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**THE REGIONAL INFLUENCES ON RELIGIOUS
THOUGHT AND PRACTICE: A CASE STUDY IN
MORMONISM'S DIETARY REFORMS**

A Thesis Presented

by

Samuel Alonzo Dodge

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

May 2013

Department of History

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Approved as to style and content by:

Robert S. Cox, Chair

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Department of History

Dedication

To my father's father, who values sincerity above all else

To my father, my first teacher, my first colleague, and my first friend

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As cliché as it may sound, in some ways I did not choose the topic of this master's thesis, it chose me. When I first began thinking about thesis topics as a new student at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, I told myself that I would not do any project that would focus on Mormon history. I have been a lifelong member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, received my undergraduate degree from Brigham Young University, and had already done several projects in the Mormon history field. I wanted to use my master's thesis as an opportunity to explore an area of history not so close to home. However, as I finished my first year of study at UMass I was unexpectedly offered a research internship working on *The Joseph Smith Papers* project at the LDS Church History Library in Salt Lake City. I jumped at the opportunity.

The time I spent working on the *Papers* was some of the most exciting I have had as a graduate student. My research supervisors, Matthew Godfrey and Gerrit Dirkmaat, assigned me to work on writing the explanatory introduction to the Word of Wisdom revelation in the *Papers'* forthcoming Documents Series and as a result, I had access to a large number of original manuscripts and primary sources not easily available to patron researchers. As my summer internship progressed, I became acquainted with such an array of rich material that I felt I could not in good conscience ignore it when I resumed my studies that fall. This thesis is the final product.

There is no way I can make a comprehensive list of all those who helped me along the way to finishing this product, either through research, advising, encouraging, or simply giving time to be a sounding board. First of all, thank you to those at *The Joseph Smith Papers* project that opened the door for me. Matthew and Gerrit were of course encouraging mentors and supervisors. Rob Cox, Marla Miller, and Barry Levy not only have read the thesis and have been great advisors, but they have been examples to me of scholarship and professionalism that I hope to emulate. John Higginson and other faculty of UMass have constantly cheered me on as well. Steven C. Harper's years of friendship and mentoring helped put me on the path of becoming the kind of historian and fellow servant that I want to be; Harper is a gentleman and a scholar of the first rate. Importantly, I must acknowledge the numerous archivists, librarians, and staff that so often labor in obscurity but upon whose skills I depend. Finally, I need to give word to my numerous family and friends scattered from Utah, to Massachusetts, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Spain. Their long phone calls and frequent proofreads were always appreciated, although I did not voice it nearly enough.

ABSTRACT

THE REGIONAL INFLUENCE ON RELIGIOUS THOUGHT AND PRACTICE: A CASE STUDY IN MORMONISM'S DIETARY REFORMS

May 2013

SAMUEL ALONZO DODGE, B.A., BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

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Directed by: Professor Robert S. Cox

While commenting upon the challenges of studying the history of religious figures and movements, Richard Bushman once said, "Everything we know in this life is seen through someone's eyes. All a historian has to work with is the way this person saw it. . . . The purpose of history is not to find out what really happened but to collect the ways human observers have described what they think happened. We [as historians] look at the world through other's eyes."¹

This thesis seeks not to argue the veracity of any particular religious doctrine, but rather strives to understand the historical development of certain Mormon beliefs by looking through the eyes of those who helped form them. Mormon doctrines are often regarded as impositions made by Joseph Smith onto docile followers. Such an interpretation fails to recognize that lay members were just as influential in the development of Mormon doctrine as was the founder of the religion. Joseph's revelations did not emerge *ex nihilo*. Joseph engaged the world and the people around him and his environment shaped the doctrines forming in his mind and continued to do so once they were taught to his followers.²

This study will examine the origins of Mormonism's dietary code, known as the Word of Wisdom, and the sect's doctrines concerning the body. Both of these tenets of Mormonism were shaped by the environments in which they emerged. The regional

¹ Samuel Alonzo Dodge, "The Hermeneutics of Suspicion" (interview with Richard Bushman), in *Exploring the First Vision*, ed. Samuel Alonzo Dodge and Steven C. Harper (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2012), 277.

² Contrary to standard scholarly practice, Mormon historical and cultural custom is to refer to many of the early church leaders by their first names rather than surnames. I have decided to follow this custom throughout the thesis.

environments which influenced the evolution of the Word of Wisdom are central to this study. In the case of the Word of Wisdom, Joseph first began teaching the doctrine in Kirtland, Ohio, an area of constant reform movements and moral activism. Conflicts within the Mormon Church reflect the tensions of Ohio settlers' reformist culture primarily located in the region known as the Western Reserve. This study will also look at the tensions within the Mormon community itself. These tensions involved leader responses to the Word of Wisdom, conflicts over church power structures, and the fallout from the Kirtland Bank's failure in the financial panic of 1837.

As the main Mormon Church body moved from Ohio, to Missouri, to Illinois, and eventually to Utah they adopted attitudes toward the Word of Wisdom that reflected the new environments in which they found themselves. In Missouri the Word of Wisdom emerges in official charges in church disciplinary courts. However, an examination of these courts indicates that the Word of Wisdom was merely one indicator of a more serious power struggle within church leadership structures. Missouri temperance, which was relatively mild, did not influence church affairs nearly as much as struggles within church leadership itself.

In Illinois, Mormonism's doctrine of the body also affected the ways in which the Word of Wisdom was implemented as it influenced the ways in which Mormons conceptualized health, godliness, plural marriage (polygamy), procreation, and their identities as a people. Simply put, context is everything and this study tries to show that the study of the teachings of any religious group should not be done piecemeal because each doctrine is shaped by and in turn shapes the other doctrines with which it is associated.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

American culture has been one of agitation. From its colonial origins, many of the people who inhabited British North America organized communities and marshaled public sentiment in response to perceived or real abuse of authority. In the case of New England, Perry Miller argues that settlers saw their colonies not only as a refuge from Anglican or Catholic corruption, but as a model from which the Old World could draw inspiration for reform. John Winthrop's "City Upon a Hill" was not only an escape; it was an example.¹ This idea of the American nation as a nursery of social and political experimentation can be found throughout the United States' regional and chronological boundaries. Reformers, such as Anne Hutchinson, John Adams, Lyman Beecher, Sylvester Graham, Frederick Douglass, Susan B. Anthony, Samuel Gompers, and Martin Luther King Jr., exemplified an American culture of an activist public pushing to change the society in which they lived. While the American culture of agitation has been present throughout the history of the United States, the first fifty years of the nineteenth-century were particularly active. In the years from the Revolution to the Civil War, Americans of all types engaged in causes calling for everything from abolition of slavery, to cessation of Sunday postal service, prison reform, women's suffrage, medical accommodation for the insane, public education, and finally temperance and health reform. Even such a partial list causes one to appreciate the energetic atmosphere that characterized the young nation.

¹ Perry Miller, *Errand into the Wilderness* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1956), 4, 5, 11.

The years of scholarship produced by historians shows that temperance was a particularly vibrant movement in the nineteenth-century United States. Although temperance advocacy can be traced into the colonial period, from the 1820s onward temperance reform took on a much more organized and radical form. Temperance leagues grew by the thousands while popular protests led to the closing of distilleries, and preachers and physicians advocated the moderation or abstention of alcoholic beverages for both spiritual and physical well-being. Social responsibility also came into play as temperance advocates cited alcohol as the root of domestic poverty, abuse, and crime.

In recent years historians have taken an environmental approach to understanding the temperance movement. The energy of the temperance movement came from the enormous social pressures transforming the United States in the years following the Revolution. From the first federal census in 1790 up to 1840 the American population grew over 300 percent, largely due to natural increase.² Such growth led to enormous migration as coastal populations moved across the Appalachian Mountains into the Ohio River and Tennessee Valleys. In 1820, the United States doubled its territorial claims only to double it again after the Mexican American War.³ Massive migration and the diversification of economic roles put considerable strain on traditional family structures.

Given the strains individuals and families endured, it is not surprising that many turned to liquor to mollify their anxieties. However, alcohol consumption went far beyond those whose families were being torn apart by a changing American landscape. In early nineteenth-century America, everyone drank. In his book *The Alcoholic*

² Herbert S. Klein, *A Population History of the United States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 244.

³ Klein, *A Population History of the United States*, 73.

Republic: An American Tradition, historian W. J. Rorabaugh estimates that in 1825, Americans per capita drank over five gallons of distilled spirits per year.⁴ Between 1790 and 1830 Americans drank more alcohol per capita than at any time before or since. Rorabaugh is careful not to claim a causal relationship between the anxiety of the nation and American's extensive drinking. He does, however, claim that anxiety did contribute to America's intoxication. "Drinking customs," he insists "were reflective of a society's fabric, tensions, and 'inner dynamics.'"⁵

Rorabaugh goes beyond the claim that early America's drinking culture reflected the fallout from familial fracturing and migration and proposes that economics explains both the large quantity of alcohol consumed and the later effectiveness in anti-drinking campaigns. According to Rorabaugh, as Americans left the east coast's crowded settlements and tired soil for the cheap and fertile wilderness out west, increased isolation from eastern and foreign markets made it difficult for rural farmers to store, transport, and sell their surplus grain. As a solution, many rural farmers distilled their grains into whiskey which was easier to store and transport. Whiskey was cheap, abundant, and on the cash-poor frontier, was even used as currency. American drinking habits reflected the pattern.⁶ However, as the century progressed, improvements in transportation and communication aided in the development of a more expansive and specialized market economy. The transition to free enterprise and materialism stabilized the social atmosphere by developing a national grain market, thus reducing the need for town

⁴ W. J. Rorabaugh, *The Alcoholic Republic: An American Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), ix, 8-9.

⁵ Rorabaugh, *Alcoholic Republic*, 125-131.

⁶ Rorabaugh, *Alcoholic Republic*, 11, 56, 80.

distilleries. Without the stabilization of a modern market, Rorabaugh argues, the early American temperance movement would not have been as successful.⁷

At the same time stabilizing markets helped mature the early American temperance movement, Joseph Smith established his new religion in upstate New York. Both Mormonism and temperance were pieces of a rapidly shifting cultural landscape and the study of the development of Mormon theology concerning diet and the body cannot be disconnected from the literature of the broader American dietary and temperance reform movements. *The Alcoholic Republic* has been invaluable for understanding the early temperance movement. The work is not without its flaws, however. Rorabaugh's data collecting is impressive, but it is thin in some places. The documentation needed for accurately estimating the distilling habits of rural farmers in the first two decades of the nineteenth-century, for example, are simply non-extant. More problematic, is Rorabaugh's tendency to treat all rural farmers, and by extension temperance advocates, as monolithic entities propelled almost wholly by market forces. Completely missing from his analysis of American drinking culture is the role individual conscience played in efforts at drinking reform. The historian Robert H. Abzug picked up on this oversight in his influential book *Cosmos Crumbling: American Reform and the Religious Imagination*. According to Abzug, evangelical Christianity influenced early temperance reform more so than previously recognized. Ministers were the first visible temperance advocates. According to Abzug, this is because ministers joined temperance with their "evangelical cosmic drama" and the role America would play in that drama.⁸ This

⁷ Rorabaugh, *Alcoholic Republic*, 90, 190-191.

⁸ Robert H. Abzug, *Cosmos Crumbling: American Reform and the Religious Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 83.

“cosmic drama” was largely made up of the hopes of many Second Great Awakening Americans who believed in what can be termed “post millennialism,” or the belief that the thousand-year peace depicted in the twentieth chapter of the Book of Revelation pertained to the time immediately *preceding* the second advent of Christ. Such an interpretation of Revelation placed a challenging burden upon Christian believers to faithfully pursue the gradual perfection of society. American society was closely joined with post-millennialist dogma as Americans saw their republican virtue as the purifying agent which would rid the world of corruption to hasten the millennium and thus Christ’s return.⁹ Many of these Christian reformers thought intemperance led to disorder, violence and thus directly compromised republican virtue.¹⁰ If America was to fulfill its role as a harbinger of the Millennium, the American republic would have to be relieved of the vices that accompanied excessive drink. Temperance ceased to be merely an economic or social convenience; it was the moral duty of the American Christian.¹¹

Rorabaugh and Abzug in many ways represent larger number historians who emphasize social pressures and those who emphasize ideology. More recent scholarship, however, has sought not to rebut either the social or ideological arguments, but rather shift the historical discussion to how American Temperance, and its promoters, changed. Graham Warder argues that as American capitalism matured, temperance activism shifted from the spheres of evangelical ministers in the 1830s, to those of entertainment capitalists during the 1840s, and later to the state in the 1850s. The changing of temperance actors held profound social implications. As ministers lost influence in the

⁹ Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 285-287.

¹⁰ Abzug, *Cosmos Crumbling*, 85.

¹¹ Abzug, *Cosmos Crumbling*, 89-92.

temperance movement, they were less able to control how the message was promulgated. Entertainers used sensational media, songs, novels, and most importantly, the theater to promote temperance. These new forms of temperance rhetoric allowed audiences to vicariously experience the “dark side of American society” without suffering its vices.¹² Warder’s contribution shows temperance as an active and exciting enterprise made up of more than just “dow sermonizers[sic].”¹³

In his 2003 *Theater, Culture and Temperance Reform in Nineteenth-Century America*, John W. Frick observed the diversity Warder mentions. In his work, Frick warns that historical scholarship too often limits itself by forcing complex topics into measured and manageable categories. By doing so historians distort the very subject they are trying to understand. Frick states:

Although historians routinely refer to nineteenth-century temperance reform as if it were a monolithic, unified and continuous movement, temperance agitation was more precisely, a series of related, interlocking movements often with different motives and often radically different cultural missions.¹⁴

Recognizing the kind of heterogeneous composition that Frick identifies in the temperance movement is crucial for understanding any kind of reform activism in the early United States. Temperance movements, and by natural extension, dietary and health reform in general, cannot be seen as unified, singular movements but rather as a collection of movements that took on their own distinct form depending upon which particular communities were its advocates. For example, Shelly Block convincingly

¹² Graham Warder, “Selling Sobriety: How Temperance Reshaped Culture in Antebellum America” (PhD diss., University of Massachusetts at Amherst, 2000), 32-33, 220.

¹³ Warder, “Selling Sobriety,” 13-14.

¹⁴ John W. Frick, *Theater, Culture and Temperance Reform in Nineteenth-Century America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 202.

argues that in many cases nineteenth-century Blacks adopted temperance not solely as a program of health or good behavior, but as a method to “capitalize on black strength” and demonstrate their independence from white control.¹⁵ It is also clear that marginalized religious groups, such as the Shakers, embraced dietary reforms as reflections of developing religious dogmas. Although broadly speaking, national reform movements often transcended particular societal barriers, each group that embraced a national reform campaign added its own particular twist to the movement.

The clothing of dietary reform in religious practice is one of the primary focuses of James C. Whorton’s book “*Crusaders for Fitness: A History of American Health Reform.*” Whorton argues that dietary reform was most successful when reformers were able to connect their religious dietary objectives to deeply held republican ideologies.¹⁶ Diet reformers saw America as a unique place where the strengths of republican virtue, liberty, and post-millennialist doctrine could be fully harnessed and sought to purify the public by removing degenerating stimulants, such as meat and “unnatural foods,” from their lives.¹⁷ Whorton uses Sylvester Graham show the bridge diet reformers made between Jacksonian political egalitarianism and post millennialist doctrine.

Graham began his career as a preacher, but left the pulpit after only two years of practice in order to advocate temperance. Graham quickly moved beyond campaigning against alcohol and began calling for an entire overhaul of America’s health system, calling for vegetarianism, the cessation of tobacco, and restriction in sexual relationships.

¹⁵ Shelly Block, “A Revolutionary Aim: The Rhetoric of Temperance in the Anglo-African Magazine,” *American Periodicals* 12(2002): 12.

¹⁶ James C. Whorton, *Crusaders for Fitness: The History of American Health Reform* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1982), 36.

¹⁷ Whorton, *Crusaders for Fitness*, 49, 65-70.

According to Graham, intemperance was not confined to alcohol abuse, but was rather the undisciplined stimulation of the body through any food or action. Dietary reformers like Graham argued that excessive stimulation harmed the body as well as man's spirit, thus the pursuit of Christian health through diet reform benefited both the Republic, by ensuring the health of its citizens, and God's people, by assuring the righteousness of their spirits.¹⁸ In Whorton's words, the "expanding public spirit [of Jacksonian America] enlarged the constituency of perfectionist campaigns" thus giving life to dietary reformer movements.¹⁹

While the expanding public spirit of Jacksonian America may have spread the reformists' messages, it also spread social stresses of a more negative nature. Nativism, anti-Catholicism, and accelerating urbanization complicated community relationships and redefined national mores. Ruth Clifford Engs sees these negative social episodes as characteristic of the emergence of reform movements. In *Clean Living Movements: American Cycles of Health Reform*, Engs argues that reform movements generally emerged in eight to ten year cycles as the "ebb and flow" of social redefinition required Americans to examine religious and moral paradigms.²⁰ Engs recognizes that republican and millennialist ideology were not the only ingredients necessary for American dietary reform to emerge. Reformers responded to outside catalysts in order to promulgate their message.

Like other reform movements, early Mormonism dietary reforms were religious responses to external stimulus characterized by its own unique framework in which those

¹⁸ Whorton, *Crusaders for Fitness*, 43.

¹⁹ Whorton, *Crusaders for Fitness*, 11-12.

²⁰ Ruth Clifford Engs, *Clean Living Movements: American Cycles of Health Reform* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 2000), 2, 3, 83-86, 89.

reforms were understood. In 1833, Mormonism's founder, Joseph Smith Jr., established a dietary and health code among his followers, which Joseph claimed to have received by direct revelation from God. The revelation became popularly known as the Word of Wisdom.²¹ Early observance and interpretation of the Word of Wisdom differs greatly from the practices of twenty-first century Mormons. Whereas modern observance of the Word of Wisdom requires all Mormon members to abstain completely from alcohol, tobacco, most teas, coffee, and to moderately consume meats, some early church members practiced complete abstinence while others advocated moderation in the use of the listed substances. Past historians cite the broader American Temperance Movement as the source for Joseph's creation of the Word of Wisdom.²² While the influence of American temperance would most certainly have played a role in early Mormonism's dietary reforms, much scholarship has fallen into Rorabaugh's trap and conceptualizes early Mormons' adoption of the Word of Wisdom as the actions of a monolithic entity. Scholars fail to recognize the early Mormon Church body as a diverse and complicated society made up of distinct populations, each differing in ideology, doctrinal interpretation, theological custom, and application of church commandments.

The historical study of the Word of Wisdom goes back to Dean D. McBrien's 1929 doctoral dissertation, "The Influence of the Frontier on Joseph Smith."²³ McBrien's

²¹ Robin Scott Jensen, Robin J. Woodford, and Stephen C. Harper, eds. *Manuscript Revelation Books*. Facsimile edition, first volume of the Revelations and Translations series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, edited by Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman. (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2009), 311-313, 511-513.

²² Dean D. McBrien, "The Influence of the Frontier on Joseph Smith," (Unpublished PhD dissertation, George Washington University, 1929); Paul H. Peterson, "An Historical Analysis of the Word of Wisdom," (M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1972).

²³ Dean D. McBrien, "The Influence of the Frontier on Joseph Smith," (Unpublished Doctor's Dissertation, George Washington University, 1929).

work is largely a simple application of Fredrick Jackson Turner's frontier thesis to Mormon studies.²⁴ McBrien's dissertation would not have attracted much attention concerning a study of the Word of Wisdom were it not for the fact that he was the first to draw any sort of connection between Mormonism's dietary standards and the broader American Temperance Movement. Although McBrien erred in his claim that complete abstinence characterized the way that early Mormons observed the Word of Wisdom, his connection between temperance reformers and the Word of Wisdom is well founded.²⁵ Over the years, historians have adopted McBrien's argument, and for good reason. However, many of their studies amount to mere restatements of McBrien's initial observation that the Word of Wisdom was merely an outgrowth of broader temperance or dietary movements.²⁶

There are exceptions, however, as in the case of Lester E. Bush's important article "The Word of Wisdom in Early Nineteenth-Century Perspective."²⁷ Bush moves away from superficial connections between American dietary reforms and the Word of Wisdom and by arguing that the diet restrictions in early Mormonism correlate closely with the accepted medical theories of the early nineteenth-century. According to Bush, nineteenth-century physicians largely saw an individual's health as a reflection of various stimulants that were ingested. A number of substances proscribed by the Word of

²⁴ Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," in *The Frontier in American History*. (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1921), 1-38.

²⁵ McBrien, "The Influence of the Frontier," 149.

²⁶ Paul H. Peterson, "An Historical Analysis of the Word of Wisdom;" (M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1972).; Clyde Ford, "The Origin of the Word of Wisdom," *The Journal of Mormon History* 24, no. 2 (Fall 1998): 129-154.; Paul Y. Hoskisson, "Different and Unique: The Word of Wisdom in the Historical, Cultural, and Social Setting of the 1830s," *Mormon Historical Studies* 10, no. 2 (Fall 2009): 40-61.

²⁷ Lester E. Bush Jr., "The Word of Wisdom in Early Nineteenth-Century Perspective," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* XIV, no. 3 (Autumn 1981), 41-65.

Wisdom, such as alcohols, tobacco, hot drinks, and red meat, were considered strong stimulants that must be taken in moderation, if at all. Bush's contribution shows the contemporary rationale behind the Word of Wisdom.

For years, few studies moved beyond the examination of the Word of Wisdom's parallels with nineteenth-century health science or temperance activity. Leonard J. Arrington broke the trend in 1959 with his study of how economics influenced the way in which church leadership enforced Word of Wisdom observance.²⁸ Arrington's study focuses mostly on the Utah period (1847-1900) when the limited availability of hard specie and a desire for economic independence motivated church leaders to call for strict observance of the Word of Wisdom. Abstaining from alcohol and tobacco was not just a spiritual necessity or a code for good health; it was an economic strategy to help the Mormons' Great Basin settlements survive.²⁹

Arrington's contribution shifted the focus for historians studying the Word of Wisdom. Instead of merely looking for a way to connect it to the secular temperance movement, students of Mormon history began examining how the church body itself engaged the Word of Wisdom revelation in creative ways. For the first time historians took notice of how in early years the Word of Wisdom was not a uniformly observed practice. In truth, the early Mormon Church's attitude transitioned from a sporadic observance of the Word of Wisdom in the nineteenth century to embracing complete abstinence from alcohol, tobacco, coffee, and tea by the early twentieth century. Perhaps no one contributed more to this study than Paul H. Peterson. In a 1972 master's thesis,

²⁸ Leonard J. Arrington, "An Economic Interpretation of the Word of Wisdom." *BYU Studies* 1, no. 1 (Winter 1959): 37-49.

²⁹ Arrington, "An Economic Interpretation," 43-48.

Peterson traces the variations in interpretation and application of the Word of Wisdom from when the revelation was first given in 1833 up through the mid twentieth-century.³⁰ Peterson's thesis demonstrated that the perception of early Mormonism as an unwavering teetotaling religion was largely anachronistic. Many early church members in good standing drank alcohol and used tobacco and for many nineteenth-century Mormons, moderation not abstinence was the proper application of the Word of Wisdom. It was not until the early twentieth century that complete abstinence became the firmly established church standard.³¹ Simply put, Mormon interpretation and observance of the Word of Wisdom fluctuated over time.

There have been some attempts to explain away the inconstancy in Word of Wisdom observance uncovered by Peterson's thesis. Some historians argue that the different episodes when church leaders practiced or advocated moderation rather than abstinence were aberrations from the prescribed standard. In 2012 Paul Y. Hoskisson forcefully argued that the first decade after the Word of Wisdom was given, "the standard of the Church [*sic*] was one of strict abstinence . . . [that] was identical to our modern standard."³² Hoskisson's study falls short in many respects. Hoskisson makes large assumptions regarding primary sources by assuming certain actors held relationships with Joseph Smith that cannot be substantiated. Furthermore, his omission of context or content of some sources, and his ignoring of others, makes his argument very shaky. His entire thesis rests upon the assumption that certain phraseology common in the modern

³⁰ Paul H. Peterson, "An Historical Analysis of the Word of Wisdom." (M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1972).

³¹ Peterson, "An Historical Analysis," 90-99.

³² Paul Y. Hoskisson, "The Word of Wisdom in its First Decade," *Journal of Mormon History* 38, no. 1 (Winter 2012): 132, 143.

and early Mormon Church meant the same thing in both eras. This is most certainly not the case. The ambiguity of the text of the revelation left much to be interpreted by early church members. If one member thought that the Word of Wisdom was a commandment that advocated moderation and another thought that the revelation meant strict abstinence, they both could claim that they “kept the Word of Wisdom” fully. The crucial point is in their *interpretation* of language used in the revelation’s text, not in the language they *employed* when describing their own habits. Hoskisson completely misses this important distinction.

However flawed Hoskisson’s article may be, it is useful in that it demonstrates a tendency found in all of the studies so far mentioned: the inclination to treat the early Mormon population the way Rorabaugh treats the national temperance movement, as a single entity that either moves to or from stricter adherence to the Word of Wisdom. Early Mormon Church members did not merely receive the teachings of church leaders passively, there were discussions, questions, strict obedience, and even objections that lay members may have had when new policy formed concerning the revelation. They voiced these differences in newspaper articles, journal entries, protests, and quiet observance. To borrow from Frick’s temperance argument, Mormon adoption of the Word of Wisdom was not a “unified and continuous movement.” In fact, it was part of a number of simultaneous movements and changes occurring both within and out of the church body.

While the connection of the Word of Wisdom with parallel movements outside the Mormon Church, such as American Temperance, has long been recognized by historians, the literature almost wholly overlooks the role played by other evolving doctrines and movements within the church itself. From the time Joseph Smith received

the Word of Wisdom in February 1833 until his death eleven years later, the Prophet received dozens of additional revelations, planned or began the construction of five separate temples, gave hundreds of sermons, and radically reinterpreted fundamental Christian doctrines such as the trinity, the substance of the human soul, vicarious baptism for dead ancestors, the destiny of the House of Israel, corporeal resurrection, and accepted structures of marriage. Whether of his own creation, borrowed from others, divinely inspired, or a mixture, Joseph's theological creativity and energies were incredible. In spite of historians' tendency to study Joseph's revelations piecemeal, it is important to remember that all of his theological developments mingled at once in his mind only to emerge in "flashes and bursts" of doctrinal exegesis.³³ Thus, understanding the development of Joseph Smith and his followers' theological thoughts is an increasingly difficult task that leaves room for a considerable amount of interpretation regarding early Mormon doctrine. In the words of Joseph's gifted biographer, Richard L. Bushman:

[The Prophet's] thought is not easily encapsulated or analyzed. His teachings came primarily through his revelations, which, like other forms of scripture, are epigrammatic and oracular. He never presented his ideas systematically in clear, logical order. . . . Nor did he engage in formal debate. His most powerful thoughts were assertions delivered as if from heaven. Assembling a coherent picture out of many bits and pieces leaves room for misinterpretations and forced logic. Even his loyal followers disagree about the implications of his teaching.³⁴

Once one recognizes the heterogeneous and simultaneous nature of Mormon doctrinal development, it is easy to see how Frick's idea of "interlocking movements" applies within the Mormon Church as well. As Joseph's doctrines mingled in his mind,

³³ Richard Lyman Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), xxi.

³⁴ Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, xxi.

they shaped and influenced one another. As those doctrines disseminated throughout the church population, they continued to be pulled, stretched, and molded by the lay Mormons' conversations. In short, both church leaders and lay membership jointly shaped new Mormon doctrines as they emerged. In regards to parallel doctrines shaping the interpretation and practice of the Word of Wisdom, Joseph's evolving theology of the body is key.

There is nothing to indicate that Joseph originally thought of the body in any way markedly different than his Protestant Christian culture. He taught about a literal resurrection of the dead, but such teaching was hardly out of the ordinary at the time. Some of the early writing with which he was associated speaks of God the Father as a "personage of spirit," an idea he would later abandon.³⁵ As his prophetic career progressed, however, Joseph's teaching about the body became more radical. He emphasized the body as a sacred gift from God which was to be taken care of and revered. Reverencing the body in Joseph's mind was not the stern disciplining of the flesh common in Puritan and Shaker practices. The material and physical things of the world too were gifts from God, and it was through the body that those gifts were enjoyed. In fact, Joseph would go on later to teach that God himself was physically embodied and enjoyed his glorious existence through corporeal senses.³⁶ One aspect of this enjoyment was through procreation and physical love. God's eternal increase was in part due to His ability to eternally have children. Mankind, Joseph taught, as literal children of God were

³⁵ Robin Scott Jensen, Richard E. Turley Jr., and Riley M. Lorimer, eds. *Revelations and Translations Volume 2: Published Revelations*, vol. 2 of the Revelations and Translations series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, edited by Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2011), 363.

³⁶ Stan Larson, "The King Follett Discourse: A Newly Amalgamated Text," *BYU Studies* 18:2 (Winter 1978), 193-208.

expected to enjoy the same blessings of increase, if done through righteous authorization. The early Mormon practice of plural marriage was one outgrowth of this teaching, along with ideas of exaltation and that through resurrection man could obtain the same glorified corporeality as God.

Joseph's radical teaching on the body has received some new attention from scholars over the past ten or so years. One interesting study of early Mormonism's theology of the body is Allison Clark's "Women and the Body in Early Nineteenth-Century Shakerism and Mormonism." Although Mormonism is only a part of Clark's study, the juxtaposition with Shakerism is illuminating. Clark points out that although Shaker doctrine taught that the physical body was a hopelessly fallen vessel of passion that needed to be subjugated to achieve true spirituality, many of the Shaker spiritual manifestations were had only through the body. Shakes, fits, and dances all were physical projections of the body which indicated a heightened spirituality. Likewise, Joseph's Mormonism also saw the body as a conduit of spirituality, with one important distinction. According to Clark, Mormonism may have regarded the body as a conduit to spirituality but the body itself was *also* spiritual.³⁷ Shaker-like celibacy would make no sense in Mormonism because the body has a spirituality in itself; God is spiritual and God himself is embodied. Because God is the father of all, increasing one's family is inherently Godlike. Or as Clark argues:

In stark contrast to the Shakers who consider the abstinence of sexual relations as the basis for spiritual union between male and female, Mormons stress the necessity, and even abundance, of sexual relations within the covenant of marriage as the ultimate source of union and divinity.³⁸

³⁷ Allison Clark, "Women and the Body in Early Nineteenth-Century Shakerism and Mormonism," in *Archive of Restoration Culture: Summer Fellows' Papers, 1997-1999* (Provo, Utah: Joseph Fielding Institute for Latter-day Saint History), 145.

³⁸ Clark, "Women and the Body," 150.

The thrust of Clark's argument is that at the heart of Mormon doctrine of the body is a conceptualization of human physicality that was fundamentally different than most other Christian dogmas at the time. Human sexuality, when exercised within sanctioned relationships, was not just a good thing, but a highly spiritual one.

Without careful examination, one could read Clark's argument and conclude that early Mormonism endorsed sexual promiscuity disguised as religious practice. Benjamin E. Park does much to clarify this misconception in his article "Salvation through a Tabernacle: Joseph Smith, Parley P. Pratt, and Early Mormon Theologies of Embodiment." Park argues that Mormon theology of the body consisted of both positive and negative conceptions.³⁹ While the act of procreation was a reflection of God's own increasing powers, early Mormonism believed that human sexuality must be strictly confined within proscribed parameters. The body was good, but unbridled bodily appetites were not. Park draws largely from Mormon scripture and early church leaders' sermons which describe mastery, not denial, of one's passions. In other words, man must learn to avoid "the unlawful indulgence of that which is otherwise good."⁴⁰ Most Christians would describe this as overcoming the flesh with the spirit, but Park is careful to point out that in Mormonism by exalting the flesh, the distinction between what was spirit and what was flesh lost significance.⁴¹

³⁹ Benjamin E. Park, "Salvation through a Tabernacle: Joseph Smith, Parley P. Pratt, and Early Mormon Theologies of Embodiment," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 43, no. 2 (Summer 2010), 1-44.

⁴⁰ Parley P. Pratt as cited in Park, "Salvation through a Tabernacle," 24.

⁴¹ Park, "Salvation through a Tabernacle," 13.

The equating of spirit and flesh stemmed from an 1843 revelation from which Joseph taught that “all is matter,” even spirit.⁴² As Park observes, such a claim by Joseph carried heavy theological implications. By making the spiritual realm material, Joseph essentially denied any possibility of an ex nihilo creation. Man’s soul or at least the substances from which it was made would have had to always exist. The materialization of spirit thus required a pre-existence of some form. Furthermore, if the substance of the soul was eternal, then it would continue to exist after death just as it would have needed to exist prior to mortality. Explaining the impact of such complex teaching upon early Mormonism is an exceptionally difficult task. Samuel Morris Brown’s recent book *In Heaven as it is on Earth: Joseph Smith and the Early Mormon Conquest of Death* is exemplary in its deconstruction of such a complex theological point. Brown’s main contention is that Joseph’s teachings of a pre-existence when combined with the sacralization of the physical body put man on the same existential plane as God. God and Christ are eternal beings, but so is the material substance from which man’s spirit and body are made. Christ himself took upon a physical body like man’s, thus man’s body can take on an incorruptible nature like Christ’s. In other words, Christ and man were literally the same species, only one more evolved than the other. “Smith’s God was not the ontologically distant Creator of the Chain of Being, but the founding parent of its genealogical hierarchy.”⁴³ In this manner Brown argues that the Prophet’s teachings about corporeality and divine embodiment did much more than reassure believers about death and the afterlife, they opened up the great possibility of man becoming like God

⁴² *Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* 131:7-8 (1981).

⁴³ Samuel Morris Brown, *In Heaven as It Is on Earth: Joseph Smith and the Early Mormon Conquest of Death* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 262.

himself, with spirit and bodily matter eternally incorporated and blessed with eternal increase.

The most radical of these teachings were not publicly or fully articulated until toward the end of the Prophet's life. However, they are the final products of a concept of sacred corporality theology that had been developing in Mormonism for about ten years; the same time it was struggling to achieve a uniform practice of the Word of Wisdom. One would expect that the simultaneous development of Word of Wisdom practice and Mormon theology of the body would shape one another in mutually reinforcing ways. If the body is sacred, a disciplined and healthy diet would demonstrate the reverence that the sacred vessel deserved. However, this was not the case. Ironically, as Joseph's teaching concerning the sanctity of both man and God's body increased, official and popular observance of the Word of Wisdom declined. The explanation lies, in part, with the regional characteristic of the American Temperance Movement in relation to the early Mormon Church's migration through several different regions: Ohio, Missouri, Illinois, and Utah. This is not to say that Mormon leaders and members themselves regarded official changes in church policy or doctrine as calculated responses to exterior circumstance. For believers, divine communication was always involved even as external circumstances prompted certain actions. In the words of one prominent Mormon scholar and leader, the revelations and changes to the revelations "were received in answer to prayer, in times of need, and came out of real-life situations involving real people."⁴⁴ In other words, the historical circumstances were part of Joseph's and Mormonism's revelatory culture.

⁴⁴ *Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, Explanatory Introduction (1981).

At the time Joseph received the Word of Wisdom, the Church population was distributed between Kirtland, Ohio, and the western Jackson and Clay counties in Missouri. Chapters one and two will examine the reform culture that abounded in Kirtland, Ohio, where Joseph received the revelation. In the Kirtland area, the American temperance movement was strong and tension surrounding the Word of Wisdom was perhaps strongest amongst the Kirtland membership. This environment led to conflict as Joseph's followers adopted their neighbor's reformist ideologies to varying degrees. In 1838 the body of church members migrated from Kirtland to join their Missouri brothers and sisters. Chapter three will examine Mormon theological and political conflicts that took place in Missouri where reception and observation of the Word of Wisdom was more mixed. The years members of the Mormon Church spent in Missouri were harsh. Frequent mob violence and the refusal of the state government to protect Mormon lives and property strained the church population, and Missouri church leaders began to assert themselves against the Prophet Joseph. The Mormon power struggles in Missouri illuminate the lackadaisical approach to temperance and the Word of Wisdom, as church dissenters used the Word of Wisdom as a weapon against Joseph's prophetic claims. Continued violence forced the church population to flee to Commerce, Illinois, in 1839. Chapter four will examine the Mormons' time in Illinois where the Word of Wisdom was perhaps less strictly enforced there than anywhere else in Mormon history. However, it was also in Nauvoo that most of Joseph's teachings about the body were most clearly and publicly expressed. The inconstancy indicates that initially differences in regional environment, not theology, were the greater influences on how early Mormons interpreted and observed the Word of Wisdom. It was not until long after the church body

migrated to Utah in 1847 that Word of Wisdom and Mormon body doctrine stabilized. The conclusion will examine that process. Simply put, in spite of an increasing emphasis on body sanctity, the divided Mormon population demonstrates that as the Mormon Church moved away from Kirtland, Ohio, where temperance was a strong political issue, to areas where it was less of a societal force, such as Missouri, Illinois, and Utah, the enforcement and interpretation of the Word of Wisdom attenuated.

CHAPTER II

STRUGGLES OF ORIGIN

Defiant of the cold weather, a young twenty-five year old Joseph Smith Jr. and his wife, Emma, then six months pregnant with twins, traveled some two-hundred and fifty miles from western New York to the small township of Kirtland, Ohio. In spite of such a precarious appearance, when Joseph arrived in Kirtland in February 1831, he had already made himself known throughout much of the American Northeast. Less than one year earlier, he and some close friends had produced and published a new volume of Christian scripture, *The Book of Mormon*. Shortly thereafter Joseph and Oliver Cowdery, one of his earliest followers and confidants, organized a new church, ordained evangelists, and commissioned them to seek out converts to the new faith. What would become popularly known as the Mormon Church, and later as The Church-of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, was one of many restorationist sects which emerged during the Second Great Awakening. Like many restorationist sects, early Mormonism sought out, or professed to have, the same identifying characteristics as biblical Christianity. Claiming restored priesthood and doctrinal authorization, the early Mormon missionaries were surprisingly successful, winning small groups of people to their faith throughout New York and New England. But when Mormon missionaries passing through Kirtland baptized over one-hundred people in just one month, Joseph decided to move west and establish the church's headquarters in the area known as Ohio's "Western Reserve."¹ Over the next

¹ The Western Reserve was given the name by Connecticut citizens who originally claimed the area as their own in the period shortly following the American Revolution. See "The Connecticut Western Reserve," Bristol Public Library, <http://www.bristol-libraryoh.org/community/10-community/25.html> (accessed December 11, 2012).

seven years thousands of Mormon converts would flock to Kirtland from the eastern United States, Canada, and Europe, eventually tripling the town's population.²

Revelation was at the center of these early Mormons' conversion experiences. To them, Joseph Smith's claim that he translated *The Book of Mormon* from ancient documents via divine inspiration was only one characteristic of the early church which believers saw as evidence that the heavens were no longer silent. By 1831, Joseph had been claiming heavenly visions and visitations for over ten years. As part of the restoration of the Ancient Christian Church, Joseph taught that continued and living revelation was necessary for the restored Christian gospel, not merely as a tool for its establishment, but as an identifying characteristic of its existence. In short, Joseph was a prophet, and as long as Christ's true gospel was upon the earth, prophetic communication with heaven would be a part of it. While living in Kirtland, Joseph would receive over forty-six revelations and seventeen more in the surrounding areas.³

One of these revelations, known to members as the "Word of Wisdom," is among the best known of Joseph's teachings. Joseph received the revelation on February 27, 1833, and began to teach it immediately. Four written copies of the revelation are known to exist and all seem to have been made in either 1833 or 1834. The two "official" manuscript copies are found in Joseph Smith's papers in what are called *Revelation Book*

² Larry T. Wimmer, "Kirtland Economy," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow, (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1992), 1:792-793, <http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/EoM/id/4391/show/3853> (accessed March 14, 2013); Milton V. Backman, "Kirtland, Ohio," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow, (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1992), 1:793-794, <http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/EoM/id/4391/show/3853> (accessed March 14, 2013), .

³ Earl E. Olson, "The Chronology of the Ohio Revelations," *BYU Studies* 11:4 (Summer 1971): 329. Olsen uses the term revelation in a broad sense counting various recorded minutes and explanations as revelations.

I and *Revelation Book 2*. Although the revelations in *Book 1* date back to 1828, the record was probably begun in early 1831 and most of the early revelations are probably copies from earlier manuscripts that are now lost.⁴ Later that year, church leaders meeting in Hiram, Ohio, authorized the publication of Joseph's revelations into a book later known as the *Book of Commandments*. The church-owned printing press was located in the frontier Mormon settlement of Independence, Missouri, and Oliver Cowdery and John Whitmer were assigned to take *Book 1* to Independence for the printing.⁵ Shortly after Oliver's and John's departure from Kirtland, Joseph and his scribe, Frederick G. Williams, began recording new revelations in *Revelation Book 2* which also came to be known as the *Kirtland Revelation Book*.⁶ As additional revelations were received, copies were sent to Missouri for later inclusion in the *Book of Commandments*. Thus the original, or at least the oldest, copy of the Word of Wisdom revelation is found in *Book 2*, from which a copy was later made by Oliver Cowdery into *Book 1*.

The other manuscripts are personal copies made by church members Sidney Gilbert and Wilford Woodruff.⁷ The revelation text did not appear in print until 1835 and with the obvious exceptions of Gilbert and Woodruff, most church members would not have had ready access to the official manuscripts. For the first two years, the doctrine would have had to have been taught by word of mouth. The oral transmission of the Word of Wisdom may account for some of the initial variation in its observance, but even

⁴ Robin Scott Jensen, Robin J. Woodford, and Stephen C. Harper, eds. *Manuscript Revelation Books*. Facsimile edition, first volume of the Revelations and Translations series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, edited by Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman. (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2009), 5.

⁵Ibid.

⁶*Manuscript Revelation Books*. Facsimile edition, *Joseph Smith Papers*, 408-409.

⁷*Documents*, vol. 3 of the Documents series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, edited by Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, forthcoming).

if the text were made widely available, there is not much in the text itself which would have offered much clarification. The revelation wording is wonderfully vague, thus allowing for a wide array in interpretation. The most specific interdiction within the revelation refers to tobacco: “Tobacco is not for the body neither for the belly and is not good for man, but is an herb for bruises and all sick cattle to be used with judgment and skill” The proscriptions concerning alcohol are much less specific.

That inasmuch as any man drinketh wine or strong drink among you behold it is not good neither meet in the sight of your father only in assembling yourselves together to offer up your sacrament before him and behold this should be wine yea pure wine of the grape of the vine of your own make, and again strong drinks are not good for the belly but for the washing of your bodies [*sic*]⁸

The revelation does make an allowance for “pure wine . . . of your own make” to be used in sacramental services, but it does not explain whether non-sacramental wine is appropriate for consumption. It is true that many people involved in the early temperance movement made a distinction between fermented and distilled liquors but no such distinction is made in the revelation itself.

Even more vague is the section of the revelation traditionally interpreted as pertaining to coffee and tea, which simply states that “hot drinks are not for the body or belly.”⁹ Though hot drinks have traditionally been interpreted by Mormons to mean tea and coffee, nowhere does the revelation make that distinction. However large the difficulties such a lack of precision may have presented, the most problematic aspect of the revelation is the absence of any indication as to whether the identified substances are to be abstained from or merely judiciously used in moderation. Most of the contention between early Mormons concerning the Word of Wisdom revolved around the

⁸ *Manuscript Revelation Books*. Facsimile edition, *Joseph Smith Papers*, 311-313, 511-513.

⁹ *Ibid.*

moderation or abstinence question. The wide array of opinions church members immediately expressed are of no help in determining whether the official position was originally one or the other. Neither do the circumstances surrounding Joseph's first teaching of the revelation indicate what his original position may have been.

A little over one month before Joseph received the Word of Wisdom revelation, he organized what would be called the "school of the prophets" in response to God's commandment that he meet with select men "who are called to the ministry" to discuss the basic elements of a liberal education as well as church ministry and doctrine.¹⁰ The school met in a cramped corner room located above the town store of a new member, Newell K. Whitney. It was before this small group that Joseph first presented several of his revelations, including the Word of Wisdom. Unfortunately, minutes from the meetings were not consistently kept and in the case of the Word of Wisdom, no contemporary account survives. The only material describing the actual circumstances of Joseph first teaching the Word of Wisdom are a handful of recorded recollections. These sources, however, are problematic. Most were recorded decades after Joseph first taught the revelation and at times when the church leadership was pushing for stricter observance of the Word of Wisdom. Thus, it is difficult to determine when these statements are accurate recollections and when they were influenced by later pressures for strict Word of Wisdom observance. Perhaps the best known account comes from Brigham Young, which he delivered in 1868 at Provo, Utah. Brigham said:

The first school of the prophets was held in a small room situated over the Prophet Joseph's kitchen, in a house which belonged to Bishop Whitney. . . . The brethren came to that place for hundreds of miles to attend school in a little room probably no larger than eleven by fourteen. When they assembled together in this

¹⁰ *Manuscript Revelation Books*. Facsimile edition, *Joseph Smith Papers*, 309, 507; *Published Revelations*, vol. 2 of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, 107.

room after breakfast, the first they did was to light their pipes, and, while smoking, talk about the great things of the kingdom, and spit all over the room, and as soon as the pipe was out of their mouths a large chew of tobacco would then be taken. Often when the Prophet entered the room to give the school instructions he would find himself in a cloud of tobacco smoke. This, and the complaints of his wife at having to clean so filthy a floor, made the Prophet think upon the matter, and he inquired of the Lord relating to the conduct of the Elders in using tobacco, and the revelation known as the Word of Wisdom was the result of his inquiry.¹¹

Brigham was destined to be one of the most influential figures in the history of the American West. After the death of Joseph, he took up the mantle of presiding over the Mormon Church and led thousands of followers across the American continent to settle in the Great Basin of the Rocky Mountains. Having converted to Mormonism in 1832, Brigham rose quickly through church leadership positions in spite of only having eleven days of formal education.¹² He became one of Joseph Smith's closest confidants and at the time Brigham gave his account of the Word of Wisdom, there was nobody with more credentials to comment upon Joseph's teachings. However, by his own admission, Brigham was not present when the Prophet first taught the Word of Wisdom and thus all his knowledge of the event would have been secondhand. Brigham's account is supported in an 1886 interview with David Whitmer. According to Whitmer, Emma Smith had complained to her husband about the school's tobacco habits and said that it would be helpful if "a revelation could be a hand declaring the use of tobacco a sin, and commanding its suppression." The men present mocked Emma's suggestion; yet, a short time later Joseph produced the revelation.¹³ However, David also was not present when

¹¹ Brigham Young, "Remarks by President Brigham Young, Delivered at Provo, Saturday, February 8th, 1868," In Vol. 12 of *Journal of Discourses by Brigham Young: His Two Counselors, the Twelve Apostles, and Others* (Liverpool: F. D. Richards, 1869), 158.

¹² Leonard J. Arrington, *Brigham Young: American Moses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), 11, 20, 30.

¹³ Lyndon W. Cook, ed., *David Whitmer Interviews: A Restoration Witness* (Orem Utah: Grandin Book Co. 1991), 204.

Joseph received the revelation; he was presiding over the Mormon settlements in Missouri at the time. Furthermore, given the similarities between his and Brigham's references to Emma, it is possible that David was repeating Brigham's words that he had heard from someone else. At any rate, Brigham frequently attended the school of the prophets and was familiar with the conditions in which they met. His account has some weight.

Zebedee Coltrin, another early church member, though not as influential or prestigious as Brigham Young, was present for the revelation's first teaching. Coltrin did keep a journal from August 1832 to March 1833, but strangely he never mentions diet, temperance, or the Word of Wisdom. Fifty years later, when Coltrin was one of the last surviving members to have seen Joseph first teach the Word of Wisdom, Young's successor John Taylor asked him to relate his experiences to an assembled group of church elders in southern Utah. According to Coltrin:

When the Word of Wisdom was first presented by the Prophet Joseph (as he came out of the translating room) and was read to the School, there were twenty out of the twenty-one who used tobacco and they all immediately threw their tobacco pipes [pipes?] into the fire [sic].

Several days later, Coltrin taught that:

Those who gave up using tobacco eased off on licorice root, but there was no easing off on tea and coffee, these they had to give up straight off or their fellowship was jeopardized. He [Coltrin] never saw the Prophet Joseph drink tea or coffee again until at Dixon about ten years after.

Out of the twenty-one other persons that Coltrin claims were present in 1833, he is only able to name fifteen.¹⁴ None of the men listed produced any surviving document

¹⁴ *Salt Lake School of the Prophets Minute Book*, October 3 and 11, 1883. Church History Library

describing the origins of the Word of Wisdom. Another man, Joel H. Johnson, was not listed by Coltrin but nevertheless published a pamphlet in 1881 in which he claimed:

I was with Joseph Smith, the Prophet, when the Word of Wisdom was given by revelation from the Lord, February 27, 1833 . . . and had used tobacco somewhat extravagantly for fifteen years. I always used some strong drink, and tea and coffee.

I knew that God had spoken and condemned the use of these things, and, being determined to live by every word that proceedeth from His mouth, I laid them all aside, and have not used them since.¹⁵

Even if one can rely on Johnson's claim that he was present when the revelation was first given, his pamphlet amounts to little more than a reiteration of the basic Word of Wisdom tenets. While Johnson does suggest that a position of abstinence was God's will which he personally adopted, nothing in his pamphlet indicates that an abstinence position, rather than moderation, was uniformly accepted by the school of the prophets.

In fact, it was not uncommon for disagreement of proper Word of Wisdom observance to erupt in church leadership meetings. On February 20, 1834, just one year shy of the revelation's anniversary, the Kirtland High Council met to discuss plans for several church Elders who were about to depart on missions.¹⁶ At the meeting someone remarked that while two council members, Orson Pratt and Lyman E. Johnson, were presiding over a church meeting in Springfield, Pennsylvania, some sixty miles east of Kirtland, several members "refused to partake of the sacrament because the Elder

¹⁵ Joel H. Johnson, *Voice From the Mountains-Being a Testimony of the Truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ: As Revealed by the Lord to Joseph Smith, Jr.* (Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor Office, 1881), 12.

¹⁶ The Kirtland High Council was the second highest official governing body of the Mormon Church until the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles was formed in 1835. The High Council should not be confused with the school of the prophets which was an organization for instruction for church leaders and was not given any authorized administrative power, although many members of the High Council would certainly have attended the school.

administering it did not observe the words of wisdom to obey them. [*sic*]¹⁷ Looking toward Orson and Lyman, the council waited a response. Lyman was a large and gruff man. Never one to keep his opinions to himself, Lyman had a commanding presence when in the room. He would later go on to be ordained one of the original Twelve Apostles of the Mormon Church but frequently had trouble submitting to Smith's leadership, and at times lashed out violently when he found disagreement with the Prophet.¹⁸ Characteristic of his abrasive temperament, Lyman rose to speak. He insisted that the members were justified in refusing the sacrament because the "Elder was in transgression."¹⁹ Although he does not come out and say it, Lyman's defense of the Springfield members' actions implies that Orson was the offending Elder.

A debate ensued. Though not as explosive as Lyman, Orson was no coward. Largely self-educated, Orson was a highly intelligent man devoting time to study languages, mathematics, and astronomy. Orson continually spoke his opinion in leadership meetings, frequently locking horns with others, particularly Brigham Young. In the High Council dispute with Lyman, however, the twenty-one year old Orson argued that "the church was bound to receive the supper under the administration of an Elder so long as he retained his office, or licence. [*sic*]"²⁰ Orson was arguing that the virtue of the office was sufficient for administering in the church; Lyman claimed that the virtue of the office holder was just as necessary. As the debate escalated it was decided that six

¹⁷ "Kirtland High Council Minute Book" 20 February, 1834, 39-40. Church History Library. Note: Although Mormonism observes many other religious rites called sacraments, the word sacrament in this case refers to the particular ordinance of the Lord's Supper that Mormonism observes along with most other Christian sects.

¹⁸ The Quorum of the Twelve Apostles was organized in 1835 and became the chief administrative body of the Mormon Church next only to Joseph Smith and his immediate Councilors who constituted the First Presidency.

¹⁹ "Kirtland High Council Minute Book" 20 February, 1834, 39-40.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

different council members should speak at length to the entire council upon the subject: Samuel H. Smith, Luke Johnson, John S. Carter, Sylvester Smith, John Johnson, and Orson Hyde. After the six members spoke to the council, “the President” (presumably Joseph Smith) concluded that: “No official member in this church is worthy to hold an office after having the word of wisdom properly taught to him, and he, the official member, neglecting to comply with, or obey them. [*sic*]”²¹ The resolution was put before the council body which voted to uphold the position.

It is not clear, however, that Lyman won the debate. Orson, if he was the offender, was not disciplined for any Word of Wisdom violation and later in the same meeting both Orson and Lyman were assigned new locations to continue their work as missionaries. Furthermore, there is no indication as to what the council decided what it meant to be “properly taught” or “neglecting to comply” with the Word of Wisdom. However, the results of the Kirtland High Council dispute seem to indicate that church leaders, if not every layman, were held to a somewhat higher standard for Word of Wisdom observance. In practice however, this was not the case. Frequently, church leaders would intervene in arguments of lay members to urge greater patience and tolerance concerning drinking and smoking habits. At other times official church publications would lambast the intemperate for their lack of faith and failure in obedience. Simply put, some of the fiercest disagreements concerning the Word of Wisdom came out of the upper level of church leadership. What can be learned from the Kirtland High Council dispute is that the tensions surrounding the Word of Wisdom were high in Ohio and even those who were charged with teaching the new church’s doctrine to the world often disagreed on the basic

²¹ Ibid.

makeup of that doctrine. This tension can largely be attributed to the highly active temperance environment that surrounded the Mormon Church in Kirtland.

CHAPTER III

STRUGGLES FOR INTERPRETATION – OHIO

The years following the American Revolution were full of uncertainty, not only in regards to the administrative failures of the Continental Congress, but also with regard to the British withdrawal from the Appalachian region, which opened up a world of opportunity and danger for the stream of land hungry settlers abandoning crowded coastal towns. This stream turned into a torrent in the years immediately following the ratification of the United States Constitution as thousands of settlers pushed across New York and dispossessed Indian peoples of their lands after the passage of the Northwest Ordinance. Most of those who came to occupy the Northeast Territories were New England natives and often reflected the interests of their former homes. Connecticut claimed the Western Reserve region, a 120-mile wide strip of land stretching across the bottom of Lake Erie, and a group of land speculators known as the Connecticut Land Company sent one of its shareholders, Moses Cleveland, to survey the area in 1796.¹ Land speculation was risky business and the Western Reserve's isolation and poor soil made sales slow. In 1800 the Connecticut Land Company ceded the Western Reserve to the Federal Government which controlled it until Ohio became a state in 1803.²

Fifteen years later the Kirtland Township was organized in the heart of the Western Reserve area, ten miles south of Lake Erie and twenty-five miles northeast of Cleveland. Charles G. Crary, who later wrote a memoir of his childhood on the frontier, was only five years old when his father took the family into the Kirtland wilderness.

¹ George W. Knepper, *The Official Ohio Lands Book* (Columbus, Ohio: The Auditor of the State, 2002), 23-24.

² Knepper, *Ohio Lands Book*, 23-24.

Though written decades after his experiences, Crary lived most of his life in Kirtland and his memoir is rich in detail about how early Kirtland settlers carved a living out of the land, fighting bears, snakes, wolves, and wildcats along the way.³ In addition to physical challenges, isolation also burdened frontier settlers. Such challenges were common for pioneer families in the early nineteenth-century. In the case of Kirtland, however, such isolation did not last long, as the end of the War of 1812, and the eventual completion of the Erie Canal in 1825, dramatically increased pioneer migration into the Western Reserve.

The pioneers brought their ideologies with them and the Western Reserve was to become known for its reform and temperance activities. Charles G. Crary's memoir details Kirtland's transition from frontier town to a bustling temperance stronghold. In 1819, Kirtland residents established a distillery with the hope of providing isolated Kirtland farmers a means of getting surplus crops to market, enrich the cash poor community, and obtain previously rare commodities, such as yeast, with greater ease. But the distillery proved to be a mixed blessing. In one instance, Crary recalls being sent to the distillery to buy yeast for his mother. Upon returning home, the boy repeated some of the language he had heard while making the purchase. Worried that her son would acquire the distasteful habits, she forbade Crary from visiting the distillery again and explained that they would find yeast some other way.⁴

Being raised in such a household, it is not surprising that Crary came to see Kirtland's distillery in a very poor light. In his recollection, the Kirtland distillery was a

³ C. G. Crary, *Pioneer and Personal Reminiscences* (Marshalltown, Iowa: Marshalltown Printing Company, 1893), 8-9.

⁴ Crary, *Pioneer and Personal Reminiscences*, 23.

complete failure. It failed to increase cash flow or economic prosperity. According to Crary, the only business the distillery was successful in bringing to Kirtland was that of “magistrates and constables” who were needed to police the town from drunks.⁵ At length Crary’s memoir depicts the pitiful victims of the Kirtland distillery. A number of young men who worked the still either died or were crippled from alcohol abuse.⁶ In another example, one man, who was known to fill his jug at the distillery prior to his walk home, stopped to rest by some bushes and there died. By the time the old man was found several days later he was “too much decayed to remove. A hole was dug beside him and he was rolled in, and his jug after him, to cheer him in his lonely grave.”⁷

Perhaps such a gruesome story reveals less about the actual drunkenness in Kirtland’s community than it does about how temperance advocates perceived that alcohol use. Regardless of whether temperance advocates’ fears of the blight of drunkenness were well founded, it was their perceptions that drove them to action. The year following the opening of the Erie Canal a group of Boston clergy and social elites organized the American Temperance Society. The Society’s growth was astonishing. Within ten years of its formation, the American Temperance Society boasted over five thousand chapters and over one million members across the nation.⁸ Trumbull County, Ohio, which originally claimed the Kirtland area, organized its own chapter in 1826, and neighboring counties organized chapters in 1829.⁹ Even where American Temperance Society chapters did not exist, local temperance advocates organized themselves to bring

⁵ Crary, *Pioneer and Personal Reminiscences* 23.

⁶ Crary, *Pioneer and Personal Reminiscences* 24.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Robert H. Abzug, *Cosmos Crumbling: American Reform and the Religious Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 90.

⁹ “Ohio Women’s Temperance Society,” *Ohio History Central*, <http://www.ohiohistorycentral.org/entry.php?rec=959> (accessed April 9, 2013)..

reform. In early 1833, just weeks before Joseph was to receive the Word of Wisdom, the same distillery from Charles Crary's youth went up for auction. Temperance advocates organized themselves together to pool their money and were able to outbid their competitors. They closed down the still and a short time later were able to shut down two more in the town of Mentor, three miles away.¹⁰ In the 1830s a movement to abstain from all forms of liquor, even fermented beers and wines, and what would become known as teetotalism swept Ohio. The Western Reserve was instrumental in carrying the teetotalism cause to other areas of the state.¹¹

The Western Reserve's active temperance community received added strength in 1832 when a cholera pandemic swept first across Asia and Europe, then the Northern United States and Canada. News of the outbreak reached American shores several months before the disease, and the press frequently published warnings and called for preventive measures intended to mitigate any loss. Reform advocates often blamed intemperance for the outbreak.¹² When the epidemic reached North America it would eventually take thousands of lives; and in an era before railroads, waterways were major transporters of the disease. Ohio's newly finished Ohio-Erie canal ran down the center of the Western Reserve and was central in spreading the disease into the region.¹³ Ohio citizens felt cholera's impact, and temperance and diet reformers responded. That same year, perhaps not unrelated to the cholera fears, Charles G. Finney at Oberlin College,

¹⁰ Crary, *Pioneer and Personal Reminiscences* 23-24, 68.

¹¹ Ian R. Tyrrell, *Sobering Up: From Temperance to Prohibition in Antebellum America, 1800-1860* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1979), 12.

¹² Charles E. Rosenberg, *The Cholera Years: The United States in 1832, 1849, and 1866* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987). 40-46; *American Revivalist*, 17 November, 1832; *American Revivalist*, 5 January, 1833.

¹³ Stephen Nissenbaum, *Sex, Diet, and Debility in Jacksonian America: Sylvester Graham and Health Reform* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1980), 97.

sixty miles west of Kirtland, implemented a restriction on tea, coffee, seasoned meats, and unwholesome or expensive foods.¹⁴ Similar reforms during the 1830s increased in popularity throughout Ohio and the Western Reserve as more Ohio residents abandoned moderate temperance reforms in favor of teetotaling ones.¹⁵

Teetotalism was not popular among all drink reformers in Ohio. Although the divisions can be exaggerated, the feuding in the temperance ranks increased as those whom one historian called “ultras” pushed teetotalism with greater enthusiasm.¹⁶ Later on, when Ohio Whigs adopted a prohibition platform, they were soundly defeated throughout the state. The only region in Ohio where prohibition candidates did well was the Western Reserve.¹⁷ The temperance movement divisions grew sharper where religion was concerned. Some radical temperance advocates attacked the use of wine in sacramental services. While many argued that religious sacraments should be exempt from teetotalers’ pledges, others saw alcohol in any form, even religious ceremonies, as a door for potential addiction and abuse. In fact, according to radical teetotalers, churches were the central advocates and proponents of American Christian virtue and thus should welcome and promote the removal of wine from sacramental services.¹⁸

It was in this hotbed of temperance and reform that the Mormon Church found itself upon moving to Kirtland. Many of the Mormon converts who joined in Kirtland would have brought these reform ideologies into the church with them and likewise, as new Mormon converts migrated and settled in Ohio, they too adopted many of the

¹⁴ Nissenbaum, *Sex, Diet, and Debility* 143.

¹⁵ Tyrrell, *Sobering Up*, 150.

¹⁶ Tyrrell, *Sobering Up* 147-148.

¹⁷ Jed Dannenbaum, *Drink and Disorder: Temperance Reform in Cincinnati from the Washingtonian Revival to the WCTU* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 144-146.

¹⁸ Tyrrell, *Sobering Up* 145.

practices of their temperate or teetotaling neighbors. After spending some time in the South, Charles Crary returned to Kirtland in 1831 and was surprised to learn that several of Kirtland's "prominent citizens had joined them [the Mormon Church]: Isaac Morley, Titus Billings, N. K Whitney, John M. Burk and Jotham Maynard." Several of these Mormon converts seemed to come from families which Crary listed as active members of the Kirtland Temperance Society, of which he too was a member.¹⁹ There is no record that Joseph Smith was a member of any formal temperance organization, but Joseph frequently interacted with Crary and other temperance advocates and had a subscription to the *American Revivalist and Rochester Observer*, which frequently condemned the vices of alcohol.²⁰ This is not to say that the Kirtland temperance movement and Mormon settlers had a completely harmonious relationship. Even after the Word of Wisdom was first implemented, Crary recalled that the interactions between Mormons and other temperance promoters were often contentious. Crary saw the Mormon religion as "an aggressive one" which would impose its morals and societal outlook upon others.²¹ As disingenuous as such a statement seems coming from a very active temperance reformer, Crary's grievances seem to come from his interactions with Mormons within the temperance movement, not without. For example, Crary blames Mormon participation in the Kirtland Temperance Society for eventually leading to the Society's downfall. In Crary's words:

When and how the [Kirtland] temperance society died I can only speak from memory, but think that October, 1835, was our last regular meeting, and the society was overslaughed and smothered by the influx of Mormons – not that they

¹⁹ Crary, *Pioneer and Personal Reminiscences* 21, 25.

²⁰ Joseph Smith, letter to N. C. Saxton, January 4, 1833, Joseph Smith Letterbook 1:14-18, Joseph Smith Collection, LDS Church History Library; Joseph Smith, letter to N. C. Saxton, February 12, 1833, Joseph Smith Letterbook 1:27-28, Joseph Smith Collection, LDS Church History Library.

²¹ Crary, *Pioneer and Personal Reminiscences* 52.

were intemperate, for I believe they would compare favorably in that respect with a large number of our old citizens. It was reported, however, that they consumed a barrel of wine and other liquors at the dedication of the Temple, enabling some of them to see angels, have visions, prophesy and dream dreams. But many of the temperance workers were driven away and those that remained let the society die by default. [sic]²²

This strange account in Charles Crary's memoir reveals the very mixed relationship he had with the Mormon settlers. Throughout his memoir Crary remarked how he enjoyed doing business with the Mormon settlers and in general found them respectable and honest people only to follow up with periodic condemnations of Mormon doctrine, perceived self-righteousness, and hypocrisy. Such inconsistencies indicate that as Crary wrote his memoir, years after his Kirtland association with Mormons, he was unable to divorce his personal interaction with his Mormon neighbors from prejudicial gossip circulated by Mormon critics. The example of the Mormon participation with the Kirtland Temperance Society is illustrative. When Crary spoke of the Mormon influx into the Society's meeting and the comparable temperance of the Mormon people he is speaking "from memory" or personal experience. When he began to talk about the Mormons' intemperance and hypocrisy at the temple dedication ceremony, his remarks came not from personal experience, but rather "it was reported" to him by someone else. Memory and rumor became conflated in Crary's memoir.

This is not to say that accusations of Mormon inconsistency or hypocrisy concerning the Word of Wisdom were unfounded. Clearly many Kirtland Mormons were involved in temperance activities, but not all Mormons were. Although no other records of Mormon drunkenness at the Kirtland temple dedication are known to exist, the diversity of the Mormon population makes it entirely possible that some Mormons did

²² Crary, *Pioneer and Personal Reminiscences* 25-26.

drink at the event. In fact, the inconsistencies in Mormon Word of Wisdom observance were similar to the divisions between “ultras” and moderate temperance reformers.

These divisions crept up in seemingly harmless circumstances. In one example, George A. Smith, the Prophet Joseph’s cousin, recorded in his autobiographical *History* one such incident that took place several months after Joseph taught the Word of Wisdom.

According to George A. Smith, in May 1833:

we arrived at Kirtland, Ohio, having travelled 500 miles . . . on the next day we hired a house ~~in the City~~ of Brother Joseph Coe & moved into it. ~~Brother~~ Cousin Joseph took Brother Brown's family home with him—his Wife asked Sister Brown if she would like a cup of tea or coffee after her long journey—in a few days ~~they settled~~ in company with Elder Jos. H Wakefield they purchased a large wagon, in the town of ~~Heble~~ Chargin,> & settled there contrary to the council of the Prophet & they all afterward apostatized, assigning as a reason that the Prophet's Wife had offered them tea & coffee <w[hi]ch was> contrary to the word of wisdom, & that they had actually seen Joseph the Prophet <come down out of> the translating room & go to play with † his children. [*sic*]²³

Even if George A. Smith is remembering the incident correctly, any excuse the Brown family may have given for leaving the church could have simply been a pretense. However, if the Word of Wisdom truly was at the center of the Brown family’s apostasy, one wonders why they would cite the failure to keep a commandment given by a man they no longer regarded as a prophet as reason for abandoning the church that prophet founded. Such a contradiction in the Browns’ rationale indicates that although George A. Smith referred to the Word of Wisdom in describing the Browns’ actions, a more accurate conclusion would have been that broader diet and/or temperance reform was at the root. In other words, Emma Smith’s offer of tea and coffee to the Browns was

²³ George Albert Smith, “History of George Albert Smith by Himself” (Manuscript, 185?), 10; George Albert Smith, “Gathering and Sanctification of the People of God,” in Vol. 2 of *Journal of Discourses by Brigham Young: His Two Counselors, the Twelve Apostles, and Others*. (Liverpool: F. D. Richards, 1855), 214.

offensive to the dietary sentiments the Browns shared with their Western Reserve neighbors. The Browns wanted a church that reflected “ultra” teetotaling positions; when they saw that Mormonism, in spite of the Word of Wisdom, did not do so, they left.

As far as the historical record indicates, Emma never received any disciplinary sanctions, and it seems safe to assume that if George A. Smith knew about her offering coffee to visitors, her husband Joseph would also have known. One possible explanation for Emma’s actions is when early church members were taught that “hot drinks are not for the body or belly,” some may have regarded the Lord’s commandment as a proscription of all hot drinks *except* tea and coffee.²⁴ If anything, Emma’s experience with the Browns indicates that interpretation and moderation concerning the Word of Wisdom were inconsistent within the Mormon population.

Contributing to the inconsistency would be the other Mormon members and leaders who held “ultra” ideologies and did not leave the church but instead tried to influence the church and its members to adopt their views. In November 1836 the *Messenger and Advocate*, the Church’s official newspaper, printed an editorial describing the Kirtland High Council meeting that had taken place two years earlier. The editorial did not mention the dispute between Lyman Johnson and Orson Pratt. However, the article quoted the church leaders as saying that “no official member in this Church is worthy to hold office” if after having been taught the Word of Wisdom fails “to comply with or obey it.”²⁵ While the *Advocate* clearly stated that observance of the Word of Wisdom was required of church leadership, the article did not explain what exactly

²⁴ See Hyrum Smith, “The Word of Wisdom,” *Times and Seasons* 3, no. 15 (June 1, 1842): 799-800.

²⁵ Editorial, *The Messenger and Advocate* III, no. 2 (November 1836): 412.

observance entailed, thus leaving the same ambiguities that had characterized the Word of Wisdom since its inception.

In an effort to remove such ambiguities, Sidney Rigdon addressed the Word of Wisdom at a church conference the following month. Born in St. Clair Township, Pennsylvania, in 1793, Sidney had been living around Kirtland since 1826. He was a student of Alexander Campbell but broke with the Campbellite movement to organize his own congregation. Sidney went on to establish his own Baptist congregation in Kirtland and was there when the first Mormon missionaries arrived in the fall of 1830. One of these missionaries, Parley P. Pratt, was an old acquaintance of Sidney's and baptized him into the new faith. Intelligent, articulate, and faithful, Sidney held considerable influence in the community and much of the early Kirtland converts to Mormonism were comprised of Sidney's former congregation that followed him into the faith. Upon meeting Sidney, Joseph was impressed with the man. Sidney's popularity with the local population made him a great asset to Joseph and one year later the Prophet chose him as an official councilor of the First Presidency.²⁶

It was in this capacity that Sidney addressed the church on the Word of Wisdom in December 1836. Wilford Woodruff, an avid journal keeper, recorded the event. According to Wilford, after an energetic sermon, Sidney called for the congregation to vote to “discountenance the use intirely of all liquors from the church in sickness & in health except wine at the sacrament & for external washing. [*sic*]” The resulting vote was

²⁶ The First Presidency was created as the chief governing body of the Church. It consisted of Joseph Smith Jr. and two or three ordained counselors. Sidney was one of the first counselors chosen by Joseph, the other being Jesse Gause.

unanimous.²⁷ Mormon observance of the Word of Wisdom was beginning to reflect the sentiments of their “ultra” temperate neighbors. Sidney had used his charisma and rhetorical skills to convince the Mormon congregation then present to adopt a strict abstinence pledge similar to those made at official temperance society meetings. Pledging to abstain and actually abstaining, of course, are two very different things and it is clear that some Mormons were still reluctant to take a complete abstinence position. This reluctance led to conflict and five months later, in May 1837, the *Messenger and Advocate* printed a fierce editorial chiding those who did not fully embrace the Word of Wisdom revelation through strict abstinence. In a departure from its earlier editorial, the *Advocate* argued that all members, whether they were of “high stations or low ones” were expected to observe the Word of Wisdom. The *Advocate* reminded readers that the Word of Wisdom was a commandment and those who ignored it would not be held guiltless. Violation of the Word of Wisdom was not merely slothful disobedience; rather it was a mockery of God and “evidence of a determination to gratify our own corrupt vitiated taste.”²⁸ Even members who had long-established habits of tobacco or alcohol use were not exempt.

You may plead former habits, as an extenuation of your guilt, but we ask if the Almighty did not know your habits and propensities of your nature? Certainly he did. Has he made an exception in your case, or are ye wiser than he? judge ye. [sic]²⁹

The accusatory tone of the *Advocate*'s editorial marked an increasing assertiveness of Mormons embracing a strict interpretation of the Word of Wisdom. No

²⁷ Wilford Woodruff, *Wilford Woodruff's Journal: 1833-1898 Typescript*, ed. Scott Kenney, (Salt Lake City, Utah, 1983), 1:110-111, December 4, 1836.

²⁸ *The Messenger and Advocate* III, no. 8 (May 1837): 510-512.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

author is indicated in the May 1837 *Advocate* editorial. However, Warren Cowdery was serving as paper editor at the time, and the other editing staff was largely comprised of administrative church leaders. Taking the editorial together with Wilford's account of Sidney's December sermon and pledge, it would be tempting to argue that at official levels the Kirtland Mormon body was beginning to adopt a position of strict abstinence concerning alcohol, tobacco, and hot drinks. However, to do so would assume unified Mormon leadership structure which simply did not exist at the time. In fact, by the time Warren Cowdery published the *Advocate's* Word of Wisdom chastisement piece, church leadership was falling apart with vicious internal bickering and threats of violence.

In December of 1836, Wilford Woodruff recorded that Joseph and various apostles began giving a number of sermons chastising the Kirtland membership for various "sins & backslidings."³⁰ Wilford was not one of those "backsliding" members. Not quite thirty years old, Wilford had already made a mark as an early Mormon missionary preaching in Arkansas, Tennessee, and Maine. Wilford would later go on to serve a mission in England where he would personally baptize thousands of converts, and eventually become the fourth president of the church. But in January 1837 Wilford had just been ordained a Seventy and the soundness of the church's leadership was anything but certain.³¹ At one of his first meetings as a Seventy, Brigham Young, ever faithful to Joseph Smith, responded to the growing criticism of Joseph and rebuked upstart leaders and warned them "not to murmur against Moses [Joseph Smith] or the heads of the church."³² Many church leaders chaffed under such reprimands, and resentment only

³⁰ Woodruff, *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, 1:111.

³¹ The Quorum of the Seventy was another priesthood administrative body organized by Joseph Smith in 1835.

³² Woodruff, *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, 1:121.

grew as church leaders in increasingly prominent positions further faulted Joseph for meddling not only in their spiritual affairs, but temporal ones as well. Beginning in 1836, Joseph Smith and other leaders started a local bank, called the Kirtland Safety Society, through which Kirtland residents could gain needed capital to invest in lands and other entrepreneurial ventures. The Ohio legislature did not approve the bank's charter and in an effort to salvage the operation, Joseph left for Monroe, Michigan, in late January 1837 hoping to buy the charter for the Bank of Monroe to provide the needed capital. In his absence several leaders tried to usurp Joseph's position.³³ In early February, members of the Twelve Apostles met in the top floor of the Kirtland temple and began to openly discuss how to depose the Prophet and who they could place in his stead. Again, Brigham rose to defend Joseph and--with the help of his close friend Heber C. Kimball--broke up the opposition and prevented a leadership coup.³⁴

Upon returning, Joseph was alarmed by what happened in his absence and set about to resolve conflict and neutralize dissenters. On February 19, Kirtland Mormons again gathered at the temple where Wilford records that Joseph "addressed the Saints (church members) in the power of God. Those who "were stri'd up in their hearts" against Joseph were "put to silence for the complainers saw that he stood in the power of a Prophet." Wilford's journal entry was initially too optimistic and by May 28, his impressions of the conference outcome had completely changed.

The same spirits of murmuring, complaining, & of mutiny, that I spake of in Feb. 19th in this journal, hath not slept from that day to the present. They have been brewing in the family Circle in the secret Chamber & in the streets untill many & some in high places had risen up against Joseph . . . and they were striving to cast him down. [*sic*]³⁵

³³ Leonard J. Arrington, *Brigham Young: American Moses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), 56-58.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Woodruff, *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, 1:147.

The same day Wilford made his entry Joseph again addressed the members, defended his actions, and reaffirmed his claim as the Lord's chosen prophet.³⁶ Several others spoke to defend the Prophet, but to Wilford's dismay his longtime friend Warren Parrish rose and "in the blackness of his face & corruption of his heart stretched out his puny arm and proclaimed against Joseph." The next day several of the dissenters tried to convene a court through which they could depose Smith. Unable to agree on whether they had the proper authority to do so, the party dispersed.³⁷ In July, Smith's critics voiced their concerns in public. Warren Cowdery, who was still editing the *Messenger and Advocate*, published an editorial in which he indirectly accused Smith of being a despot and plundering the people's money in the Kirtland Bank.

Money we all know is power, and he who possesses most of it, has the most men in his power. If we give all our privileges to one man, we virtually give him our money and our liberties, and make him a monarch, absolute and despotic, and ourselves abject slaves or fawning sycophants. . . . if we thus barter away our liberties, we are unworthy of them . . . whenever a people have unlimited confidence in a civil or ecclesiastical ruler or rulers, who are but men like themselves, and begin to think they can do no wrong, they increase their tyranny, and oppression. . . . Who does not see a principle of popery and religious tyranny involved in such and order of things? [*sic*]³⁸

The opposition to Joseph came to a violent head when he was out of town and Warren Parrish and several other dissenters stormed the temple during services brandishing knives and pistols. Frightened members threw themselves out of windows and summoned the police. The riot was broken up but nobody was indicted.³⁹ The incident in the temple pushed Joseph to the edge and when he returned in August he

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Woodruff, *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, 1:148.

³⁸ *Messenger and Advocate* III, no. 10 (July 1837), 538.

³⁹ Eliza Roxy Snow, *Biography and Family Record of Lorenzo Snow* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Company, Printers, 1884), 20-24.

called for a conference to try to expel dissenters who would not reconcile themselves to his prophetic claims. The morning of the conference, Brigham Young went throughout the town gathering those still loyal to the Prophet and packed them into the pews so as to assure that Joseph would be supported in his decisions.⁴⁰ The church leadership was purged of dissenters, but the damage was done. Joseph's reputation amongst Kirtland's non-Mormon population had been compromised. In November the Kirtland Safety Society fell victim to the 1837 financial panic and the Church, members, and other Kirtland residents lost thousands of dollars. Joseph was left with little recourse and on January 12, 1838, he informed his counselors that the Lord no longer required them to try to make things work in Kirtland. Rather, the faithful members were all to travel to the other Mormon settlements in Missouri.⁴¹

Joseph and a few others left for Missouri immediately but the majority of the remaining members stayed until the spring. Hyrum Smith, the Prophet's brother, returned to Kirtland after the death of his wife and was asked to lead the Mormon migration party, which was named the "Kirtland Camp." The crises of the previous year had heightened sensitivities. Everyone was concerned with demonstrating faithfulness and weary of possible dissention. In this mindset, Hyrum, under pressure from other members, supervised the composition of a "constitution" which established a set of rules and regulations which the Kirtland Camp was to follow throughout the duration of its journey to Missouri. At the center of this constitution was the Word of Wisdom. According to the

⁴⁰ Arrington, *American Moses*, 60-61.

⁴¹ Dean C. Jessee, Mark Ashurst-McGee, and Richard L. Jensen, eds., *Journals, Volume 1: 1832-1839*, vol. 1 of the Journals series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, edited by Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2008), 283.

constitution, camp leaders should “see that cleanliness and decency are observed in all cases, the commandments kept, and the Word of Wisdom heeded, that is, no tobacco, tea, coffee, snuff, or ardent spirits of any kind are to be taken internally.”⁴²

The pro-abstinence position is clear but four days after implementing the constitution, Hyrum gathered the Camp together and told them to “not be too particular in regard to the word of wisdom.” [*sic*]⁴³ The pro-abstinence position in the constitution and Hyrum’s fairly quick call for a more moderate application of the Word of Wisdom suggests that there was a degree of friction among camp members. “Ultra” temperance types who advocated strict abstinence of the proscribed substances in the Word of Wisdom tried to impose that position upon the less stringent members. When the latter resisted, Hyrum called for greater tolerance. The Word of Wisdom had been a source for disagreement within the church ever since it was given in 1833. The last year in Kirtland, however, had taught some church members, like Hyrum, that minor infractions of diet were not overly important when faced with intense opposition and internal discord. Nevertheless, the Western Reserve mindset was not easily abandoned by some Kirtland Mormons, and issues involving the Word of Wisdom were to again arise in Missouri, although in different forms.

⁴² “Kirtland Camp Journal 1838 March-October,” (Manuscript, 1838), 3, 4. Church History Library

⁴³ “Kirtland Camp Journal,” 9.

CHAPTER IV

STRUGGLES FOR POWER – MISSOURI

In colonial times, the frontier could refer to the area just beyond the nearest European settlement. By the time of the Revolution, the eastern seaboard was developed to such an extent that regardless of the opinions of indigenous inhabitants, white Americans began to regard the region beyond the Appalachian Mountains as the frontier. As each new generation of settlers pushed ever further inland, the frontier at various times referred to western New York, the Ohio Valley, Tennessee, Kentucky, the Great Plains, the Rocky Mountains, and the ever ill-defined region known as “The West.” The “American Frontier” was a moving target and when figures wrote about the region, it is often hard to know to what exactly they are referring. For example, in the early nineteenth-century, Americans considered both Ohio and Missouri frontier states but by 1830 the differences could not be more apparent. By 1830 Ohio had over eight times the population of Missouri.¹ Ten years later that gap had narrowed but Ohio would still boast 260,000 citizens to Missouri’s 54,000.² Ohio’s network of canals and later railroads tied the state to northeastern markets and the Whigish politics of free labor and internal improvements. Missouri, on the other hand was established in 1820 as a slave state, and its reliance upon the Mississippi River for most of its commerce tied it closer to southern sentiments.

These regional sentiments had their impact on temperance and dietary movements. The Western Reserve’s access to reform-minded-media via its canal and

¹ Censusrecords.com, “1830 US Census Data by State,” <http://www.censusrecords.com/search?state=missouri,ohio&censusyear=1830> (accessed March 22, 2013).

² Censusrecords.com, “1840 US Census Data by State,” <http://www.censusrecords.com/search?state=missouri,ohio&censusyear=1840> (accessed March 22, 2013).

migration networks gave Ohio teetotalers energy to promote their causes. Missouri's temperance movement was much more modest. From its time as a territory up through the first ten years of statehood, Missouri saw virtually no anti-alcohol campaigning. Often the first permanent buildings set up in new towns were saloons or drink shops.³ Through the 1830s several minor laws regulated the sale of alcohol, but these mostly amounted to taxes on opening taverns or small fines for selling liquor to minors or slaves.⁴ These acts aimed less at limiting alcohol sale or consumption than raising revenue or preventing masters from losing control of their slaves.

There were some efforts at formal temperance organization, but most were confined to the city and county level. In May 1830, the Boone County Temperance Society was organized as an auxiliary of the American Temperance Society. After its first meeting in Columbia, the Boone chapter began recruiting members in the surrounding area. In 1833, temperance chapters from Boone, Cooper, Callaway, and Pike counties, along with small numbers from the cities of St. Louis, Columbia, Auxvasse, Apple Creek, Potosi, and Round Prairie all met to organize the Missouri State Temperance Society, an organization dedicated to total abstinence throughout the state.⁵ Two years later, the Legislative Temperance Society was organized at Jefferson City.

In spite of these milestones, statewide temperance activities were limited and by 1842 the organizations in Columbia and Jefferson City were still the only two large chapters to exist in Missouri.⁶ In fact, until the mid to late 1840s, most Missouri

³ Laura Louise Martin, "The Temperance Movement in Missouri, 1846-1869" (Master's Thesis, Washington University, 1935), 15-16.

⁴ Martin, "The Temperance Movement in Missouri," 17-19.

⁵ Martin, "The Temperance Movement in Missouri," 22-23.

⁶ Martin, "The Temperance Movement in Missouri," 26.

temperance activity was located in the central counties and eastern cities of the state.⁷ Thus the Mormon settlement in far away Jackson and Clay counties would have had limited contact with the temperance reformers. This is a stark difference from Kirtland's location in the heart of Ohio's temperance nursery. Just as Ohio's active temperance climate had a keenly felt impact on Mormon Word of Wisdom observance, Missouri's diffuse population hindered temperance efforts and thus outside cultural pressure on Mormon theology and behavior lessened. This is not to say that Mormonism completely abandoned the Word of Wisdom as a doctrinal and social practice upon moving to Missouri. On a few occasions church leaders actively tried to promote more temperance or charged others with Word of Wisdom violation, but such examples were rare and Mormon reticence concerning the Word of Wisdom reflected the general attitude in Missouri's western settlements.

The isolation of Missouri's western settlements in some ways was what attracted Mormons to the area in the first place. In 1830, Missouri's Jackson and Clay counties constituted the far western border of the United States, beyond which was Indian country. Through a series of revelations in late 1830 and early 1831, Joseph Smith began sending several members to Jackson and Clay counties first to preach the gospel to the Indian peoples located nearby, and later to establish a settlement that Smith taught would eventually be recognized as God's special heaven for his disciples, an American Zion.⁸ Oliver Cowdery, Peter Whitmer Jr., Parley P. Pratt, and Ziba Peterson were the first

⁷ Martin, "The Temperance Movement in Missouri," 24.

⁸ Robin Scott Jensen, Robin J. Woodford, and Stephen C. Harper, eds. *Manuscript Revelation Books*. Facsimile edition, first volume of the Revelations and Translations series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, edited by Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman. (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2009), 52-55, 147-151, 159-160, 583-584.

Mormon missionaries to be sent to western Missouri. Federal agents prevented the missionaries from doing extensive preaching among the Indian peoples; however, Oliver and his companions settled themselves in the nearby town of Independence.⁹

Mormon migrants began pouring into Independence and the surrounding areas. In 1832 Mormon entrepreneur and poet W. W. Phelps established a printing press in Independence and he was soon printing Joseph Smith's revelations and editorials in *The Evening and Morning Star*. The influx of Mormon settlers did not sit well with other Missouri residents. After reading in the paper of Joseph's teachings concerning the establishment of Zion, Missourians feared that Mormon settlers would monopolize all the good farmland to be had in the region. To complicate matters further, slaveholding Missourians felt that Mormon settlers coming mostly from northern states shared an ideology that posed a threat to their established social norms.¹⁰ Tensions erupted into violence in 1833 when angry Missourians broke into Phelps's printing office and destroyed his press. Periodic violence continued until many of the Mormons had been pushed off their lands in Jackson and took refuge in Clay County. In 1836 and 1837, Missouri mobs again pushed some Mormon settlers into the newly organized Caldwell and Daviess counties. By the time Joseph arrived in early 1838 his followers were demoralized and scattered across four different counties.

It would be easy to argue that high tensions and sporadic violence would impede and any firm implementation or debate regarding the Word of Wisdom, but to dismiss the Mormon silence on the Word of Wisdom as merely fallout from Missouri's violent

⁹ Leland H. Gentry, "Light on the 'Mission to the Lamanites,'" *BYU Studies* 36:2 (1996-1997): 226-234.

¹⁰ Richard Lyman Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 222-223.

circumstances ignores the fact that while in Kirtland internal dissent, increasingly hostile neighbors, and threats of violence did not hinder temperance zealots from aggressively promoting an abstinence position to the Word of Wisdom. Missouri's lethargic temperance activity and other regional characteristics could have easily played a significant role. There is only one known instance in Missouri where Mormon settlers directly addressed the proscriptions of the Word of Wisdom in regard to lay members. In November, 1837, a general assembly of the Missouri members voted "not to support stores and shops selling spirituous liquors, Tea, coffee or tobacco," but it is clear that some members thought of this pledge as optional, and not binding upon all members.¹¹ Furthermore, it was not until 1838, as Joseph and other Western Reserve Mormon transplants began arriving in Missouri, that the Word of Wisdom would be first cited in formal church disciplinary hearings. However, internal strife, not temperance, would be the underlying factor.

The church's internal dissention was not confined to Kirtland. Church leaders in Missouri had been ignoring directions from Joseph Smith for some time and had been acting in increasingly autonomous ways. There was concern within the remaining Mormon population that the Missouri church presidency, John and David Whitmer, W. W. Phelps, and Oliver Cowdery, had been misappropriating church lands and keeping some of the profit for themselves. At the heart of the matter lay the selling of lands in Jackson County, which many members felt were consecrated lands for the building of Zion, the selling of which demonstrated not only greedy motives, but a disregard for

¹¹ 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, 1983), 124-125, 179-180.

God's commandments.¹² On January 26, a little over seven weeks before Joseph's arrival, the Missouri High Council held a church disciplinary court to investigate the actions of the presidency and determine if official church sanctions should be implemented. In addition to the accusations of selling church land without authorization for personal profit, the defendants were also charged with violating the Word of Wisdom. W. W. Phelps and Oliver Cowdery rejected the accusation outright, the former claiming that he indeed did keep it while the latter said that he only drank tea on rare occasions when he was ill. The Whitmers were more hostile, claiming that although they did not use tea and coffee, "they did not consider them to come under the head of hot drinks" and thus not proscribed by the Word of Wisdom.¹³

Their protestations did not matter and after further discussion, the council resolved that "under existing circumstances we [the Missouri High Council] no longer receive them as presidents."¹⁴ A little over a week later a general assembly of the Missouri church was convened in which the charges brought against the Presidency were reiterated before the main membership body. Almost as an afterthought, the High Council informed the members of "D. Whitmer's wrong in persisting in the use of tea, coffee, and tobacco." The gathered members voted and rejected the Missouri Presidency as legitimate presidents; Thomas B. Marsh would serve as president pro tempore.¹⁵ W. W. Phelps and John Whitmer were excommunicated from the church while David and Oliver received a lesser penalty of being disfellowshipped. The Whitmers and W. W. Phelps

¹² Dean C. Jessee, Mark Ashurst-McGee, and Richard L. Jensen, eds., *Journals, Volume 1: 1832–1839*, vol. 1 of the Journals series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, edited by Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2008), 253 note 94.

¹³ Cannon, *Far West Record*, 135-136.

¹⁴ Cannon, *Far West Record*, 136.

¹⁵ Cannon, *Far West Record*, 137.

refused to accept the council's decisions and on March 10, wrote a letter of protest challenging the council's authority to try them. Several witnesses testified before the High Council and confirmed the charges of land sales, and one "Br. Newberry" testified that David Whitmer had on occasion told him that the drinking of alcohol was acceptable.¹⁶ The council would not reverse its decision and four days later, after Joseph arrived in Missouri, the Prophet approved the action.

The record does not indicate why David and Oliver were not excommunicated at the same time as the other Presidency members. Perhaps the special relationship the two had with Joseph is why the latter gave them extra time to address the accusations. David and Oliver had both been with Joseph from the earliest days of his religious work. Oliver had served as the chief scribe as Joseph dictated the text of *The Book of Mormon*, much of it while sitting in the Whitmer home. Both David and Oliver were distinguished in the Mormon community as being two of the three people, besides Joseph, who claimed to have seen, by heavenly power, the golden plates from which *The Book of Mormon* was said to have come. In spite of their unique history with Joseph, their relationship with the Prophet soured with time. Oliver circulated reports questioning Joseph's morality while David openly questioned his legitimacy as a religious leader. By April 1838, neither one had been able to reconcile his differences with Joseph or the Missouri High Council. On April 12, Oliver was excommunicated, with David Whitmer and Lyman Johnson following him the next day.¹⁷

The 1838 dismissal of the Missouri Presidency was an odd mix of the serious accusations of the misuse of church lands for personal gain and the seemingly out of

¹⁶ Cannon, *Far West Record*, 145-150.

¹⁷ *Journals, Volume 1: 1832-1839*, vol. 1, *Joseph Smith Papers*, 251-256.

place grievances concerning tea, coffee, and alcohol. The inclusion of Word of Wisdom violations in the charges would indicate that the Missouri members had begun to enforce the revelation's observance in ways similarly strict to their Kirtland predecessors. However, as seen in the Kirtland High Council meeting with Lyman Johnson and Orson Pratt, disagreements on the Word of Wisdom alone did not result in any disciplinary action. Furthermore, when one examines the formal charges leveled against Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer, it becomes clear that underneath the Word of Wisdom and land sale accusations was an unfolding power struggle between Joseph Smith, his followers, and the Missouri Church Presidency. In the case of Oliver Cowdery the formal charges leveled against him were

1st For persecuting the bretheren by urging on vexatious lawsuits against the Bretheren and thus distressing the inocent. 2nd For seeking to destroy the Character of Pres. Joseph Smith Jr by falsly insinuating that he was guilty of adultery &c. 3rd By treating the Church with contempt by not attending meeting. 4th For virtually denying the faith by declaring that he would not be governed by any ecclesiasticle authority nor revelation whatever in his temporal affairs. 5th For selling his lands in Jackson Co. Contrary to the revelations. 6th For writing and sending an insulting letter to Pres. T. B. Marsh while on the high Council attending to the duties of his office as president of the Council and <by> insulting the high Council with the contents of said letter: 7th For leaving his calling in which God had appointed him by revelation for the sake of filthy lucre & turning to the practice of Law. 8th For disgracing the Church by being Connected in the Bogus business as common report says. 9th For dishonestly retaining notes after they had been Paid, and finally for leaving or forsaking the cause of God and returning to the begerly elements of the world, neglecting his high and holy Calling Contrary to his profession [*sic*]¹⁸

The Word of Wisdom, intemperance, alcohol, tobacco, tea, or coffee are not mentioned in Oliver Cowdery's formal charges of excommunication. The remaining charges have to be examined in light of the crisis the Church barely survived in Kirtland less than one year earlier. Joseph's claims as God's chosen religious leader were directly

¹⁸ *Journals, Volume 1: 1832–1839*, vol. 1, *Joseph Smith Papers*, 251-254.

challenged while in Kirtland as men in the highest levels of church leadership sought to overthrow or replace him. Furthermore, the failure of the Kirtland bank and the general economic panic of the previous year had made many people suspicious of any sort of monetary speculation or malpractice. The Mormons in Missouri were aware of what had been transpiring in Kirtland, and the charges against Cowdery reflect their paranoia. Charges 2, 4, and 6 brought against Oliver all have to do with a refusal to accept, support, or submit to what Mormons saw as legitimate claims to authority. Charges 5, 7, 8, and 9 all pertain to improper or dishonest financial actions. The 8th charge concerning “Bogus business” most likely refers to the use of counterfeit currency in business transactions, a charge Cowdery would consistently deny throughout his life.¹⁹ The first charge apparently has to do with a debt collection enterprise Cowdery was beginning in Missouri which could be seen as both a challenge to established authority and a financial malpractice. In light of the financial troubles from the Kirtland bank, with which Oliver had been associated, members saw his collection of debts from fellow Mormons on behalf of non-members as a dubious practice when such matters should be handled by church courts and councils.²⁰

Some of these charges, such as slander against Joseph Smith, can be readily verified while others cannot be proven because no legal inquiry ever took place. For this thesis, at any rate, Cowdery’s guilt or innocence is not at issue; the mindset of those who brought the charges in the first place is. Oliver’s trial, charges presented against him, the church disciplinary outcome, and Joseph’s support for the rulings exposes a worried theological hierarchy that saw God’s church and His chosen leaders as being threatened

¹⁹ *Journals, Volume 1: 1832–1839*, vol. 1, *Joseph Smith Papers*, 254 note 96.

²⁰ *Journals, Volume 1: 1832–1839*, vol. 1, *Joseph Smith Papers*, 251 note 91.

by libel, internal discord, financial distress, and malicious cabals. Joseph and those loyal to him sought out whom they thought were the malefactors and removed them from positions where they could cause harm. An examination of the charges against David Whitmer reveals a similar scenario. The formal charges leveled against Whitmer were:

1st – For not Observing the word of wisdom. 2nd – For unchristian-like conduct in neglecting to attend meetings, in uniting with and possessing the same spirit as the dissenters. 3rd – In writing letters to the dissenters in Kirtland unfavorable to the cause, and to the Character of Joseph Smith, Jun. 4th – In neglecting the duties of his calling, and separating himself from the Church, while he had a name among us. 5th – For signing himself President of the Church of Christ in an insulting letter to the high Council after he had been cut off from the Presidency. [*sic*]²¹

Although the violation of the Word of Wisdom is listed first among Whitmer's offences, in light of the power and financial struggles faced in Kirtland and now in Missouri, the charges of association with dissenters, and defaming the character of Joseph Smith would have carried more weight in the disciplinary hearing. Interestingly, the charges of misuse of church lands and finances that were mentioned in the first trial on January 26 were not mentioned in the formal excommunication hearing. Although it is listed first, the Word of Wisdom was in fact a minor charge in David Whitmer's excommunication. Ironically, David's own insistence later in life provides the best evidence for such a conclusion. Over the years David's opinion of Joseph Smith and the Mormon Church soured. In December 1886, David wrote to the leadership of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, a dissenting group of the larger Mormon Church. Two months later, the Reorganized Church published the letter in its periodical *The Saints' Herald*.²² In the letter Whitmer claims that his excommunication was not a consequence of any serious infraction. Bitter Mormons, he insisted, had added

²¹ *Journals, Volume 1: 1832–1839*, vol. 1, *Joseph Smith Papers*, 256-257.

²² David Whitmer to *The Saints' Herald*, December 9, 1886, in *The Saints' Herald*, February 5, 1887.

the more serious charges sometime later with the intent to tarnish his image. According to Whitmer, the main charge which led to his excommunication was the violation of the Word of Wisdom.²³

Although Whitmer dismissed other more serious charges and claimed that the Word of Wisdom was at the heart of his excommunication, such qualifications are largely self-serving and should be taken with a degree of caution. An examination of the letter indicates the same sort of power struggle found between Oliver and Joseph Smith was at work between Whitmer and the Prophet. Whitmer wrote that in addition to violating the Word of Wisdom, he was accused of “disbelieving some of Joseph’s revelations, and not teaching them.”²⁴ The charges were not unfounded. In the same letter to *The Saints’ Herald* Whitmer insisted

As for me, my conscience does not condemn me for not keeping the Word of Wisdom; but those who believe it to be of God, if they violate it in the least particular, their conscience cannot be clear of doubt.²⁵

Simply put, David did not believe the Word of Wisdom was a legitimate revelation; Joseph was a fallen prophet by the time he declared the Word of Wisdom in 1833 and Whitmer was under no obligation to obey it. The local leader of Mormon settlements in Missouri was not advocating the will of Joseph Smith and the general church leadership. Thus, the charges of violating the Word of Wisdom were made not because of any regard to the revelation per se, but rather because Whitmer’s actions were outward manifestations of his denial of Joseph’s authority as leader of the Mormon

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

Church. In the wake of the multiple challenges of authority that Joseph faced in Kirtland the previous year, David's dismissal and eventual excommunication are not surprising.

One wonders why, if David thought Joseph was a fallen prophet when he first taught the Word of Wisdom in 1833, he would continue to associate himself with the church for another five years. Answering such a question is difficult. David did not seem to address the issue while he was still in the Missouri Presidency, and most of his explanations for leaving were dictated years later after his bad feelings and ill will had hardened. What does seem clear is that although the Word of Wisdom seems to be at the center of David Whitmer's excommunication, his hostility towards Joseph's claims to prophetic authority was at the root of his actions. Like Oliver, internal power struggles, challenges to authority, or financial dishonesty were the driving forces behind his excommunication. In other words, in spite of its appearance in the Missouri Presidency's excommunications, the Word of Wisdom was a minor influence for the Missouri Mormons, similar to how the broader American temperance movement was of small importance to other Missouri settlers.

CHAPTER V

STRUGGLES FOR DOCTRINE – ILLINOIS

The remainder of 1838 was a mixture of continued difficulty and spiritual recuperation for Joseph Smith and his followers. With religious dissenters dismissed and mob violence placated for a time, Joseph began to again address the spiritual affairs of his people, producing new revelations and establishing a temple site at the settlement of Far West, Caldwell County. The peace was short lived, however, and on August 6, violence broke out at the polling place when a group of Mormons tried to exercise their right to vote in state elections. The conflict escalated as mobs of both Mormons and non-Mormons raided farms and pushed one another out of their homes.¹ On October 27, things turned nightmarish for Smith and his followers when in response to exaggerated reports of Mormon violence, Missouri Governor Lilburn Williams Boggs authorized the state militia to treat the Mormon settlers “as enemies, [whom] must be exterminated or driven from the State.”² Three days later an armed mob surrounded a blacksmith shop on the estate of Jacob Haun and killed seventeen Mormon men women and children. Joseph and several other church leaders were imprisoned and the remaining settlers fled Missouri and sought refuge across the Mississippi River in Quincy, Illinois.³

Smith remained in jail for over five months until he and his fellow prisoners were able to escape custody during a change in venue.⁴ Upon reuniting with his followers,

¹ Alexander L. Baugh, “Joseph Smith in Northern Missouri, 1838,” in *Joseph Smith the Prophet and Seer*, ed. Richard Neitzel and Kent P. Jackson (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2010), 291-346.

² John P. Greene, *Facts Relative to the Expulsion of the Mormons or Latter Day Saints, From the State of Missouri, Under the “Exterminating Order.”* (Cincinnati, Ohio: R. P. Brooks, 1839), 26; *Journals, Volume 1: 1832–1839*, vol. 1, *Joseph Smith Papers*, 333.

³ Baugh, “Joseph Smith in Northern Missouri, 1838,” 291-346.

⁴ Richard Lyman Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 382.

Joseph wasted little time in rebuilding. They relocated to Commerce, Illinois, which they renamed Nauvoo. Given the dissent and violence of 1837 and 1838, the energy with which Joseph and his followers built the city is impressive. Within two years the Mormon settlers had begun the construction of yet another temple and with more members migrating to Nauvoo, mostly from England, the city's estimated population numbered about 3,000 more than the state capital of Springfield.⁵ In spite of this rapid growth, 1840s western Illinois still bore many of the characteristics of America's frontier. The state's population was fluid, with migrants constantly coming and leaving, shaping customs and demographics along the way. Though it was a free state, much of Illinois had been settled by neighboring Kentucky and Missouri migrants, thus giving southern sympathies to much of Illinois politics as the murder of Alton abolitionist Elijah Lovejoy by a pro-slavery mob in 1837 demonstrates. Thus, like many frontier states with southern connections, Illinois was slow to broadly embrace reform movements. Different sects and sectional leanings prevented any formalized temperance organizations from thriving in Illinois until the 1850s.⁶ The small movements that did occur reflect the shifting pattern of temperance reform from a clergy and evangelical driven enterprise to one managed and promoted by entertainment capitalists and temperance professionals.⁷ Like Missouri, Mormon interaction with temperance and diet reformers was much more subdued than when the church was located in Kirtland.

⁵ Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 405.

⁶ Ian R. Tyrrell, *Sobering Up: From Temperance to Prohibition in Antebellum America, 1800-1860* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1979), 56, 243-244.

⁷ Graham Warder, "Selling Sobriety: How Temperance Reshaped Culture in Antebellum America" (PhD diss., University of Massachusetts at Amherst, 2000), 3, 102-103.

This is not to say that Mormonism abandoned the doctrine of the Word of Wisdom; rather Mormons started to interpret that doctrine in ways that reflected the lax temperance atmosphere of western Illinois. For example, in November 1841 Wilford Woodruff attended a church conference at the temple lot. As usual, Wilford recorded the events in his journal. The first speaker was an Elder William Clark who addressed the membership for about two hours. After his sermon, Wilford records that Joseph rose and “reproved him for pharisaical & hypocritical & not edifying the people. [*sic*]”⁸ Joseph went on to speak, teaching his followers what the nature of

temperance faith, virtue, charity & truth was. He also said if we did not accuse one another God would not accuse us & if we did if we had no accuser we should enter heaven. . . . If we would not accuse him he would not accuse us & if we would throw our cloak of charity over his sins he would over ours. For charity covereth a multitude of Sins & what many people called sin was not sin & he did many things to break down superstition & he would break it down. He spoke of the curse of Ham for laughing at Noah while in his wine but doing no harm.⁹

One wonders what Elder Clark could have said to draw such a lengthy and detailed rebuttal from Joseph. Joseph’s reference to both “temperance” and “Noah while in his wine” implies that the Word of Wisdom was the topic at issue. By declaring that “what many people called sin was not sin,” Joseph was calling for a more moderate interpretation and enforcement of the Word of Wisdom. The Mormon members should not accuse one another too readily lest they bring God’s accusations down upon their own heads. However, there seems to be more at stake here than a mere moderating of Word of Wisdom doctrine. In his response, Joseph refers to himself several times when teaching

⁸ Wilford Woodruff, *Wilford Woodruff’s Journal: 1833-1898 Typescript* ed. Scott G. Kenny (Midvale Utah: Signature Books, 1983), 2:136-137.

⁹ Wilford Woodruff, *Wilford Woodruff’s Journal: 1833-1898 Typescript* ed. Scott G. Kenny (Midvale Utah: Signature Books, 1983), 2:136-137.

his followers about refraining from needless accusations and covering one another's sins. It would seem that Elder Clark's strict interpretation of the Word of Wisdom touched either directly or implicitly upon a well-known habit of Joseph himself. Joseph was known to drink wine at weddings and other occasions. Even while in Western Reserve Kirtland, Joseph indulged the habit without considering it a violation of the Word of Wisdom.¹⁰ Simply put, Joseph was teaching that not only were his actions not a violation of the Word of Wisdom, but neither were those of any other member who took a moderate interpretation of the Word of Wisdom. This seems to be the lesson many took away from Joseph's sermon. After the service, for instance, Wilford writes that he met with the Twelve and High Priest quorums to discuss the proceeding of the conference.

The word of wisdom was brought up. B Young says shall I Break the word of wisdom if I go home and drink a cup of tea? No wisdom is justified of her children. The subject was discussed in an interesting manner. All concluded that it was wisdom to deal with all such matters according to the wisdom which God gave. That a forced abstinence was not making us free but we should be under bondage with a yoke upon our necks. [sic]¹¹

Wilford's 1841 journal entries are all the more fascinating when one recalls that this is the same man who five years earlier had recorded that under the direction of Sidney Rigdon, he and an entire congregation in Kirtland made a pledge of complete abstinence regarding the Word of Wisdom. Wilford was an apostle by 1841 and would remain a member in good standing throughout his life, yet his interpretation of the Word of Wisdom while living in Western Reserve Kirtland was markedly different from when he was living in more moderate western Illinois. Part of the shift from strict to more

¹⁰ Dean C. Jessee, Mark Ashurst-McGee, and Richard L. Jensen, eds., *Journals, Volume 1: 1832-1839*, vol. 1 of the Journals series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, edited by Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2008), 153, 165-166.

¹¹ Wilford Woodruff, *Wilford Woodruff's Journal: 1833-1898 Typescript* ed. Scott G. Kenny (Midvale Utah: Signature Books, 1983), 2:136-137.

moderate interpretations of the Word of Wisdom was in the theological approach Mormon leaders began to use to explain the doctrine. When not parroting the arguments of broader temperance activists, most Mormon teetotalers spoke only of abstinence as obedience to God's will and His commandments.¹² Deeper theological justifications for the Word of Wisdom were not broached. That changed in Nauvoo as church leaders began to apply a more cosmologically sophisticated reasoning regarding the revelation. On June 1, 1842, the church's latest newspaper, *The Times and Seasons*, printed a sermon Hyrum Smith gave the previous week. In his sermon, Hyrum gave the most complex interpretation of the Word of Wisdom given by any church authority up to that point. According to Hyrum, the Word of Wisdom could only be properly understood in the context of Mormonism's claim to be a restoration of ancient scriptural doctrines and practices. Hyrum reasoned that originally man was strong and robust. At the time of the Patriarchs, a man could live to be 1,000 years old or more, but as man increased in wickedness he indulged his appetites until "everything [had] become degenerated from what it was in its primitive state."¹³ Thus as part of the restoration of all things, modern man would need to achieve the same sort of bodily longevity as his ancient predecessors by ridding himself of debilitating habits. Hyrum argued that the Word of Wisdom was God's restorative device.

[God] knows what course to pursue to restore mankind to their pristine excellency and primitive vigor, and health; and he has appointed the word of wisdom as one of the engines to bring about this thing, to remove the beastly appetites, the murderous disposition and vitiates of man; to restore his body of health, and vigor, promote peace between him and the brute creation, and as one of the littlewheels in God's designs, to help regulate the great machinery, which shall

¹² Lester E. Bush Jr., "The Word of Wisdom in Early Nineteenth-Century Perspective," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* XIV, no. 3 (Autumn 1981), 49, 57-58.

¹³ Hyrum Smith, "The Word of Wisdom," *Times and Seasons* 3, no. 15 (June 1, 1842): 799.

eventually revolutionize the earth, and bring about the restoration of all things, and when they are restored he will plant “the tree of life, whose leaves shall be for the healing of the nations.” [*sic*]¹⁴

Hyrum had gone far beyond the previous justifications of the Word of Wisdom through the simple rhetoric of obedience. Instead he offered a complex theological argument of restorationist theology through a doctrine of bodily restoration to pristine more godlike conditions. Yet, Hyrum’s teaching did not stand alone in Mormon doctrinal development. In Nauvoo, Joseph too was teaching new doctrines concerning the human body, some of which were the most radical Joseph Smith would ever pronounce. What Hyrum’s sermon did was bridge the Word of Wisdom to Joseph’s newer, more radical doctrines of the human body.

In some ways it is hard to call Joseph’s Nauvoo doctrines of the body new because, unlike the Word of Wisdom which was one revelation that struggled through various interpretations, Mormonism’s doctrine concerning the body came through a series of revelations and discussions among church members over the course of several years starting as early as 1835. At times, later revelations and teachings directly contradict earlier decrees as Joseph’s own opinion and understanding of doctrine changed with the years.

One example of Joseph’s changing doctrines is what he taught concerning the nature of God, and specifically God’s embodiment. When Joseph was meeting with a group of Elders in Kirtland, he and his counselors delivered a series of lectures called “The Lectures on Faith.” The seven lectures addressed a variety of themes including the nature of the Trinity or “Godhead” in which it stated, “The Father being a personage of

¹⁴ Hyrum Smith, “The Word of Wisdom,” 799-800.

spirit . . . The Son . . . a personage of tabernacle . . . possessing the same mind with the Father, which mind is the Holy Spirit.”¹⁵ While Mormonism maintained the distinction of separate personages comprising the Godhead, the idea of the Holy Spirit being a product of the Father and Son’s consciousness was abandoned in favor of a conceptualization of the Holy Spirit as a separate individual entity. More important, however, is the claim that God the Father is a spiritual being, different in composition from the embodied Son. While the direct authorship of the “Lectures” is not known, it seems that the passages concerning the nature of God were most likely written by Joseph, and even if they were not, the Prophet would have been heavily involved in their transcription and eventual publication.¹⁶ Therefore, it can be reasonably claimed that in 1835 Joseph was teaching that God the Father was a spirit.

God the Father as a spirit was a doctrine that closely resembled nineteenth-century mainstream Christian conceptions of deity. The Mormon Church was only five years old when the “Lectures” were published and Joseph and many of his followers still held their previous doctrinal notions. As Mormonism matured, however, doctrinal distinctions became more acute; and in the case of God’s nature this did not take long. Although there is no existing record of Joseph’s immediately changing his teachings on the nature of God the Father, several hearsay sources indicate that within the church there was discussion and shifting conceptions. One of these hearsay accounts is from a Presbyterian minister from Kirtland, Truman Coe, who in 1836 published a letter in the

¹⁵ Robin Scott Jensen, Richard E. Turley Jr., and Riley M. Lorimer, eds. *Revelations and Translations Volume 2: Published Revelations*, vol. 2 of the Revelations and Translations series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, edited by Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman (Salt Lake City: Church Historian’s Press, 2011), 363.

¹⁶ Larry E. Dahl, “Authorship and History of the Lectures on Faith,” in *The Lectures on Faith in Historical Perspective*, ed. Larry E. Dahl and Charles D. Tate Jr. (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1990), 1-21.

Ohio Observer criticizing the Mormon Church which he felt was threatening his flock. Surprisingly accurate in many of the details of early Ohio Mormons, Coe nevertheless lays out a series of sharp criticisms against the church. One of his critiques is that Mormons “contend that the God worshiped by the Presbyterians and all other sectarians is no better than a wooden god. They believe that the true God is a material being, composed of body and parts; and that when the Creator formed Adam in his own image, he made him about the size and shape of a God himself.”¹⁷ Two years later Wilford Woodruff wrote a letter to his non-Mormon brother and corroborates Coe’s assertion by stating,

my soul mourns over the unbelief of man, and the ignorance of the Earth. We talk of deception, and truly there is a world of it, and why should their not be, when there is a whole generation worshiping they know not what, whether a God without mouth, eyes ears, body parts or passions as he does not reveal himself unto them, but there is no deception with the Saints in any age of the world who worship the living and true God of revelation.¹⁸

Taken together, Coe and Woodruff’s letters indicate that even if official church doctrine had not changed since 1835, in the very least, concepts of a physically embodied God was taught and embraced by some of the church leadership. Not all of the church leadership, let alone lay membership, were on the same page with these doctrinal shifts. In 1840 Parley P. Pratt, an apostle serving a mission in England, published a tract rebuking church critic William Hewitt who he said was falsely claiming that Mormons worshiped a physically embodied God. Such claims, Parley claimed “entirely misrepresented us . . . whoever reads our books, or hears us preach, knows that we

¹⁷ Milton V. Backman Jr. “Truman Coe’s 1836 Description of Mormonism,” *BYU Studies* 17:3 (Spring 1977): 1, 6.

¹⁸ Robert H. Slover, “A Newly Discovered 1838 Wilford Woodruff Letter,” *BYU Studies* 15:3 (Spring 1975): 6-7.

believe in the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as one God. That the Son has flesh and bones, and the Father is a spirit.”¹⁹ Parley’s reply to William Hewitt seems to indicate that he held a conceptualization of God’s nature entirely different from that expressed by his colleague Wilford Woodruff. However, Parley goes on to explain that “a personage of spirit has its organized formation, its body and parts, its individual identity, its eyes, mouth, ears, &c., and that it is in the image or likeness of the temporal body, although not composed of such gross materials as flesh and bones.”²⁰ Wilford and Parley’s contradiction can be explained by an understanding that “embodied” need not mean a physical embodiment, but rather a spiritual being whose visual form is that of a tangible body. But such a conclusion cannot be forced upon Wilford without further evidence. Furthermore, someone or something prompted Coe’s and Hewitt’s criticism. Coe certainly had contact with Mormons in Kirtland and Hewitt most likely engaged them in debate in England. Thus, one can easily infer that God as being physically embodied was embraced and discussed by some Mormons in the mid 1830s.

Joseph’s doctrinal position on the corporeality of God was clear by the time he was in Nauvoo in 1841 where private journal accounts record his teaching that God the Father was embodied and even resurrected like Jesus Christ.²¹ But Joseph taught this doctrine only to select people as illustrated by the fact that Parley P. Pratt was still teaching God as a spirit as late as 1844.²² Interestingly, even before he had clearly taught

¹⁹ Parley P. Pratt, *An Answer to Mr. William Hewitt’s Tract Against the Latter-Day Saints* (Manchester, England: W. B. Thomas, 1840), 9.

²⁰ Pratt, *An Answer to Mr. William Hewitt*, 9.

²¹ Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *The Words of Joseph Smith* (Orem, Utah: Grandin Book Company, 1993), 60, 382.

²² Parley P. Pratt, “Intelligence and Affection,” in *An Appeal to the Inhabitants of the State of New York, Letter to Queen Victoria (Reprinted from the Tenth European Edition) The Fountain of Knowledge Immortality of the Body, and Intelligence and Affection*, by Parley P. Pratt (Nauvoo, Illinois: John Taylor, 1844), 31-32.

the doctrine of God's physical embodiment to all church leaders, Joseph was talking about man's physical bodies as being manifestations of a godlike heritage. In January 1841, Joseph was visiting with William Patterson McIntire; their conversation turned to the doctrine of the body and according to McIntire, Joseph taught that "the express purpose of God in Giving it [a body to man's spirit] was to arm it against the power of Darkness. [sic]"²³ According to Joseph, one of the most distinguishing features between mankind and the devil was that God had given mankind bodies, whereas the devil has no tabernacle and wanders "naked upon the earth like a man without a house exposed to the tempest & the storm."²⁴ Therefore, the body was not a burdensome vessel that impeded man's spirit from approaching the divine, rather the body was a gift which increased, not limited, man's abilities. Thus, every being which possessed a body had power over beings that did not.²⁵

Joseph's doctrine of the body as an empowering vessel was a strict departure from what many other Christian sects taught, namely that the body was an impediment to true spirituality. However, when examined along with Joseph's developing doctrine of divine embodiment, the good or even empowering nature of a physical body is a logical consequence. If God is good, and God has a physical body, then the physical body is also good. Thus man, as God's supreme and good creation, would possess a physical body as manifestation of that good potential. The proper order of man's spirit and man's body is to be joined together. This not only echoes Joseph's earlier teaching of a literal

²³ Ehat, *The Words of Joseph Smith*, 62.

²⁴ Ehat, *The Words of Joseph Smith*, 207.

²⁵ Ehat, *The Words of Joseph Smith*, 68.

resurrection, but it also reflects a concept he was teaching at the time he first received the Word of Wisdom, that “the spirit, and the body [together] is the soul of man.”²⁶

The first few years that Joseph and his followers were in Illinois, bodily function and action began to be seen as necessary for spiritual progression, thus giving the body an increasingly central role in Mormon doctrine. In mid-August 1840, Joseph Smith first taught his followers the concept of vicarious baptism for the dead. While describing baptism for the dead, Joseph stated that “the Saints have the privilege of being baptized for those of their relatives who are dead, whom they believe would have , , , received the Gospel in the spirt [*sic*], through the instrumentality of those who have been commissioned to preach to them.”²⁷ Joseph’s statement shows that acceptance of the Mormon gospel was not imposed upon deceased persons through vicarious baptism. The spirits of dead individuals still had the gospel “preach[ed] to them” while “in the spirt [*sic*]” and they could either receive or reject what they had heard. Thus, the only justification for vicarious baptism would be if the deceased who were willing to accept the gospel were unable to do so through formal ceremony. Wilford Woodruff indicated as much when he recorded that to be baptized for the dead was “a privilege to act as an agent . . . in behalf of our dead kindred.”²⁸ If the Spirits of deceased men were able to accept the Mormon gospel of their own volition, the only act that would require an agent would be one they could not do themselves because they were disembodied. Baptism was

²⁶ Robin Scott Jensen, Robin J. Woodford, and Stephen C. Harper, eds. *Manuscript Revelation Books*. Facsimile edition, first volume of the Revelations and Translations series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, edited by Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman. (Salt Lake City: Church Historian’s Press, 2009), 483.

²⁷ Cannon, Donald Q. “Words of Comfort: Funeral Sermons of the Prophet Joseph Smith,” *Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship*, <http://maxwellinstitute.byu.edu/publications/books/?bookid=47&chapid=265#12> (accessed March 27, 2013).

²⁸ Woodruff, *Wilford Woodruff’s Journal*, 2:165.

a physical act which required a physical body. Thus vicarious baptism was not only a manifestation of Illinois Mormon's concern for passed kindred, it was also an indication of the centrality of the human body in Mormon worship.

Vicarious bodily rites soon became applied to all Mormon sacraments including baptism, confirmation of the Holy Spirit, priesthood ordinations, and marriages. Marriage in particular was a sacrament in which the body was most prominently concerned, not simply because one needed a body to kneel and take hands at an altar, but because marriage itself was a way in which men and women could use their bodies to exemplify godliness through procreation. In early Mormonism, sexual relationships between spouses was more than merely a natural benefit of marriage; rather it was a righteous exercise of the godly gift of a body. Speaking of proper and improper sexual relationships, in 1844 Parley P. Pratt wrote:

Men who do not govern their affections so as to keep them within their proper and lawful channel; but who indulge in every vice, and in the unlawful use of that which was originally good . . . they are led into the other extreme; and begin to accuse their nature, or him that formed them of evil. . . . O man . . . Instead of seeking unto God for a mysterious change to be wrought, or for you affections and attributes to be taken away and subdued, seek unto him for aid and wisdom to govern, direct and cultivate them in a manner which will tend to your happiness and exaltation.²⁹

In Pratt's argument, whoremongering was to be shunned, but so was celibacy. Like some early Mormon interpretations of the Word of Wisdom, moderation was the key for proper sexual relationships. However, Parley went beyond calling for a disciplined exercise of sexual activities; Parley clearly states that sexual intimacy was a vehicle in which man could achieve not only happiness, but exaltation. By the term

²⁹ Pratt, "Intelligence and Affection," 39.

exaltation, Parley meant man's "eternal inheritance of the earth" and with the "ceaseless exertions of creative goodness" to live a life like that which God enjoys.³⁰ Creation was at the heart of Mormons' conception of God, and Mormon scripture taught that not only was God the Father the creator of all things, but he was also literally Father of all mankind. Therefore, if God is Father and creator of an ever increasing number of children, the act of mankind having and creating children was in itself a manifestation of godliness.

It is from this concept that the nineteenth-century Mormon practice of plural marriage emerged.³¹ The origins of plural marriage are complicated in part because of the high level of secrecy Joseph invoked when first engaging in and introducing the practice. Furthermore, it seems clear that plural marriage was something that gradually took form in the Prophet's mind. Again, illustrating the evolutionary or developmental nature of Mormon doctrine, Joseph had been pondering and practicing the concepts of plural marriage from the mid-1830s, but it was not until 1841 in Nauvoo that the practice was first discussed openly. Only a few close associates would have known about Joseph's multiple marriages before that point.³² Joseph's hesitancy about openly discussing plural marriage is understandable. Richard Bushman points out that before the Civil War several other marginal American religious sects were practicing sexual experimentation

³⁰ Pratt, "Intelligence and Affection," 35.; *Manuscript Revelation Books*. Facsimile edition, *Joseph Smith Papers* 415-417.

³¹ Mormon plural marriage is more commonly referred to as "polygamy." However, polygamy was a term first applied by critics of the Mormon Church as a pejorative. Although Mormons themselves would eventually come to use the term, in the days of Joseph Smith the practice of having multiple spouses was referred to as "Celestial" or "Plural Marriage." Given the chronological context of this paper, I have chosen to use the original terminology.

³² Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 437-438.

in a variety of forms. Critics of these religious groups saw their behavior as perverse with sexual excess as “the all too common fruit of pretended revelation.”³³

Only Joseph never gave any indication that his revelations concerning marriage were at all pretended. In fact, he tenaciously defended them as commandments from God which he would strive to preserve in spite of their unpalatable nature. As Joseph’s understanding of the centrality of the body to human spirituality increased, he taught and practiced plural marriage more widely. By the time of his death, Joseph had married between twenty-eight and thirty-three different women. In 1841 he had introduced most of the Twelve Apostles to the practice and within the following years at least twenty-nine other men had married at least one additional wife.³⁴ The promulgation of the doctrine lay in the concept that eternal increase was the nature of God and if man was to become like God he would have to increase as well. In Bushman’s words, “the practice had to be generalized because the revelation tied marriage to the highest form of exaltation, . . . The great godly power was procreation, the continuation of seed. The ultimate social order of heaven was familial.”³⁵

There is no written record from Joseph describing his own personal feelings about plural marriage, leaving only glimpses from second hand sources into what he might have thought. Furthermore, it is unclear how many, if any, of Joseph’s plural marriages were sexual. Some of his multiple wives were simultaneously married to other men suggesting that the Prophet, in some cases, thought of the marriages in terms of spiritual relationships designed to draw him and others closer to God as a family unit. There were

³³ Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 323, 438.

³⁴ Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 440, 443.

³⁵ Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 443, 444.

a handful of claims made later on by those claiming the prophet as their father from multiple wives, but these claims are difficult to substantiate.³⁶ But even if Joseph's own plural marriages produced limited offspring, the concept of familial increase as an attribute of godliness remained central to the practice. From a July 1843 revelation Joseph taught that "if a man marry a wife by my word, which is my law . . . and if ye abide in my covenant . . . they shall pass by the angels . . . to their exaltation and glory in all things, as hath been sealed upon their heads, which glory shall be a fullness *and a continuation of the seeds forever and ever.*"³⁷ Familial increase through physical procreation was central to man's progression to God's throne and thus the human body became a projection of human righteousness.

By the 1840s Joseph Smith's concept of heaven had passed far beyond that which mainstream Christianity espoused. Not only would man's physical relationships continue on in the afterlife, but those relationships would be coupled with eternal glory. Quite literally, man would be like God. In an 1844 discourse Joseph quite bluntly claimed:

God Himself who sits in yonder heavens is a Man like unto one of yourselves – that is the great secret! If the veil were rent today and the great God that holds this world in its sphere and the planets in their orbit and who upholds all things by his power – if you were to see Him today, you would see Him in all the person, image, fashion, and very form of a man, *like yourselves.*³⁸

In effect, man and God are the same species, only differentiated in animation, glory, development, and mortal condition. Through righteousness, covenants, ordinances, and resurrection these differences were mitigated, man's mortal body became an immortal one capable of eternal seed and eternal increase.

³⁶ Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 438-439.

³⁷ *Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints* 132:19 (1981), 268.

³⁸ Stan Larsen, "The King Follett Discourse: A Newly Amalgamated Text." *BYU Studies* 18:2 (Winter 1978): 200 (emphasis in original).

These new bodily doctrines were far more revolutionary than anything Joseph had taught before. Although Joseph shared these doctrines periodically with select people over the years, the vast majority of members had not heard them until Nauvoo. There was initially some resistance to these new doctrines, especially plural marriage. The murder of Joseph and his brother Hyrum in 1844 can in some measure be explained as terrible fallout from the teaching of these new doctrines. Yet Joseph's followers eventually embraced them all; even plural marriage went on to be widely practiced once the Mormon Church relocated to the Great Basin. Bodily sacralization was radical, yet went on to define Mormonism more so than most of its other teaching. Amazingly, with the rapid increase in teaching bodily doctrine and veneration in Mormon Illinois, the Word of Wisdom is almost never mentioned. Hyrum's 1842 connection between the Word of Wisdom and longevity of life is the only instance in which Mormon dietary proscriptions are ever mentioned in connection with bodily doctrine. The connection between body sanctity and dietary regulation seems logical to make. If the body was a vessel through which man could be exalted and through which man could demonstrate that exalting power, the ways in which man strengthens that body should be reflected by what he ingests. Yet the Word of Wisdom was almost relegated to a secondary position during the Nauvoo period. Brigham Young and Wilford Woodruff, for example, told the other apostles that consuming tea and coffee did not violate the commandment. Early on there were some city ordinances restricting the sale of spirits in small quantities, yet it is not clear how strictly these were enforced, and at any rate, Joseph himself sold drinks in the

basement of his home which functioned as a hotel bar.³⁹ On the afternoon that a large mob murdered Joseph and Hyrum Smith, they and their companions, John Taylor and Willard Richards, all drank wine in an effort to lighten their moods as they expected the worst.⁴⁰

The disconnection of the Word of Wisdom from the ever increasing rhetoric about bodily sanctification is puzzling. The constant arrival of new Mormon migrants, the building of another temple, and the increasing hostility of non-Mormon neighbors all put demands on the Prophet's time and energies, but increased violence and administrative demands did not impede the implementation of the Word of Wisdom in Kirtland and, to a lesser extent, Missouri. The largest variable between the circumstances surrounding the Word of Wisdom interpretation and practice from 1833 to 1844 was regional demographics. No matter how well Joseph's new doctrines complemented Word of Wisdom tenets, nothing proved as effective in stimulating Mormon dietary reform as did Ohio's Western Reserve temperance climate. As Joseph and his followers left Ohio's reform hotspots, the Word of Wisdom gradually decreased in importance as a Mormon characteristic.

³⁹ Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 413; *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, (Salt Lake City Utah: Deseret Book Company, 1948): 6:111; Linda King Newell and Valeen Tippetts Avery, *Mormon Enigma: Emma Hale Smith*, 2nd edition, (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 178-179.

⁴⁰ *History of the Church*, 6:616.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION – STRUGGLES FOR STABILITY – UTAH

Following the murder of Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum in June 1844, there was a period of uncertainty as to whom would take up Joseph's mantle and direct the Mormon Church. Throughout the year several persons, including Sidney Rigdon, Brigham Young, and Smith's son Joseph Smith III, came forward and claimed the prophetic mantle. Although there were several groups of dissenters, it became clear by the fall that the vast majority of the Mormon population believed that Brigham Young should take Joseph's position. Sidney Rigdon left the church a second time in disgust while Joseph Smith III, still only eleven years old, would eventually lead a separate sect of the larger Mormon Church beginning in 1860. The vast majority of the remaining Mormon membership made preparations to yet again move its church headquarters to another location, this time out west in what was then Mexico.

The Mormon migration to America's Rocky Mountain west was one of the largest and most organized movements of any one particular group of people in American history. From 1847, the time Mormon pioneers first arrived in what would become the Utah territory, up through the 1860s, tens of thousands of people crossed the American plains under Brigham Young's direction. Those directions were meticulous. Young organized pioneer companies by tens and by hundreds with called priesthood leaders assigned to guide the companies on their journey.¹ He implemented an internal mail service and chose individuals to organize way stations, build ferries, and plant crops

¹ *Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (1835), 136:3.

along the trail, which following pioneer groups would harvest in route.² Prior to embarking on exodus to the Rocky Mountains, Brigham had a list of necessary supplies for the journey west printed in one of Nauvoo's newspapers. The list consisted of the usual items expected for the three month journey: flour, sugar, salt, dried apples, dried beef, rope, farming tools, fish hooks, a musket, lead, and powder; but also among the listed necessities was one pound of tea, five pounds of coffee, and one gallon of alcohol.³ This list was probably a standard supply list that was taken from another source and reprinted in Nauvoo's paper. Such a scenario seems plausible given that Brigham Young later urged the members to replace the coffee with an extra ration of flour.⁴ However, such a suggestion may have been more pragmatic than theological. Wilford Woodruff's journals record different occasions when Mormon pioneers drank coffee on the trail.⁵

Whatever Brigham's motivation may have been for substituting flour for coffee, the Word of Wisdom observance along the trail and in the Utah territory continued to be a source of disagreement amongst church members as different groups applied the Word of Wisdom in various ways. For Rocky Mountain Mormons, the increased isolation from other U.S. citizens accentuated the lackadaisical attitude toward temperance and diet that characterized Illinois. By the 1850s, Word of Wisdom observance among the Mormon Church may have been at an all-time low.⁶ However, in spite (or because) of the

² Leonard J. Arrington, *Brigham Young: American Moses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), 129.; William Hill, *The Mormon Trail: Yesterday and Today* (Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 2006), 13.

³ *Nauvoo Neighbor*, October 29, 1845.

⁴ General Church Minutes of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, March 26, 1847. Church History Library.

⁵ Wilford Woodruff, *Wilford Woodruff's Journal: 1833-1898 Typescript*, ed. Scott Kenney (Salt Lake City, Utah, 1983), 3:148, 3:210, April 14, 1847, June 20, 1847.

⁶ Robert J. McCue, "Did the Word of Wisdom Become a Commandment in 1851?" *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* XIV, no. 3 (Autumn 1981), 67.

continued disregard among Mormons for the Word of Wisdom, in 1851 Brigham did make an effort at standardization of Mormon Word of Wisdom practice. At a September conference, Brigham gave a harshly worded sermon in which he said all members who violated the Word of Wisdom should be cut off from the church. Although no transcript of Brigham's remarks exists, summary accounts left by others indicate that many regarded Brigham remarks to mean that the Word of Wisdom was no longer to be considered merely as counsel but as a commandment that all were expected to obey.⁷

The move to regard the Word of Wisdom as a commandment was more difficult than with some of Joseph's other revelations. This was largely because the revelation itself states that it was originally given "not by commandment or constraint: but by revelation and the word of wisdom. [sic]"⁸ Many early members debated the meaning of the phrase "not by commandment or constraint. In the first publication of the revelation in the 1835 edition of the *Doctrine and Covenants* this phrase appears as part of an italicized introduction, separated from the rest of the revelation text.⁹ Because of its placement, some members contended that "not by commandment or constraint" was not truly part of the revelation, thus corroborating Brigham Young's supposed assertion. Others disagreed, and in a meeting of area bishops a few months after Brigham Young's sermon, an unidentified counselor debated the meaning of the introductory passage with Bishop Ruben Miller. Bishop Miller argued that the Word of Wisdom was originally not

⁷ McCue, "Did the Word of Wisdom Become a Commandment in 1851?," 67-68.

⁸ *Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (1835), 207-208.; Robin Scott Jensen, Richard E. Turley Jr., and Riley M. Lorimer, eds. *Revelations and Translations Volume 2: Published Revelations*, vol. 2 of the Revelations and Translations series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, edited by Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2011), 517-518.

⁹ The introduction of the 1835 edition was incorporated into the main text as the first three verses in 1876.

used as a test of fellowship, but President Brigham Young had since changed the policy.¹⁰ The unidentified counselor, however, insisted that the Word of Wisdom had always been a test for fellowship and that “Joseph said the caption [italicized introduction] to the ‘Word of Wisdom’ was put there by Oliver Cowdery, not by his consent and that it was just as binding as any other commandment.”¹¹ The claims of the counselor cannot be corroborated because his identity remains a mystery. He may never have actually heard Joseph say these words but may simply have been repeating speculation. The counselor’s reference to Oliver Cowdery casts further doubt upon his statement because Cowdery was still estranged from the church in 1851 and was thus an easy tool to discredit the introductory passage. Furthermore, Oliver was not in Kirtland in February 1833 and the earliest copy of the revelation is not in Oliver’s handwriting but that of Frederick G. Williams. The revelation was not divided into paragraphs and the punctuation is sporadic or non-existent; the 1835 preface was not separated in any way from the rest of the text. It is true that Oliver was involved in the printing of the 1835 *Doctrine and Covenants* and could have included the passage against the Prophet’s wishes, but given that Joseph himself was involved in the printing, such a scenario seems implausible. In spite of the unidentified counselor’s assertion, and those like him, Joseph and his scribes most likely regarded the text in its entirety as part of the revelation.

The *Bishop Miller’s* Word of Wisdom debate is just one example of continued inconsistency among church leaders, even amongst the highest levels of the church. Heber C. Kimball an apostle, complained about the difficulty of keeping his home

¹⁰ Presiding Bishopric, “Record of Bishop’s Minutes, 1851-1862” (Salt Lake City 1851-1862), 14-16.

¹¹ Bishopric, *Record of Bishop’s Minutes*, 14-16.

supplied with tea and coffee. Brigham himself was unable to give up tobacco until 1860.¹² Nevertheless, from the 1850s forward Brigham Young and some others began pushing for stricter and more consistent observance of the Word of Wisdom, although for years many did not accept it as a binding commandment.¹³ But other challenges, regional environments in particular, still played a crucial role in the shaping of Word of Wisdom practice. From the earliest days of Utah settlement, Brigham broke with Joseph's established pattern of gathering church members to one central location. Instead Brigham sent small groups of people to establish towns in increasingly remote areas of the American west. Before long, Mormon settlers had established communities from what is now Wyoming to the California border, and from the base of Canada down to Mexico. Such a broad scattering of settlements would have made the consistent teaching, application, and enforcement of church doctrines an exceedingly difficult task. Again, regional environments, not theology, were the primary influences on the shaping of the church's Word of Wisdom doctrine.

If there was a unifying doctrinal characteristic in Mormon culture in the Utah territory it was plural marriage. The practice, which had initially been limited among high church leaders, became widespread in the Utah territory. While some apostles had a large number of wives (Heber C. Kimball had forty-five), most local church leaders practicing plural marriage only had one or two additional wives. Regardless of family size, most nineteenth-century Mormons regarded plural marriage as a mark of a righteous priesthood holder and by 1880 twenty to thirty percent of the Mormon population was in

¹² McCue, "Did the Word of Wisdom Become a Commandment in 1851?" 69.

¹³ Thomas G. Alexander, "The Word of Wisdom: From Principle to Requirement," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* XIV, no. 3 (Autumn 1981): 85.

a plural marriage relationship.¹⁴ As the practice of plural marriage grew, so did non-member opposition to the practice. Westward migration and improvements in transportation and communication all brought the rural Utah territory into the spheres of broader American culture and politics. Disgusted by plural marriage, eastern Americans pressed politicians to act. In 1882 the Edmunds Act made the practice of polygamy a felony. If marriage did not fit under the parameters defined by the federal government, it was not a lawful union, regardless of religious justification. Mormons, however, refused to abandon a practice they not only deemed from God, but believed was a manifestation of holiness as well. In 1885, Mormon apostle Erastus Snow gave a sermon in which he attacked the Edmunds Act as an “unconstitutional measure,” a “wicked and malicious law.”¹⁵ Snow argued that anti-polygamy laws were in reality “against the institution of marriage.”¹⁶ Plural marriage, he insisted, was not about sexual excess, but rather about holiness and godliness.

The lusts and desires of the flesh are not of themselves unmitigated evils. On the contrary they are implanted in us to noble deeds, rather than low and beastly deeds. These affections . . . emanate from God They stimulate us to . . . assume the responsibilities of families and rear them up for God . . . when properly regulated and restrained, and guided by the Holy Spirit and kept within its proper legitimate bounds. But all these instincts and desires of the flesh are susceptible of perversion, and when perverted result in sin. . . . Excesses of all kinds tend to death and to sickness and misery, physically and spiritually; while temperance and moderation and the proper use of all our functions tends to the glory of God and the welfare of his children.¹⁷

¹⁴ Thomas Alexander, *Utah, The Right Place: Revised and Updated Edition* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Gibbs Smith), 188-190.

¹⁵ Erastus Snow, “Discourse by Apostle Erastus Snow,” *Journal of Discourses by President John Taylor, His Counselors, The Twelve Apostles, and Others* (London: Daniel H. Wells, 1886), 26:220.

¹⁶ Snow, “Discourse by Apostle Erastus Snow,” 26:221.

¹⁷ Snow, “Discourse by Apostle Erastus Snow,” 26:217.

The sanctity of the body and increase through marital sexual relations were never stronger than for nineteenth-century Mormons practicing plural marriage. But outside condemnation of the practice increased. In 1887 the Edmunds Tucker Act authorized federal agents to seize church property and imprison church leadership if found practicing polygamy. Church leaders went into hiding as the pressure mounted and in 1890 the Mormon Church, under the leadership of a new president (the ever faithful Wilford Woodruff), rescinded the practice of plural marriage. Although it took several years for members to adapt, the new policy was eventually accepted by the majority of church members and those who refused to abandon the practice had their names removed from church records.

But adapting to the change went beyond merely the cessation of plural marriage ceremonies. The practice had been preached from Mormon pulpits for so long and defended in court so often that it had come to be a crucial identifying mark of Mormonism. For members and non-members alike, acceptance of Mormon polygamy was the litmus test for whether an individual could justifiably claim to be a faithful member of the church. When plural marriage ceased, it proved to be a sort of identity crisis for the religion. In the words of historian Thomas Alexander, “The abolition of plural marriage . . . left a number of breaches in the boundary between Latter-day Saints and others;” with plural marriage gone, what was to separate Israel from the gentile?¹⁸

Alexander argues that the Word of Wisdom rose to fill the role. The end of Mormon plural marriage coincided with the rise in the second American temperance movement that would culminate with the ratification of the eighteenth amendment. No

¹⁸ Thomas G. Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition: A History of the Latter-Day Saints, 1890-1930* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 258, 261-263.

longer distracted by the controversies surrounding plural marriage, Mormon leaders began to embrace actions reflecting the popular sentiments of prohibition. In 1902 habitual drunkards were to be denied admission to Mormon temples. In 1906 Mormon leaders began using water instead of wine in their private sacrament services and two years later apostle Heber J. Grant joined the Utah chapter of the Anti-Saloon League. As one of the fiercest advocates for increased observance of the Word of Wisdom, it is no surprise that two years after Heber J. Grant became church president, strict abstinence and observation of the Word of Wisdom became a necessary requirement for all church members who wanted to participate in temple worship.¹⁹

Throughout the early and mid-nineteenth century, Mormons had migrated time and again to remove themselves from the spheres of influence and persecution of their neighboring Americans. Each time they moved the particular characteristics of their new geographical locations helped shape and define Mormon interpretations and practices of their health code, the Word of Wisdom. By the time the American government was seriously threatening church members for the practice of plural marriage in the 1880s, “The West” was largely gone and the Mormon people far too numerous to move again. They had to adapt; and in the years following the end of plural marriage, the Mormon Church was able to do what it had not been able to for more than five decades following Joseph’s revelation, come to a church-wide consensus on Word of Wisdom policy. Finally, the Word of Wisdom was connected to Mormon conceptions of bodily sanctity through plural marriage, but only in that one fully emerged as the other disappeared. The Word of Wisdom was the new litmus test for faithful Mormon living. Increasingly the Mormon

¹⁹ Alexander, “The Word of Wisdom: From Principle to Requirement,” 82.

Church came to be identified as the American religion of no coffee, no tea, teetotalers, and non-smokers. In Alexander's words, "the Word of Wisdom . . . in many ways replaced political solidarity and polygamous marriage as the distinctive features of Mormon society."²⁰

²⁰ Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition* , 307.

APPENDIX A: WORD OF WISDOM TEXT – REVELATION BOOK 2

TRANSCRIPTION¹

A Revelation for the benefit of the saints &c a word of wisdom for the benefit of the council of high Priests assembled in Kirtland and Church and also the saints in Zion to be sent Greeting not by commandment or constraint but [p. 50 verso] by revelation and the word of wisdom shewing forth the order and will of God in the temporal salvation of all saints in the last days given for a principle with promise adapted to the capacity of the weak and the weakest of all saints who are or can be called saints behold verily thus saith the Lord unto you in consequence of evils and designs {~~of~~which} do and will exist in the hearts of conspiring men in the last day, I have warned you and forewarn you by giving unto you this word of wisdom by revelation that inasmuch as any man drinketh wine or strong drink among you behold it is not good neither meet in the sight of your father only in assembling yourselves together to offer up your sacrament before him and behold this should be wine yea pure wine of the grape of the vine of your own make, and again strong drinks are not ~~good~~ for the belly but for the washing of your bodies, and again Tobacco is not for the body neither for the belly and is not good for man, but is an herb for bruises and all sick cattle to be used with judgment and skill and again hot drinks are not for the body or belly and again verily I say unto you all wholesome herbs God hath ordained for the constitution nature and use of man evry herb in the season thereof and evry fruit in the season thereof, all ~~all~~ these to be used with prudence and thanksgiving yea flesh also of beasts and of the fowls of the are [air] I the Lord hath ordained for the use of man with thanksgiving nevertheless they are to be [p. 51 recto] used sparingly, and it is pleasing unto me that they should not be used only in times of winter or of <cold or> famine, all grain is ordained for the use of man and of beasts to be the staff of life not only for man but for the beasts of the feald and the fowls of heaven and all wild animals that run or creap on the earth and these hath God made for the use of man only in times of famine and excess of hunger—all grain is good for the food of man as also the fruit of the vine that which yealdeth fruit whether

¹ Robin Scott Jensen, Robert J. Woodruff, and Steven C. Harper, eds., *Revelations and Translations, Volume 1: Manuscript Revelation Books*, vol. 1 of the Revelations and Translations series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, edited by Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2011), 379-381.

in the ground or above the ground never the -less wheat for man and corn for the ox and
oats for the horse and rye for the ~~swine~~ fowls & for swine and for all beasts of the field and
barley for all useful animals and for mild drink as also other grain, and all saints who
remember to keep and do these sayings walking in obedience to the commandments shall
receive health in their navel and marrow to their bones and shall find wisdom and great
treasure of knowledge even hidden treasures and shall run and not be weary and shall walk
and not faint and I the Lord give unto them a promise that the distroying angel shall pass
by them as the Children of Israel and not slay them Amen—

Given Februa[r]y 27— 1833

APPENDIX B: WORD OF WISDOM 1835 DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS¹

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SECTION LXXIX.

Revelation given March, 1832.

I Verily, verily I say unto you my servant Frederick G. Williams, listen to the voice of him who speaketh, to the word of the Lord your God, and hearken to the calling wherewith you are called, even to be a high priest in my church, and a counsellor unto my servant Joseph Smith, jr. unto whom I have given the keys of the kingdom, which belongeth always unto the presidency of the high priesthood: therefore, verily I acknowledge him and will bless him, and also thee, inasmuch as thou art faithful in council, in the office which I have appointed unto you, in prayer always vocally, and in thy heart, in public and in private: also in thy ministry in proclaiming the gospel in the land of the living, and among thy brethren: and in doing these things thou wilt do the greatest good unto thy fellow-beings, and will promote the glory of him who is your Lord: wherefore, be faithful, stand in the office which I have appointed unto you, succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees: and if thou art faithful unto the end thou shalt have a crown of immortality and eternal life in the mansions which I have prepared in the house of my Father. Behold, and lo, these are the words of Alpha and Omega, even Jesus Christ. Amen.

SECTION LXXX.

A word of wisdom for the benefit of the council of high priests, assembled in Kirtland, and church; and also, the saints in Zion: to be sent greeting: not by commandment, or constraint: but by revelation and the word of wisdom: showing forth the order and will of God in the temporal salvation of all saints in the last days. Given for a principle with promise, adapted to the capacity of the weak, and the weakest of all saints, who are or can be called saints.

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

¹ Robin Scott Jensen, Richard E. Turley Jr., and Riley M. Lorimer, eds. *Revelations and Translations Volume 2: Published Revelations*, vol. 2 of the Revelations and Translations series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, edited by Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2011), 517-518.

your own make. And again, strong drinks are not for the belly, but for the washing of your bodies. And again, tobacco is not for the body, neither for the belly; and is not good for man; but is an herb for bruises, and all sick cattle, to be used with judgment and skill. And again, hot drinks are not for the body, or belly.

2 And again, verily I say unto you, all wholesome herbs God hath ordained for the constitution, nature, and use of man.— Every herb in the season thereof, and every fruit in the season thereof. All these to be used with prudence and thanksgiving. Yea, flesh also of beasts and of the fowls of the air, I the Lord hath ordained for the use of man with thanksgiving. Nevertheless, they are to be used sparingly; and it is pleasing unto me, that they should not be used only in times of winter or of cold, or famine. All grain is ordained for the use of man, and of beasts, to be the staff of life, not only for man, but for the beasts of the field, and the fowls of heaven, and all wild animals that run or creep on the earth; and these hath God made for the use of man only in times of famine, and excess of hunger.

3 All grain is good for the food of man, as also the fruit of the vine, that which yieldeth fruit, whether in the ground or above the ground. Nevertheless wheat for man, and corn for the ox, and oats for the horse, and rye for the fowls, and for swine, and for all beasts of the field, and barley for all useful animals, and for mild drinks; as also other grain. And all saints who remember to keep and do these sayings, walking in obedience to the commandments, shall receive health in their navel, and marrow to their bones and shall find wisdom, and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures; and shall run and not be weary, and shall walk and not faint: and I the Lord give unto them a promise, that the destroying angel shall pass by them, as the children of Israel, and not slay them. Amen.

SECTION LXXXI.

Revelation given August, 1833.

1 Verily I say unto you my friends, I speak unto you with my voice, even the voice of my Spirit, that I may show unto you my will concerning your brethren in the land of Zion, many of whom are truly humble, and are seeking diligently to learn wisdom and to find truth: verily, verily I say unto you, blessed are all such for they shall obtain, for I the Lord showeth mercy unto all the meek, and upon all whomsoever I will,

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