each other. Martha’s description of her parents presents a picture of a mother and father who were emotionally detached, and often physically unavailable. Her mother spent a lot of her time in bed with physical and emotional ills. Her father was busy teaching and doing church work. He was already fifty-two years old when she was born.

The members of her family were, and are, loyal Mormons and today Martha’s siblings are very distressed that she has become an “apostate.” They deny that the story of abuse which Martha relates ever happened. It is that
abuse story that is at the heart of this book.

As an adult, and mother of three children, Martha began remembering abuse she experienced as a child. I believe this was about 1990, when Martha’s oldest daughter, Katie, was five years old. Martha was five years old herself in her first flashback memory, and it is possible that observing Katie as a five year old prompted Martha’s repressed memory to surface. In therapeutic parlance this was an “anniversary” time for Martha. Here is her description of that flashback memory. “I am five years old, my hands are tied, and my father is doing something that feels as though it is ripping me in two. I am stretched out on my back, legs spread, like a frog on a dissecting table, unable to see or understand what is happening, focusing as hard as I can on the cord around my hands, because it distracts me from what is happening elsewhere. A rush of strange words bounce around in my head, words my father is saying: Father Abraham. The Book of the Dead. The Book of Breathings. The prophet Joseph. Amut the Destroyer. The prophet Joseph Smith. Sacrifice. Abrahamic sacrifice. I have a dim idea that my father has been commanded by God to do what he is doing, the way Abraham was commanded to sacrifice Isaac. None of it makes any sense” (113).

In the book Martha expands on her understandings of how that act of abuse changed her life. She believes, but never verified, that this abuse was related to the study her father was doing in relation to the Book of Abraham (in the Pearl of Great Price). The Church had sent him back to school to learn the Egyptian language, so that he could refute the criticisms of Joseph Smith’s translation of the Book of Abraham. He worked for many years in that effort.

As with many abuse situations, it is difficult to find evidence that will meet the strict standards of a court of law. And Martha does not have that “smoking gun” evidence. However, I believe that the evidence she does have is very compelling. Psychological researchers have discovered that abuse memories are encoded in physical ways, and that the body “remembers.” One way it “remembers” is to keep bringing an unresolved issue to attention, until the issue is resolved. The body literally feels the emotional pain of the mind, and there can be body sensations that mimic the unacknowledged physical and emotional trauma of the past.

Throughout her life she had been plagued by pain of unknown origin. These episodes were so intense that they could immobilize her. The most dramatic example of her pain occurred in the days just prior to her flashback memory of being abused when she was five years old. She and her husband were team teaching a course in Group Psychology at BYU. A part of each class time was set aside for unstructured discussion. “About halfway through the semester, the discussion would invariably turn to deeply personal, sometimes tragic episodes in the lives of the group members” (94). It was halfway through the semester and one by one the students did begin to reveal personal experiences. One student said that she had no memories for the first ten years of her life. She wondered if she had been a bad child and done sexual things. As Martha
listened to the continuing discussion she was becoming panicky. She was having trouble breathing — her hands were twitching convulsively — her back began to spasm. She had an overwhelming compulsion to leave the room. “As I opened the door, it finally hit: the real pain, the pain for which back spasms and hand convulsions were only a tiny teaser. I felt a horrendous ripping sensation between my legs, so intense that (thank God) I couldn’t scream. I couldn’t even whimper. I lurched into the corridor, grabbed the wall as if it were my very best long-lost friend, and slid, unconscious, to the sparkling clean linoleum floor” (98).

John rushed her to their doctor. In the doctor’s examination he found a large lump in her “gynecological area.” He felt that she needed immediate exploratory surgery. She and John had to drive from Provo to Salt Lake City to find an available surgeon. The hospital personnel then scrambled to form a surgery team. The surgery proved successful. Martha says, the doctors “didn’t know exactly what had happened, but it wasn’t anything to worry about. I had a lot of scar tissue in my female parts, and for some unknown reason a spontaneous tear had opened inside it. The lump they’d thought might be a tumor was actually pooled blood from the internal wound. The surgeons had drained it and left it open to heal on its own” (112). What causes a pool of blood to spontaneously appear without any known physical origin? Psychologists might postulate that the scars and the blood were the body’s way of saying that past traumatic issues had not been identified or resolved.

During her surgery Martha had an out-of-body experience. In this dissociated state she saw the surgeons working on her body. She could see herself lying on the operating table with her eyes closed. Her dissociated self sat up and could watch and hear the surgeons. Then her attention was attracted to a small ball of light that was coming toward her. It grew in size as it moved toward her, and then it poured through her. She described it as an “infinite presence of love and peace and joy.” This was a very powerful experience for her, and the eyes of her sedated, prone body began to weep. Her doctors saw the tears and were concerned that she was in pain. They didn’t know these were tears of joy.

This experience changed her life forever. For many years she had been practicing spiritual disciplines from an eclectic assortment of belief traditions. She had an intense longing to feel God’s spirit in her life. Now, in a time of extreme crisis, her longings had been met. It was in this time of feeling secure in God’s love that her memory of being ritually and sexually abused surfaced. And it was also a turn around in her experiences of unexplained pain. As her mind began to accept her childhood abuse experiences, it also released the need to continually try to get her attention through physical pain.

This book is a welcome addition to both the growing number of abuse survivor stories, and to the shedding of light on how religious traditions have the potential to be used in very damaging and sadistic ways. Survivor stories are found in all religious traditions, and Mormonism cannot expect to be exempt from these disclosures.
About the Authors of this Volume

Jan Shipps, “Prophets and Prophecy in the Mormon Tradition(s)”
Jan Shipps, Ph.D., is professor emerita of history and religious studies and adjunct professor of philanthropic studies at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis. Over the course of four decades, Jan Shipps has become the preeminent non-Mormon interpreter of Mormonism. She has served as president of both John Whitmer Historical Association and the Mormon History Association. She is the author of numerous books and papers on various facets of the Latter Day Saint tradition.

William G. Hartley is an associate professor of history at Brigham Young University. A past president of the Mormon History Association, he has served on the editorial boards of the Journal of Mormon History and Mormon Historical Studies. He has authored more than 100 articles and 12 books dealing with LDS history and family history, including an award winning history of the Joseph Knight family. Regarding Iowa, he co-edited The Iowa Mormon Trail and co-authored the newly published Sacred Places: Iowa and Nebraska, A Comprehensive Guide to Early LDS Historical Sites. This article expands on a paper he presented at the John Whitmer Historical Association meetings in 2004 in Omaha.

Connell O’Donovan is a freelance historian and writer, returned missionary and excommunicated Mormon living in Santa Cruz, California. He is the founding director of the Lesbian and Gay Historical Society of Utah and continues to maintain their extensive collection. He has published several articles on Gay and Lesbian history, most notably “‘The Abominable and Detestable Crime Against Nature:’ A Brief History of Mormonism and Homosexuality, 1840-1980,” in Brent Corcoran (ed.) Multiply and Replenish: Essays on Mormon Sex and Family (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1994).

Michael S. Riggs and John E. Thompson, “Joseph Smith, Jr., and “The Notorious Case of Aaron Lyon:” Evidence of Earlier Doctrinal Development of Salvation for the Dead and a Trigger for the Practice of Polyandry?” Michael S. Riggs is a historian and an employee of Burns & McDonnell, an engineering firm in Kansas City, Missouri. He is a full-time Ph.D. student (religious studies/history) at the University of Missouri-Kansas City.
Mr. Riggs co-instructs an archaeology field school at Haun’s Mill for Northwest Missouri State University. He is a past president of the John Whitmer Historical Association and holds a master of arts in religion from Park University.

John E. Thompson is a retired contracting officer from Edwards AFB. Mr. Thompson holds a B.A. in history (1974) from Los Angeles Baptist College and an M.A. in Old Testament and M.Div. from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (both in 1981). Mr. Thompson has published numerous articles on the Missouri Mormon period and Masonic influences in LDS history. He and his wife, Susan, reside in Lancaster, California.

Newell G. Bringhurst, “Four American Prophets Confront Slavery: Joseph Smith, William Miller, Ellen G. White, Mary Baker Eddy.” Newell G. Bringhurst, Ph.D. served as the President of the John Whitmer Historical Association during the 2005-6 year, and also serves as Associate Editor of the Journal of the Association. He recently retired from 25 years as an Instructor of History and Political Science at College of the Sequoias, in Visalia, California, where he has lived with his wife, Mary Ann, and their daughter. He also has served as president of the Mormon History Association and is the author of four books, his most recent, Fawn McKay Brodie: A Biographer’s Life (1999).


Richard K. Behrens, “Dartmouth Arminianism and Its Impact on Hyrum Smith and the Smith Family.” Richard K. Behrens did his undergraduate work at Dartmouth College in economics and his graduate work at Northwestern University in managerial economics and finance. After a 38 year career in corporate banking and finance he retired to pursue his personal interests in investments and historical research. He is particularly interested in analysis of underlying factors of past events. He has presented several papers at JWHA and MHA Conferences and also belongs to Oregon California Trails Association and the Western History Association. He splits his time between the Bay Area and the Utah mountains.

Jason R. Smith, “Does God Call Women to Preach and Minister? Pauline Hancock and Her “Basement Church.”” Jason R. Smith, B.A.
Richard Francaviglia, “‘Surely There is a Vein for Silver and a Place for Gold:’ Mining and Religion in the Nineteenth Century Intermountain West.” Richard Francaviglia holds a B.A. from the University of California at Riverside, and an M.A. and Ph.D. in Cultural/Historical Geography from the University of Oregon. He currently serves as Professor of History at the University of Texas at Arlington, and has also served as director or officer of several associations dedicated to aspects of cartography, history of mining, and other environmental interests. Among his most recent books are, Believing in Place: A Spiritual Geography of the Great Basin (2003) and From Sail to Steam: Four Centuries of Texas Maritime History, 1500-1900 (1998).

William D. Russell, “Empowering Homosexuals in the Church: A History of GALA.” William D. Russell, J.D. is a professor and chair of the Division of Social Science at Graceland University, Lamoni, Iowa. He is a former President of both the John Whitmer Historical Association and the Mormon History Association, and has published articles and reviews in the various Mormon studies journal, and has three books in process: one is Homosexual Saints: The Community of Christ Experience; the other two are on the recent (1980s) schism in the RLDS Church and the 1989 cult murders in Kirtland, Ohio. He also serves as book review editor for this journal.

John E. Thompson, “Sampson Avard and Danite Leadership (June – October 1838): A Reinterpretation.” (See biographical entry above with Michael Riggs.)

Michael W. Homer, “Why then introduce them into our inner temple?” The Masonic Influence on Mormon Denial of Priesthood Ordination to African American Men.” Michael W. Homer is a practicing trial lawyer in Salt Lake City. He was appointed to the Board of State History in 1997 by Governor Michael Leavitt and he has been Chair since 2003. He has published four books, thirteen chapters in books, and over seventy articles on historical and legal subjects. He is the recipient of the David Kirby Best Article Award from the Arthur Conan Doyle Society; the Lowell L. Bennion Editor’s
Award by *Dialogue, A Journal of Mormon Thought*; the T. Edgar Lyon Award of Excellence by the Mormon History Association; and The John Whitmer Historical Association Best Article Award. His most recent book: *On the Way to Somewhere Else: European Sojourners in the Mormon West, 1834-1930*, was published by The Arthur H. Clark Company in 2006.

**Bill Shepard, “The Notorious Hodges Brothers: Solving the Mystery of Their Destruction at Nauvoo.”** Bill Shepard is of Strangite heritage and has long had an interest in Marietta Walker, a stalwart of the RLDS Church, and her murderous brothers. Bill is a board member of the John Whitmer Historical Association and has presented papers at Sunstone, the Mormon History Association and at JWHA conferences. He is also a caretaker of the historic Strangite sites at Burlington, WI. Along with H. Michael Marquardt, Bill has recently completed a book about Apostle Lyman E. Johnson.

**Robert D. Anderson, “Fawn McKay Brodie and Joseph Smith: A Psychoanalytic Comparison.”** Robert D. Anderson, M.D. characterizes himself as a (mostly) retired psychiatrist living (mostly) in the Northwest. He is a graduate of BYU and the University of Washington School of Medicine. Following 30 years of private practice, he now does occasional temporary assignments with Native Americans and inner-city mental hygiene clinics. He is the author of *Inside the Mind of Joseph Smith: Psychobiography and the Book of Mormon* (Signature Books, 1999), and of articles in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* and *The American Journal of Psychiatry*. He reports, “I have been a frequent presenter at Sunstone, and would describe myself as a non-believing Mormon interested in assisting with the continued evolution of the church.”