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*Front cover illustration:* Alexander Hale Smith, son of Joseph and Emma Smith, apostle, counselor in the First Presidency, and presiding evangelist/patriarch of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. Courtesy of Community of Christ Archives, Independence (H802.29).

*Back cover illustrations, left:* Elizabeth Agnes Kendall Smith, ca. 1910. She and Alex were the parents of nine children (D1821.1). *Center:* Alexander H. (left) and his brother, Joseph Smith III, Church president and prophet, at Bushrod Park, near Oakland, California. Alex was preparing to leave for Tahiti, 1901 (D501.2). *Right:* Alexander Hale Smith as a young man in the 1860s (H802.2).

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*Ronald E. Romig. Photograph by Kiana Griffin, 2009.*

## ALEXANDER H. SMITH: REMEMBERING A SON OF JOSEPH AND EMMA SMITH

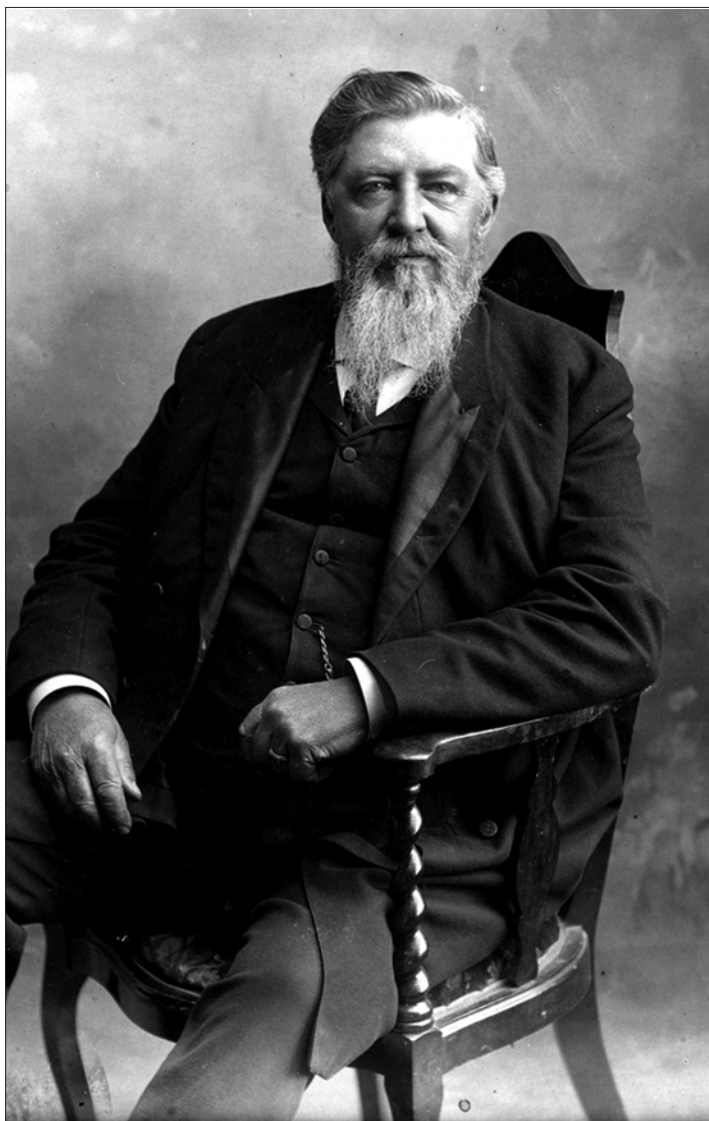
*Ronald E. Romig*

ALEXANDER HALE SMITH IS ONE of the lesser-known sons of Joseph and Emma Smith. But unlike his father or his oldest brother, Joseph III, Alexander lived much of his life in the shadows of others. Modern scholars of the Restoration movement tend to overlook Alex’s life and contributions; yet he was, in fact, a significant player, and his life merits a thoughtful examination. This article illustrates how Alexander’s heritage impacted his identity and life’s work and how, in turn, he contributed to the Restoration.

Although “what if’s” can never be more than speculation, it seems apparent that, had Joseph Smith Jr.’s church remained undivided after his death in 1844, Alexander, as a member of the founder’s family, would likely have achieved even more significant stature. But in the succession crisis after Joseph’s death, Brigham Young and

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*Alexander H. Smith, son of Joseph and Emma Smith, apostle, president and presiding evangelist/patriarch of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (H802.29). All images accompanying this article are provided courtesy of Community of Christ Archives, Independence, Missouri. Captions include each image's pictorial archives reference number.*

James J. Strang, among others, led their followers in different directions away from Nauvoo. As a result, Alexander grew to manhood well away from a large body of those who accepted his father as the founding prophet.

Furthermore, in many ways, Alexander's ministry was eclipsed by that of his older brother Joseph III, who accepted the presidency of the RLDS Church in 1860. Alex, who was then twenty-one, firmly believed that his brother was their father's rightful successor, a core belief that he expressed privately and publicly throughout his life. In the Reorganization, it was primarily Joseph III who enjoyed his father's religious and family legacy. Though some in the Utah LDS Church briefly harbored hopes that the youngest brother, David Hyrum Smith, might someday fill a leadership role, no one pictured Alex as his father's successor. This is not to say that Alex was not known nor well-liked by his contemporaries. Indeed, he was greatly respected and loved. But had his daughter Vida not written a biography of Alex soon after his death, even less would be known about him.

Except for this biography, the chief sources are the occasional mention of his activities in the RLDS periodical, the *Saints' Herald*, and Alexander's interesting series of articles about his missionary experiences in *Autumn Leaves*, the Church's periodical for youth and young adults. Alex's letters dealing with RLDS ecclesiastical administrative duties, while of interest to students of institutional history, are much less interesting than his warm and highly personal letters to his family. A historian can only wish that more of them had survived.

#### ALEXANDER'S EARLY YEARS

Alexander Hale Smith was born on June 2, 1838, in the new Mormon frontier town of Far West, Missouri. He was Joseph's and Emma's fifth son and sixth child, but only the third to survive infancy. Joseph Smith commemorated the occasion laconically in his journal: "I returned [from a surveying expedition] on the first of June . . . for I had a son born unto me."<sup>1</sup>

Named "Alexander" for Alexander Doniphan, Joseph Smith's trusted friend and lawyer, and "Hale" for his mother's family, this

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<sup>1</sup>Joseph Smith Jr. et al., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, edited by B. H. Roberts, 2d ed. rev. (6 vols., 1902-12, Vol. 7, 1932; rpt., Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1978 printing): 3:37.

third-born son became associated with the distinctive, even “royal,” lineage and heritage of his father that was wrought not only from the ancient scriptural elements that became part of Joseph’s theology but also from the vigorous, proselytizing, kingdom-building elements that energized Joseph’s followers. His siblings were an adopted sister Julia, then age seven, five-year-old Joseph III, and Frederick Granger Williams, who would turn three two weeks later.

Joseph III’s daughter, Mary Audentia Smith Anderson, observed that “Alexander had ‘a gentle and genial nature, instantly winning the friendship and confidence of those who knew him.’” Mary Audentia further affirmed that “old time saints” testified that Alexander “inherited a striking resemblance to his father in voice, gesture, and manner of presentation in the pulpit.”<sup>2</sup> Alexander’s daughter Vida Smith noted that Alex inherited his father’s “blue eyes and ruddy complexion.”<sup>3</sup>

The Mormon movement in Missouri collapsed for the second time within months of Alexander’s birth. Emma took him with her on one visit to Joseph, who was jailed in Liberty, Missouri, then fled from the state with the other Mormons under an executive decree of expulsion. Alexander later reflected: “With no choice of my own, I had inherited what the world looked upon as a heritage of shame. . . . For at that time my father was looked upon as an impostor, and was persecuted and driven from city to city, and wherever his name was mentioned it was looked upon by the people as a synonym of evil, of wrong.”<sup>4</sup>

In February 1839, Emma made the arduous trek across Missouri to the shores of the frozen Mississippi River, sent their driver, Jonathan Holman, and team ahead on the ice, then crossed on foot, with Frederick and baby Alexander in her arms and Joseph III and adopted daughter Julia clinging to her dress. Under it she was wearing pockets into which she had fitted the holograph manuscript of Joseph

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<sup>2</sup>Vida Elizabeth Smith, “Biography of Patriarch Alexander Hale Smith,” *Journal of History*, January 1911, 5. This biography was serialized from January 1911 through October 1913 and is hereafter cited as “Biography of Patriarch Alexander Hale Smith” by month, year, and page.

<sup>3</sup>Mary Audentia Smith Anderson, *Ancestry and Posterity of Joseph Smith and Emma Hale* (Independence: Herald Publishing House, 1929), 580.

<sup>4</sup>Alexander H. Smith, “My Heritage,” Sermon, Kaukura, Tahiti, November 10, 1901, *Vision* 53 (July 2006): 19.

Smith's "Inspired Translation" of the Bible.

The family found temporary shelter in the home of John and Sarah Cleveland while the hospitable and philanthropic citizens of Quincy rallied to help the other refugees. Joseph III recalled their "kindly welcome and, as far as Mother and her children were concerned, gave them excellent care."<sup>5</sup> In early March, Emma fondly wrote to Joseph, still imprisoned in Missouri, that nine-month-old Alexander was "so strong that with the assistance of a chair he will run all round the room."<sup>6</sup> Joseph and his brother Hyrum, who had been imprisoned with him, escaped while being transported to a different locale and reached Quincy in April 1839.

#### LIFE AT NAUVOO

The reunion in Quincy must have been a joyful one, although Alex could not have remembered his father. The waiting period while Joseph's fate hung suspended was over; and in fact, the need to plant crops was urgent. On May 9, Joseph and Emma bade farewell to the hospitable Clevelands and left for Commerce (later Nauvoo), a day's journey upriver. Joseph purchased an old but sturdy blockhouse from Hugh White, and here they celebrated Alexander's first birthday.

The landmarks of Alex's early childhood passed unrecorded while Nauvoo sprang into existence on the Mississippi shore. He was only six when his father and Hyrum were killed by self-appointed vigilantes on June 27, 1844. David Kilbourne, a land speculator and railroad builder staying at Nauvoo, wrote of these events to Reverend T. Dent, Lancashire, England, on June 29, 1844. His report, the first to reach England, was later published in the *London Record*:

The Mormon Prophet Joe Smith & his brother Hyrum are no more. I have just returned from Nauvoo & I this day looked upon the lifeless remains of these two men—the great heads & leaders of Mormonism.

I put up at Joes tavern. . . . About 4 O'clock the next morning Friday June 28th . . . [a] messenger arrived at Joes tavern. . . [with the news]. I immediately dressed & went down, saw Joes wife & children

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<sup>5</sup>Richard P. Howard, ed., *Memoirs of President Joseph Smith III (1832–1914)* (Independence: Herald Publishing House, 1979), 4–5.

<sup>6</sup>Emma Smith, Letter to Joseph Smith, March 7, 1839, Joseph Smith Letter Books, Ms 155, Box 2, fd. 2, LDS Church History Library.

about the house, but saw no manifestations of grief on the part of any one save Joes mother who made her appearance at the door in the course of the morning & enquired who had killed her sons.<sup>7</sup>

Following Joseph's death, a profound and unfortunate animosity developed between Emma Smith and Brigham Young, ranging from the giant conflict over succession to Brigham's petty accusation that Emma had taken "rings from Hyrum [Smith]'s and Don Carlos Smith's widows and never return[ed] them."<sup>8</sup>

According to Joseph Smith III, who was eleven when his father died, during the summer or fall of 1845, Emma became

aware that she was an object of suspicion to the leading element of the Church; and that a watch was set over herself and her household. Persons visiting her house were watched and their footsteps dogged; some were turned away from her door, without being permitted to hold communication with the household; and upon one occasion a man, a friend, was assaulted, and but for his resolute defense of himself, would have suffered severely. At one time, word was sent her to vacate her home, and that if she remained in it after the expiration of three days it should be burned over her head.

For us, however, flight was out of the question; my mother . . . gathered her children unto her, and sitting down with them around her, explained to them the danger she and they were in, and charged them what to do in case the worst came; and after kneeling with them in prayer commending them to God, all lay down to sleep. The dreaded night passed,—and the old house still stands unharmed by fire.<sup>9</sup>

At the high point of this mutual mistrust, Emma was termed an "apostate." When she declared that she would not move west with Brigham Young, a messenger told her that, if she refused, "it was 'decided to make her so poor that she would be glad to beg pardon of

<sup>7</sup>David Kilbourne, Letter to Reverend T. Dent, Lancashire, England, June 29, 1844, David Wells Kilbourne (1803–76) Collection, Iowa State Archives, Des Moines; cited in Warren Jennings, "'The Work of Death Has Commenced': The Lynching of an American Prophet," draft manuscript, Warren A. Jennings Papers, P109, f40, Community of Christ Archives, Independence.

<sup>8</sup>Brigham Young, Jr., re: Emma Smith, April 1, 1867, Photostat, Emma Smith Papers, P4, f38, Community of Christ Archives.

<sup>9</sup>Edward Tullidge, *Life of Joseph the Prophet* (Plano, Ill.: Herald Publishing House, 1880), 746–47.



the Twelve and follow them.”<sup>10</sup>

No record has survived of what Alex knew and how he dealt with these tensions, including the birth of his youngest brother, David Hyrum, five months after his father’s death. Unquestionably, however, they had a profound impact on his life. According to Vida, eight-year-old Alexander remembered Emma’s hasty departure in the fall of 1846, 140 miles upriver to avoid the attack on Nauvoo that forced out the remaining Mormons. She wrote, with colorful details, the story that he had doubtless related to his own children: “Clinging to his mother’s hand, with her he left the home on the banks of the Mississippi, his young heart excited by the firing of guns and the sad-faced, hurrying throng, pushing through the streets to the ferry. On the *Uncle Toby*, a north-bound steamer, they passed up the river to a village on its eastern banks, called Fulton City.”<sup>11</sup>

The family returned to Nauvoo in the spring of 1847.<sup>12</sup> Alexander grew up either in the Mansion House, which his mother ran as a hotel, at the Homestead, or on the family farm a few miles east of the city. On December 23, 1847, when Alex was nine, Emma married Major Lewis Bidamon, a non-Mormon “new” citizen of the city. Theirs was an affectionate and companionable marriage that, while not providing affluence, at least assured financial stability and an accepted place in the community. According to Joseph III, their stepfather

was a man of strong likes and dislikes, passionate, easily moved to anger, but withal ordinarily affable in manner, decidedly hospitable, and generous in disposition. He made friends easily, but, unfortunately for him, lost them quite as easily. His love for intoxicating liquors and his lack of religious convictions were the two most serious drawbacks to the happiness of our home . . . [but] he did possess certain pride of manhood, a deeply-rooted dislike of being in debt or under obligation to anyone, and, so far as the ordinary transactions of life are concerned, a desire to deal honorably with his fellow men.<sup>13</sup>

Joseph III also credited Bidamon with providing a comfortable

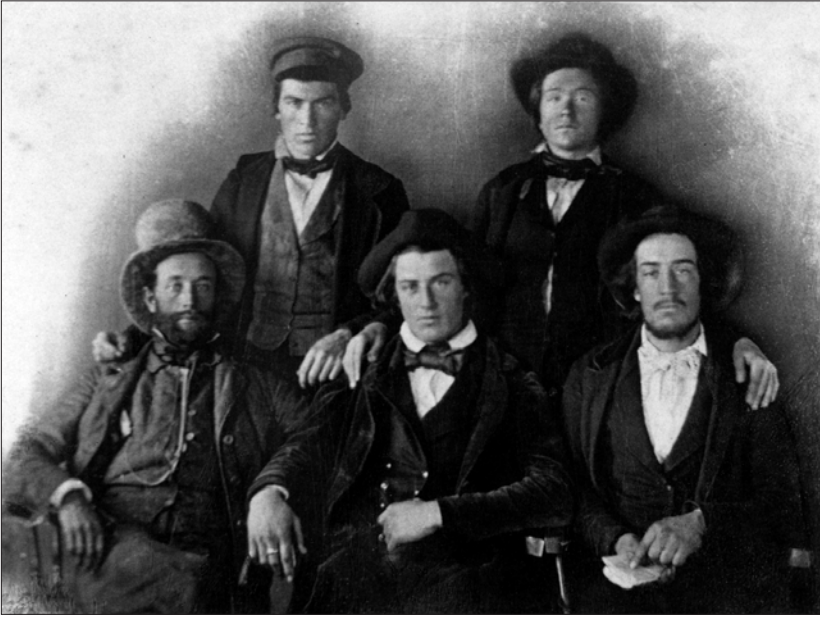
<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 748, 753.

<sup>11</sup>Vida Elizabeth Smith, “Biography of Alexander Hale Smith,” *History of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints* (Independence: Herald Publishing House, 1969), 4:672.

<sup>12</sup>“Biography of Patriarch Alexander Hale Smith,” January 1911, 8.

<sup>13</sup>*Memoirs of Joseph Smith III*, 42.





*Major Lewis Bidamon and the sons of Joseph and Emma Smith, ca. 1859. Standing left: Alexander Hale Smith and David Hyrum. Seated left: Major Lewis Crum Bidamon, Frederick Granger Williams Smith, and Joseph Smith III (D504.4).*

living. They farmed, worked in “fair-sized gardens” near the home, and kept “cows, chickens, and pigs, which helped to supply the table.”<sup>14</sup> The labor of the growing Smith boys would have been a decided advantage in this family setting.

In 1849, when news of the California gold rush reached Nauvoo, Lewis was swept up in the excitement and departed. Emma’s 1850 letter, directed to Lewis in California, reminded her husband of a promise he made to five-year-old David—“to bring him some gold in a little box.”<sup>15</sup> Bidamon returned late the next year, without gold but fortunate to be alive and uninjured.

Nineteen-year-old Alexander was also impacted by “gold fever” in 1857, when a wild rush for Pike’s Peak galvanized the nation. Vida

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>Emma Smith Bidamon, Letter to Lewis C. Bidamon, January 7, 1850, Emma Smith Papers, P4, f30, Community of Christ Archives.

describes “the spirit of adventure” in which he joined a company heading west, only to have it fizzle out on “the plains of western Kansas.” Alexander returned home disappointed, but “subsequent events bear out the thought that the hand of God overruled.”<sup>16</sup>

Emma cared for Alex’s grandmother, Lucy Mack Smith, who had long been housebound due to crippling arthritis. Lewis Bidamon had made her a light wheeled chair, and Alex, like the other children, no doubt enjoyed pushing her around the garden in it in good weather until her final illness and death in 1856.<sup>17</sup>

Alexander proved to be good with horses, mechanically inclined, skilled at wood carving, and an adequate student, but he was best known for his proficiency with the rifle.<sup>18</sup> With brotherly pride, Joseph III described how Alexander’s prowess “resulted in the master of ceremonies at the different shooting matches within a radius of twenty miles, when announcing the terms of the contests, winding up with the statement, ‘Open to all comers except Alexander Smith!’”<sup>19</sup>

### RELIGIOUS CALLING

For her second marriage, Emma asked William Hanna, the local Methodist minister, to perform “a simple ceremony, with only a few people besides the family present.”<sup>20</sup> But apparently, she avoided all organized religion for a time, including the Methodist Church, to which she had belonged as a young woman. Alex did not seem religiously inclined as a youth, and Emma carefully avoided influencing her children religiously during their childhood, instead wishing them to freely discern their own religious inclinations. In later years, Edmund Briggs asked Emma what she counseled Saints who asked her

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<sup>16</sup>“Biography of Patriarch Alexander Hale Smith,” January 1911, 12; *History of the Reorganized Church*, 4:672.

<sup>17</sup>Inez Smith Davis, Letter to Mary Audentia Anderson, June 30, 1930, P23, f178, Community of Christ Archives.

<sup>18</sup>“Biography of Patriarch Alexander Hale Smith,” January 1911, 9.

<sup>19</sup>*Memoirs of President Joseph Smith III*, 169. Alex later told a charming story of a rather reckless hunting adventure on the Mississippi River that started on a whim and ended with him and his companion being stranded for several days on an island during a storm. “Biography of Patriarch Alexander Hale Smith,” January 1911: 16–19.

<sup>20</sup>Roger D. Launius, *Joseph Smith III: Pragmatic Prophet* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 57.

advice about religion. After a brief discussion regarding the claims of James J. Strang, Emma added: "I have always avoided talking to my children about having anything to do in the church, for I have suffered so much I have dreaded to have them take any part in it. But I have always believed that if God wanted them to do anything in the church, the same One who called their father would make it known to them, and it was not necessary for me to talk to them about it." Her faith was not misplaced. Alex took seriously her moral precepts and followed her example of hospitality.<sup>21</sup> With his brothers, he had his own experiences of life-changing religious significance.

In 1852–53 when Alex would have been about fourteen, former members of Joseph Jr.'s church living in independent branches in southern Wisconsin organized a conference and ordained apostles, anticipating that Joseph's posterity would one day become leaders in this "new organization." Joseph III, who was then twenty, experienced a memorable vision while reflecting upon a possible future role in the Restoration. The experience directed him to staunchly oppose polygamy, which he unwaveringly did for his whole life.<sup>22</sup> He proved equally aloof to overtures in 1856 both from George A. Smith and Erastus Snow of the Utah Mormons and from Samuel H. Gurley and Edmund C. Briggs on behalf of the fledgling Reorganization. However, he continued to think seriously about religious questions; and when the Restoration branches called a conference at Amboy, Illinois, on April 6, 1860, he prayed earnestly and received an assurance that he should step forward in a leadership role.<sup>23</sup> However, it took a series of sobering experiences for twenty-one-year-old Alex to

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<sup>21</sup>*Memoirs of President Joseph Smith III*, 169.

<sup>22</sup>One day during the fall of 1856, Joseph III found himself in vision in which the question, "Is polygamy of God?" was . . . distinctly and definitely answered to me. . . ; and the answer was, "No," and I was directed that I was to have nothing to do with it, but was to oppose it. Much of my opposition to polygamy has been charged to my mother's teaching and influence . . . but she did not trouble herself to teach me anything specially in regard to that tenet." *History of the Reorganized Church*, 3:259.

<sup>23</sup>Joseph III recalled, "I sought earnestly to determine where to cast my religious lot. . . I made the whole matter a specific study and subject of prayer, laying it before the Almighty in the plain question: "To which body of believers shall I unite myself!" When the answer came I could make no mistake, for clearly and specifically I was directly told to unite myself to the

seek religious certitude for himself.

Instead, he was more interested in young Elizabeth Agnes Kendall, born near Liverpool, England, on June 16, 1845. Her parents, John Kendall and Elizabeth Milliken Kendall, had joined the Church in England; but her father had been killed when he fell from a scaffold while endeavoring to save a fellow workman.<sup>24</sup> The widow brought her children to Nauvoo where they were living in Brick Row when Emma befriended them.<sup>25</sup> Mrs. Kendall died; and Emma took fourteen-year-old Elizabeth into her home in 1859. In the spring of 1861, Elizabeth and Alexander were married in the parlor of the Mansion House.<sup>26</sup>

The newlyweds began keeping house at the Smith family farm southeast of Nauvoo. Their first child, Frederick Alexander, was born there on January 19, 1862, and named after Alex's brother, Frederick Granger Williams Smith, who died three months later, leaving a widow and a three-year-old daughter.<sup>27</sup> Frederick, like Alex, had never been baptized. According to Vida Smith, the thought that his brother might be denied salvation "caused [Alex] days and nights of sorrow" and "horror." However, he was comforted by his first spiritual experience—the "whispering" of the Holy Spirit: "Grieve not; Frederick's condition is pleasant; and the time shall come when baptism can be secured to him."<sup>28</sup>

Alex had already been forced to think about the precariousness of mortality when Elizabeth experienced health difficulties af-

Reorganization. "Memoirs of President Joseph Smith," *Saints' Herald* 82, no. 14 (April 2, 1935): 432–33.

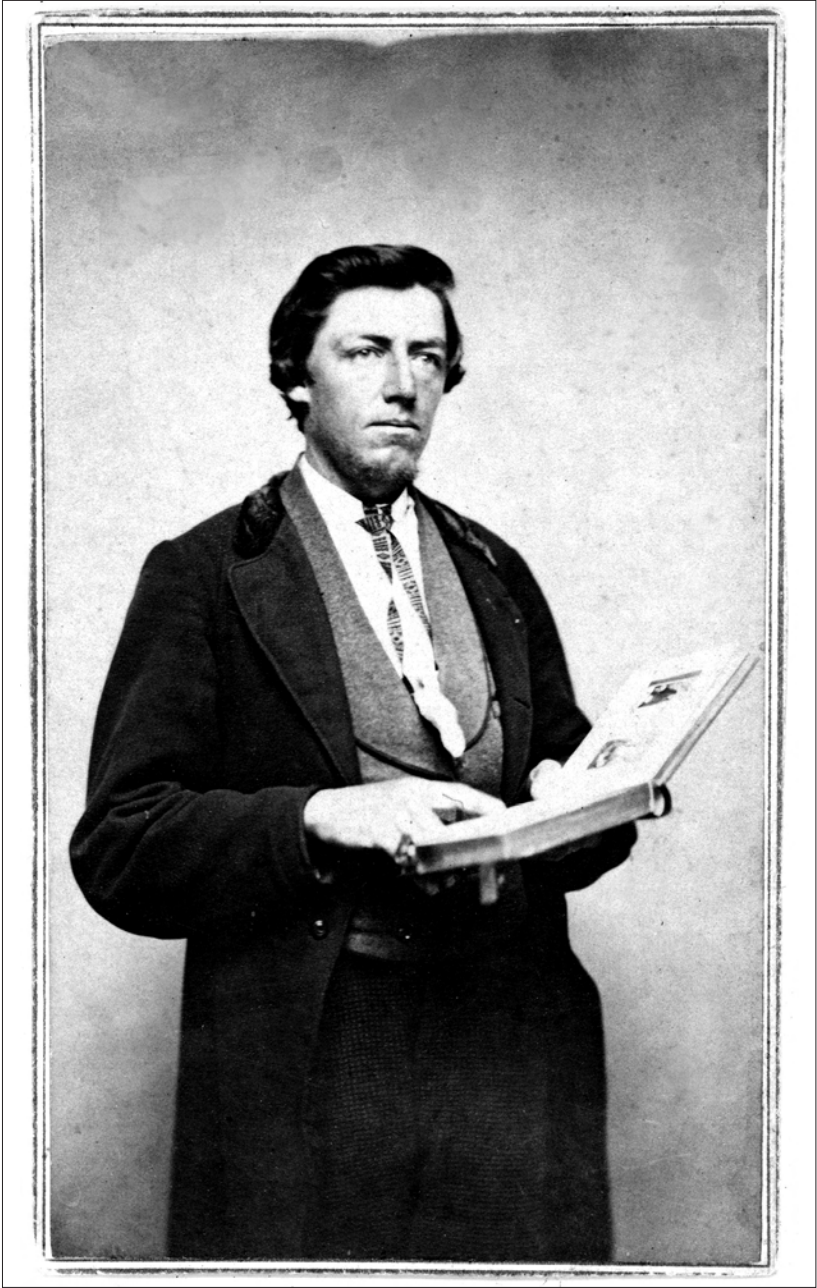
<sup>24</sup>*History of the Reorganized Church*, 4:673.

<sup>25</sup>Vida Smith explained, "Elizabeth Kendall, my maternal grandmother, slept deep and unwaking, and her children were scattered. In time, the little English babe, Elizabeth (Agnes), came into the household at the Mansion. She was now a small girl of fourteen and needed the love and tender care that Emma Smith gave to her." "Biography of Patriarch Alexander Hale Smith," January 1911, 13.

<sup>26</sup>"Death of Elizabeth Agnes Smith," *Herald* 66, no. 24 (June 11, 1919): 555–56; "Biography of Patriarch Alexander Hale Smith," January 1911, 13.

<sup>27</sup>*Memoirs of President Joseph Smith III*, 91.

<sup>28</sup>"Biography of Patriarch Alexander Hale Smith," January 1911, 14; *History of the Reorganized Church*, 4:673.



*Alex in his youth, 1860s (H802.2).*

ter the baby's birth. Anxiously, Alex brought her and the baby to the Mansion House where Emma nursed her back "to health and rosiness."<sup>29</sup>

Vida describes Alex's mental state as "tumult" when his "adored younger brother, David, joined himself to the church" in October 1861. This third event was coupled with a crucial fourth. Although the Smith boys, their stepfather, and especially their generous, hospitable mother had made a solid place for themselves in the "new" Nauvoo, unidentified "citizens" warned Joseph III "that he must neither preach nor pray in public, nor in any way attempt to promulgate his doctrine in the country in which he lived. . . . This threat did what nothing else had done for Alexander. He began to search such books as were at his command, and began to believe the principles therein. Their beauty and power appealed to his mind as true and desirable."<sup>30</sup>

And fifth, during this period of investigation, Alex fell ill of a fever so severe that Elizabeth asked

if she might send for the elders. I consented. Two of them had come at her call, and one of them asked me if I believed God *could* heal me? At once it flashed across my mind and I answered instantly, "It is not a matter of as to whether he *can* heal me, it's a matter as to whether he *will*. I know he can if he will."

I was administered to, and I watched very closely the wording of the prayer; and at its close I said in my heart, "If I receive any benefit from this administration it will come from God, for no other power will answer or follow that petition." . . . [I]n fifteen minutes I began to perspire freely, and the fever was broken. I slept sweetly all night, and awoke entirely healed.<sup>31</sup>

Joseph III baptized Alexander on May 25, 1862, "in the grand old Mississippi." Elizabeth followed two months later.<sup>32</sup> They attended the "Olive Leaf Branch" of the Reorganization that met in the Red Brick Store at Nauvoo. Alex considered himself a very humble member in the early stages of religious understanding, so he was startled

<sup>29</sup>"Biography of Patriarch Alexander Hale Smith," January 1911, 13.

<sup>30</sup>*History of the Reorganized Church*, 4:672-73.

<sup>31</sup>Alexander H. Smith, "Early Ministerial Experiences, No. 3," *Autumn Leaves* 11, no. 3 (March 1898): 97.

<sup>32</sup>*History of the Reorganized Church*, 4:673. See also John Shippy, "Good News from Iowa," *Herald* 3, no. 2 (August 1862): 43.



when, at a branch meeting held to elect officers, a member nominated him for the office of teacher, “and then bore testimony that the Spirit witnessed to him that it was my calling.” To Alex’s redoubled surprise, Joseph III “confirmed the testimony and supported the motion.”

I sprang to my feet and objected. I held a very exalted idea of what a teacher in the Church of Jesus Christ ought to be, and I knew I did not fill the measure of requirements a teacher should possess. I was young, inexperienced, ignorant of the law of God and the order of his church, had been a wild thoughtless boy; and in no sense, in my own estimation, was I worthy to be made a teacher over members who had been in the church nearly as many years as I had been in the world. The task seemed altogether too huge an undertaking for me. . . . I argued that I could not talk in meeting . . . but I was met with the objection that my plea was not well made, as I had already been speaking twenty minutes very rapidly. Not wishing to appear rebellious, I finally consented to do the best I could, and was ordained a teacher.<sup>33</sup>

It was the beginning of a lifetime of service, shared with his brothers, Joseph III and David Hyrum.<sup>34</sup> All three of them shared a religious perspective termed “moderate Mormonism” by historian Alma Blair. Cautious, even suspicious of some experiences associated with their father’s church, these three sons essentially “renounced, and in a very real sense forgot many elements of the Nauvoo experience,” reinterpreting their father’s “status as a prophet, and particularly . . . his relationship to polygamy.”<sup>35</sup> In contrast, Alexander had found great comfort in one of his father’s teachings—baptism for the

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<sup>33</sup>Alexander H. Smith, “Early Ministerial Experiences,” *Autumn Leaves*, 10, no. 12 (December 1897): 529.

<sup>34</sup>At age twenty-eight, David, who was then serving as a counselor in the First Presidency and who had offered significant ministry as a missionary, experienced serious disorientation with occasional episodes of violence. When rest and watchful care failed to alleviate his condition, Joseph III sorrowfully committed him in 1877 to a progressive institution for the mentally ill in Elgin, Illinois, where he stayed until his death in 1904. Valeen Tippetts Avery, *From Mission to Madness: Last Son of the Mormon Prophet* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 212–13, 225, 245, note 7, 281.

<sup>35</sup>Alma Blair, “The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: Moderate Mormons,” in *The Restoration Movement: Essays in Mormon History*, edited by F. Mark McKiernan, Alma R. Blair, and Paul M. Edwards

dead—where Frederick was concerned.<sup>36</sup> Like Joseph III, Alex staunchly believed that his father did not introduce polygamy at Nauvoo.

The calling of elder was extended to Alex on April 7, 1863. He hesitated over whether to accept it, but one night a beautiful and significant spiritual vision reassured him. He saw himself standing on a hill from which he could see multitudes in every direction. On top of the hill was a strongly constructed “speaker’s stand” occupied by two men. One, holding

two books, . . . looked as if he had just ceased speaking to the multitude. As I gazed wondering, I was possessed of a strong desire to get closer. I began to push through the crowd to get near and hear what the two men had to say. . . . [T]hey left the platform, stepping down and coming directly towards me. I noticed the people stepping aside, opening a pathway wide enough for them to walk side by side without crowding. As they came towards me, chatting and talking to those on either side, I recognized them. They were my father and Uncle Hyrum. My uncle was slightly in advance of my father. As he met me he took me by the hand and said, “How are you, Alexander?” Then my father took my hand in his, a good strong clasp, and held it till he turned and pointed with his other hand to the speaker’s stand and said, “Alexander, you go up and take your place. We are going away; we will be gone for a season, but we will return again.” He then bade me good-bye, and the two walked on towards the east, and as they walked they gradually left the earth, and I watched them till they ascended out of sight. I turned and looked towards the stand. The people still stood as before, but there was the pathway open to the stand, not a man had moved into it. The interpretation was plain. When I came to my sense of surroundings, I was sitting upright, bathed in

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(Lawrence, Kansas: Coronado Press, 1973), 207–30.

<sup>36</sup>“Biography of Patriarch Alexander Hale Smith,” January 1911, 14. Although this teaching was not formally repudiated during most of Joseph III’s presidency, neither was it practiced. Joseph III taught that, should the time for its institution ever come, it could only be implemented within a temple. At first, believers like Alexander, awaited the day when the RLDS Church completed its temple in Independence. Any hope that the ordinance might become authoritative in the Reorganization quietly died when the Community of Christ dedicated its temple in Independence in 1994 without a baptismal font.



tears, and the Spirit did not leave me for hours.<sup>37</sup>

Alexander's first missionary appointment soon followed, and he spent the summer, fall, and winter of 1863 preaching with W. W. Blair in the Council Bluffs, Iowa, area.<sup>38</sup> Following Alex's return to Nauvoo in late December 1863, a new RLDS member, Charles Derry, formerly a member of the LDS Church in Utah, visited the family and described Alex as "not so tall as David, nor so heavy as Joseph. Is of light complexion, free and sociable, intelligent, and takes a great interest in the work. . . . I never saw a family pay more respect to their mother than all three do."<sup>39</sup>

In late summer of 1864, Alex accepted another mission to the St. Louis District.<sup>40</sup> Alex expressed his ministerial aspirations in a briefly kept journal: "May God enable me to live in such a manner that I may be as firm as my Father and Uncles were in proclaiming the gospel."<sup>41</sup> Behind this hope, he put his own resolve and commitment. Joseph III expressed deep gratitude for the "two close and sympathetic assistants [Alex and David] in . . . the task to which we were committed—the task of preaching to all men everywhere the ancient gospel of Christ, restored in new vitality and purity, and that of reorganizing into an efficient, active, and smoothly-running unit, the scattered forces of the church of latter days, wherever such elements might be found."<sup>42</sup>

The ongoing Civil War challenged all three brothers. On the one hand, as ministers, they decried bloodshed except as a "last resort" in self-defense; but they also deeply felt "the call of patriotic duty." They studied, prayed fervently, and engaged in lengthy discussions with "fellow church members . . . in council meetings and in the general assemblies." According to Joseph III, the answer

was clear, definite, and unmistakable, and was borne in upon our

<sup>37</sup>*History of the Reorganized Church*, 4:673–74.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*; also "Biography of Patriarch Alexander Hale Smith," April 1911, 144.

<sup>39</sup>"Biography of Patriarch Alexander Hale Smith," April 1911, 146.

<sup>40</sup>*History of the Reorganized Church*, 4:675.

<sup>41</sup>Alexander H. Smith, January 11, 1864, Journal, 1863–64, 100, Journals, P2, J91, Community of Christ Archives.

<sup>42</sup>*Memoirs of President Joseph Smith III*, 90.

souls with great distinctness. In substance it was as follows:

“Do not enlist. Enlisting makes your military service an individual and voluntary action, whereby you will be responsible for the blood you might shed while in the service. Wait; if drafted, . . . the deed becomes a national sin instead of a personal one.”<sup>43</sup>

Alexander was one of seventeen local men conscripted and ordered to report to Quincy. Alex had a relevant dream that Joseph III recorded in his memoirs. In the dream, Alex was ordered to report to a steamboat, connected to the shore by a short plank. Joseph was in the group and boarded the steamer, only to be stopped by two men who told him, “You go ashore; you are not wanted.” Joseph returned to the shore, and Alexander went aboard. The two men “bade him stand up straight, and then they took a good look at him, a thorough inspection they had not accorded me [Joseph]. Finally they picked up first one of his feet, and then the other, making chalk marks on the bottom of both shoes. Turning him about, they sent him ashore, also, with some added verbal order he did not clearly understand.”

The meaning of this comforting dream soon became clear. The two adjutant generals of Illinois and Iowa had agreed that “all enlistments of Illinois men in Iowa regiments should be counted as having been furnished by Illinois, and vice versa.” Under this system, Nauvoo had already furnished its quota, dismissing Alex.<sup>44</sup>

Alex promptly resumed his ministry. Emma, in an effort to help provide some economic stability to Alex’s family, deeded the Mansion House, which still operated as a hotel, to him and Elizabeth. Alex combined managing the hotel with missions in western Iowa and southern Illinois. In January 1865, daughter Vida was born.<sup>45</sup>

In May 1865, RLDS missionary W. W. Blair visited Emma and Alexander at Nauvoo, recording conversations with significant historical information on May 15:

Sister Emma . . . stated that in the spring of 1844 a council, composed of a number of the leading authorities of the church, was held in Nauvoo, and at its close Elder G. J. Adams came and said to her, rejoicing greatly, that one matter was now settled; they now knew who Joseph’s successor would be,—it was little Joseph, for he had just seen

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid.

<sup>45</sup>“Biography of Patriarch Alexander Hale Smith,” October 1913, 402.

him set apart under the hands of his father and others.

Brother Alexander H. Smith then related that Elder James Whitehead, a one time secretary of Joseph the Seer, said to him not long before, that in the spring of 1844, just prior to the death of the Seer, “young Joseph” was set apart in a council by his father and others to be his successor, and that Bishop Whitney, Doctor Bernhisel, W. W. Phelps, Alpheus Cutler, Willard Richards, and, he thought, John Taylor were present on that occasion; also that Bishop Whitney held the horn of oil; and further, that Joseph the Seer afterward stated to the Saints from the public stand that he was no longer their prophet, and, putting his hand on young Joseph’s head, he said, “This is your prophet. I am going to rest.”<sup>46</sup>

When Joseph III moved to Plano, Illinois, in 1865, the Olive Branch at Nauvoo selected Alex to become the branch leader. In a letter to Charles Derry, Alex lamented, “Perhaps the Saints will realize the inestimable value of the teaching they were wont to hear while he [Joseph] stayed here.” Alex expressed personal frustration at the conflicting “cares of my family” and his desire to “spend all my time in the service of my Master. . . . I would like to be satisfied that their wants were sup[p]lied so they would not suffer, then I would spend all my time in the work of the Lord.” After listing a series of upcoming appointments, he burst out again:

Oh the harvest is more than ready & the reapers are so few that it seems that the work will not be accomplished in the time allotted. When I meditate on this subject it seems to me that I am all unworthy to be called a servant of God. What can I do to forward the work. The work is so great and the instruments so weak. . . . You who have felt the assistance of the spirit know how much I need that same help so I ask you to pray God that I may be firm in my faith & have the spirit of God to help me in my ministry.<sup>47</sup>

### PACIFIC SLOPE MISSION

Meanwhile, a call to a vast new mission field was awaiting Alex. The 1866 annual RLDS Conference placed Alexander in charge of the Pacific Slope Mission, which covered the entire American West from Colorado to the Pacific Ocean. Joseph III and Ja-

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<sup>46</sup>William Wallace Blair, *Memoirs of W. W. Blair* (Lamoni, Ia.: Herald Publishing House, 1908), 166–17.

<sup>47</sup>Alexander H. Smith, Letter to Charles Derry, Nauvoo, Illinois, January 10, 1866, P19, f33, Community of Christ Archives.

son W. Briggs ordained Alex a high priest on April 12, 1866. On May 20, along with two companions Alex set out for the West, leaving Elizabeth four months pregnant. At one point, Alex fell ill with an unspecified ailment so severe that “he left the wagon and lay down on the desert as he feared in his death agonies; but was raised by the Spirit.”<sup>48</sup>

At Fort Kearny, the missionaries joined a large LDS emigrant train of 250. To avoid possible unpleasantness, Alexander gave his name only as Alex Hale. When they asked a blessing on their meal, keen observers “immediately reported to the captain that we were either apostate Mormons or Josephites, as no other class of religionists continued to . . . ask a blessing upon the food so long after striking the plains.” The RLDS missionaries fended off other attempts “to learn who we were.” The game was up, though, when Alex, who had climbed a hill on scout duty, heard the emigrants singing “We Thank Thee, Oh God, for a Prophet,” as the train passed by.<sup>49</sup> Alexander knew he had been found out. Presumably the travelers were well-enough acquainted by this point that there were no religious quarrels.

Alexander’s literary ability appears in this description of Devil’s Gate on the Sweetwater:

Sometime in the dim past the mountains by some throe of nature have been cracked or broken, as a huge cut, clean from top to base, and moved apart; and the river taking advantage, rushed through and has ever since kept its channel, although huge quantities of rock have from time to time fallen from the ragged walls on either side, which rise thousands of feet, sometimes perpendicularly, sometimes overhanging, and sometimes receding, raising upward, making a grand sight, which to be appreciated must be seen. . . . And as I turned and looked back the way we had come, I could see the wagon trail winding around the huge rock in the desert; and away towards the east the vast plain which seemed limitless; and to the south I could see occasionally the glint of silver as the river came in sight in its meanderings; while to the west lay a valley, a beautiful valley; and be-

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<sup>48</sup>“Biography of Patriarch Alexander Hale Smith,” April 1911, 148; *History of the Reorganized Church*, 4:674.

<sup>49</sup>“Biography of Patriarch Alexander Hale Smith,” July 1911, 269–70, 272.

yond, range upon range of rugged mountain scenery.<sup>50</sup>

At Cache Cave in Echo Canyon, Alex succumbed to the tourist's impulse to add his name to those covering the cave's walls and the ceiling. The stones "of this natural album" were so crowded that Alex found a space "in the very top of the cave" only "by standing up in my saddle on the back of my pony."<sup>51</sup>

As the company descended into the Salt Lake Valley, LDS Church Patriarch John Smith, Alexander's cousin, "warmly" welcomed the RLDS missionaries to his home and acted as a hospitable tour guide.<sup>52</sup> Alex also enjoyed meeting his cousin, Samuel Harrison Bailey Smith, son of Samuel H. Smith and just two months Alex's junior. A sour note was Brigham Young's public denunciation of Alex's mother: "To my certain knowledge Emma Smith is one of the damnest liars I know of on this earth; yet there is no good thing I would refuse to do for her, if she would be a righteous woman."<sup>53</sup> Although outraged, Alexander chose not to respond.

In San Francisco, Alex attempted to continue the dialogue with his cousins, explaining that he did not wish to hurt them but sought greater unity within the family: "You know I did not fear to speak my firm convictions while in your presence, and I do not fear the result of my so speaking, my only fear is that, Those most interested in your destruction will hedge you in and bind you by false covenants that you cannot make your escape when you would." He continued in the same vein, pleading with Samuel to "break off your allegiance to that false

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., 272–74.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., 276.

<sup>52</sup>"Biography of Patriarch Alexander Hale Smith," October 1911, 394–95. John was the son of Hyrum Smith.

<sup>53</sup> In addition to repeating his charges that Emma had taken Don Carlos's and Hyrum's gold rings from their widows, he also claimed that she had accused him of plotting to have Joseph killed, accused her of keeping the Bible in which Joseph had made his marginal notations for the Inspired Translation (which Brigham claimed Newel K. Whitney owned; actually, Oliver Cowdery had purchased it) even after she agreed to exchange it for the deed to the Cleveland farm, and "complained about her poor, little, fatherless children, and . . . kept up this whine" although "she . . . owned city property worth fifty thousand dollars." Brigham Young, October 7, 1866, in Richard S. Van Wagoner, ed., *The Complete Discourses of Brigham Young*, 5 vols. (Salt Lake City: Smith-Pettit Foundation, 2009), 4:2378–79.

power” and “be not entangled in the many secret organisatons [sic] of the valleys,” by which he meant the LDS temple endowment. He continued by denouncing “that sprit [sic] of revenge that is taught there.” He signed himself “your loving Cousin.”<sup>54</sup>

Samuel responded on January 8, 1867, in a letter that has not survived but in which, according to Alex’s answer, he expressed a “wish not to enter or commence a war with the Smith family.” Alexander protested warmly:

I do not understand that a candid examination of the Laws of God (on which we both claim to be founded) would inaugurate a War between us. So far as my feeble efforts will accomplish a unity in the family. I mean to exert them to that end. There has been already too great an enmity existing between us. There seems to have been a fear of each other that is altogether uncalled for. . . . As I said when [I] was with you so say I again I do not fear an investigation of these mighty differences. I rather seek investigation, nor do I feel that a correspondence upon these principles between you and I would commence war between the Smith Families. If I did I never would scratch a line to any of you. . . .

Samuel I could forgive very severe language from you or any of the rest of the family. In your letter you ask me to forgive you if any thing should escape your pen to injure my feelings. I find nothing offensive in your letter to forgive. But I fear you cannot forgive me for my blunt plain blundering way of writing. But as God knows my heart I mean no harm nor offense to anyone much less to those I love. . . .

You say that time will prove which is right. Time is a slow coach when one is waiting anxiously the solution of so all important a problem as ones eternal salvations [sic] in the celestial kingdom of God.<sup>55</sup>

Alexander also attempted to discuss these same issues with John Smith, only to receive an answer “couched in such evasive terms that I am left in doubt as to your freedom. I know when you and I talked upon Matters that concern our eternal welfare you . . . appeared under a constraint that prevented your expressing your real heartfelt convictions. . . . I am well aware that your position is such that you must needs act with great care, caution, and forethought, more particularly if you do not agree with those in more exalted positions in that

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<sup>54</sup>Alexander H. Smith, San Francisco, Letter to Samuel H. B. Smith, November 19, 1866, MS 17756, f13, LDS Church History Library.

<sup>55</sup>Alexander H. Smith, San Francisco, California, Letter to Samuel H. B. Smith, January 19, 1867, MS 17756, f13, LDS Church History Library.

organization[.]” He expressed repugnance at “those secrets, oaths, and combinations that have been established in that organization to bind the members together” but asked for a careful investigation of the positions of their two churches. “If you have the truth you need not fear an investigation, and if you have it I want it and if I have it I want you to have it.”<sup>56</sup>

The reticence of Samuel and John was no doubt based on a clear understanding that, whatever their family affections, the positions of their respective churches were irreconcilable. As a coda to this correspondence, Joseph F. Smith (Hyrum’s youngest son), in a letter to Joseph III, complained that Alex had not written to him. Alex replied that he had, in fact, written to Joseph F. who had not answered. “Consequently I concluded I was on forbidden ground and have remained silent.” He praised John’s hospitality and Samuel’s quick action one evening when Samuel had stepped “between the object of his friendship [Alex] and danger”—apparently a threat from a Salt Lake resident. He assured Joseph F., “As there is a difference as you say in our faith, it need not make us enemies. Neither shall it upon my part.”<sup>57</sup>

By the time Alexander left California twenty-one months later, twelve branches of the Reorganization had been established. He reached Nauvoo by the end of 1867 where he greeted daughter Ina Inez, born in November 1866.

Members of the Reorganization had been gathering in Plano, Illinois, since Joseph III’s move there in 1865. In March 1868, Alex moved his family to Plano, built a home on a lot near the Plano Stone Church, which he helped construct (dedicated November 15, 1868), and welcomed another daughter, Emma Belle, in March 1869. Meanwhile, his Pacific Slope Mission was still active; and in July 1869, Alex, accompanied by his younger brother, David H., set out, this time on the recently completed transcontinental railroad.<sup>58</sup>

Upon arriving in Utah, Alexander and David obtained an audience with Brigham Young on July 17, 1869, to request permission to

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<sup>56</sup>Alexander Hale Smith, San Bernardino, California, Letter to John Smith, February 8, 1867, Joseph Smith Sr. Family Collection, VMSS 775, no. 2, Box 2, fd. 8, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

<sup>57</sup>Alexander H. Smith, Nauvoo, Illinois, Letter to Joseph F. Smith, Salt Lake City, February 16, 1868, MS 18119, LDS Church History Library.

<sup>58</sup>“Biography of Patriarch Alexander H. Smith,” January 1912, 65.

preach in the Tabernacle. Emma dreaded the encounter and had written to Joseph III in anxiety and resignation: "I hope they will be able to bear with patience all the abuse they will have to meet. I do not like to have my children's feelings abused, but I do like that Brigham shows to all, both Saint and sinner that there is not the least particle of friendship existing between him and myself."<sup>59</sup>

Brigham Young's feelings had not mellowed since Alexander's first visit, and the meeting was no less acerbic. The brothers were kept waiting for some time—long enough, as Alexander deduced, for President Young to summon "nineteen or twenty . . . principal men of the church." In the group were relatives George A. Smith, John Henry Smith, John Smith, and Samuel H. B. Smith. Although surprised at "this imposing array," Alex made his request. Young challenged some statements he had made three years earlier in responding to a public disagreement with Joseph F. and demanded that he retract them. Alex responded:

They were strictly true, and I stood ready to prove them. He asked me where I got my information, and I remarked I had lived through the experiences of many of the events referred to, and did not need to have anyone inform me. He then asked me if my mother did not give me information. By this time so much had been said we were both getting warm and earnest in our converse. I answered, Yes sir, and I had more confidence in her statement than I did in his. This made him quite angry, and he began to abuse my mother, calling her "the damnedest liar that ever lived;" accused her of trying to poison my father twice, and also accused her of stealing my father's and Uncle Hyrum's picture, and his family ring, and withholding them from the church and the family, and other things of like nature.

I finally told him to stop; that what he had said was false and he knew it to be false. Of course this angered him still more.

Some one said, "We love you boys for your father's sake." I said that made no impression upon me, I expected to live long enough to make for myself a name, and have the people of God love me for my own sake.

At this President Young arose to his feet, clenched his fists, and shook them down by his side, raised upon his toes and came down on his heels repeatedly as he said, "*A name, a name, a name.* You have not got God enough about you to make a name. You are nothing at all like your father. He was open and frank and outspoken, but you; there is

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<sup>59</sup>Emma Smith Bidamon, Nauvoo, Letter to Joseph Smith III, August 1, [1869], MS 9091, LDS Church History Library.



something covered up, something hidden, calculated to deceive.”

I told him time would tell.

He then told me that article on marriage in the Book of Covenants had been written by Oliver Cowdery and published in the book directly in opposition to father’s wishes.

I remarked, “President Young, unfortunately for your statement, that article with every other one in the book, used by the church previous to father’s death, was laid before a general assembly of the church in solemn assembly, and indorsed by the whole church.” I then challenged him or any other authorized representative of the church there in Utah to meet us in discussion of the differences in faith and organization existing between us. I told him, “You say you have the truth, and that we are in error. If you have the truth, what need you fear? You are men in full vigor of mind and reason, we are but boys. If it is as you say you can easily overcome us, if we are in the wrong; but if it proves that we are right the sooner you get right the better. . . .”

President Young would no longer talk to me; so I said, “Come, David, let us go; it is useless to prolong this controversy.” We arose to our feet, and David said, “Mr. Young, are we to understand that we are denied the use of the tabernacle?”

President Young then turned to his brethren, and said, “What do you say, brethren?” Several of them expressed themselves disapproving the letting us have it. The exact words of none come to me except those of George Q. Cannon. He arose and said, “So far as I am concerned, I can soon express myself. After we whose hairs have grown gray in the service of God and after we have borne the heat and burden of the day in persecution and suffering, on land and sea, and have labored long and hard in heat and cold to build up the work and name for their father; for these boys to come now and ask us for the use of our houses to tear down what we have been so many years in building up, to me it is the height of impudence, and I will not give my consent to it.” He was very much in earnest, his face was as white as death.

David then quietly arose to his full height and his face was also white but his words were calm, but oh, so full of sarcasm: “We will not deny that you have traveled far, suffered much, and labored hard to build up a name for our father, but what sort of a name is it? A name that we his sons are ashamed to meet in good society, and it shall be our life’s work to remove from our father’s name the stain you have heaped upon it.”

. . . When Brigham Young was abusing my mother so to my face, my first impulse was to strike him, and quick as a flash I seemed to hear the words, “You are representing the Lord Jesus Christ,” and then followed the words of my mother, “Do not let anything they may say offend or hurt you, they can’t hurt me and I would rather they

would speak ill than good of me,” and at once I had myself in control.<sup>60</sup>

The Smith brothers’ preaching services were filled to overflowing, even though, according to notes slipped them by more than one Latter-day Saint, the high council had passed a resolution forbidding members to attend their services. They stayed in the city until December, then continued their mission in California, carrying with them a heavy gold ring. It was one of three that “an admirer in Nauvoo” had given to Joseph, Hyrum, and Don Carlos.<sup>61</sup> In San Francisco, they located Don Carlos’s widow, Agnes Coolbrith Smith Pickett, and her daughter, Josephine Donna Smith, who had disassociated herself from Mormonism and was known as Ina D. Coolbrith, librarian, author, and poet. They presented Ina with her “father’s gold ring . . . [which] became a prized possession.”<sup>62</sup>

### RETURN TO THE MIDWEST

They had to leave California within four months. Elizabeth became dangerously ill in Plano with “lung fever,” and David’s health suddenly failed, leaving him “sick and broken.”<sup>63</sup> Emma’s skilled nursing brought Elizabeth through the fever,<sup>64</sup> and the family moved back into the Nauvoo Mansion during the summer of 1870. Alexander served as Nauvoo District president and another son, Don Alvin, named for two of Joseph Jr.’s brothers who had predeceased him, was born on May 17, 1871.<sup>65</sup>

In Utah, Alexander had written to Emma, expressing his wish “that you should not have so much house room to keep clean, nor so

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<sup>60</sup>Alexander H. Smith, “Early Ministerial Experiences: No. 16,” *Autumn Leaves* 14, no. 8 (August 1901): 349–52. Technically, the Doctrine and Covenants was canonized by an assembly of priesthood quorums on August 17, 1835, rather than by a full conference of the Church, but this detail does not affect the main point, which was the statement on monogamous marriage’s authoritative acceptance. *History of the [LDS] Church*, 1:243–53.

<sup>61</sup>Avery, *From Mission to Madness*, 119.

<sup>62</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup>*History of the Reorganized Church*, 4:674.

<sup>64</sup>Emma Smith Bidamon, Letter to Mrs. (Emma) Pilgrim, March 27, 1870, Emma Smith Papers, P4, f43, Community of Christ Archives.

<sup>65</sup>Alexander’s and Elizabeth’s family eventually included nine children: (1) Frederick Alexander, January 19, 1862; (2) Vida Elizabeth, January

much running up and down stairs to do.” He asked her to propose to Lewis Bidamon using some of the material from the Nauvoo House, a hotel left unfinished at Joseph’s death, “to build a comfortable cottage home.” He volunteered his own labor and assistance from David and Joseph III.<sup>66</sup> When this thoughtful project began, a section of the wall they were removing collapsed, injuring Alexander and some of the other workmen. One of Vida’s vivid memories was seeing “Father c[o]me walking up from the place of dust and confusion—Mother, white and wide-eyed on one side, and Aunt Julia on the other—with that awful wound in his head.”<sup>67</sup> It could have been even worse. Moments earlier, Alex and Elizabeth’s son, Frederick A., then about ten, had been playing at the very spot where the wall fell. Despite such setbacks, the family’s united labor soon enclosed and finished the portion of the Nauvoo House where Emma would make her home during her final years.

On April 10, 1873, Alex was ordained an apostle and reappointed to the Pacific Slope Mission. He left on June 27, 1873, but had to borrow money to reach California. There he set apart Charles Wesley Wandell and Glaud Rodger for a RLDS mission to Australia.<sup>68</sup>

### A NEW FARM

Alex returned home briefly; but the general conference again

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16, 1865; (3) Ina Inez, November 27, 1866; (4) Emma Belle, March 17, 1869. She married William Kennedy on October 5, 1887; (5) Don Alvin, May 17, 1871; (6) Eva Grace, March 1, 1874; she married Forest Lamont Madison. They moved to San Bernardino, California, where she died in 1892, after giving birth to a son, Lamont (“Monty”), on March 18. Elizabeth brought the baby to the family home where she and Alex cared for him until he was about sixteen; (7) Joseph George, May 7, 1877; (8) Arthur M., February 8, 1880; and (9) Coral C. R., October 29, 1882. “Biography of Patriarch Alexander Hale Smith,” July 1913, 309; Anderson, *Ancestry and Posterity of Joseph Smith and Emma Hale*, 598; Gracia Jones, email to Ron Romig, May 2, 2008.

<sup>66</sup>Alexander H. Smith, Letter to Emma Smith Bidamon, Salt Lake City, September 12, 1869, transcription by Rick Grunder, electronic copy in my possession.

<sup>67</sup>“Biography of Patriarch Alexander Hale Smith,” April 1913, 220.

<sup>68</sup>James McKiernan, Letter to Vida Smith, July 21, 1911, quoted in “Biography of Patriarch Alexander Hale Smith,” July 1912, 275; October 1912, 477.

appointed him to California in 1875. He had been laboring as a missionary for a decade, but it was a difficult situation given his “increasing family care.” At his request in autumn 1877, he “was released to labor as circumstances would permit,” allowing him more flexibility.<sup>69</sup> The family moved again, this time to a farm “that appealed to his heart-call” in Harrison County, Missouri. Buying it required a substantial mortgage, but the thirty-nine-year-old Alex was optimistic about being able to combine thrifty farming and the duties of his ministry. Vida wrote movingly of the family’s departure from Nauvoo:

The bright, sunny April day was closing down. The children were trooping through the hall of the Nauvoo House to where Grandma stood spreading “pieces” for the hungry little band. The little mother sat wearily in the big rocker, tears of parting already shining in her eyes, although she thought the night lay between her and the last good-bye. The rooms at the Mansion looked sadly lonely, and as Grandmother stooped to tie a stray bonnet string or press into tiny hands a well-sugared biscuit, there was the tremor of sadness in the dear old hands, and the brown eyes overflowed. Soon they would all be gone, and how they would be missed.

Suddenly there came a shout from the front door, and some way in the hurry and bustle of the hour we were swept out of the loving arms of our grandmother, and from the brow of the hill I recall looking back to Grandmother standing with her hands shading her eyes from the western sunlight, a pathetic droop to the whole beloved figure. Father had discovered the [railroad] car was going that night and Mother had refused to go alone, so we were thus suddenly whisked away from the old home and Grandmother. . . . Never again did my mother look upon the cherished friend of her life, her foster mother and ideal mother-in-law. All that she had been to my mother no pen can ever tell. That was the greatest sorrow of this change to a new home. It left the grandmother so lonely.<sup>70</sup>

The new farm was also a lovely place, but the best part of the new arrangement to Vida was Alexander’s presence:

We made the first really intimate acquaintance with Father, and formed the biggest estimate of his possibilities as a companion and a real chum. Those of us who were permitted to labor beside him, or take tramps into the woodland where he often spent whole long days cutting wood, or if granted to ride with him on some cherished expe-

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<sup>69</sup>*History of the Reorganized Church*, 4:675.

<sup>70</sup>“Biography of Alexander Hale Smith,” January 1913, 28–30.

*Emma Smith Bidamon, ca. 1875  
(H818.38).*



dition for pleasure or business, found him a delightful companion. As daughters we received from him, of course, deserved but gentle-voiced criticism of action or language, but coupled with it was always the same chivalrous, courteous, gentlemanly consideration that he expected other men to bestow upon us. To meet with his disapproval in conduct or speech was almost unerringly to be deserving of it. Long after I was a woman, and when far from his guiding hand, a woman of his acquaintance said to me, "I always thought your father's standard of womanhood very difficult to reach," and turning that sentiment over in the light of mature years, I have wondered if the standard of womanhood to all men is not measured by their conceptions of the goodness and virtue and strength of the women they knew best in childhood.<sup>71</sup>

Vida also described her father's physical and personal qualities:

As a man he has a height of five feet and ten inches; an eye large, clear, full, and blue; hair dark, almost black, soft, fine and abundant, even now when he is growing old; a forehead square and full. A facial

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<sup>71</sup>"Biography of Patriarch Alexander Hale Smith," April 1913, 219.

index of his tender heart is shown by a deeply cleft chin. As a speaker, he appeals to the heart at once. He is himself quickly moved to extremes of sorrow or merriment, and has the gift of enjoying the good and beautiful things of life to a remarkable extent.<sup>72</sup>

Alexander served as the Andover postmaster for two years and doubled as a land agent.<sup>73</sup> Still, he felt compelled in April 1878 to accept the conference appointment for northern Missouri and southern Iowa, which at least had the advantage of leaving him closer to home.<sup>74</sup>

Just a year later, Emma, age seventy-five, entered her final illness. Summoned by his adopted sister, Julia Murdock Middleton, Alex arrived at Emma's sickbed along with Joseph III. Alexander wrote on April 27, 1879, to Elizabeth: "Mother is gradually failing. . . . Oh, Lizzie, it is hard to see her suffer so."<sup>75</sup>

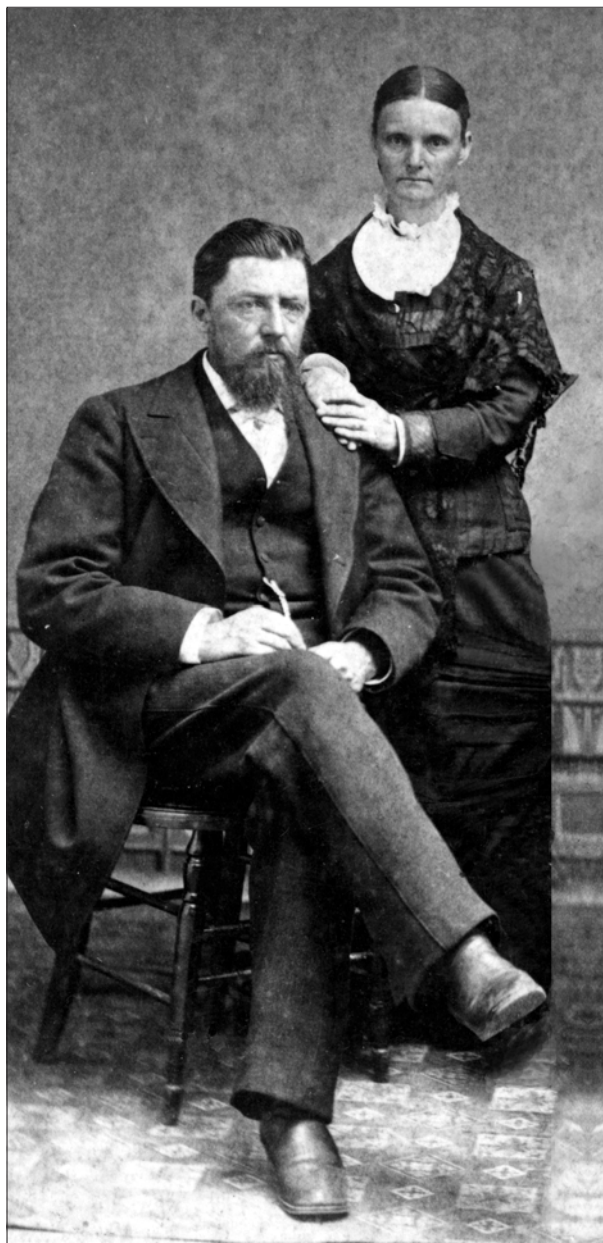
Alexander described Emma's last moments three days later:

<sup>72</sup>*History of the Reorganized Church*, 4:677.

<sup>73</sup>*Ibid.*; "Editorial Items," *Saints' Herald* 25, no. 3 (February 1, 1878): 41.

<sup>74</sup>*History of the Reorganized Church*, 4:675. Vida provided a brief summary of her father's missionary endeavors over the next decade or so: "In 1879 the whole Missouri was added. From October, 1880, it was simply Missouri until the following April, when he was given Illinois in addition. In 1883 he was still retained in charge of his birth-state, Missouri, and the state of Kansas. The time came for another distant mission. Leaving his family (wife and nine children) in their home in Independence, Missouri, in 1885, he took charge of the Pacific Slope returning in the spring of 1886. From this sunny field he was directed to minister to the Saints in a field comprising Northern Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, the Dakotas, and Manitoba. His charge kept him in touch with the people of the North until 1890. Then in connection with Elder E. C. Briggs, there were added Northern Indiana, Michigan, and Northwest Ohio. He returned to the Rocky Mountain Mission in 1892 with Elder Joseph Luff as associate. In 1893 he was associated with Elder William H. Kelley in the Eastern States." *History of the Reorganized Church*, 4:675.

<sup>75</sup>"Biography of Patriarch Alexander Hale Smith," April 1913, 227. Joseph III described his mother's final moments, April 30, 1879, "When in the presence of her husband Major L. C. Bidamon, my adopted sister Julia M. Middleton, my brother Alexander, and myself, she (Emma) quietly breathed her earth life away," *Memoirs of Joseph Smith III*, 186.



*Alexander and Elizabeth, in Independence, Missouri,  
1882 (D1821.2).*



My mother raised right up, lifted her left hand as high as she could raise it, and called, Joseph. I put my left arm under her shoulders, took her hand in mine, saying, Mother, what is it, laid her hand on her bosom, and she was dead; she had passed away.

And when I talked of her calling, Sr. Revel, who was with us during our sickness, said, Don't you understand that? No, I replied, I do not. Well, a short time before she died she had a vision which she related to me. She said that your father came to her and said to her, Emma, come with me, It is time for you to come with me. And as she related it she said, I put on my bonnet and my shawl and went with him; I did not think that it was anything unusual. I went with him into a mansion, a beautiful mansion, and he showed me through the different apartments of that beautiful mansion. And one room was the nursery. In that nursery was a babe in the cradle. She said, I knew my babe, my Don Carlos that was taken away from me. She sprang forward, caught the child up in her arms, and wept with joy over the child. When she recovered herself sufficient she turned to Joseph and said, Joseph, where are the rest of my children? He said to her, Emma, be patient, [a]nd you shall have all of your children. Then she saw standing by his side a personage of light, even the Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>76</sup>

Alex returned to northern Missouri to find his seventeen-year-old son Fred "sick with chill fever and my work all at a standstill." He had the crops to plant but was simultaneously resolved "going into my mission this week, no preventing providence."<sup>77</sup>

### MOVE TO THE CENTER PLACE

By 1880, Alexander reluctantly conceded that it was impossible to continue his ministry and also farm enough to support his family. They rented out the farm and moved to Stewartsville, DeKalb County, Missouri, which was then becoming a significant place of gathering for RLDS members in northern Missouri. Stewartsville not only offered improved educational opportunities for the Smith children, but the Saints also promised to help Alexander construct a home for his large family. However, they passed the winter of 1880–81 in a single room offered by a member while some of the children temporarily

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<sup>76</sup>Alexander H. Smith, "Second Coming of Christ: The Home of the Redeemed," Sermon at Bottineau, N.D., July 1, 1903, *Zion's Ensign* 14 (December 31, 1903): 4–7.

<sup>77</sup>Alexander H. Smith, Letter to W. H. Kelley, June 3, 1879, William Kelley Papers, P1, Box 2, f5, item 35, Community of Christ Archives.



lodged with other Saints. In the spring, Alex and the other men built a frame house. The family moved in as soon as it was enclosed, happy to be together even in a construction zone as lathing and plastering continued around them. “Mother took some comfort in the new carpet and a few pieces of new house furnishing that the sale of some of the farm animals secured.” With the money from the children’s favorite horse, Alex bought “a modest but sweet-toned Western Cottage Organ, which came to be known in the family as the ‘wooden brother.’”<sup>78</sup>

Alex resumed his missionary labors until, in March 1882, they moved again—this time to Independence, Missouri, where they made their home at 112 South Spring Street.<sup>79</sup> One advantage of this location became immediately apparent when Alex and Elizabeth opened their home during conference to the William Kelley family of Kirtland, Ohio. When William wrote a thank-you letter, Alex responded warmly: “I should regret very much if you did not feel at home in my house. My wife is very sensitive and has for a long time felt that our brethren gave us the go by, and sought for better quarters. Well I tell her its all right, if they are better cared for and more contented, but she thinks its on her account. So Will it did me good to have you with other of our Brethren make your home with me during conference.”<sup>80</sup>

While living at Independence, Alexander provided ministry to surrounding congregations that involved more than preaching. In July 1883 in Armstrong, Kansas, Alex joined the members who were building a meeting house: “I went upon the scaffold to aid in putting on the cornice. We got too . . . [many big men] on one corner and the scaffold broke and I would have got a bad fall but I caught on the cornice.” Still he was “laid up” from “internal injuries.”<sup>81</sup>

In July 1883, David Whitmer consented to allow an RLDS committee that included Alexander and Joseph III to compare the Book of Mormon Printer’s Manuscript at his home in Richmond, Missouri, against the printed versions. Joseph Smith III reported in the

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<sup>78</sup>“Biography of Patriarch Alexander Hale Smith,” July 1913, 294–95.

<sup>79</sup>*Ibid.*, 295.

<sup>80</sup>Alexander H. Smith, Independence, Letter to William H. Kelley, July 1, 1882, William H. Kelley Papers, P1, Box 4, f1, item 33, Community of Christ Archives.

<sup>81</sup>Alexander H. Smith, Letter to E. L. Kelley, July 21, 1883, P58–1, f1, Community of Christ Archives.

*Saints' Herald* that Lewis Bidamon had excavated the Nauvoo House cornerstone in 1881, only to find that “the manuscripts were water soaked and spoiled, a small section only being decipherable, the rest was mostly reduced to pulp, and on those portions not so reduced, the writing was faded out and illegible. A copy of the Doctrine and Covenants was with the manuscript, and the whole mass when dry crumbled to pieces at a touch. He forwarded, such part as could be handled, to us at Lamoni, where after a little exposure and handling it became entirely worthless even as a relic.”<sup>82</sup> This disheartening discovery left David Whitmer’s copy as the only holograph in existence.

Joseph III read aloud from the manuscript, Alex followed in “the Palmyra copy” (1830), and William H. Kelley “the Plano copy (1874); carefully noting each and every change that was discovered in the printed copies.” The RLDS Church subsequently published a revised edition of the Book of Mormon based on the committee’s findings.<sup>83</sup>

In addition to health limitations, Alex was falling behind financially. In the 1870s, the Church bishop began providing missionary families with limited support, making it possible for Alexander to stay in the field for extended periods. But it was never enough. In a series of 1883 letters to Edmund L. Kelley of the RLDS Presiding Bishopric, Alex confessed that he owed “the dry goods merchant \$67.85, my apple man \$6.25, my grocers bill . . . \$133.65. . . . I did feel ashamed to go up town, for fear someone would ask for what I could not give, and that was justly theirs to ask.”<sup>84</sup>

A month later, the situation had not eased. Eighteen-year-old Vida had “tried hard to get a situation [in millinery] but has failed” and was hiring out “to do housework. There is no disgrace in being poor nor in honest work, but here in this semi southern society, a white girl who goes out to work is looked down upon, a mere servant. And it is very hard to a sensitive mind. And Ed it is hard for me to

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<sup>82</sup>Joseph Smith III, “It is often said that history repeats itself. . . .” *Saint’s Herald*, 31, no. 34 (August 23, 1884): 537–38.

<sup>83</sup>William H. Kelley, Alexander H. Smith, and Thomas W. Smith, “Book of Mormon Committee Report,” *Herald* 31, no. 34 (August 23, 1884): 545.

<sup>84</sup>Alexander H. Smith, Letter to Edmund L. Kelley, April 20, 1883, P12, f2, Community of Christ Archives.



*Alexander and Elizabeth Smith's daughter Vida Smith and husband Heman C. Smith (no relation). Heman succeeded Alexander as the RLDS missionary in charge of the Pacific Slope Mission and later served as an apostle and RLDS Church Historian (D574).*

have to let my girls go out to do menial labor for the enemies of our faith.”<sup>85</sup>

Alex, like other RLDS missionaries, received only minimal financial assistance from the cash-strapped Church. At this period, missionaries were required to be self-sustaining and simultaneously provide for their own families. Local jurisdictions provided missionaries in the field with food, housing, and sometimes travel expenses, but none of these local units was affluent. That same fall, Alex admitted his growing worries: “I am constantly reminded of my delinquencies and know not the day when the crash will come. And I be

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<sup>85</sup>Alexander H. Smith, Letter to Edmund L. Kelley, May 30, 1883, P58-1, f1, Community of Christ Archives.

told ‘I can’t carry you any longer.’”<sup>86</sup>

By late 1884, Alexander was severely overextended, living on credit, and saddled with mortgages on both the farm in Harrison County and on their Independence home. He saw no way out of the situation; but as always, putting his ecclesiastical responsibilities first, he accepted the conference assignment to serve in California in 1884 and 1885.

### FAMILY MATTERS

In August 1885, Alexander and Joseph III traveled together as far as Utah, then Joseph returned to Independence. Alexander went on to California where he initially boarded with George and Emily Bartholomew in Oakland.<sup>87</sup>

In March 1886, a letter arrived from a young RLDS missionary, Heman C. Smith (no relation to Alexander), asking Alex’s blessing on his marriage to Vida, to which Elizabeth had already responded happily. Alex responded with a mixture of joy and sadness:

Bro. Heman, Vida is like the apple of my eye to me. She is a child of the covenant. I don’t know if you understand me or not, but to me she is all a child of promise can be. A bond given of God. She combines the love I had for my mother, and that I have for my child. I would never forget, I fear I could never forgive the man who ill treats her. . . .

I appreciate your worth, will make no eulogies on character, nor past history, but simply say in giving my consent, and with it my daughter, and parental blessing, it is all I can give, and still in thus giving I think I am giving into your keeping one of the purest and carest [sic] gems this world holds. And oh Heman see to it, before God that you keep it undimmed and pure as your future happiness and hers also depends on the mutual bond being kept always unsullied and pure.

I do not write this without tears, for, I feel how I have leaned upon my Vida in my home life. And I forsee [sic] how hard it will be to give her up, but she assures me her happiness will be secured by the union. So take her my boy, and with her take a Fathers blessing. May the God

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<sup>86</sup>Alexander H. Smith, Letter to Edmund L. Kelley, September 27, 1883, P16, f3, Community of Christ Archives.

<sup>87</sup>“Biography of Patriarch Alexander Hale Smith,” July 1913, 305. Alexander H. Smith, Letter to W. H. Kelley, January 16, 1886, William H. Kelley Papers, P1, Box 6, f9, items 1, 2, 3, 4, Community of Christ Archives.



*Alexander was ordained President of the RLDS Quorum of the Twelve by Presidents Joseph Smith III and William W. Blair in 1890 (D591).*

of our fathers bless the union. May his Spirit be and abide with my children thus made one. And the holy angel of peace dwell with you now and evermore, in the name of Christ Jesus, our Lord, Amen.<sup>88</sup>

Alex returned home later that month, passing through Salt Lake City. While he was preaching, Joseph F. Smith, who was in the congregation, asked permission to speak. Alex readily accepted this request but reported indignantly that Joseph F. bore “his testimony to Polig and charged his father and my father with being Polig’s and with lying in their published testimony against it.” Alex responded that “[I] was heartily ashamed of him to stand before that immense congregation and proclaim his father a liar.”<sup>89</sup> It was a difficult position ethically for both men since, for reasons Joseph Jr. and Hyrum found necessary, they were, in fact, polygamists yet had publicly asserted that they were not.

Alexander’s finances had not improved; and he was nearing the end of hope when his California friend, George Bartholomew, offered him a loan of \$700 to pay off the mortgage on the Independence home, using the farm for collateral. Alexander gratefully accepted this solution, concerned about Elizabeth’s failing health, which was exacerbated by worry. Although a frugal woman, “she has received nothing on her allowance this nor last month, and the expenses of living still goes on. What the Bishop gave me at Lamoni of course has been used for living perposes [sic]. I have been offered two chances for work, but I can’t, I positively can’t allow the effect of my quitting the field to come upon the church.”<sup>90</sup>

Regretfully he decided that he could not afford to attend the historic 1887 conference, held at the Kirtland Temple. “It will take all I

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<sup>88</sup>Alexander H. Smith, Letter to Heman C. Smith, Oakland, California, March 18, 1886, P13, f330, Community of Christ Archives. After the wedding, the young couple moved to California where Heman served as an RLDS missionary. At this time Alex was reassigned to a new mission field, comprised of Illinois, Missouri, Minnesota, the Dakotas, and Manitoba.

<sup>89</sup>Alexander H. Smith, Letter to Edmund L. Kelley, December 19, 1883, P58-8, f1, Community of Christ Archives.

<sup>90</sup>Alexander H. Smith, Independence, Letter to E. L. Kelley, May 6, 1886, P16, f13, Community of Christ Archives. Alexander and Elizabeth Smith, indenture, to John W. Brackenbury and George Bartholomew, Deed of Trust, Recorder’s Office, Harrison County, Missouri. He had hoped to pay Bartholomew out of the farm proceeds, but living expenses had con-



can rake and scrape to move me [back to the farm],” as he wrote W. H. Kelley. “I tell you ‘Hope’ does not shine very brightly before me now.”<sup>91</sup> He understood how tight Church finances were but felt humiliated at asking for reimbursement of expenses and doubly mortified to be refused. He resolved to continue exercising the “strictest economy” with his family while carrying on his ministry as best he could.<sup>92</sup>

Vida remembered a bright moment in April 1888 when she and Heman returned to Independence for the cornerstone laying of the Stone Church near the temple lot. She had her son, Heman Hale Smith, then a year old, with her. After Alex gave his address, “he came around to where I stood and took my year-old boy and held him during the remainder of the ceremonies. . . . I fancy I see him press the little form of my boy close to him, his face radiant with living emotions and his eyes lighting with pride and delight, his hat held in his hand left his dark hair tossing in the cool, spring wind.”<sup>93</sup>

Vida visited her parents at the farm and, with her sister, Ina Inez, would accompany Alex on preaching visits in the region, “assisting him with our faith and songs.” In later years, Vida could never think of that time without picturing her “father standing in some weather-beaten, cheerless old schoolhouse, spreading a royal spiritual feast for a few straggling but earnest hearers.”<sup>94</sup>

### IN THE MISSION FIELD

In 1890 the RLDS Conference assigned Alexander to take charge of the large North Central Mission field, including parts of Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio. Part of his mission included Clitherall,

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sumed all of the profits, with the result that two years later with the mortgage due in another year, he saw no means of meeting his obligation. Alexander H. Smith, Clitherall, Minnesota, Letter to Edmund L. Kelley, August 4, 1888, P16, f16, Community of Christ Archives.

<sup>91</sup>Alexander H. Smith, Letter to W. H. Kelley, March 11, 1887, William H. Kelley Papers, P1, Box 8, f1, items 13, 14, Community of Christ Archives.

<sup>92</sup>Alexander H. Smith, Letter, E. L. Kelley, Independence, March 20, 1887, P16, f15, Community of Christ Archives.

<sup>93</sup>“Biography of Patriarch Alexander Hale Smith,” October 1913, 394.

<sup>94</sup>*Ibid.*, 396.



*Alexander standing by door of Nauvoo House at the time he removed the hotel wing of the Nauvoo Mansion House, 1890 (D398.166).*

Minnesota, where a large group of followers of Alpheus Cutler had lived since 1865. By this time of Alexander's first visit in August 1888, many of Cutler's disciples had affiliated with the RLDS Church.

During the 1890 RLDS Conference, on April 8, Alexander was called by revelation to be the president of the Twelve and was ordained to that office by Joseph III and W. W. Blair.

Alex bore testimony to the conference of his call:

While traveling in southern California, in one period of my ministry, my surroundings were such that I was cast down in spirit, discouraged, worn and tired. I felt very much like giving up and going home. Retiring to rest I presented myself before the Lord. I asked him for some encouragement. During the night I received by the influence of the Spirit the following: I saw a city upon a hill. I saw to the eastward of the city a rolling prairie country. The city appeared to have walls. . . . I came to the east side of the city and seemed to be standing on the top of the wall. . . . On gazing toward the east I beheld a band of people approaching. They seemed to be led by one that was riding a horse and as



they approached the city they came singing. I stood watching until they came near to the gate, and as they approached it the one that was leader alighted from his horse, and instead of going through the gate, came up the broad flight of steps and approached me. I recognized him and I cried out, "My father! O my father!" He took me in his arms and embraced me. He said, "Be cheered, be comforted; the time is near when your position will be changed; let your heart be comforted." I awoke, was filled with the spirit, and weeping.<sup>95</sup>

Ina went to California for a protracted visit with Vida and Heman. When she returned home about 1890, she wrote to Vida: "I was tired and the crowd was great in the city, but suddenly I found myself in the arms of a portly gentleman and felt all my worry and weariness roll away. It was always like a tonic to meet Father in the midst of confusion and weariness and irritating crowds. He was so sure and easy and comfortable, and we felt a sort of pride in being thus companioned and chaperoned. And . . . his nieces felt the same loving care and tenderness and chivalry from him."<sup>96</sup> Although Vida also described Alex as "very portly," she also noted that his health was much better during this period.<sup>97</sup>

Whenever opportunity afforded, Alexander returned to Nauvoo for short visits. One concern during this period was the upkeep of the Nauvoo Mansion House, of which Alexander retained ownership. Fortunately, it had remained occupied, but by 1890, the condition of the hotel wing of the old Smith home had deteriorated. During the summer of 1890, Alex and Joseph III determined that the dilapidated condition of the hotel wing threatened the survival of the Mansion House. Alexander's diary recorded: "[I] Let [a] contract [to Lyman Beecher] to tear down the old house." The remainder of the house was re-roofed and painted red.<sup>98</sup> "It looked real cozy and homelike when I was there last summer—made me almost homesick," Alex wrote to Vida in 1891. "I love the old place yet, and would gladly go back if there were Saints enough to form a church there; and I had

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<sup>95</sup>"Biography of Patriarch Alexander Hale Smith," October 1913, 400.

<sup>96</sup>Ina Inez Smith, Letter to Vida E. Smith, quoted in "Biography of Patriarch Alexander Hale Smith," October 1913, 403.

<sup>97</sup>Ibid.

<sup>98</sup>Ibid., 401–2.

means enough to fix up the old home as I would love to.”<sup>99</sup> In conjunction with Lewis Bidamon’s funeral in 1891, the family finally erected a modest marker over Emma’s grave.

Alex again found a temporary solution to his financial problem in the fall of 1890 by extending his mortgage with Bartholomew and trading his farm for a home in Lamoni, Iowa, where they lived near Graceland College. “Mother was happy,” wrote Vida. “She had room for flowers and chickens and cows, and for Father a wide, fine garden and place for fruit; in fact all the comforts of a farm and also conveniences of a wide-awake town and none of the burdens of harvest and seedtime. Here Mother thought to spend her days until the sun set.” On April 22, 1891, Ina married Sidney Garden Wright of Australia and moved with him to that country. “The years seemed very long to those left behind,” Vida recalled.<sup>100</sup>

Alex still felt the pressure of an uncertain financial situation; despite the relief, he knew it was only temporary, because “I see no way of making any money while in the ministry and have no way out of it,” he wrote to Edmund Kelley in early November 1890. “So must simply wait until the close, and then lose all. But perhaps providence intends it so, to keep me humble.” The month before, the LDS general conference had just voted to sustain the Woodruff Manifesto, which withdrew support for new plural marriages, and Alex wrote, compassionately but with a keen appreciation of the ironies:

What think you of “That Manifesto”? Is it not quite a come round? An easy way to justify oneself, to lay the responsibility on the shoulders of the national government. But unfortunately they do quote, that “Rev, Be obedient to the laws that be,” given years before their pet Polig is claimed to have come.

Well, well, I hope they will learn obedience, if need be, by the things which they suffer.<sup>101</sup>

During a 1900 conference talk, probably referring to the success of the work in California, Alexander commented, “Our advance has been . . . slow, seemingly, but it has been sure. We have not had to yield

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<sup>99</sup>Alexander Hale Smith, Letter to Vida E. Smith, quoted in “Biography of Patriarch Alexander Hale Smith,” October 1913, 401–2.

<sup>100</sup>*Ibid.*, 404.

<sup>101</sup>Alexander H. Smith, Letter to W. H. Kelley, November 8, 1890, William H. Kelley Papers, P1, Box 10, f8, item 8, Community of Christ Archives.

any ground where we have planted ourselves.”<sup>102</sup>

### IDENTITY AND SERVICE

At this point in his life, Alex’s core identity and belief system were fully mature. Now, fully confident in his religious sentiments, Alexander, three days after his fifty-ninth birthday, wrote a remarkable letter to his cousin Fred Salisbury, the son of Alex’s Aunt Katharine Smith Salisbury, sister of Joseph Jr. This earnest letter explains Alex’s understanding of the law of lineal succession, one of the two great rifts between the LDS and RLDS churches, both of which have now receded into the past. However, understanding Alex’s views gives significant insight into some of the underlying interests and motivations that drove Alexander’s extraordinary life of commitment and sacrifice:

Bro Joseph was kind enough to show me a letter from you today, in which you ask some questions, which I may aid you in understanding, but to do so I will examine some of the foundation upon which the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of L.D.S. is built.

There is no need of calling your attention to proofs of the mission of Joseph Smith the Martyr. My Father and your Uncle. But some of the revelations through him to the church have never been understood, or else have been willfully misrepresented, and misinterpreted. . . . And now for my examination of Gods word to support the claim of my Bro Joseph, as successor of Joseph the Martyr. His statement in the matter will natural[l]y be of little service to you, in discussion with those Elders from Utah, as they will not admit that he will tell the truth in the matter at issue, being schooled by his mother who B Young Said was the “Damndest [sic] Liar that ever lived,” and those fellows will simply ignore anything which Joseph or I may say on the history of the church, for that reason I take the present mode of answering you for your good.

What I refer to in the revelations is the plain provision made for just, what occurred, that is the taking away the Prophet. I call your attention, first to Sec 2 Par 4 of Book of D. Covenants, and there is the plain statement, to the Prophet, “because of transgression if thou art not aware thou wilt fall, but remember God is merciful.” I quote this to show that the Prophet was not infal[l]ible, but might do wrong. It is so often quoted, “What the Prophet Joseph did was right, and we have no right to question what he did.” And also to show a foreshadowing [sic] of evil to come to the Prophet. And again Sec 4 Par 4, God says, “I

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<sup>102</sup>A. H. Smith, 1900 Conference speech, *Journal of History*, 7, no. 1 (January 1914): 63.

command you my servant Joseph to repent and walk more upright before me and yield to the persuasions of men no more and that you be firm in keeping the commandments wherewith I have commanded you, and if you do this, behold I grant unto you eternal life, even if you should be slain.”

Notice here Coz Fred, God foreshadows the fact that he would be slain and father for a long time understood it so. Now see if God knew the Prophet would be taken, it is but reasonable to believe he would provide for his church in such an emergency, and we believe he did, as I will endeavor to show. It has always seemed strange to me with the bible book of mormon and doctrine and covenants in their hands how so many were lead astray. For nothing is more clearly established in the restoration, in this latter day work than, the law of lineal decent in the right to the priesthood. It is one of the pillars upon which the work rests.

They can no more get away from the decrees of God as pertaining to the lineal right to the priesthood, and presidency, than they can escape the Gospel law of condemnation, if they do wrong, and reject the truth. Rev. Sec 83. Par 1-2 & 3 and Sec 84, Par 3, the latter reads. “Therefore thus saith the Lord unto you. (Who? Why Joseph to whom he is talking) with whom the priesthood hath continued, through the lineage of your fathers, for ye are lawful heirs according to the promise (no) the flesh, and have been hid from the world with Christ in God, therefore your life (not lives) and the priesthood hath remained and must needs remain through your lineage until the restitution of all things &c and again Sec 107 Par 18, where the Lord says the blessings of Joseph is put upon the head of his posterity after him (which is the present Joseph). Now I take up the line again and show just how nicely the revelations confirm Josephs calling. Sec 23, Par 4 is this promise. “Be patient in afflictions for thou shalt have many; but endure them, for lo, I am with you (Joseph Father) even unto the end of thy days. (“Even if you should be slain Sec 4-4”)

You notice here is seemingly an unconditioned promise to the end of the mortal life of the Prophet. God knew he would remain faithful, but he also knew he would be taken away from the church, so he provides for it. In Sec 27 Par 2. God says “I have given him the keys of the mysteries and revelations, which are sealed, until I shall appoint unto them (the church) another in his stead. Note the keys of the mysteries of the revelations are given to Joseph the Prophet, until he God should appoint unto them. Who? the church. Note again the Keys are given to Joseph not to the 12 and he was to hold them, how long? let us see. Sec 64, Par 2. “and the keys of the mysteries of the kingdom, shall not be taken from my servant Joseph Smith Jr through the means I have appointed while he liveth. &c. See Sec 87 Par 2. “Verily I say unto you (Joseph) the keys of this kingdom shall never be taken from you while thou art in this world neither in the world to come. Nevertheless

through you shall the oracles (or revelations) be given to another yea even unto the church." The idea that Fathers mantle fell on Brigham is all nonsense, devilish nonsense. See again as pertaining to the keys father held towards the 12. Sec 105, Par 6. Rebel not against my Joseph Servant Joseph, for verily I say unto you I am with him, and my hand shall be over him and the keys which I have given unto him and also to youward. Shall not be taken from him till I come.

Now Fred, What conclusion must we come to? God said if the Seer should be taken he God would appoint another in his stead, but he would do it through him, his chosen Seer. See Sec 43 Par 2. You will see there, God further explains, and says. None else shall be appointed unto his gift except it be through him. &c and then goes on to say. "For verily I say unto (the church) that he that is ordained of me shall come in at the gate, and be ordained["] as I have told you before, to teach those revelations which you have received and shall receive through him whom I have appointed.

Now I think I have quoted enough to make the matter plain. God tells us, the Seer will be taken, that he will not lose his keys, and gifts, that God will appoint another in his stead, this indicates that his successor will not take his place while he the seer lives. Also that the one God had ordained must come in at the Gate, meaning baptism, note God seems to have "ordained before" some one. Now who is it? God never forgets himself, nor his law, so he remembers the lineage he has watched over so many hundred years and makes his appointment according. In the summer of 1843 while a large concourse of people stood on the banks of the grand old Mississippi river watching a baptism, as the Prophet comes out of the water having immersed the last who had given their name, he lifts his voice and cries, "Is there any one else wishes to give themselves to the service of God. Now is the accepted time" from a group of boys near the outskirts of the concourse of people, comes the answer, "here I am father I do." And the lad God had ordained, threw his hat behind him and ran forward to be led through the gate. As God said he shall come in at the gate. And through my servant Joseph will I appoint him. The lad was confirmed and subsequently was called before the council in the upper chamber of the brick store and anointed and blessed. Now all this was foreshaddowed by the events occurring in Missouri and by prophecy, but it would take too long to tell it now suffice it to say in the jail at Liberty Mo. Father put his hands on the head of Joseph his son, and Prophitically blessed him, and in his anointing at Nauvoo, the blessing of his Father was put upon his head, and it was so announced upon the stand in Nauvoo, but now as to the claim that he was ordained by father to fill his place. Father could hardly do that while he lived that is his place could not be occupied but by him while he lived, he did it so far as was possible in the blessing and setting apart to the prophetic calling. Now you ask why was it necessary for him to be ordained by Bro Marks. See Sec 17, Par 17. "Every presi-

dent of the high priesthood &c is to be ordained by direction of a high council of general conference." This is the law, and God did not choose to ignore it, he gave it, and so he would comply with it, hence ordered, Joseph going where he had a servant who could ordain according to the law. A vote of a general conference was had, and Joseph was ordained by William Marks, president of the high priesthood, of the high council of the corner stake of Zion, Nauvoo at the time of the death of the Prophet.

Cousin Fred there is no clearer line of authority given in all the hand dealing of God in all the ages past than that of the present Josephs. He was ordained a high priest an apostle, president of the high priesthood, and so accepted by the church. Father was ordained, an Apostle, elder and high priest before the church was organized, the command of God was authority for so doing, but after the church was organized and the law given, a compliance with the law was necessary to legalize such ordinations. . . .

In regard to Bro [James] Whiteheads testimony to Joseph blessing. It was called an ordination in the sense of being set apart to fill ~~phoph~~ Prophelicaly [sic] the office he now fills. The ordination could not be understood to place him immediately in the exorcise [sic] of the office, but when the blessing was confirmed by Wm Marks, it placed him immediately in charge. See?<sup>103</sup>

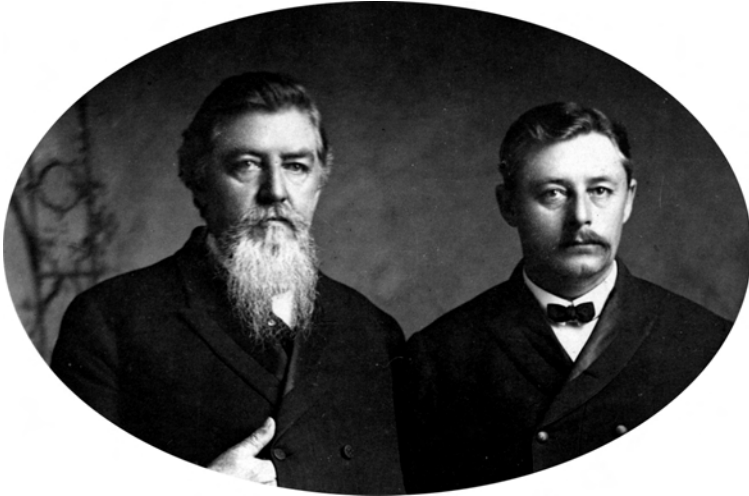
In 1897, Alexander was called into the First Presidency where he served as counselor to Joseph III until 1902. Whenever Joseph III was out of the office, Alexander assisted with the Presidency's correspondence, addressing complex issues of church polity and law.<sup>104</sup> Also in 1897, Alex received an additional appointment by revelation—that of Church Patriarch/Evangelist. Alex's grandfather, Joseph Smith Sr., had served as the first Church Patriarch and, on his deathbed in September 1840, ordained Hyrum as his successor.<sup>105</sup> Following Hyrum's assassination, the only surviving brother, William, briefly became Church Patriarch but quickly parted company

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<sup>103</sup>Alexander H. Smith, Lamoni, Iowa, June 2, 1897, and Blue Rapids, Kansas, June 5, 1897, Letter to Fred Salisbury, P21, f92, Community of Christ Archives; Alex's underlining removed.

<sup>104</sup>Alexander H. Smith Letter Book, 1897–1901, MS 17756, LDS Church History Library.

<sup>105</sup>H. Michael Marquardt, comp., *Early Patriarchal Blessings of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Smith-Pettit Foundation, 2007), xiii.



*Alex with his oldest son, Frederick Alexander, ca. 1900. Frederick eventually filled his father's place as presiding evangelist/patriarch (D564).*

with Brigham Young.<sup>106</sup> After joining a number of other expressions of Mormonism, including an attempt to start his own church, William eventually joined the RLDS Church. However, Joseph III left the office of Presiding Evangelist/Patriarch unfilled until William died in 1893, then called Alexander to that position.

As this was a new ministry in the Reorganization, Alexander had to develop his own patriarchal methodology. His task was materially aided by Leon Arthur Gould (1876–1971) who became Alexander's close associate and stenographer, recording Alex's blessings.<sup>107</sup> Alex undertook this new responsibility reverently, finding great joy in encouraging those who sought his blessings. Here is an example given to Abbie Augusta Horton in 1903:

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<sup>106</sup>William B. Smith, biographical note in Lyndon W. Cook, ed., *The Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Provo, Utah: Seventy's Mission Book Store, 1981), 277.

<sup>107</sup>In later life, Gould served as associate editor of the RLDS Church youth-oriented periodical, *Autumn Leaves*, and later the adult periodical, *Saints' Herald*. During his tenure as editor, Leon was ordained a high priest in the RLDS Church, June 18, 1905. When conflict erupted within the Reorganization during the 1925–27 Supreme Directional Control dispute,



Do not lose faith in thy fellows of like covenant with thee. Remember that humanity is weak, and remember that each one sees this latter day work from the standpoint that they occupy, and sometimes what thou cant not see, thy brother or thy sister may see to an advantage. Sometimes what they see thou cant not see. Sometimes what thou seest they can not behold. Remember this; and that the line of sentinels to see eye to eye must be so arranged that each can see that part of the work over which they have care, and they are placed in trust. If they will watch that part over which they are placed in trust, faithfully, and do their part, it does not matter what others may do, they will receive their reward. So it is with thee. Fill the niche in the great work which God has established in this latter day, in which He has placed thee by reason of thy creation, by reason of the providences which He has thrown around thee, by reason of the very troubles and distresses that have come to thee in consequence of this latter day work. . . . I seal upon thee, in the name of the Lord Jesus, the promise of Eternal Life. The right is thine. Thou has sought to obtain it, and if faithful it shall be given thee in joy and peace and honor and in contentment in the Kingdom of God, where thou shall reign over the sphere of action granted thee, living with those who shall be redeemed, brought into the presence of our Lord and Savior, to dwell upon the earth in its redeemed condition.<sup>108</sup>

Alexander traveled throughout the Church and visited many lo-

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Leon affiliated with the Church of Christ (Temple Lot) by transfer of membership, July 9, 1930. He was selected as an apostle for that church in August 1936 and served with distinction in the Church of Christ until his death on October 23, 1971. Late in his Alex's life, William Dexter also served as his stenographer.

<sup>108</sup>Alexander H. Smith, Evangelist's Blessing of Abbie Augusta Horton, January 3, 1903, Smith Papers, P70-1, f8, Community of Christ Archives. Abbie A. Jones (Johnes) was born in Charleston, Massachusetts, in 1836. She married George F. Horton in May 1879 at Plano, Illinois. George was about eight years old when his parents left Nauvoo "in the Scattering" but held fast to the faith. George was baptized by Joseph Smith III in Plano in 1875. George died at Independence in 1918. Both George and Abbie must have been well known by Joseph III and Alexander. Hortons are buried in Mound Grove Cemetery, Independence, Missouri. George Horton, Obituary, "Died," *Herald* 60, no. 44 (1913): 1066; Abbie Horton, Obituary, "Independence: Stone Church," *Herald* 72, no. 2 (January 14, 1925): 44. Thanks to Barbara Bernauer, Community of Christ Archivist Assistant, for providing research data on Abbie and George Horton.



cal jurisdiction conferences and reunions as Presiding Evangelist/Patriarch.<sup>109</sup> The tradition also developed that Alexander would open every RLDS General Conference with prayer. A significant service during this period was representing the RLDS Church in a series of conversations and meetings with leaders of the Church of Christ (Temple Lot) that eventually culminated in a period of functional harmony between the two bodies.<sup>110</sup>

In 1901, Hawaiian missionary Gilbert J. Waller, wrote to the *Herald*, asking the church: “I hope you will consider the needs of this mission, and . . . send some one to assist in carrying on the work here. If you cannot, I hope you will take some action in regard to the translation and printing of tracts for distribution among the Portuguese, Japanese, and Chinese peoples of the city of Honolulu.”<sup>111</sup> The conference, as a result, instructed Alexander to visit Church members in Polynesia and Australia, a lengthy journey that had to be made by ship.

Accompanied by Leon Gould, the sixty-three-year-old apostle left San Francisco on September 10, 1901. En route to Tahiti, Alexander had a dream that he later wrote about to the Church’s youth magazine *Autumn Leaves*:

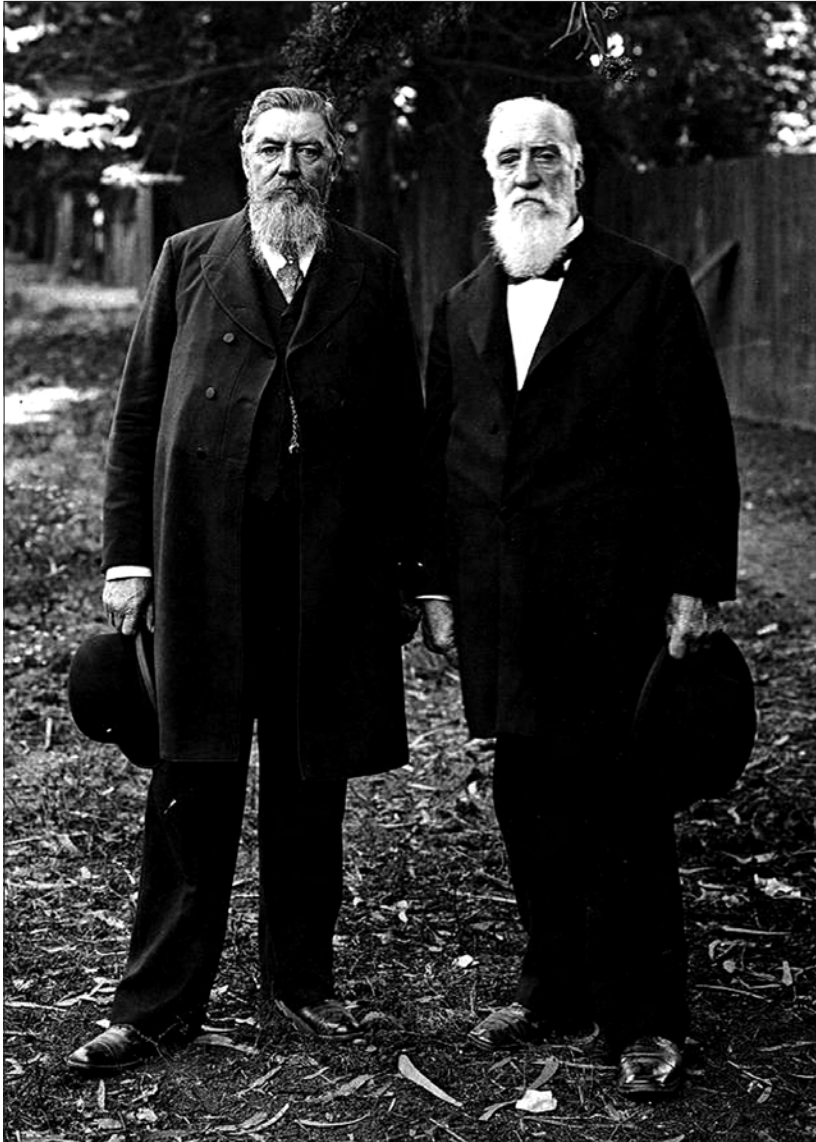
I saw in my dream a native, or colored man, with straight hair and smooth face, a tall, broad-shouldered, finely-formed man, dressed in a white shirt or waist, with a colored pareu or hipcloth, which both sexes wear, legs and feet bare. I awoke and the vision still remained with me. I asked the meaning and was told this man represents those islanders. They are Lamanites, and are worthy and entitled to the priesthood. I was glad to receive this evidence, for I had heretofore had some scruples as

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<sup>109</sup>An RLDS/Community of Christ Reunion is essentially a family camp providing fellowship activities for all ages. Around 1890, RLDS leaders began substituting such gatherings in place of the annual general fall conference. This innovation proved to be such a success that soon many local jurisdictions also began hosting fall family camp reunions. The event usually involved worship, educational, and recreational experiences, typically lasting about a week.

<sup>110</sup>See R. Jean Addams, “The Church of Christ (Temple Lot) and the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints: 130 Years of Crossroads and Controversies,” *Journal of Mormon History* 36, no. 2 (Spring 2010): 85–86, discusses this episode in more detail, including Alex’s critical role.

<sup>111</sup>[From] Bro. G. J. Waller, “Hawaii: The Field,” *Herald*, 48, no. 14 (April 3, 1901): 261.



*Alexander H. (left) and Joseph Smith III at Bushrod Park, near Oakland, California. Joseph was attending a reunion at Bushrod Park, a few miles east of Oakland, and Alex was preparing to leave for Tahiti, 1901 (D501.2).*

to ordaining them to the high priest's office. I had never before seen one like the one shown me, but have since, dressed very similarly.<sup>112</sup>

As a result of this vision, Alex ordained Tahitian member Metuaore to the office of bishop, went on to visit Tuamotu, Anaa, Makemo, Raroia, and Tonga, then continued on to Auckland, New Zealand, and Sydney, Australia. Here he met Richard Ellis, the first RLDS member in Australia and former presiding elder of the LDS branch in Sydney. Alex also ordained Walter Haworth, editor of the RLDS Australian church periodical, the *Gospel Standard*, to the office of Seventy.

In Sydney, he visited the gravesite of Charles Wesley Wandell, an RLDS convert from the LDS Church, whom Alex had set apart for his mission to Australia and who was serving as part of the first RLDS mission in Australia when he died in 1875.<sup>113</sup> Alex was still in Australia in April 1902, visiting the branches, when he received a telegram that his nephew Frederick M. Smith along with Richard C. Evans had been called as Joseph III's counselors in the First Presidency, "leaving him (Alexander) free to act in his evangelical calling."<sup>114</sup> The message also instructed Alexander to ordain Cornelius A. Butterfield as an apostle. This was remarkable not only in that Butterfield was the first RLDS apostle to live and serve in Australia; but at that moment those "close to Brother Butterworth thought that he was dying, and it was with considerable trepidation that President Smith fulfilled the instructions given him, commissioning Brother Butterworth as an apostle and minister in charge of the work in Australia. But Apostle Butterworth recovered shortly [thereafter] and took up his work" which he faithfully fulfilled.<sup>115</sup>

A particular delight for Alex was visiting his daughter, Ina Inez,

<sup>112</sup>Alexander H. Smith, "Reminiscences: Part 7," *Autumn Leaves* 16, no. 5 (May 1903): 204–5.

<sup>113</sup>Marjorie Newton, *Hero or Traitor: A Biographical Study of Charles Wesley Wandell* (Independence: John Whitmer Historical Association Monograph Series, 1992), 63.

<sup>114</sup>*History of the Reorganized Church*, 4:677. The same telegram instructed Alex to ordain Charles Butterworth of Hastings, Victoria, Australia an apostle. Butterworth, born at Gallands Grove, Iowa, in 1864, sailed to Australia to serve a mission for the RLDS Church in 1888. Cornelius remained in Australia the rest of his life.

<sup>115</sup>Cornelius A. Butterworth, Biography, *History of the Reorganized Church*, 6:640–41.

and her family in New South Wales where her husband farmed near a little village called Fairview, nearly a day's ride by stagecoach from Wallsend:

Our driver said he knew where Sid Wright lived and would set us down within a half mile of his place; that he lived back away from the road in the bush. Said Mr. Wright had been over to America some time before and brought home an American girl for a wife.

We finally came to a large gate which opened into what appeared to be an immense timber pasture. Just inside the gate a few rods stood a small cabin, uninhabited. Our driver told me I better follow the left-hand road as I got into the bush, as the right-hand was a log road, and I might get lost. He left us and drove off. There we were apparently in an Australian forest, strangers in a strange land, evening coming on, and our past reading about the "bushmen of Australia" did not have a tendency to make us feel at ease. What if our driver had been mistaken? What if he was in league with those same bushmen, and left us just where they wanted us? However, as we could not well carry our baggage—all of it, I left Leon to watch while I went in search of my son-in-law's.

I came to the forks of the road and of course took the left-hand road. I thought the half mile was stretching out most awful long and began to wish I had taken the right-hand road when I came to two fence corners and a lane, evidently a log road, which seemed to lead way up into the hills. I started along the lane and had gone perhaps forty rods when I saw to the right a clearing and away across that clearing to the east or southeast I saw a house. I stopped and looked closely,—it looked familiar. I soon recognized my daughter's home, as she had sent me a photo of it before I left America.

I didn't go back around the road. I just slid through the fence and went straight across to the house in the most direct way. As I neared the house I discovered it was inclosed with a picket fence and a lane led up to it, the garden on one side, the paddock on the other.

As I walked up the lane three great dogs came barking out; but as I am not afraid of a dog, as a rule, I kept walking briskly on and spoke to the dogs and they quieted their noise. I was near enough now to hear, and I heard my daughter Ina say to some one, "I wonder what ails the dogs?" Just then I came in sight, as they were on the back porch. Ina saw me and exclaimed, "It's my papa! It's my papa!"

She gave her husband the baby she held in her arms and was soon in the arms of her papa. Sid soon had the buggy hitched up and was off to get Leon and the luggage. After nearly ten years I was with my daughter once more.

... For ten days or two weeks I rested and enjoyed the society of my daughter and grand-children. My son-in-law, Bro. Sidney Wright, was busy at his mills—at home evenings and mornings—but I did enjoy my

visit to his little home hugely. . . . My son-in-law and several brothers and their father own several thousand acres of bush-land, mostly fenced in and stocked to a limited degree, with cattle. They, too, are girdling the timber land and passing it through the saw-mills and sending it to Sydney, Newcastle, and other points.<sup>116</sup>

While returning to the United States, Alexander's ship paused in Pago Pago to pick up "several Brighamite elders" who had been missionaries in Samoa and who were accompanied by "a young native girl, whom the missionaries were taking home to Utah to educate for mission work in the islands. She seemed a nice, well-behaved, ladylike girl, and I hoped she might be well cared for, and not meet the fate so many of those islanders suffer, coming from the warm, moist climate of the islands to the hard, cold winters of the States—pneumonia."

Alex was amused that the "Brighamite" elders declined an opportunity to preach on Sunday because "they were afraid I would interfere by asking questions, and they wished to avoid all controversy. I tried several times to draw them out in conversation, but failed. They seemed loth to engage in conversation."<sup>117</sup>

In Honolulu, on Monday, June 2, 1902, Alex conferred "the first [RLDS] patriarchal blessings" on Church members in Hawaii and left a week later for San Francisco. He "was literally covered with garlands of flowers. One, about a yard in length, was a beauty; with the native Hawaiian flag knotted in a bow, on the shoulder, a silk flag, a little beauty two thirds of a yard long. I prize it highly as one of my prettiest souvenirs. The majority of the branch came to the steamer to see us off and secured small boats and hovered round the vessel and sang songs of farewell."<sup>118</sup>

### SENIOR YEARS

Throughout his later years, Alexander enjoyed the high esteem of fellow Church members. However, his health was a growing concern. No doubt with the passing years, his back injuries, suffered during the

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<sup>116</sup>Alexander H. Smith, "Reminiscence: Part 16," *Autumn Leaves* 17, no. 2 (February 1904): 62–63; "Reminiscence: Part 17," *Autumn Leaves* 17, no. 3 (March 1904): 116.

<sup>117</sup>Alexander H. Smith, "Reminiscence: Part 21," *Autumn Leaves* 17, no. 10 (October 1904): 441–42.

<sup>118</sup>Alexander H. Smith, "Reminiscence: Part 25," *Autumn Leaves* 18, no. 2 (February 1905): 67.

remodeling of the Nauvoo House, became more severe. He may have also suffered from congestive heart failure. Vida remembered her aging father's emaciation, florid color, and slow movements.<sup>119</sup>

Writing to a fellow priesthood member in 1908, Alexander voiced some concern for what he saw as unsolved problems in Church procedures. He was unable to do much about them, nor could Joseph III, who was seventy-five years old and suffering from failing eyesight:

Our numbers [in the church] are increasing, and soon we will have no house large enough to accommodate the general conferences. Our church here [at Lamoni] is too small now, and the [Stone] church at Independence is not large enough [sic], we will have to build a new or change our representative system. I am in favor of changing our system. I believe in an Elders conference, as provided for in the Law.

I am getting tired of the gathering together of a mixed multitude, of members, and priesthood, and calling it a general conference of the ministry of the church. Our assemblies [are] composed of Tom, Dick, and Harry, Susan, Jane and Mary. If they are members in good standing is all that is necessary to make them delegates, and if they can bear the expense and pay their own way to conference, they are immediately chosen and sent as representatives, and they may know very little or absolutely nothing of the general necessities, and nature of the work. Oh well, Noah don't think I am losing faith, I simply see what we [are] tending towards, what we are drifting to.<sup>120</sup>

Alexander and Joseph III visited Nauvoo in 1908 after RLDS Conference selected them to serve on a committee to erect a monument to Joseph Jr. and Hyrum Smith. While in Nauvoo, the committee visited Emma Smith Bidamon's grave.

The next year, during a short visit to Nauvoo, Alexander unexpectedly died in the Mansion House on the evening of Thursday, August 12, 1909. The *Saints' Herald* reported:

He attended the reunion at Bluff Park, and took part with pleasure in all meetings, greeting Saints and old friends with his usual good cheer and genuine delight. Sunday night he preached the closing sermon of the reunion with usual vigor and was apparently feeling well, and in excellent spirits. Monday he crossed to Nauvoo and visited old acquaintances, expecting to go Tuesday to Burlington, stopping at the

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<sup>119</sup>"Biography of Patriarch Alexander Hale Smith," April 1913, 213.

<sup>120</sup>Alexander H. Smith, Lamoni, Iowa, Letter to Noah Nephi Cooke, January 11, 1908, Smith Papers, P70-1, f9, Community of Christ Archives.





*This Smith family photograph was taken in about 1902, after Alexander's return from Polynesia and Australia. Back left: Don Alvin, Emma B., Joseph G., Coral C., and Arthur M. Front left: Vida E., Alexander, Elizabeth, and Fred A. Missing: Ina (in Australia), Inez Eva Grace (deceased) (D523.2).*

mansion, still his property, but occupied by his wife's brother, John Kendall. In the afternoon he complained of feeling unwell, and his niece, Mrs. Ross, brought home remedies to his aid, but he grew worse and continued to grow worse through Tuesday and Tuesday night. Bro. and Sr. Mark Siegfried adding their attentions to those of the family, and these joined now by the help of Brother Smith's stenographer, Bro. William Dexter. A physician was called who gave them no hope, and his family was called. . . . [Of his immediate family, only Vida was with him when he died.] . . . Sister Lizzie reached Nauvoo Friday morning, but found another messenger had gone before, and she must meet the first bitter hours of widowhood in the home of her bridal days. Amid the wreck and ruin left of former happy and beautiful scenes, she looked upon the silent form of one who had never before failed to answer when she called him. . . .

One son, Don A., and his daughter, Eva Grace, awaited him in the beyond. Fred A. is in his mission field in Oregon. Ina, the second daughter, lives in Australia. Vida, Emma, Joseph, Arthur, and Coral, and their



*Alexander and Joseph III at Emma Smith Bidamon's grave site at Nauvoo, Illinois, in 1908. Left: Unidentified, Mark H. Siegfried, Joseph Smith III, Heman C. Smith, E. L. Kelley, Alex H. Smith, George P. Lambert, and two unidentified individuals (D583.3).*

children, and family of Fred A., and the widow of Don A. with six children, and Lamont, the son of Eva Grace, are all present. In addition to these he leaves a brother, our venerated president, Joseph Smith.<sup>121</sup>

Alexander was interred in Lamoni's Rose Hill Cemetery.<sup>122</sup> In the *Saints' Herald*, Elizabeth expressed thanks for the "letters that speak of a world of comfort and sympathy; letters so kind and beautiful that I want to answer them all, but my sorrow bears hard on me, and not less as time has gone. . . . Your remembrance of me has brought strength and solace. Some day I may grow more accustomed to this long, silent mission that holds my dear one from me; but now I feel the absence, so intense and silent, too keenly to write much."<sup>123</sup>

On June 5, 1919, she fell suddenly ill at night, died the next morning, and was buried next to Alexander at Rose Hill Cemetery.

<sup>121</sup>"His Sickness and Death," *Saints' Herald* 56, no. 33 (August 18, 1909): 772.

<sup>122</sup>Rose Hill Cemetery listing, Lamoni, Decatur County, Iowa, [http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~iadecat2/rose\\_s.htm](http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~iadecat2/rose_s.htm) (accessed January 31, 2010).

<sup>123</sup>"A Word from Sr. Alexander H. Smith," November 12, 1909, *Saints' Herald* 56, no. 47 (November 24, 1909): 1125.





*Elizabeth Agnes  
Kendall Smith,  
ca. 1910  
(D1821.1).*

The *Saints' Herald* obituary praised her:

She united with the Reorganization in its early days, and was always a humble sincere follower of the Lord. She was of a bright and sunny disposition, and so endeared herself to many. She was a mother, not only to her own immediate family, but to others who needed her help. During the past few years, she made a home for her son, Arthur, and his motherless flock of five children. She had reared one grandson to manhood, and bore the undying love, not only of her children and grandchildren in America and Australia, but of many others who were privileged to know her.<sup>124</sup>

#### CONCLUSION

Alexander seemed to instinctively understand his own and his family's special identity. But Alex never allowed his heritage to serve as a justification for privilege. Rather, by adopting and living out the core teachings of the Restoration movement as his own, Alexander conscientiously walked a path of exceptional sacrifice and service to

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<sup>124</sup>“Death of Elizabeth Agnes Smith,” *Saints' Herald* 66, no. 24 (June 11, 1919): 555–56.

others. Acting his part in a purposeful story, Alexander H. Smith devoted his life to the realization of a greater good.



*Catherine A. Brekus*

## MORMON WOMEN AND THE PROBLEM OF HISTORICAL AGENCY

*Catherine A. Brekus*

FEW WOMEN IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY were as controversial—and as maligned—as Mormon women. Angered by polygamy, nineteenth-century critics claimed that Mormon women were the victims of both lecherous husbands and a despotic church. “The cornerstone of polygamy is the degradation of woman,” Jennie Anderson Froiseth argued in 1888, “and it can flourish only when she is regarded and treated as a slave.” Mormon women were “deluded and downtrodden,” “broken-hearted,” “dull, senseless, sorrowful,” “degraded,” “shameless,” “miserable,” and “the meanest and most abject slaves.”<sup>1</sup> In a work of fiction that advertised itself as journalism, a critic in 1877 denounced polygamy as a “crime that degrades woman to a level actually below the beasts of the field! A

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<sup>1</sup>Jennie Froiseth Anderson, ed., *The Women of Mormonism, or The Story*

crime that makes woman at once the slave of lustful men rich enough to purchase her; the mere toy of base passion, to be cast aside the moment a newer and more attractive face is seen.”<sup>2</sup> The author claimed that, when he asked a working man why he intended to join the Mormons, the man responded, “*Out there a chap can have as many wives as he wants.*” And when asked how his wife would cope, the man replied, “Oh, bother her, I’ll teach her not to interfere with my ideas when I get her out to Salt Lake. That’s the place, Sir, where we men can make these women folks keep their proper places and mind their own business. Women was made to be the servants of men, and a man ought to have just as many as he can get a hold of.”<sup>3</sup> Most of these critiques were written by anti-polygamy activists and doubtless contained a strong element of fiction, but the condemnations penned by women like Ann Eliza Young, Brigham Young’s runaway wife, were especially damaging. Ann Eliza claimed that polygamy was responsible for broken hearts and ruined lives.<sup>4</sup>

The anti-polygamy literature of the nineteenth century was so vivid, so inflammatory, and so popular that historians have never been able to completely escape from its shadow. On one hand, historians outside of the LDS community seem to have been influenced by the caricature of the degraded polygamous wife; and although they have rarely articulated their reasons for ignoring Mormon women, they seem to assume that they are not worth studying. Neither women’s historians nor American religious historians have seemed interested in including Mormon women in their narratives, implicitly suggesting that they should not be considered as serious historical actors who made things happen. On the other hand, scholars who specialize in Mormon history have been so determined to defend nineteenth-century LDS women against lingering stereotypes that they

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*of Polygamy as Told by the Victims* (Detroit, Mich.: C.G.G. Paine, 1887), 20, 23, 26, 144, 191, 259.

<sup>2</sup>Wesley Bradshaw, “Letter to the Publisher,” in Ella Young Harris, *Life, Confession and Execution of Bishop John D. Lee, the Mormon Fiend!* (Philadelphia: Old Franklin Publishing House, 1877), unpaginated prefatory material.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>4</sup>Ann Eliza Young, *Wife No. 19, or the Story of a Life in Bondage* (Hartford, Conn.: Dustan, Gilman, & Co., 1875).

have sometimes exaggerated their agency. The result is that we are left with a fractured picture of Mormon women as either deluded, downtrodden slaves or fiercely independent matriarchs.

The conceptual confusion over how to imagine Mormon women raises larger questions about the challenges of writing women's history, especially the history of women and religion. Mormon women are an especially dramatic example of women's absence from narratives of American religion, but not the only one. Women's religious history has flourished during the past thirty years, but it has often remained on the sidelines of both women's history and religious history.<sup>5</sup> This essay explores why historians have found it difficult to integrate religious women into their narratives and, specifically, why the many excellent studies of Mormon women have not had a greater impact on the way historians teach and write about American religion. Since the answer to these questions seems to involve the way that historians imagine historical agency, this essay examines the problem of writing about Mormon women as agents of historical change.

Even though modern-day historians have often ignored early Mormon women, those same early Mormon women seem to have had a robust sense of their power to shape events—a power that they believed had come from God. When the first generation of Mormon women wrote memoirs about their experiences, they proudly described their contributions to the building of Zion. Ruth Page Rogers, for example, claimed that she had convinced her family to gather with the Saints after she threatened to go alone, and Mercy Rachel Fielding Thompson remembered how she and other women had raised money to build the temple at Kirtland. After receiving a revelation, she encouraged women “to subscribe one Cent per Week for the purpose of buying Glass and nails for the Temple.” Although she had to hide the money from mobs, she and other women eventually raised \$500.<sup>6</sup> Other women remembered standing up to officers or mobs who had harassed them. According to Patience Delilah Pierce Palmer, she stared “fearlessly” into the eyes of a man who held a gun near

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<sup>5</sup>On this theme, see Catherine A. Brekus, “Searching for Women in Narratives of American Religious History,” in *The Religious History of American Women*, edited by Catherine A. Brekus (Chapel Hill: the University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 1–50.

<sup>6</sup>Ruth Page Rogers, “Sketches and Incidents of the Life of Ruth P. Rogers,” 1887, MS 1854, fd. 1, LDS Church History Library, Salt Lake City;

her chest and said, "I swore I'd kill a d-d Mormon when I left home and now is my chance." He left only after his captain ordered him to lower his gun. Sarah Studevart Leavitt remembered that, when an officer asked whether she and other women were armed, she lied to him. As she commented with satisfaction: "It is not hard to deceive a fool."<sup>7</sup>

Impressed by their mothers' strength, the daughters of these female pioneers remembered them with a mixture of affection and awe. "What a fearless, courageous woman mother was!" exclaimed Margaret Gay Judd Clawson. She praised her mother as a devout woman who had not only collected warm clothing for the "brethren" during the Echo Canyon War, but who had "sat up many nights knitting woolen stockings to protect them from the inclemency of the weather." Martha Cragun Cox marveled that her mother had not been daunted even by giving birth in a wagon on the way to Utah: "All day she suffered the jolting of the wagon under the August sun while her pains of travail were upon her without a sign of complaint and did not hinder the travel one hour. As the wagons rolled into camp her delivery came." Many other women echoed Cox's conclusion in the late nineteenth century: "It is women of that caliber that can build a nation."<sup>8</sup>

Despite damaging stereotypes of polygamous wives as passive and degraded, Mormon women insisted that their work was as valuable as men's—perhaps more so. "How great the responsibilities of the sisters of the church," wrote Belinda Marden Pratt, one of Apostle Par-

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Mercy Rachel Fielding Thompson, *Autobiographical Sketch*, 1880, 8–9, MS 4580, LDS Church History Library. See also Mercy Rachel Fielding Thompson, *Subscriptions for the temple* [ca. December 1843], MS 18642, LDS Church History Library.

<sup>7</sup>William Moroni Palmer, "Sketch of the Life of Patience Delilah Pierce Palmer," n.d., MS 18461, LDS Church History Library; Sarah Studevart Leavitt, "History of Sarah Studevart Leavitt," copied from her history by Juanita Leavitt Pulsipher, 1919, 28, LDS Church History Library. See also Mary A. Phelps Rich, "Autobiography," in *Autobiographies of Mormon Pioneer Women* (Salt Lake City: Pioneer Press, 1998), 217.

<sup>8</sup>Margaret Gay Judd Clawson, "Rambling Reminiscences, 1904–1911," typescript, 2, MS 3712, LDS Church History Library. Martha Cragun Cox, "Biographical Sketch of Martha Cox," 1928–1930, 38, MS 1661, LDS Church History Library.



ley P. Pratt's plural wives. "What a work they are accomplishing! . . . Teaching their children. Engaged in the Relief Society! Giving of their means to the poor. Visiting the sick. Administering comfort and consolation when needed. Engaged in the starting of Silk Culture. Buying up wheat etc. etc. Our labors are as great as those of the Brethren and more numurous [sic] for the responsibility of training the young rests almost entirely with the sisters."<sup>9</sup> In 1901 a group of women founded Daughters of Utah Pioneers to preserve the stories and memorabilia of their foremothers as well as those of the better-known men.<sup>10</sup>

When Mormons began to publish histories of the Church, however, they rarely wrote about the women whose faith and work had made its existence possible. Influenced by the historical assumptions of their time, they wrote as if male leaders had created a new religious movement virtually on their own. Apostle George A. Smith's 1872 book, *The Rise, Progress and Travels of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* does not mention any women by name, and only a handful of women appear in B.H. Roberts's seven-volume edition of LDS history, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, which includes Joseph Smith's own chronicle and those of his close associates.<sup>11</sup> This official chronicle praises several women for their faith, including Emily Coburn, who defied her family to become an early convert, and Lydia Knight, who had a prophetic dream about the Prophet Joseph; but the narrative focuses mostly on influential male converts like Sidney Rigdon, Oliver Cowdery, and Parley Pratt.<sup>12</sup>

In contrast, Edward Tullidge published a tribute to LDS women in 1877, *The Women of Mormondom*, which praised them as "religious

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<sup>9</sup>Belinda Marden Pratt, "The Autobiography and Diary of Belinda Marden Pratt," typescript (undated) and introduction by Taunalyn Ford Rutherford, 37, LDS Church History Library.

<sup>10</sup>For more information on Daughters of Utah Pioneers, see <http://www.dupinternational.org/> (accessed July 1, 2010).

<sup>11</sup>George A. Smith, *The Rise, Progress and Travels of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Being a Series of Answers to Questions, including the Revelation on Celestial Marriage*, 2d ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Office, 1872); Joseph Smith et al., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, edited by B. H. Roberts, 7 vols., 2d ed. rev. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1948 printing); hereafter cited as *History of the Church* by volume and page number.

<sup>12</sup>*History of the Church*, 1:87, 101.

empire-founders, in faith and fact.”<sup>13</sup> But at a time when most people assumed that the natural subject of history was men and their accomplishments, Tullidge was an exception. Writing in 1893, Edward H. Anderson, a Mormon journalist, historian, and member of the Young Men’s Mutual Improvement Association general board, avoided writing about women even when they should have been unavoidable—for example, in his discussion of celestial marriage. Explaining this doctrine, Anderson explained that Mormons saw marriage as “one of the chief means of man’s exaltation and glory in the world to come, whereby he may have endless increase of eternal lives, and attain at length to the power of the Godhead.”<sup>14</sup> Douglas Davies, a British scholar of Mormonism, pointed out in 2003 that, since men “cannot fully exercise their priesthood outside marriage and women cannot fully benefit from the power of the Melchizedek priesthood unless they are married to a member of it,” the doctrine of celestial marriage makes men and women central to one another’s salvation.<sup>15</sup> But one would not know this from reading Anderson’s book.

By the early twentieth century, however, many LDS historians felt compelled to include women in their narratives, even if only briefly. Besides being influenced by the women’s suffrage movement, they seem to have seen the political advantages of countering the stereotype of the degraded, polygamous wife. Orson F. Whitney, a bishop, future apostle, and son of a plural marriage, published his four-volume *History of Utah* in 1904, including a section on “Women of Note” that emphasized Mormon women’s intelligence, patriotism, and character. He praised Eliza Roxcy Snow, poet, general president of the revived Relief Society, and a plural wife of both Joseph Smith and Brigham Young, as “gifted and educated.” Whitney also pointed out that Bathsheba Wilson Bigler Smith expressed affection and “respect” for her husband’s other wives, reportedly saying: “We have

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<sup>13</sup>Edward Tullidge, *The Women of Mormondom* (New York: Tullidge and Crandall, 1877), 1.

<sup>14</sup>Edward H. Anderson, *A Brief History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: George Q. Cannon and Sons Co., 1893), 130.

<sup>15</sup>Douglas J. Davies, *An Introduction to Mormonism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 212–13. It should be noted that “celestial marriage,” though understood as plural marriage in the nineteenth century, has been redefined as monogamous marriage between a man and a woman, sealed by a temple ordinance.

worked and toiled together, have had our joy in our labors, have had our recreations and taken comfort in each other's society. Our faith is the same, our anticipations are the same."<sup>16</sup> When historian B. H. Roberts, editor, famous second-generation missionary, theologian, and member of the First Council of the Seventy, published his *Comprehensive History of the Church* in 1930, he included idealized portraits of Vilate Murray Kimball and Leonora Cannon Taylor (wives of Heber C. Kimball and John Taylor respectively) as "types of the early womanhood of the church: noble-minded, high-spirited, intelligent, courageous, independent, cheerful, but profoundly religious and capable of great self-sacrifice under the sense of religious duty." He concluded emphatically: "Never was a greater mistake made than when it has been supposed that the women of the church were weak, and ignorant, and spiritless. Such religious movements as that which the world knows as 'Mormonism,' involving as it has done self-sacrifice, patient, heroic service, through trying years—through whole lifetimes, in fact—cannot be maintained on the womanhood side of it but by high-spirited, virtuous women."<sup>17</sup> Although Roberts's glowing tribute to women was heartfelt, it also sounded defensive and was definitely politically driven. He wanted to guarantee that no one repeated the "mistake" of portraying Mormon women as "ignorant." His own autobiography barely mentions his own plural wives and children, and he strenuously argued against including female suffrage in Utah's Constitution.<sup>18</sup>

Roberts's book set a pattern. Until the rise of women's history in the mid-1970s, most Mormon historians who wrote about women seemed to be motivated by a desire to counter negative stereotypes of polygamy. For example, Russell R. Rich's 1972 book *Ensign to the Nations: A History of the Church from 1846 to the Present*, which was designed to be a survey text for undergraduate classes, only briefly refers to the Relief Society but includes several pages on women's defenses of polygamy. When Rich cites the testimonies of Sarah Melissa Granger Kimball, Mrs. Levi Riter, Phoebe Carter Woodruff, Harriet

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<sup>16</sup>Bathsheba B. Smith, quoted in Orson F. Whitney, *History of Utah*, 4 vols. (Salt Lake City: G. Q. Cannon and Sons, 1904), 4:573, 579.

<sup>17</sup>B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1930), 5:253–54.

<sup>18</sup>B. H. Roberts, *The Autobiography of B. H. Roberts*, edited by Gary James Bergera (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1990).

Cook Young, and Eliza R. Snow, he mentions more women by name than on any other single page of his book. Rich's interest in female agency seemed to be limited to demonstrating that women were not forced into plural marriages.<sup>19</sup>

Rich asked probing questions about Mormon men's faith, but he did not ask why so many women were attracted to the LDS Church. Like other historians, he seems to have taken women's religious devotion for granted—as if faith has always been a natural and enduring feature of being female. Historians have traditionally naturalized women's piety instead of asking questions about why we equate femininity with faith, or how women's religious beliefs and practices have changed over time. In her history of the Reorganized Church, for example, Inez Smith Davis rarely wrote about women. The exception is a brief paragraph about their charitable endeavors as members of the Daughters of Zion: "The women of the church carry on the same church activities as have occupied the time and attention of church women everywhere," she wrote.<sup>20</sup> Her description implied that historians did not need to spend time analyzing something as timeless and stable as women's church work.

The modern field of Mormon women's history dates from the 1970s, when a group of female scholars including Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, Jill Mulvay Derr, Carol Cornwall Madsen, Claudia Lauper Bushman, and Laurel Thatcher Ulrich began writing about LDS women, often in collaboration with one another. When *Mormon Sisters: Women in Early Utah*, edited by Bushman, was published in 1976, it heralded the arrival of a new, academic interest in Mormon women's history. The authors who contributed to that collection wrote about topics that few before them had found worthy of study, including the Relief Society, healing, teaching, and midwifery.<sup>21</sup>

Since the 1970s the field of Mormon women's history has exploded. Hundreds of books and articles about Mormon women have

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<sup>19</sup>Russell R. Rich, *Ensign to the Nations: A History of the Church from 1846 to the Present* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Publications, 1972), 330, 365, 369, 402, 591.

<sup>20</sup>Inez Davis, *The Story of the Church* (Independence: Herald Publishing House, 1948), 574. She was the great-granddaughter of Joseph Smith, the granddaughter of Alexander Hale Smith, and the daughter of Vida E. Smith and Heman C. Smith. Heman was the RLDS Church historian in the late 1800s and early 1900s.

been published, including insightful biographical accounts and groundbreaking studies of women's economic activities, professionalization, education, and support of suffrage.<sup>22</sup> Scholars have also published critical editions of Mormon women's diaries and autobiographies that have let women speak in their own voices. Landmark works include the diaries of midwife Patty Bartlett Sessions and the introspective journal of the well-connected Helen Mar Kimball Smith Whitney.<sup>23</sup>

Yet despite this impressive scholarship, Mormon women's history has not yet been integrated into the larger fields of either

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<sup>21</sup>Claudia L. Bushman, ed., *Mormon Sisters: Women in Early Utah* (1976; rev. ed., Logan: Utah State University Press, 1997).

<sup>22</sup>For biographies of Mormon women, see Vicky Burgess-Olson, ed., *Sister Saints* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1978); Lavina Fielding Anderson, "A 'Salt of the Earth' Lady: Martha Cragun Cox," in *Supporting Saints: Life Stories of Nineteenth-Century Mormons*, edited by Donald Q. Cannon and David J. Whittaker (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1985), 101–32. On suffrage, see Carol Cornwall Madsen, ed., *Battle for the Ballot: Essays on Woman Suffrage in Utah, 1870–1896* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1997). On polygamy, see Kathryn M. Daynes, *More Wives than One: Transformation of the Mormon Marriage System* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001); Sarah Barringer Gordon, *The Mormon Question: Polygamy and Constitutional Conflict in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); and Jessie L. Embry, *Mormon Polygamous Families: Life in the Principle* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1987). Other groundbreaking studies of Mormon women include Maureen Ursenbach Beecher and Lavina Fielding Anderson, eds., *Sisters in Spirit: Mormon Women in Historical and Cultural Perspective* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987) and Maxine Hanks, ed., *Women and Authority: Re-emerging Mormon Feminism* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992).

<sup>23</sup>For examples of women's personal writings, see Kenneth W. Godfrey, Audrey M. Godfrey, and Jill Mulvay Derr, eds., *Women's Voices: An Untold History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830–1900* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1982); Maria S. Ellsworth, ed., *Mormon Odyssey: The Story of Ida Hunt Udall, Plural Wife* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992); Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, *The Personal Writings of Eliza Roxcy Snow* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1995); Jennifer Moulton Hansen, ed., *Letters of Catharine Cottam Romney, Plural Wife* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992); Carol Cornwall Madsen, ed., *In Their Own Words: Women and the Story of*

women's history or American religious history. In the introduction to the second edition of *Mormon Sisters*, Anne Firor Scott remembered her ignorance when she was asked to give the Tanner Lecture to the Mormon Historical Association in 1984. "The most startling thing I learned," she wrote, "was how little any of us non-Mormons knew about Mormon history in general but especially about the work being done on Mormon women. Most of my colleagues in the field were quite unaware that this work was going on."<sup>24</sup> More than twenty-five years later, the same could still be said. Few historians outside the LDS community have included Mormon women in their narratives. For example, Edwin Gaustad and Leigh Schmidt's textbook, *The Religious History of America*, includes a few pages on Joseph Smith and Brigham Young but nothing else, and Mary Beth Norton's *Major Problems in American Women's History* does not include any essays or documents about Mormon women.<sup>25</sup>

While Mormon women appear in the brand-new textbook, *Women and the Making of America*, they are confined to a three-page section on polygamy and women's suffrage. Although the authors mention Emmeline B. Wells in the context of her relationship with suffrage leaders like Susan B. Anthony, their brief discussion of Mormon women's activism is overshadowed by a full-page extract from Jennie Anderson Froiseth's 1882 polemic, *Women of Mormonism, or The Story of Polygamy As Told by the Victims Themselves*.<sup>26</sup> Froiseth's work is an important document for understanding Mormon women's history; but by giving it so

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*Nauvoo* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1994); Donna Toland Smart, ed., *Mormon Midwife: The 1846–1888 Diaries of Patty Bartlett Sessions* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1997); and Todd Compton and Charles M. Hatch, eds., *A Widow's Tale: The 1884–1896 Diary of Helen Mar Kimball Whitney* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2003). For a useful overview of scholarship on Mormon women, see Todd Compton, "The New Mormon Women's History," in *Excavating Mormon Pasts: The New Historiography of the Last Half Century*, edited by Newell G. Bringhurst and Lavina Fielding Anderson (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2004), 273–302.

<sup>24</sup>Anne Firor Scott, "Introduction," in Bushman, *Mormon Sisters: Women in Early Utah* (1997 edition), xxii.

<sup>25</sup>Edwin S. Gaustad and Leigh Eric Schmidt, *The Religious History of America* (New York: HarperCollins, 2002), 177–80; Mary Beth Norton, *Major Problems in American Women's History: Documents and Essays* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2007).

much space, the authors imply that Mormon women should be imagined as “victims.” Even though they include a question at the end of the document asking students to consider how Anderson’s anti-polygamy stance might have influenced her depiction of plural marriage, their brief acknowledgment of possible bias is dwarfed by the full-page description of women’s degradation. The authors could have discussed Mormon women in more depth elsewhere, but either they decided against it or they simply overlooked such possibilities. For example, they could have compared nineteenth-century Mormon women’s charitable work in the Relief Society to Protestant women’s participation in reform and benevolent associations.

Like historians outside of Mormon studies, many specialists in Mormon history have also found it difficult to imagine women as central characters in their narratives. Often their solution has been to place them in separate chapters or sections. For example, in their 1979 one-volume history, *The Mormon Experience*, Leonard J. Arrington and Davis Bitton include far more material on women than previous historians, but they place most of their discussion of women in separate chapters on “Mormon Sisterhood” and “Marriage and Family Patterns.” Without intending it, they end up portraying women as marginal to the building of the faith. In Part I, for example, when they discuss “the appeal of Mormonism,” they focus exclusively on the experiences of male converts like Wilford Woodruff, Newel Knight, Parley P. Pratt, and Lorenzo Snow.<sup>27</sup> By waiting until Chapter 12 to tell the stories of early female converts, the authors end up isolating them from the main action of the narrative—a choice that implies that women’s lives had little effect on the rise of Mormonism. Since Arrington was a strong supporter of women’s history who published several articles and books about women, this effect was clearly not what he intended; but despite his admiration for historical Mormon women, he struggled to connect women’s history to the larger field of Mormon history.<sup>28</sup>

Why have historians, despite their best intentions, found it difficult to integrate Mormon women’s history into their narratives?

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<sup>26</sup>Mari Jo Buhle, Teresa Murphy, and Jane Gerhard, *Women and the Making of America* (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2009), 340.

<sup>27</sup>Leonard J. Arrington and Davis Bitton, *The Mormon Experience: A History of the Latter-day Saints* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), 28–29.

<sup>28</sup>Arrington’s work on women includes “Blessed Damozels: Women



There are several possible explanations, including androcentrism (the assumption that the universal human subject is male), inherited assumptions about what counts as serious history, and top-down models of historical change.<sup>29</sup> Because orthodox Latter-day Saints and Community of Christ members believe that Joseph Smith's encounters with the divine led him to create a new church based on the example in the New Testament, Mormon historians seem to have been particularly attracted to models of history that emphasize the power of prophetic leaders to create change. And indeed, many of the most dramatic changes in both churches have come from divine revelation: for example, the advent of polygamy for Mormons (and its rejection by the first RLDS prophet-president, Joseph Smith III), the acceptance of black men into the priesthood for Latter-day Saints in 1978, and the 1984 revelation authorizing the ordination of women for Community of Christ, the first of which occurred in 1985. When LDS assistant Church historian Andrew Jenson published his *Church Chronology*, he began by recording the names of the First Presidents, the Council of Twelve Apostles, the Presiding Patriarchs, and the First Council of Seventies.<sup>30</sup>

Historians rarely reflect on why they arrange their narratives the way they do, or why they include some characters and not others, but the choice to ignore women seems to be connected to their assumptions about agency. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines agency as "the faculty of an agent or of acting; active working or operation; action, activity," and as "working as a means to an end; instrumentality, intermediation." An "agent," also according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, is "one who (or that which) acts or exerts power, as distinguished from the *patient*, and also from the *instrument*."<sup>31</sup> In other words, agency is the ability to take action—to *do* something—and an agent is

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in Mormon History," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 6 (Summer 1971): 22–31; "Women as a Force in the History of Utah," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 38 (Winter 1970): 3–6; with Susan Arrington Madsen, *Sunbonnet Sisters: True Stories of Mormon Women and Frontier Life* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1984); with Susan Arrington Madsen, *Mothers of the Prophets* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1987).

<sup>29</sup>Brekus, "Searching for Women in Narratives of American Religious History," 13–23.

<sup>30</sup>Andrew Jenson, *Church Chronology*, 2d ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1899).

someone or something that has the power to make something occur.

Most scholars, however, invest far more in the word “agency” than these simple technical definitions might suggest.<sup>32</sup> The field of women’s history grew in tandem with the feminist movement; and, especially in the 1970s and 1980s, women’s historians hoped to recover the stories of crusading female leaders who had challenged male authority. Although historians of male leaders had never felt compelled to argue that men’s agency was politically subversive or liberating (and in fact, their narratives often revolved around men who had fostered war and destruction), historians of overlooked groups—including women, Native Americans, African Americans, and Latina/os—were searching for a “usable past,” and so they looked for evidence of individual or collective resistance to white male hegemony. For example, African American historians inspired by the civil rights movement focused on black protests against slavery. As a result, “agency” today has become virtually synonymous with emancipation, liberation, and resistance. When historians write about agency, they often imagine an individual in conflict with his or her society who self-consciously seeks greater freedom. As Sharon Hays, a sociologist, has pointed out, agency is often portrayed as the opposite of “structure,” the enduring patterns of human life that are reproduced across generations. Social structure is associated with constraint, permanency, and collectivity, while human agency is as

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<sup>31</sup>“Agency,” *Oxford English Dictionary Online* (accessed from the University of Chicago Library, July 1, 2010).

<sup>32</sup>Mustafa Emirbayer and Ann Mische, “What Is Agency?” *American Journal of Sociology* 103, no. 4 (1998): 970, offer this useful definition: “The temporally constructed engagement by actors of different structural environments—the temporal-relational conflicts of action—which, through the interplay of habit, imagination, and judgment, both reproduces and transforms those structures in interactive response to the problems posed by changing historical situations” (italics removed). William H. Sewell Jr., *Logics of History: Social Theory and Social Transformation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 142–43, defines agency as “the actor’s capacity to reinterpret and mobilize an array of resources in terms of cultural schemas other than those that initially constituted the array.”

sociated with individuality, change, and freedom.<sup>33</sup> An agent is someone who resists the constraints of the social structure, who challenges social norms to create something new.

Given these implicit definitions of agency as freedom, empowerment, and intentionality, it is not surprising that the few women who appear in American religious history textbooks tend to be pioneering female leaders who self-consciously challenged the restrictions on their authority: white, mainstream Protestant women like Catharine Beecher, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and Frances Willard. Because historians have implicitly defined agency against structure, they have found it hard to imagine women who *accepted* religious structures as agents. This is why there are so few Mormon women in American religious history textbooks—or for that matter, Catholic women, Orthodox Jewish women, or Fundamentalist women. The field of women’s history still has a feminist bent, and scholars in search of a “usable past” have rarely been interested in studying women who seem to have accepted female subordination.

Mormon historians have been determined to change this marginalization; and over the past thirty years, they have written scores of books and articles about Mormon women. They have been especially interested in recovering the stories of notable Mormon feminists like Emmeline B. Wells, suffragist, journalist, and Relief Society general president, who challenged the restrictions on women’s political and economic equality.<sup>34</sup> Contrary to what many historians seem to have assumed, Mormon history has proven to be fertile ground for feminists in search of their foremothers. Today one of the most vital fields in Mormon women’s history focuses on suffrage.

Much of this recent scholarship has been excellent, and we need still more studies of Mormon feminism in both the nineteenth century and today. Yet even though Mormon women’s historians have

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<sup>33</sup>Sharon Hays, “Structure and Agency and the Sticky Problem of Culture,” *Sociological Theory* 12, no. 1 (1994): 57. Christopher Lloyd, “The Methodologies of Social History: A Critical Survey and Defense of Structurism,” *History and Theory* 30, no. 2 (1991): 190, defines structures as “the ensemble of rules, roles, relations, and meanings that people are born into and which organize and are reproduced and transformed by their thought and action.”

<sup>34</sup>Carol Cornwall Madsen, “Emmeline B. Wells: ‘Am I Not a Woman and a Sister?’” *BYU Studies* 22 (Spring 1982): 161–78.

demonstrated why Mormon women deserve to appear alongside female worthies like Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, they have unwittingly allowed other historians to set the terms of their debate. Instead of broadening the definition of female agency, they have tried to fit Mormon women's lives into an emancipatory paradigm by demonstrating their subjects' engagement in feminist politics. This is a laudable (and inspiring) project, but an incomplete one. While Mormon women's historians have made a compelling case for why LDS women should be included in discussions of the suffrage movement, they have not explained why historians should care about the large numbers of ordinary women who never openly challenged male authority in the family, state, or church.

Besides privileging the stories of female leaders, historians who have equated agency with resistance have encountered a different kind of problem. Because of their desire to dismantle lingering stereotypes of nineteenth-century Mormon women as victims of patriarchy, they have sometimes exaggerated women's agency. This is especially true in recent studies of polygamy. Ever since the nineteenth century, LDS historians have emphasized that women were not coerced into polygamy; but since the rise of second-wave feminism, they have portrayed this marriage practice in an increasingly positive light. Although Mormon historians always acknowledge that women described polygamy as a "trial," many also emphasize that it encouraged women to become independent and in some cases, to seek fulfillment outside of the home.

For example, in a pathbreaking essay published in *Mormon Sisters* in 1976, Stephanie Smith Goodson pointed out that "polygamy developed independent women who bore much of the financial responsibility for their families," adding, "Childcare problems for polygamous wives away from home for one reason or another were virtually eliminated with the help of other sister-wives." Describing polygamous wives as powerful "matriarchs," she argued that "the advantages of polygamy often offset the problems of the system."<sup>35</sup> Offering an even more positive interpretation, Joan Iversen published an essay in 1984 claiming that polygamy led to "intense female bonding, increased female independence, and closer mother/child bonds." By assaulting the ideology of exclusive romantic love, Mormon leaders

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<sup>35</sup>Stephanie Smith Goodson, "Plural Wives," in Bushman, *Mormon Sisters* (1997), 104–5.

inadvertently encouraged women to carve out autonomous identities for themselves apart from men.<sup>36</sup> More recently historian and cultural critic Terryl L. Givens has explained that plural marriage “engendered great independence and resilience on the part of women necessarily deprived of the presence of a constant companion.” Pointing out the large numbers of Mormon women who attended college, he claims that polygamy made it possible for women to become doctors or lawyers.<sup>37</sup> Turning the interpretations of nineteenth-century critics upside down, historians have insisted that polygamy was not necessarily degrading or oppressive, but sometimes liberating. Polygamy could be a form of freedom; it could liberate women from the burdens of housekeeping and childcare and enable them to find fulfillment outside of the home.

On one hand, it is clear that Mormon women were not forced into polygamy, and in fact most insisted that they had chosen it of their own free will. “I freely gave my assent,” testified Artimesia Beman Snow.<sup>38</sup> By pointing out that polygamy encouraged women to become more independent, historians have helped to dismantle nineteenth-century caricatures of Mormon women as “slaves” or concubines. On the other hand, this positive interpretation of polygamy has also had the effect of minimizing or even ignoring the structural constraints on women’s agency. Postmodernists have often overstated the limits on human agency (to the point that they have been accused of portraying humans as prisoners of language), but they have reminded us that freedom is never absolute.<sup>39</sup> Mormon women were free to make choices, but they exercised that freedom within a religious environment that strongly encouraged them to cultivate the

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<sup>36</sup>Joan S. Iversen, “Feminist Implications of Mormon Polygyny,” *Feminist Studies* 10, no. 3 (Autumn 1984): 507.

<sup>37</sup>Terryl L. Givens, *The Latter-day Saint Experience in America* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2004), 204–5.

<sup>38</sup>Artimesia Beman Snow, quoted in Arrington and Bitton, *The Mormon Experience*, 201.

<sup>39</sup>See, for example, the works of Michel Foucault, including *Discipline and Punish* (New York: Vintage, 1977) and *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Pantheon, 1970). For critiques of postmodernism, see Lloyd, “The Methodologies of Social History,” 210–12; Michael L. Fitzhugh and William H. Leckie Jr., “Agency, Postmodernism, and the Causes of Change,” *History and Theory* 40 (December

supposedly “feminine” values of piety, self-denial, and obedience. According to Mary Ellen Kimball, her husband, Heber, warned his wives that if they did not recognize him as their “head,” they “would bring death and destruction and misery” upon themselves.<sup>40</sup> The power of Mormon culture was not absolute; and many women, including Emma Smith, refused to submit to the authority of the male priesthood by accepting plural marriage. Yet these women were warned that the price of dissent might be their salvation. According to Joseph Smith’s revelation on polygamy, Emma would be “destroyed” if she refused to obey the commandment to accept and even facilitate her husband’s polygamy (LDS D&C 132:54).<sup>41</sup> In 1842, when sixteen-year-old Lucy Walker hesitated to become Joseph Smith’s plural wife, she reported his response as: “I have no flattering words to offer. It is a command of God to you. I will give you until tomorrow to decide this matter. If you reject this message the gate will be closed forever against you.” Walker consented after receiving her own individual revelation, but her choice took place within webs of power that she herself had not spun.<sup>42</sup>

Later Mormon women made the same choice within the same limited matrix. When Orson Pratt, himself already a polygamist, preached on “Celestial Marriage” in 1852, he warned, “Let no woman unite herself in marriage with any man, unless she has fully resolved herself to submit herself wholly to his counsel, and to let him govern

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2001): 59–81; and Perez Zagorin, “History, the Referent, and Narrative: Reflections on Postmodernism Now,” *History and Theory* 38 (1999): 1–24. See also Keith Jenkins, “A Postmodern Reply to Perez Zagorin,” *History and Theory* 39 (May 2000): 181–200, and Perez Zagorin, “Rejoinder to a Postmodernist,” *History and Theory* 39 (May 2000): 201–9. See also the essays collected in Keith Jenkins, ed., *The Postmodern History Reader* (London: Routledge, 1997).

<sup>40</sup>Mary Ellen Kimball, *Journal of Mary Ellen Kimball, Including a Sketch of Our History in This Valley* (Salt Lake City: Pioneer Press, 1994), 52.

<sup>41</sup>On Emma Smith, see Linda King Newell and Valeen Tippetts Avery, *Mormon Enigma: Emma Hale Smith, Prophet’s Wife, “Elect Lady,” Polygamy’s Foe* (New York: Doubleday, 1984).

<sup>42</sup>Lucy Walker Kimball, “Statement of Mrs. L. W. Kimball,” n.d., typescript, MS 3142, LDS Church History Library. After Joseph Smith’s assassination, Lucy became one of Heber C. Kimball’s numerous plural wives.

as the head. It is far better for her not to be united with him in the sacred bonds of eternal union, than to rebel against the divine order of family government, instituted for a higher salvation; for if she altogether turn therefrom, she will receive a greater condemnation."<sup>43</sup> Belinda Marden Pratt (his sister-in-law) later defended polygamy on the grounds that "in the Patriarchal order of family government, the wife is bound to the law of her husband. She honors him, 'calls him lord,' even as Sarah obeyed and honored Abraham. She lives for him, and to increase his glory, his greatness, his kingdom, or family."<sup>44</sup>

Influenced by this emphasis on feminine difference and obedience, most nineteenth-century Mormon women did not describe polygamy in the emancipatory language used by modern historians. Even those who praised polygamy for encouraging women's independence argued that it was a difficult and often painful discipline. According to an anonymous author in the 1884 *Woman's Exponent*, polygamy forced women "to depend more upon their own judgment and to take more fully the charge of their own home and affairs; this brings into requisition many latent powers in woman's nature, which would, under other circumstances, have lain dormant, and she finds herself capable of being something more than a plaything, or a hot-house plant." Yet the same author also emphasized that polygamy taught women painful lessons about how to make "the greatest sacrifice for the good of another."<sup>45</sup> Similarly, Lucy Walker Kimball described polygamy as a "grand school" that had taught her "self-control" and "self-denial," and many others described it as a "trial": It was a hardship or an ordeal that taught them traditionally feminine

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<sup>43</sup>Orson Pratt, "Celestial Marriage," sermon August 29, 1852, in *The Essential Orson Pratt*, foreword by David J. Whittaker (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1991), 275.

<sup>44</sup>Belinda Marden Pratt, *Defence of Polygamy, by a Lady in Utah to Her Sister in New Hampshire* (Salt Lake City: n.pub., 1854), 7. On the patriarchal emphasis of polygamy, see B. Carmon Hardy, "Lords of Creation: Polygamy, the Abrahamic Household, and Mormon Patriarchy," *Journal of Mormon History* 20 (Spring 1994): 119–52.

<sup>45</sup>Anonymous, "A Mormon Woman's Views," *Woman's Exponent* 13, no. 11 (November 1, 1884): 81.



virtues like chastity, submission, and especially self-sacrifice.<sup>46</sup> Although it was painful to share their husbands with sister wives, women argued that their suffering purified them and helped them prepare for their spiritual exaltation.

Most of the early Latter-day Saints had once belonged to Protestant churches, and they seem to have absorbed common Protestant ideas about the redemptive power of suffering. As Artimesia Beman Snow explained, “The Lord has said, He would have a tried people, that they should come up through great tribulation, that they might be prepared to endure His presence and glory. If I had no trials, I should not expect to be numbered with the People of God, and therefore not be made a partaker of his blessings and glory.” Elizabeth Graham MacDonald claimed that her “trials” had made her “a far better woman than I otherwise should be.”<sup>47</sup> She understood polygamy as a form of discipline that taught her how to subordinate herself to her husband, her family, and above all, to God.

Given the controversies surrounding polygamy, it is not surprising that Mormon historians have struggled to find the right tone to use when writing about plural wives. Yet their difficulties suggest that they need to think more deeply about their understanding of women’s agency. In terms of its treatment of women, the field of Mormon history stands at a crossroads. While previous generations of historians virtually ignored women, recent scholars have been so determined to portray women as historical agents that they have sometimes exaggerated their freedom to make choices about their lives. Although there is no simple solution to this conceptual problem, one way forward is to try to craft a new model of agency—a model that rec-

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<sup>46</sup>Kimball, “Statement of Mrs. L. W. Kimball.” Belinda Marden Pratt, “Autobiography and Diary,” 30, also described polygamy as a “sacrifice.” For an account of a woman’s suffering in polygamy, see Annie Clark Tanner, *A Mormon Mother: An Autobiography* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1969), 57-69.

<sup>47</sup>Artimesia Beman Snow quoted in Arrington and Davis, *The Mormon Experience*, 201. Elizabeth Graham MacDonald, 1831-1917, *Autobiography*, 1875, letterpress, 40, MS 31, LDS Church History Library. For a good overview of recent scholarship on polygamy, see Martha Sonntag Bradley, “Out of the Closet and into the Fire: The New Mormon Historians’ Take On Polygamy,” in Bringham and Anderson, *Excavating Mormon Pasts*, 303-22.

ognizes *both* the capacity of ordinary women to create change *and* the structural constraints on their agency.

What should this model look like? I suggest seven characteristics. First, a new definition of agency should recognize that agency includes the reproduction of social structures as well as the transformation of them. As Saba Mahmood, an anthropologist of religion, has argued, scholars assume that “human agency primarily consists of acts that challenge social norms and not those that uphold them.”<sup>48</sup> But even though we are interested in how things change, we must also be attentive to continuity—how and why things remain the same. Most of the time, people use their agency to uphold the structures that bring meaning and stability to their lives.<sup>49</sup> Historians sometimes treat structures as inherently oppressive, as if we are always injured or harmed by the institutions and practices that shape us, but in fact, structures also give us a sense of security.<sup>50</sup> Social structures may seem permanent and unchangeable, but they do not exist independently of human beings; they have to be reproduced by people in every generation.<sup>51</sup>

It is hard to understand the rise of the Latter-day Saints in the

<sup>48</sup>Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005), 5. See also Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 15.

<sup>49</sup>On this point, see Hays, “Structure and Agency and the Sticky Problem of Culture,” 63. According to Emirbayer and Mische, “What Is Agency,” 975, “The past, through habit and repetition, becomes a stabilizing influence that shapes the flow of effort and allows us to sustain identities, meanings, and interactions over time.”

<sup>50</sup>Elizabeth Pritchard, “Agency without Transcendence,” *Culture and Religion* 7, no. 3 (2006): 267. Pritchard criticizes Judith Butler’s theory of “subjectivization” in her *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1997). Pritchard argues that socialization does not always entail antagonism or violation: “There is no warrant for supposing that making is tantamount to subordination. There is no warrant for supposing that one is deprived of agency in being made or for supposing that subordination entails ‘the deprivation of agency’” (266). See also Hays, “Structure and Agency and the Sticky Problem of Culture,” 61.

<sup>51</sup>Christopher Lloyd, “The Methodologies of Social History,” 191, argues that “society is a real structure of rules, roles, relations, and meanings

nineteenth century without paying attention to the women who sat in the pews every Sunday, raised their children in the faith, volunteered their time and energy to the Relief Society, and agreed to participate in plural marriages. When Lucy Ashby Clark (1818–85) encouraged her husband to marry another woman because “I believed in the plurality of wives, and I thought my husband worthy to enter this order of the priesthood,” she helped to perpetuate the distinctive beliefs and practices of her church.<sup>52</sup> Neither American religious historians in general nor Mormon historians in particular have treated ordinary female believers as “agents,” but of course they were: They helped to reproduce their religious communities across the generations. As sociologists Mustafa Emirbayer and Ann Mishe have explained, “Habitual and routinized activities are not devoid of agency.”<sup>53</sup>

Second, we should reconsider the implicit association of agency with freedom and emancipation.<sup>54</sup> Agency is certainly liberating on a personal level—people who make things happen gain an expanded sense of personal power—but as we have seen, agency is not limited to challenging social structures; it also includes reproducing them. So, for example, women’s historians outside of the LDS community have been fascinated by nineteenth-century women’s religious organizations like the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union and the Female Antislavery Society, but they have written little about the Relief Society. Given the large numbers of women who belonged to the Relief Society—more than 115,000 by 1942 when it was a voluntary dues-paying organization—this silence is perplexing, but women’s historians have often found it difficult to write about conservative women.<sup>55</sup> Because they have implicitly equated women’s agency with the quest for liberation, they have either ignored Mormon women or implied that

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that has to be produced, reproduced, and transformed by individuals while causally conditioning individual actions, beliefs, and intentions.” Hays, “Structure and Agency and the Sticky Problem of Culture,” 63, describes the reproduction of structures as “structurally reproductive agency.”

<sup>52</sup>Lucy Ashby Clark, “A Short Sketch of My Life—Written in 1881,” *Our Pioneer Heritage*, compiled by Kate B. Carter, 20 vols. (Salt Lake City: Daughters of Utah Pioneers, 1958–77), 10:130.

<sup>53</sup>Emirbayer and Mishe, “What Is Agency,” 978.

<sup>54</sup>On this point, see Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*.

<sup>55</sup>Jill Mulvay Derr, Janath Russell Cannon, and Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, *Women of Covenant: The Story of Relief Society* (Salt Lake City:

their agency was not authentic—that they were victims of false consciousness. Ironically, historians treat apostates like Ann Eliza Young as agents because of their decision to leave their marriages and the Church, but they seem to assume that women who remained Mormon could not have made a free choice. Although we must ask hard questions about *why* women have acted in certain ways, there is no doubt that the choice to reproduce structures—such as male headship in the church and home in the case of Mormon women—is, in fact, a form of agency.

To be clear, claiming that a woman has exerted agency is not the same as claiming that her actions were necessarily admirable. Historians of white men do not hesitate to acknowledge that men have often used their agency for ill, but because women’s history began as an attempt to recover the stories of inspiring female heroines, and perhaps because of cultural assumptions about women’s superior morality, historians have sometimes been reluctant to write about the less appealing aspects of women’s history: for example, women’s nativism or their involvement in racist organizations. Historians should be empathetic toward the women they study, especially as a factor in understanding the constraints on their choices, but they must also make carefully considered judgments about the ways that women have used their agency.<sup>56</sup>

Third, in addition to broadening our definition of agency to include the reproduction of social structures, we should also rethink the close association between agency and intentionality. Ever since the Enlightenment, freedom has been defined as “rational self-interest”; and in the United States in particular, historians have been fascinated by the stories of seemingly self-made men who triumphed over adversity to gain fame or wealth.<sup>57</sup> “Agency” has usually been equated with the deliberate pursuit of power. Yet one of the most important insights of the new social history that emerged in the 1970s is that

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Deseret Book, 1992), 287. As of 1971, all LDS women over the age of eighteen were automatically enrolled in the Relief Society and the requirement of paying dues was cancelled.

<sup>56</sup>On the challenges of making judgments, see Linda M. G. Zerilli, “Toward a Feminist Theory of Judgment,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 34, no. 2 (2009): 295–317.

<sup>57</sup>On Enlightenment definitions of agency, see Emirbayer and Mishe, “What Is Agency,” 964–65.

historical change not only comes from the top down, but also from the bottom up. Even though agency includes intentionality (a sense of purpose and direction), this intentionality can be more subtle and modest than highly visible and deliberate campaigns to enact large-scale change. Emphasizing the collective power of groups, social historians claim that, when large numbers of people make similar decisions about their lives, they set events in motion that have far-reaching consequences—sometimes unwittingly. Historical agents are not only visionary leaders who deliberately decide to change the world, but also ordinary people who might not be fully aware of how their individual decisions create historical change. American religious historians do not hesitate to describe Joseph Smith or Brigham Young as historical agents because they purposefully tried to create something new. But without minimizing the contributions of famous individuals, we must also pay attention to the collective agency exercised by groups of religious actors who seek common ends. For example, as Susanna Morrill has shown, large numbers of nineteenth-century Mormon women wrote poems, journals, articles, short stories, and letters that subtly challenged the patriarchal tone of the Church by placing women at the center of eternal progression. Although these female writers did not intend to create something new, their common questions and concerns led them to create an alternate, female-centered theology.<sup>58</sup>

Fourth, a new definition of agency should also include the insight that agency should always be seen as relational and social rather than simply individual.<sup>59</sup> Historians sometimes write about famous religious leaders as if they were autonomous individuals who bent history to their will, but in fact their leadership was dependent on the

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<sup>58</sup>Susanna Morrill, *White Roses on the Floor of Heaven: Mormon Women's Popular Theology, 1880–1920* (New York: Routledge, 2006); see also her “Relief Society Birth and Death Rituals: Women at the Gates of Mortality,” *Journal of Mormon History* 36, no. 2 (Spring 2010): 128–60. In contrast to my argument, Thomas Dietz and Tom R. Burns, “Human Agency and the Evolutionary Dynamics of Culture,” *Acta Sociologica* 35 (1992): 191–92, claim that “actions must be intentional for agency to be operating.” Yet they also add, “That does not mean that all implications of the action are understood or anticipated.”

<sup>59</sup>William Hamilton Sewell, *Logics of History: Social Theory and Social Transformation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 145; Neitz,

recognition of others. Brigham Young would not be celebrated today as the “American Moses” if not for the ordinary men and women who embraced his ideas as their own.<sup>60</sup> His agency was largely dependent on *theirs*. Remembering the confusion that followed Joseph Smith’s murder, Nancy Naomi Alexander Tracy insisted that she had no doubt about the legitimacy of Brigham Young’s leadership. She found certitude in her perception that, when he spoke to the assembled Mormons at Nauvoo in August 1844, “the mantle of Joseph fell upon Brigham that day as that of Elijah did fall upon Elisha, for it seemed that his voice, his gestures, and all were Joseph.”<sup>61</sup> Without her testimony (and the testimony of scores of other men and women in Utah who testified that they saw and heard the same thing), Sidney Rigdon might have succeeded in becoming the “guardian” of the Church.

Fifth, agency must be understood as existing on a continuum. Historians tend to write as if their subjects either have agency or they do not. Nineteenth-century Mormon women were either proto-feminists (suffragists) or dupes of a patriarchal church who suffered from false consciousness. But, of course, agency is not so clear-cut. With the horrifying exception of those who, under torture, are utterly deprived of any capacity to act, almost everyone has some degree of agency—some capacity, even if limited, to make things happen. As sociologists Thomas Dietz and Tom R. Burns explain, “All actors possess agency to some degree, and no actor has total, unconstrained agency.”<sup>62</sup>

So, for example, several LDS women claimed that they had been married to violent husbands before joining the Mormons. When Elizabeth Terry Heward remembered her first husband, she lamented that he “kept getting drunk and coming home at night and abusing

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“Gender and Culture,” 392–97; Emirbayer and Mische, “What Is Agency,” 973; Pritchard, “Agency without Transcendence,” 280.

<sup>60</sup>Leonard J. Arrington, *Brigham Young: American Moses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985).

<sup>61</sup>Nancy Naomi Alexander Tracy, “Autobiography,” in *Autobiographies of Mormon Pioneer Women*, edited by Ogden Kraut, 2 vols. (Salt Lake City: Pioneer Press, 1998), 2:149.

<sup>62</sup>Hays, “Structure and Agency and the Sticky Problem of Culture,” 64; Dietz and Burns, “Human Agency and the Evolutionary Dynamics of Culture,” 192.

me.”<sup>63</sup> Other women were reportedly sexually assaulted as part of the mob violence against them in Missouri and elsewhere. Many Mormon women knew the shame and terror of physical violation, and their lives bear testimony to the fragility of human agency. But Mormon women also converted others to the faith, demonstrated against anti-polygamy laws, and sometimes physically fought back against their enemies. Laura Farnsworth Owen remembered that, when an apostate verbally attacked Brigham Young’s character in her house, she hit him with a “long-handled slice” (a cooking tool for placing food in the oven) and then “backed him out of the door the blood trickling down his cheeks.”<sup>64</sup>

Mormon women did in fact have agency, and historians interested in the rise of Mormonism in the nineteenth century have to reckon with them as full-fledged historical actors. At the risk of stating the obvious, though, most Mormon women did not have as much agency as Mormon men, who had greater access to material and cultural resources, including money, education, and the power of the priesthood. Agency is relative and is marked by gender, racial, and class disparities.<sup>65</sup>

Sixth, we should also recognize that agency is always shaped by cultural norms and structural constraints. Although all humans are born with the capacity for agency, the way that humans use their agency is always shaped by the multiple structures that exist at a particular historical moment. As sociologist William Sewell has argued, “What kinds of desires people can have, what intentions they form, and what sort of creative transpositions they can carry out vary dramatically from one social world to another depending on the nature of the particular structures that inform those social worlds.”<sup>66</sup> What this means is that there are limits to what we can imagine and what we can do. For example, both Church authorities and historians have

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<sup>63</sup>Elizabeth Terry Heward, *Autobiography and Journal* (N.p.: N.pub., 1900–1980?), 8.

<sup>64</sup>Laura Farnsworth Owen, “Autobiography,” 1868, MS 1048, LDS Church History Library. Mary Ann Phelps Rich, “Autobiography,” in Kraut, *Autobiographies of Mormon Pioneer Women*, 2:220, reports how she helped rescue her husband.

<sup>65</sup>On agency as “relative,” see Pritchard, “Agency without Transcendence,” 278–79.

<sup>66</sup>Sewell, *Logics of History*, 144. See also Dietz and Burns, “Human



pointed out that relatively few contemporary Latter-day Saint women have explored the possibility of ordination to the Melchizedek Priesthood, but few have asked deeper questions about why Mormon women seem less interested in gaining access to male leadership roles than Protestant, Jewish, or Catholic women.

Offering a possible explanation, historian Richard Lyman Bushman suggests that Mormon women

knew from everyday experience that women had plenty of responsibility in the lay-run congregations where there were rarely enough men and women to perform all the necessary tasks. Women preached and prayed in church, they taught classes, and they had a limited but consistent place in the congregational leadership councils. What Mormon women wanted, as measured by the writings in *Exponent II*, was a voice. They wanted to count when decisions were made, and they insisted that attention be paid to the peculiar problems of young mothers, single women, abused women, and others in need of help.

As a further explanation, Bushman adds, “Most Mormon women think of marriage and children as the life they most desire.”<sup>67</sup>

Bushman’s description of Mormon women’s subjectivity is undoubtedly right: Most Mormon women have not demanded the priesthood, and most seem to value marriage and motherhood as their most important calling. But Bushman does not pursue his line of inquiry further to ask how women’s desires have been shaped and molded by their religious culture. Why, for example, did women in Community of Christ seek (and win) priesthood ordination despite their equally strong commitment to marriage and motherhood?<sup>68</sup>

Since women’s desires do not stand outside of history (as the differences between individual women make clear), we cannot explain

Agency and the Evolutionary Dynamics of Culture,” 192.

<sup>67</sup>Richard L. Bushman, *Mormonism: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 93–94.

<sup>68</sup>On women in Community of Christ, see Danny L. Jorgensen, “Sisters’ Lives, Sisters’ Voices: Neglected Reorganized Latter Day Saint Herstories,” *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 17 (1997): 25–42. According to William D. Russell, whose history of the schism is in preparation, an estimated 25 percent of RLDS members defected, either formally or informally, over the 1984 revelation; but not surprisingly, women’s role in this schism was primarily accompanying husbands and fathers out of the Church rather than leading a protest movement.

Mormon women's decisions about their lives solely in the language of personal preference. Instead, we must also ask how their decisions have been influenced by the political, economic, and religious structures that have framed their lives. In terms of the institutional LDS Church, this means asking questions about how women's beliefs and practices have shaped and disciplined them into being particular kinds of selves. It seems likely, for example, that the paucity of female characters in the Book of Mormon, the exclusively male priesthood starting with twelve-year-old boys, and the widely publicized excommunications of outspoken feminists have all influenced Mormon women's subjectivities. To be clear, human agency is not *determined* by structures, which would make dissent impossible. But as sociologist Anthony Giddens has argued, agency and structure should be understood as dialectical. Human action transforms structures, but structures also influence human action. Or to rephrase the same point, individuals make history, but history also makes individuals.<sup>69</sup>

Finally, we should remember that agency takes place within structures as well as against them. Although this is not a new observation, it bears repeating because it reminds us that women creatively appropriated LDS history to make space for assertions of their own importance and authority. Lucy Walker Kimball, for example, made sure that younger Mormons knew that Joseph Smith frowned on men who belittled their wives. Looking back, she remembered that he

often referred to the feelings that should exist between husbands and wives, that they, his wives, should be his bosom companions, the nearest and dearest objects on earth in every sense of the word. He said men must beware how they treat their wives. They were given them for a holy purpose that the myriads of spirits waiting for tabernacles might have pure and healthy bodies. He also said many would awake in the morning of the resurrection sadly disappointed; for they, by transgression, would have neither wives nor children, for they surely would be taken from them and given to those who should prove themselves worthy. Again he said a woman should have her choice; this was a privilege

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<sup>69</sup>In his theory of "structuration," Anthony Giddens, *Central Problems in Social Theory* (Berkeley: University of North Carolina Press, 1979), argues that structure and agency constitute each other. Hays, "Structure and Agency and the Sticky Problem of Culture," 61, argues that "people . . . produce certain forms of social structure at the same time social structures produce certain types of people."

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that could not be denied her.<sup>70</sup>

Similarly, Martha Cox told a story to her granddaughter about Caroline Barnes Crosby, who “was a very hardworking woman taking much more responsibility in her home than most women take. Her husband, thinking to give the Prophet some light on home management said to him. ‘Brother Joseph, my wife does much more hard work than your wife.’ Bro. Joseph replied by telling him that if a man cannot learn in this life to appreciate a wife and do his duty by her in properly taking care of her, he need not expect to be given one in the hereafter.”<sup>71</sup> Recounting a cherished memory of Joseph Smith, Polly Angell remembered his praise in 1835 when he saw her and other women sewing drapes and carpets for the Kirtland Temple: “The sisters are always first and foremost in good works.”<sup>72</sup> By telling stories like these, LDS women tried to guarantee that they would be treated with the respect and dignity that they deserved.

The model of agency outlined in this essay does not solve all the problems that Mormon historians (and American religious historians) face when writing about women. Yet if we can develop an understanding of agency that moves beyond its association with freedom, liberation, and intentionality, we will write books that deepen our understanding of how religious change takes place. If we remember that agency is not an either/or proposition, but a continuum, we will write books featuring a diverse set of characters—women as well as men—as the creators of historical change. If we view agency as relational and social, we will analyze famous leaders like Brigham Young in the context of their relationship to the ordinary men and women who made their agency possible. If we recognize agency as collective as well as individual, we will gain insight into the way that Mormon women have transformed American religion—sometimes intentionally, sometimes

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<sup>70</sup>Lucy Walker Kimball, “Statement of Mrs. L. W. Kimball.”

<sup>71</sup>Martha Cragun Cox, “Stories from the Notebook of Martha Cox, grandmother of Fern Cox Anderson,” typescript, not paginated, MS 658, LDS Church History Library. *Joseph Smith: The Prophet of the Restoration*, a Church-produced film shown at the Visitors’ Center in Temple Square (and at other visitors centers), shows Smith speaking these lines while standing outside and beating a rug—a choice that emphasizes his sexual egalitarianism.

<sup>72</sup>Polly Angell, quoted in Derr, Cannon, and Ursenbach, *Women of Covenant*, 16.

not—by making common decisions about their beliefs and practices. If we emphasize that agency includes the reproduction as well as the transformation of structures, we will ask questions about why and how Mormon women have reproduced the LDS Church across the generations. If we clarify that agency always exists in a dialectical relationship to structure, we will not only resist the temptation to exaggerate Mormon women's ability to create change, but we will confront the reality of their sacrifices in the name of their faith. And if we explain that women's agency is not always oriented toward emancipation or resistance, we will treat conservative as well as radical women as serious historical actors. My hope is that if we can rethink our assumptions about agency and historical change, we will write new, more inclusive narratives that show how Mormon women both made and were made by history.

# THE POWER AND FORM OF GODLINESS: METHODIST CONVERSION NARRATIVES AND JOSEPH SMITH'S FIRST VISION

*Christopher C. Jones*

FIVE YEARS BEFORE HIS DEATH, John Wesley penned his “Thoughts upon Methodism,” reflecting upon the movement’s past and its future prospects on both sides of the Atlantic. At the time of his writing in 1786, Wesley had seen the society he helped start in the 1730s grow from a small band of students to a transatlantic movement numbering more than 100,000 adherents. The Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States alone numbered 57,000 by 1790.<sup>1</sup> Secure in his belief that Methodism would continue to expand long after his death, Wesley was less sure if the movement would succumb to the societal pressures brought on by continued

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<sup>1</sup>John Wigger, *Taking Heaven By Storm: Methodism and the Rise of Popular Christianity in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 4–5.

growth. The quest for respectability and further expansion, Wesley worried, would rob Methodism of “the doctrine, spirit, and discipline with which they first set out. . . . I am not afraid that the people called Methodists should ever cease to exist either in Europe or America,” he explained. “But I am afraid, lest they should only exist as a dead sect, having the form of religion without the power.”<sup>2</sup>

Approximately thirty years after Wesley’s death, Joseph Smith encountered Methodist revivalists in upstate New York and found their message appealing. “My mind became somewhat partial to the Methodist sect,” he later wrote, “and I felt some desire to be united with them.” Following an intense period of pondering and prayer, Smith ventured into the woods to pray and, according to his 1838 account, to “inquire of the Lord . . . which of all the sects was right, that I might know which to join.” Instead of confirming his early impressions about the Methodists, Smith reported that God told him “that I must join none of them, for they were all wrong. . . . [T]he Personage who addressed me said that all their Creeds were an abomination in his sight, that those professors were all corrupt, that ‘they draw near to me with their lips but their hearts are far from me; They teach for doctrines the commandments of men, *having a form of Godliness but they deny the power thereof.*”<sup>3</sup>

In Smith’s narrative, Wesley’s worst fears had been realized. Methodists, along with all other Christian denominations, lacked the power of true religion, possessing only “a form of Godliness.” This stinging rebuke responded to more than an isolated concern of John Wesley’s. Over the course of the eighteenth century and during the first decades of the nineteenth, Methodists in both Great Britain and America regularly proclaimed that Methodism uniquely possessed both the form of godliness and the power of true religion. It found expression in Methodist sermons, hymns, ecclesiastical reports, and even in the personal writings of laity and clergy. In the

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See also the tables included in Wigger’s appendix, 197–99.

<sup>2</sup>John Wesley, “Thoughts upon Methodism,” in *The Methodist Societies: History, Nature, and Design*, edited by Rupert E. Davies, in *The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley*, edited by W. Reginald Ward and Richard P. Heitzenrater (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1976–), 9:527.

<sup>3</sup>Joseph Smith, “History—1839,” in *The Papers of Joseph Smith: Vol. 1: Autobiographical and Historical Writings*, edited by Dean C. Jessee (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989), 1:270, 273; emphasis mine.

minds of Methodists, they were set apart from Baptists, Presbyterians, and others; and the message God reportedly communicated to Joseph Smith was, as Smith would soon discover, particularly offensive to Methodist ears.

Examining Joseph Smith's first vision in the context of Methodist concerns over the nature of true religion brings its message into sharper focus. While condemning all religious denominations, it spoke to specific Methodist concerns in antebellum America. Yet closer attention to the Methodist context also suggests that Methodism fundamentally shaped Smith's early religious wanderings in important ways. Heavenly visions at the time of conviction and conversion were, in fact, common among Methodists of the day. And nowhere else did the rhetoric of true religion's form and power appear more regularly than in both private and public conversion narratives of Methodism's adherents. As other historians have previously pointed out, Joseph Smith's earliest recorded recollections of his first vision resemble early American evangelical conversion narratives in both context and content.<sup>4</sup> By focusing more specifically on the Methodist variation of the standard conversion narrative, it becomes clear that Smith's own narratives bear distinct Methodist markers of influence. This is true not only of his earliest recorded account of 1832, but also his later narrations of the experience, including the 1838 account, which others have argued represents a marked departure from his earlier expressed concern with conversion. In this instance and others, Methodism shaped much of early Mormon religiosity, signifying both the expansive influence of Methodism in early America and making clearer the meanings of Joseph Smith's first vision—as both he and others understood it.

John Wesley's 1786 reflection was not an isolated expression. The subject was one that had concerned Wesley since his early days at Oxford, and he revisited it throughout his ministry. Alluding to 2 Timothy 3:5, Wesley routinely stressed that true religion must include

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<sup>4</sup>Neal E. Lambert and Richard H. Cracroft, "Literary Form and Historical Understanding: Joseph Smith's First Vision," *Journal of Mormon History* 7 (1980): 31–42; Richard L. Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 56–59; Richard Lyman Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 2005), 39.



both the form and the power of godliness.<sup>5</sup> As early as 1743, he had exhorted his followers to “seek after the power as not to despise the form of godliness,”<sup>6</sup> and on another occasion he emphasized the necessity “to explain and defend this truth.” If Methodists denied the spiritual witness, he explained, “there is a danger lest our religion degenerate into mere formality; lest, ‘having a form of godliness,’ we neglect if not ‘deny, the power of it.’”<sup>7</sup>

As Methodism expanded and flourished in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, this emphasis on the form and power of true religion became an integral part of Methodist identity. It was crucial to Methodists’ initial efforts to claim and establish a separate authority from the Church of England. The 1787 *Form of Discipline, for the Ministers, Preachers, and Members of the Methodist Episcopal Church* thus determined that “the Church of England, to which we have been united, is deficient in several of the most important Parts of Christian Disciplines; and that (a few Ministers and Members excepted) it has lost the *Life and Power of Religion*.”<sup>8</sup> Methodists leveled similar charges against other churches that they confronted and with which they competed for converts in early America.<sup>9</sup> The message was also preached in Methodist sermons and noted by circuit riders and missionary soci-

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<sup>5</sup>See for example, John Wesley, May 31, 1763, *Journals and Diaries IV (1755–1765)*, in Ward and Heitzenrater, *The Works of John Wesley*, 21:413; Wesley, “Sermon 22: Sermon on the Mount II” (1725), *Sermons I*, edited by Albert C. Outler in *The Works of John Wesley*, 1:498; Wesley, “Sermon 11: The Witness of the Spirit II” (1767), *Sermons I*, edited by Albert C. Outler, in *The Works of John Wesley*, 1:285; Wesley, “An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion,” (1743), *The Appeals to Men of Reason and Religion and Certain Related Open Letters*, edited by Gerald R. Cragg, in *The Works of John Wesley*, 11:48; Wesley, “Sermon 150: Hypocrisy in Oxford,” (1741), *Sermons IV*, edited by Albert C. Outler, in *The Works of John Wesley*, 4:398–400.

<sup>6</sup>Wesley, September 22, 1743, *Journals and Diaries II (1738–1743)*, in *The Works of John Wesley* 19:341.

<sup>7</sup>Wesley, “Sermon 11, The Witness of the Spirit II” (1767), *Sermons I*, in *The Works of John Wesley* 1:285.

<sup>8</sup>Methodist Episcopal Church, *Form of Discipline, for the Ministers, Preachers, and Members of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America* (New York: Methodist Episcopal Church, 1787), Sections 3 and 5; emphasis mine.

<sup>9</sup>For one such example, see Francis Asbury, Journal, June 4, 1791, in Elmer T. Clark, J. Manning Potts, and Jacob S. Payton, eds., *The Journals and*

eties in their annual reports. An 1824 sermon by Richard Watson, for example, lamented that “the majority of professing *Christian* men” possess “a ‘form of godliness,’ but deny its power, or live in utter disregard of it.”<sup>10</sup>

Most commonly, however, the theme showed up in Methodist conversion narratives published in the many short biographical sketches of pious men and women in Methodist periodicals and in the booklength memoirs of itinerant preachers. In these narratives, individuals recounted their journey from sin to grace, describing in detail their activities as either an unchurched sinner or a nominal and unsatisfied Christian, their initial conviction of guilt, and finally their transforming experience of conversion. While a large number of converts to Methodism in early America were religious seekers with no prior denominational affiliation, many others were raised as Episcopalians, Presbyterians, or Congregationalists. Initially attracted to Methodist camp meetings and revivals by their interdenominational character, these persons soon became aware of the difference between Methodism and their respective churches. That difference was to be found in the Methodist emphasis on “experimental religion”—in Wesley’s words, “religion of the heart.”<sup>11</sup>

As historian Lester Ruth has noted, in addition to the strident anti-Calvinist message of various evangelical denominations, “early Methodists in America were equally concerned to challenge the merely ‘formal’ religion that they discerned in other churches.” This realization, Ruth continues, “led them to lament their upbringing in non-Methodist settings.”<sup>12</sup> Several published conversion narratives described this dissatisfaction explicitly in terms of the form and power of religion. A typical expression was that, while the church of

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*Letters of Francis Asbury* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1958), 1:676–77.

<sup>10</sup>Rev. Richard Watson, “Divinity, Man Magnified by the Divine Regard: A Sermon,” *Methodist Magazine*, February 1824, 44. For an example of an annual report from a missionary society, see “Extracts from the Third Annual Report of the South-Carolina Conference Missionary Society,” *Methodist Magazine*, May 1824, 197.

<sup>11</sup>Wesley, “Sermon 7, The Way of the Kingdom,” *Sermons I*, in *The Works of John Wesley* 1:220; Wesley, “Sermon 16, The Means of Grace,” in *ibid.*, 1:379.

<sup>12</sup>Lester Ruth, *Early Methodist Life and Spirituality: A Reader* (Nashville, Tenn.: Kingswood Books, 2005), 70.

the person's upbringing may have possessed some outward *form* of religion, it lacked the *power* to convert the individual to Christ. Freeborn Garrettson cast his Anglican upbringing in such terms. "During this time of my self-secure state," he recalled, "I had a form of godliness." He then detailed what specifically this meant. "[I] attended church constantly, . . . fasted once a week, prayed frequently every day in secret places, endeavored to attend strictly to the Sabbath, often re-proved open sin, and denied myself of what the world calls pleasure."<sup>13</sup> Still Garrettson remained unsatisfied with his religiosity. About this time, he heard a Methodist sermon that particularly resonated with him and ultimately triggered an emotional and intense conversion. "I was immediately surrounded with a divine power. . . . I saw a beauty in the perfections of the Deity and felt that power of faith and love that I had ever been a stranger to before." In Anglicanism, Garrettson had found the form of godliness, but in Methodism he had experienced the power. In fact, that experience *was* the power.<sup>14</sup> As one historian summarized, "Early Methodists were never satisfied with a mere affirmation of rational belief that one understood Christ saved sinners." Rather, "they sought to lead a person into an inward experience of assurance that Christ had saved *her* or *him*. This was *experimental* religion, and anything less fell short of true Christianity in their opinion."<sup>15</sup> The sermons, oral testimonies, and extemporaneous exhortations of the camp meeting, together with the published accounts of conversion narratives, set a standard for the unconverted to strive for. Or as Lester Ruth put it—"they created the expectations that shaped the salvation experiences of others in their circles."<sup>16</sup>

These descriptions of Methodist belief and practice serve as useful context for understanding not only early Methodist identity, but also the larger culture of popular religion that Methodists helped to shape in the early American republic. As John Wigger has noted,

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<sup>13</sup>Robert Drew Simpson, ed., *American Methodist Pioneer: The Life and Journals of the Rev. Freeborn Garrettson, 1752–1827* (Rutland, Vt.: Academy Books, 1984), 43.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, 44–45. For another example, see "The Grace of God Manifested: Memoir of Mrs. Penelope Goulding Coke, by Her Husband the Rev. Thomas Coke, Ll. D.," *Methodist Magazine*, November 1818, 431–32.

<sup>15</sup>Ruth, *Early Methodist Life and Spirituality*, 68; emphasis his.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, 69.

“Because of Methodism’s spectacular success, in many ways its beliefs and practices came to define the context from which future popular religious movements in America would emerge.”<sup>17</sup> Methodism thus influenced in various ways the religious movements of Ellen G. White, La Roy Sunderland, and William Miller in antebellum America. It also left its mark on Mormonism beginning even before the formal establishment of the Church with Joseph Smith’s earliest religious wanderings. It was, after all, Joseph Smith’s youthful experience at Methodist camp meetings that led to his “first vision” in 1820 in which the teenage boy claimed that heavenly beings—God the Father and Jesus Christ—visited him and gave instructions to restore a pure and primitive version of Christianity.<sup>18</sup> Smith recalled years later that “there was in the place where we lived an unusual excitement on the subject of religion. It commenced with the Methodists, but soon became general among all the sects in that region of the country.”<sup>19</sup> He continued: “During this time of great excitement my mind was called up to serious reflection and great uneasiness, but though my feelings were deep and often poignant, still I kept myself aloof from all these parties, though I attended their several meetings <as often> as occasion would permit. But in process of time my mind became somewhat partial to the Methodist sect, and I felt some desire to be united with them.”<sup>20</sup>

Historians have long noted that visions like Smith’s “were common in the folklore of the area” and pointed out the similarities between Smith’s accounts and those recorded by other visionaries in the Early Republic.<sup>21</sup> It was in 1965 that the earliest-known account of Joseph Smith’s first vision—written in 1832—came to the attention of historians, and scholars immediately began carefully examining the

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<sup>17</sup>Wigger, *Taking Heaven by Storm*, 195.

<sup>18</sup>The fullest account of young Joseph Smith’s involvement at the Methodist revivals in western New York is D. Michael Quinn, “Joseph Smith’s Experience at a Methodist ‘Camp-Meeting’ in 1820,” Expanded Version (Definitive), *Dialogue Paperless* (December 2006): 1–110, <http://www.dialoguejournal.com/content/?p=35> (accessed April 14, 2009).

<sup>19</sup>Smith “History—1839,” in Jessee, *The Papers of Joseph Smith*, 1:269–70.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, 1:270.

<sup>21</sup>Fawn M. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History: The Life Story of Joseph Smith, the Mormon Prophet* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1946), 22.

document.<sup>22</sup> Articles comparing it to the other known accounts, noting both the similarities and noticeable differences, appeared shortly thereafter, and in 1971 the subject received a book-length treatment.<sup>23</sup> In the most detailed and thorough analysis of the literary structure and form of Smith's known recitations of his first vision, two Brigham Young University English professors concluded that, in his 1832 account of heavenly visions, Joseph Smith drew upon "a traditional form of spiritual autobiography familiar to him and those around him" and that this earliest record of his experience followed "the well-established pattern in recounting a conversion."<sup>24</sup> More recently, Smith's biographer Richard Lyman Bushman argued that Joseph Smith initially "understood the experience in terms of the familiar" and consequently "explained the vision as he must have first understood it, as a personal conversion."<sup>25</sup>

The Christian conversion narrative has a long and storied history, dating back to the biblical account of Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus. While Augustine, Martin Luther, and John Calvin each recorded accounts of their personal conversions, it was not until the seventeenth century that the conversion narrative became a pop-

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<sup>22</sup>Paul Cheesman, then a graduate student at Brigham Young University, found the account in "a journal ledger in the Church Historian's Office [in] Salt Lake City" and included it in his master's thesis, though he incorrectly dated the account to 1833. See Paul R. Cheesman, "An Analysis of the Accounts Relating to Joseph Smith's Earliest Visions" (M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1965), Appendix D, 126–32.

<sup>23</sup>Dean C. Jessee, "The Early Accounts of Joseph Smith's First Vision," *BYU Studies* 9 (Spring 1969): 275–96; James B. Allen, "Eight Contemporary Accounts of Joseph Smith's First Vision—What Do We Learn from Them," *Improvement Era*, April 1970, 4–13; and Milton V. Backman Jr., *Joseph Smith's First Vision* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1971).

<sup>24</sup>Lambert and Cracroft, "Literary Form and Historical Understanding," 33, 36.

<sup>25</sup>Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 39. Bushman initially made this argument in his earlier biography of the Mormon prophet and in an article situating Joseph Smith within the context of other seemingly obscure visionaries in the early American republic. See Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism*, 56–59; and Richard L. Bushman, "The Visionary World of Joseph Smith," *BYU Studies* 37, no. 1 (1997–98): 183–204.

ular phenomenon.<sup>26</sup> Puritans in early colonial New England required prospective church members to relate a specific conversion experience, which was then recorded in official ecclesiastical records and sometimes in the private journals of both preachers and parishioners.<sup>27</sup> One result of this Puritan practice was the emergence of an established format for these narratives—a format later adopted and then adapted by evangelicals in the early American republic to fit their own needs and their own theology.<sup>28</sup> By the time of the Second Great Awakening, which began in the first decade of the nineteenth century, evangelical Protestants were including conversion narratives in short biographical eulogies in denominational periodicals and in the published autobiographies of clergymen. The intent was to provide models of appropriate “conversion and righteous living” in print from which the unconverted could learn and which they could imitate in acting out their own spiritual journeys.<sup>29</sup>

Joseph Smith, whose participation and interest in the revivals surrounding him as a youth is documented in his own memoirs and those of neighbors and family members, probably heard many such conversion narratives and testimonies as a youth—in print, from the pulpit, and in camp meeting song. Indeed, as mentioned above, his 1832 account, written as part of an ultimately abortive attempt to record the history of his nascent church, reads much like the conversion narratives that appear in numerous journals of other early American

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<sup>26</sup>D. Bruce Hindmarsh, “My Chains Fell Off, My Heart Was Free”: Early Methodist Conversion Narrative in England,” *Church History* 68 (December 1999): 913.

<sup>27</sup>Literature treating the Puritan conversion narrative is extensive. See, for example, Patricia Caldwell, *The Puritan Conversion Narrative: The Beginnings of American Expression* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Charles Lloyd Cohen, *God’s Caress: The Psychology of Puritan Religious Expression* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); and Douglas L. Winiarski, “Souls Filled with Ravishing Transport: Heavenly Visions and the Radical Awakening in New England, 1742,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 61 (January 2004): 3–46.

<sup>28</sup>Jerald C. Brauer, “Conversion: From Puritanism to Revivalism,” *Journal of Religion* 58 (July 1978): 227–43.

<sup>29</sup>Elizabeth Elkin Grammer, *Some Wild Visions: Autobiographies by Female Itinerant Evangelists in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 140–41.

evangelicals. Another account recorded three years later in 1835 maintained the basic features of the earlier version but also, according to one study, signaled his “shift [in] emphasis . . . from forgiveness of his personal sins to his greater concern regarding the ‘different systems’ of religion in the world.”<sup>30</sup> By 1838, however, Smith’s understanding of his first vision had developed even further. In comparing the earliest account against the more widely known (and now canonized) narrative recorded in 1838, historians have proposed that, by the time the latter was written, “the transition from plow-boy to prophet was complete” and the 1838 “account of the original theophany thus takes on a significance far different from the earliest visions.”<sup>31</sup> As Bushman put it, by 1838, “Joseph’s own salvation gave way to the opening of a new era of history. The promise of forgiveness through faith in Christ was dropped from the narrative, and the apostasy of Christian churches stood as the central message of the vision.” This later account, in contrast to the earlier versions, “supplied the church with a founding story.”<sup>32</sup>

This point is an important one. It is revealing in that it demonstrates Joseph Smith’s expanding conception of his own role—and that of his followers—in the providential history of which early Mormons saw themselves as an integral part. Nevertheless, suggestions that the 1838 account diverges sharply from the Protestant pattern of evangelical conversion narratives are not entirely accurate. While Bushman and others correctly note that “the promise of forgiveness through faith in Christ was dropped from the narrative”—at least as an explicit message—a more careful study of Methodist conversion narratives reveals that Smith’s 1838 account still retains the basic

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<sup>30</sup>Lambert and Cracroft, “Literary Form and Historical Understanding,” 37.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

<sup>32</sup>Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 40. Of course, as James Allen has pointed out, Joseph Smith’s First Vision did not come into common and popular usage as the genesis of the Church’s “founding story” until well after Smith’s death. See James B. Allen, “Emergence of a Fundamental: The Expanding Role of Joseph Smith’s First Vision in Mormon Religious Thought,” *Journal of Mormon History* 7 (1980): 43–61. See also Kathleen Flake, “Re-Placing Memory: Latter-day Saint Use of Historical Monuments and Narrative in the Early Twentieth Century,” *Religion and American Culture* 13 (January 2003): 69–109.



structure and most crucial aspects of the narrative style. Furthermore, later rehearsals of Smith's early visionary experience recorded in the 1840s demonstrate that the emphasis in the earlier accounts on his "conviction of sins" and singular desire "to obtain mercy" remained consistent in his understanding. One of these accounts—recorded in Mormon convert Alexander Neibaur's journal in 1844—additionally suggests that Smith's desire to "get religion" was intimately tied to his early interest in Methodism—an idea also present in the 1838 account.<sup>33</sup>

While Methodist conversions share much in common with those of other evangelicals in the early American republic, their autobiographical narratives possess some unique (and important) features as well. And it is these unique features that cast new light on Joseph Smith's several narratives of his own visionary experience. Methodists in antebellum America "leaned toward the enthusiastic side" in the spectrum of religious experience.<sup>34</sup> True religion, they maintained, could—and in some instances, should—include visions, revelation, and other manifestations of the miraculous. This was the power they so often spoke of in narrating their experiences. While other evangelicals in the early American republic shared to varying degrees Methodism's acceptance of such experiences, they were generally more common among Methodists. This, together with the rhetorical emphasis on the form and power of religion, demarcated Methodist conversions from those of typical Baptists or Presbyterians. Additionally, in what historian Dee Andrews identified as "the most distinguishing characteristic of Wesleyan conversion," Methodist conversion to Christ, with its attendant forgiveness of sins, was directly connected to their simultaneous conversion to Methodism. Andrews thus noted that, whereas "Congregationalists, Presbyterians, and many Baptists came to their religious experiences after years of familiarity with Scripture and Reformed theology, Methodists customarily joined Methodist societies *after* their awakening, in many cases, often after their full conversions."<sup>35</sup>

Previous historians were right to situate Joseph Smith's visionary experience within the context of evangelical conversion narra-

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<sup>33</sup>Alexander Neibaur, Journal, May 24, 1844, in Jessee, *Papers of Joseph Smith*, 1:461.

<sup>34</sup>Ruth, *Early Methodist Life and Spirituality*, 191.

<sup>35</sup>Dee Andrews, *The Methodists and Revolutionary America* (Princeton,

tives generally, but exploring his experience more specifically within the Methodist variation on that tradition illuminates key aspects of Smith's narrative of the events. In the conclusion to her book on religious experience, Ann Taves explained that in "approaching the experiencing and explaining of religion historically," she sought "to make the larger point that the experience of religion cannot be separated from the communities of discourse and practice that gave rise to it *without becoming something else*."<sup>36</sup> The same point is relevant here. Even as Joseph Smith reinterpreted his earliest vision to assume larger meanings that were crucial to the development of early Mormon identity, the fundamental narrative remained constrained by the discursive community of Methodist conversion literature from which it emerged.

While Joseph Smith's initial understanding of the event recorded in the earliest accounts reads much like the descriptions that earnest evangelicals penned in their journals and that denominational periodicals published as short vignettes, the much longer and more detailed 1838 account of Smith's vision of Deity bears a keen likeness to the voluminous conversion narratives included by Methodist itinerant preachers in their published autobiographies and memoirs. These accounts, printed and circulated widely among interested readers in antebellum America, are generally straightforward and unapologetic in their prose. Their intent is clear—to celebrate the work of God in the lives of these Methodist heroes and to assert the historical importance and divine truth of the Methodist message. Furthermore, these veteran Methodist preachers sought to present through their published memoirs what they saw as an accurate and fair portrayal of Methodism to their American audience. One

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N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000), 91.

<sup>36</sup>Ann Taves, *Fits, Trances, and Visions: Experiencing Religion and Explaining Experience from Wesley to James* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999), 353; emphasis hers. Latter-day Saint historians have recently begun to call for the utilization of "communities of discourse" theory in early Mormon history. Grant Underwood, "A 'Communities of Discourse' Approach to Early LDS Thought," *Discourses in Mormon Theology: Philosophical and Theological Possibilities*, edited by James M. McLachlan and Loyd Ericson (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2007), 27, suggests that such an approach will yield "a more nuanced understanding of LDS thought."

“D.W.C.” thus introduced the autobiography of Jacob Young by rhetorically (and humorously) asking, “‘What! another autobiography of an itinerant?’” And then answered, “Yes, my friend, another autobiography. And why should there not be another, and even still another?” The reason was clear and simple in Young’s mind:

With regard to those old veterans of the cross, who, by their sacrifice, toil, and fidelity to God, laid the foundations and reared the noble fabric of Methodism. Let them enter into history. Let their heroism, their devotion, toils, and triumphs be placed upon record. No class of men have been more overlooked in American history; and yet none have higher claims to a noble and generous recognition in that history, than the pioneer Methodist preachers. It is but just now that the substantial service done by such men to their country, as well as to their God, is beginning to be understood.<sup>37</sup>

The conversion narratives embedded in these larger autobiographies (usually appearing as the primary focus of the first or second chapter) served not only to reinforce the importance and appropriate method of conversion, but also to document, as the above-cited preface put it, “the foundations [of] . . . Methodism.” Joseph Smith’s 1838 history similarly encompassed much more than merely reciting his visionary conversion. He explains that his purpose was to “put all enquirers after truth into possession of the facts as they have transpired” regarding his personal history and that of the Mormon Church.<sup>38</sup> Nearly all conversion narratives included in the autobiographies followed this pattern of narrating one’s personal conversion as a means of speaking to larger issues. Peter Cartwright, for instance, explained that his autobiography “would necessarily connect with it a history of the rise and progress of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the great valley of the Mississippi.”<sup>39</sup> Smith’s 1838 narrative follows this format. But each of Smith’s accounts also follows the Methodist precedent for conversion narratives in its particulars.

Literary historian Virginia Brereton identified five stages that

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<sup>37</sup>Jacob Young, *Autobiography of a Pioneer: or, The Nativity, Experience, Travels, and Ministerial Labors of Rev. Jacob Young, with Incidents, Observations, and Reflections* (Cincinnati, Ohio: L. Swormstedt and A. Poe for the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1857), 3.

<sup>38</sup>Smith, “History—1839,” in Jessee, *The Papers of Joseph Smith*, 1:267.

<sup>39</sup>Peter Cartwright, *Autobiography of Peter Cartwright* (Cincinnati, Ohio: Cranston and Curts, 1856), v.

nearly all autobiographers include in their conversion stories:

(1) life before the conversion process began, when narrators more or less ignored the question of salvation; (2) a period when the narrators became acutely aware of their sinfulness and of the possibility that they would be damned forever; (3) the surrender to God's will in conversion proper, during which converts felt the oppressive sense of sinfulness lifted and gained confidence or at least hope that they were saved; (4) a description of the narrator's changed behavior and attitudes, resulting from the conversion; and (5) an account of periods of discouragement and low spiritual energy followed by renewals of dedication.<sup>40</sup>

In the first stage, the writer describes his or her life before the conversion process. Most commonly, this section of the narrative includes an account of the religious affiliation of the author's parents and often noted that in spite of their membership in the Church of England, the Presbyterian, or the Congregational church (or occasionally their unchurched status), the writer had been raised by devout parents who imparted to their children a belief in God and desire to serve Him. Thomas Smith, who grew up in Kent County, Maryland, recalled that his mother instructed "my infant mind in the principles of our holy religion," and Ezekiel Cooper, also of Maryland, recalled that his parents, members of the Church of England, "were hospitable to strangers and benevolent to the indigent."<sup>41</sup> After praising his parents, the itinerant preacher then shifted his focus and lamented the spiritual shortcomings of his life before Methodism. Cooper was "sorrowful to relate [that] we were all too great strangers to any thing truly spiritual," while Charles Giles of Connecticut, whose unchurched parents "nevertheless had a high respect for the canons of morality," mourned the religious climate of his childhood. "Religion," he explained, "consisted chiefly in hollow form. . . . Holy living, deep piety, and experimental re-

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<sup>40</sup>Virginia Brereton, *From Sin to Salvation: Stories of Women's Conversions, 1800 to the Present* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 6.

<sup>41</sup>David Dailey, *Experience and Ministerial Labors of Rev. Thomas Smith, Late an Itinerant Preacher of the Gospel in the Methodist Episcopal Church. Compiled Chiefly from His Journal* (New York: Lane and Tippet for the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1848), 9; Ezekiel Cooper, *Beams of Light on Early Methodism in America, Chiefly Drawn from the Diary, Letters, Manuscripts, Documents, and Original Tracts of the Rev. Ezekiel Cooper*, compiled by George Phoebus (New York: Phillips and Hunt, 1887), 12.

ligion, were matters not critically understood.”<sup>42</sup>

Joseph Smith thus began the earliest recorded account of his conversion with this standard trope. “I was born . . . of goodly parents who spared no pains of instructing me in <the> christian religion.”<sup>43</sup> He elaborated on this theme in his later account, noting that it was not until he was in his teenage years that “my Fathers family was proselyted to the Presbyterian faith and four of them joined that church.”<sup>44</sup> But Presbyterianism did not satisfy Smith. In an 1844 account, he explained that “he wanted to get Religion too . . . but could feel nothing.”<sup>45</sup>

The second stage that Breerton identified in these narratives described the sinner’s conviction of his or her depravity, an insight usually prompted by some sort of “personal crisis”—family troubles, poverty, a recent death, or, as was most often the case, a personal concern for one’s salvation. After spending a day in dancing and merriment, Peter Cartwright “began to reflect on the manner in which I had spent the day and evening,” and, as a result, “felt guilty and condemned. . . . [A]n awful impression rested on my mind that death had come and I was unprepared to die.”<sup>46</sup> Jacob Young had “spent five or six years since the Spirit of God seemed to have left” him, and came “to the conclusion that my day of grace was gone forever.”<sup>47</sup> Joseph was thus typical in his inability “to get Religion” and “feel & shout like the Rest” whom he saw at the revival meetings. The adolescent boy lamented that he “could feel nothing.”<sup>48</sup> He further explained that “if any person needed wisdom from God, I did, for how to act I did not know and unless I could get more wisdom than I then had, would never know.”<sup>49</sup>

Typically, it was a combination of the emotional style of preaching and the direct messages preached by Methodists that triggered the conviction and attendant hope for conversion. Elijah

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., 12; Charles Giles, *Pioneer: A Narrative of the Nativity, Experience, Travels, and Ministerial Labours of Rev. Charles Giles* (New York: G. Lane and P. P. Sanford for the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1844), 15–17.

<sup>43</sup>Smith, “History—1832,” in Jessee, *The Papers of Joseph Smith*, 1:3.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., 1:270.

<sup>45</sup>Neibaur summarizing Joseph Smith, Journal, May 24, 1844.

<sup>46</sup>Cartwright, *Autobiography*, 36.

<sup>47</sup>Young, *Autobiography of a Pioneer*, 38.

<sup>48</sup>Neibaur, Journal, May 24, 1844.

<sup>49</sup>Smith, “History—1839,” in Jessee, *The Papers of Joseph Smith*, 1:271.

Woolsey of New Jersey put it bluntly: "I cannot say that I ever heard any preaching that reached my heart until I heard the Methodists." Furthermore, "I never attended the preaching of the Methodists . . . without feeling conviction, and I must say that no preaching seemed to me like theirs."<sup>50</sup> Benjamin Abbott, "a professed presbyterian" who experienced "the Spirit of God" only intermittently prior to his conversion, became convicted after he heard a particularly poignant sermon at a Methodist revival. The Methodist minister, he remembered, "preached with power; the word reached my heart in such a powerful manner that it shook every joint in my body; tears flowed in abundance, and I cried out for mercy."<sup>51</sup> Philip Gatch, one of the first Methodist preachers born in America, admitted that until he first heard Methodist preaching, "I did not know the way to be saved from my guilt and wretchedness." But God soon sent "the Gospel into our neighborhood . . . through the instrumentality of the Methodists." He recalled that the first Methodist sermon he heard "was accompanied to my understanding by the Holy Spirit. I was stripped of all my self-righteousness. It was to me as filthy rags when the Lord made known to me my condition."<sup>52</sup>

Joseph Smith's conversion process was sparked under similar circumstances. "In the place where we lived," he explained, a religious revival "commenced with the Methodists," and after hearing a sermon on (and then reading) "the Epistle of James, First Chapter and fifth verse," he recalled: "Never did any passage of scripture come with more power to the heart of man than this did at this time to mine. It seemed to enter with great force into every feeling of my heart. I reflected on it again and again. . . . At length I came to the conclusion that I must either remain in darkness and confusion or else I must do as James directs, that is, Ask of God."<sup>53</sup>

The third stage of the process is the conversion itself. While

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<sup>50</sup>Elijah Woolsey, *The Supernumerary; or, Lights and Shadows of Itinerancy, Compiled from Papers of Rev. Elijah Woolsey, by Rev. George Coles* (New York: G. Lane and C. B. Tippet for the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1845), 7, 12.

<sup>51</sup>Benjamin Abbott, *The Experience and Gospel Labours of the Rev. Benjamin Abbott: To Which Is Annexed a Narrative of His Life and Death by John Firth* (Philadelphia: Solomon W. Conrad for Ezekiel Cooper, 1801), 6, 10.

<sup>52</sup>John M'Lean, *Sketch of Rev. Philip Gatch* (Cincinnati, Ohio: Swormstedt and Poe for the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1854), 9–10.

Methodist periodicals and the writings of itinerant preachers often boasted of the large numbers of converts made at the camp meeting on the mourners' bench or sometimes in the more intimate class meetings, the personal conversions of writers more often occurred in private. After months of attending revivals and worrying about his standing before God, Benjamin Abbott finally "went to a lonely place and kneeled down to pray."<sup>54</sup> Henry Boehm escaped "into the upper loft of the mill" where he worked and "on his knees, in an agony of deep distress" asked God for forgiveness.<sup>55</sup> Joseph Smith likewise "retired" to a secluded grove behind his family's home—a "place where [he] had previously designed to go" and "looked around" to make sure he was alone.<sup>56</sup>

Often the seeker's conversion came after attempting to pray in a manner that departed from his or her ordinary personal routine. For some, praying in solitude was such a different step. On the advice of a Methodist co-worker, Alfred Brunson decided to pray in private for forgiveness. He explained his normal routine thus: "When I lay down at night and rose in the morning I would pray mentally, or *think* a prayer for mercy and forgiveness." But "on his [the Methodist friend's] suggestion, I sought for a place for retirement, and found one."<sup>57</sup> Benjamin Abbott, seeking additional strength from the Lord, prayed "for the first time . . . with a vocal voice."<sup>58</sup> In nearly the same language, Joseph Smith explained, that prior to his visionary conver-

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<sup>53</sup>Smith, "History—1839," in Jessee, *The Papers of Joseph Smith*, 1:269–71. The suggestion that Smith first heard a Methodist sermon on this biblical passage comes from his brother William, "Another Testimony: Statement of William Smith, Concerning Joseph, The Prophet," *Deseret Evening News*, January 20, 1894, 11.

<sup>54</sup>Abbott, *Experience and Gospel Labours*, 12.

<sup>55</sup>J. B. Wakeley, *The Patriarch of One Hundred Years; Being Reminiscences, Historical and Biographical, of Rev. Henry Boehm* (New York: Nelson and Phillips, 1875), 17.

<sup>56</sup>Smith, "History—1839," in Jessee, *The Papers of Joseph Smith*, 1:272.

<sup>57</sup>Alfred Brunson, *A Western Pioneer: or, Incidents of the Life and Times of Rev. Alfred Brunson, A.M., D.D., Embracing a Period of over Seventy Years, Written by Himself* (Cincinnati, Ohio: Hitchcock and Walden, 1872), 47.

<sup>58</sup>Abbott, *Experience and Gospel Labours*, 12.



sion, he “had never as yet made the attempt to pray vocally.”<sup>59</sup> The point they are stressing is that, to experience true conversion, one had to put forth concerted and extra effort.

Another distinguishing characteristic of these conversions was an encounter with the devil (alternately described as a dark force or being). Though not present in all conversion narratives, the theme is prevalent enough to warrant attention. While limited in its geographical scope, Christine Heyrman’s extensive research on evangelicals in the early American South indicates widespread fear among lay evangelicals of Satanic opposition, especially among prospective converts who were recently convicted of their sins. “Indeed, as evangelical pastors well knew,” she explained, “what sometimes accompanied the first throes of repentance was a sinner’s sheer terror of being snatched into hell by a devil trying not be cheated of triumph.”<sup>60</sup> Such trepidation was common to evangelicals in the North as well as the South, especially among the enthusiastic Methodists. Sometimes the devil would mentally torment the individual for months.

This theme is especially pronounced in Benjamin Abbott’s narrative. One day shortly after his initial conviction, while traveling home, Abbott became convinced that “the devil was behind me in the waggon with his hand just over my head, threatening to take me away both soul and body.” That same night, as he lay down to sleep, he recalled that “my mind was filled with awful apparitions. I thought I saw devils ready to take me.” Having survived each of these episodes physically unharmed, Abbott experienced one final encounter with the devil before he experienced conversion. Just as he kneeled down in solitude to pray, “the devil suggested to my mind that there was somebody hid in the woods, and they would laugh at me.” While perhaps not as physically threatening as his earlier encounter with Satan, it made enough of an impression to persuade him to move “to the other end of the field” and attempt to pray again.<sup>61</sup> Another preacher was, in the words of Dee Andrews, so distraught by “‘Lucifer’s’ alarming presence during his conversion that he suffered a nervous break-

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<sup>59</sup>Smith, “History—1839,” in Jessee, *The Papers of Joseph Smith*, 1:272.

<sup>60</sup>Christine Leigh Heyrman, *Southern Cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997), 57. Heyrman devotes her entire Chapter 1, “Raising the Devil,” 28–76, to early evangelical understandings of Satan.

<sup>61</sup>Abbott, *Experience and Gospel Labours*, 12.

down.”<sup>62</sup> In Joseph Smith’s own encounter with “the power of some actual being from the unseen world,” he was astonished at the being’s ability “to bind my tongue so that I could not speak. Thick darkness gathered around me and it seemed to me for a time as if I were doomed to sudden destruction.”<sup>63</sup> The notion that the devil had an active interest in stopping the conversions of these persons served, in the minds of the narrators, to demonstrate the importance and reality of their conversion.

In those instances where Satan attempted to tempt and torment the person, the convert was always rescued from the adversarial force by what Dee Andrews called a “felicitously timed redemption experience.”<sup>64</sup> This was the climax of the conversion experience. Often the individual experienced a vision in which God the Father, Jesus Christ, and/or angels appeared. At other times, the person was permitted a view of heaven. This pattern also appears in Smith’s narrative: “Just at this moment of great alarm I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually untill it fell upon me. It no sooner appeared than I found myself delivered from the enemy which held me bound. When the light rested upon me, I saw two personages whose brightness and glory defy all description standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me calling me by name and said pointing to the other ‘This is my beloved Son, Hear him.’”<sup>65</sup>

Mormon historians aware of evangelical visions of deity in this era have pointed to this claim made first in the 1835 account and then repeated in Smith’s 1838 history—that Smith saw not only “the Lord,” as earlier versions had suggested, but rather the Father *and* the Son—as further evidence of Smith’s attempts to distinguish his own experience from those of other visionaries. “The Protestant pattern” of conversion, they have asserted, included visions “of one personage”—usu-

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<sup>62</sup>William Glendinning, *The Life of William Glendinning, Preacher of the Gospel, Written by Himself* (Philadelphia: Printed for the author, at the office of W. W. Woodward, 1795), 19–35; as quoted in Andrews, *The Methodists and Revolutionary America*, 82.

<sup>63</sup>Smith, “History—1839,” in Jessee, *The Papers of Joseph Smith*, 1:272.

<sup>64</sup>Andrews, *The Methodists and Revolutionary America*, 87.

<sup>65</sup>Smith, “History—1839,” in Jessee, *The Papers of Joseph Smith*, 1:272.

ally Christ.<sup>66</sup> But many Methodists reported seeing not only the Father *or* the Son, but often times the Father *and* the Son.<sup>67</sup> Benjamin Abbott thus “saw, by faith, the Lord Jesus Christ” who said to him, “*I died for you.*” Abbott “then looked up, and by faith I saw the Ancient of Days, and he said to me, ‘*I freely forgive thee for what Christ has done.*’”<sup>68</sup> In similar fashion, early Methodist circuit-rider Philip Gatch recorded that “the Spirit of the Lord came down upon me, and the opening heavens shone around me. By faith I saw Jesus at the right hand of the Father. . . . The Lord said by his Spirit, ‘You are now sanctified, seek to grow in the fruit of the Spirit.’”<sup>69</sup>

The conversion proper being complete, the new convert was left in a state of almost inexpressible joy—Brereton’s fourth stage of conversion or the immediate rewards of the conversion. In the 1832 account of his vision, Joseph said his “soul was filled with love and for many days I could rejoice with great Joy and the Lord was with me.”<sup>70</sup> In the 1844 recounting of the vision, Smith described his post-vision state simply as “comforted.”<sup>71</sup> Elijah Woolsey similarly described that, following his conversion, the Lord’s “Holy Spirit brought comfort to my poor soul” and “I was enabled to believe, and all was joy and peace.”<sup>72</sup> Dan Young also noted that his “soul enjoyed sweet peace” and Henry Boehm recorded that “my heart [was] strangely warmed.”<sup>73</sup> The conversion had a transforming effect on the now-converted soul, and prospective converts could likewise expect joy and peace to accompany their conversion.

The fifth and final stage of conversion came after the conver-

<sup>66</sup>Lambert and Cracroft, “Literary Form and Historical Understanding,” 36.

<sup>67</sup>John Kent, *Wesley and Wesleyans: Religion in Eighteenth Century Britain* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 116, 123, has pointed out that, in eighteenth-century Britain “when Wesleyans had visions they were as likely to be of the Father as of the Son,” and often were of both.

<sup>68</sup>Abbott, *Experience and Gospel Labours*, 16; emphasis his.

<sup>69</sup>M’Lean, *Sketch of Rev. Philip Gatch*, 18.

<sup>70</sup>Smith, “History—1832,” in Jessee, *The Papers of Joseph Smith*, 1:7.

<sup>71</sup>Neibaur, *Journal*, May 24, 1844.

<sup>72</sup>Woolsey, *The Supernumerary*, 15.

<sup>73</sup>Dan Young, *Autobiography of Dan Young, a New England Preacher of the Olden Time* (New York: Carlton and Porter, 1860), 20; Wakeley, *The Patriarch of One Hundred Years*, 17.

sion in the form of continuing temptation and repeated renewal of faith. Such persistent temptation, the writers informed their readers, sometimes resulted in mild backsliding but never in serious sin. Peter Cartwright thus explained that, in the years following his conversion, he occasionally succumbed to temptation. “Though I have been since then, in many instances, unfaithful,” he wrote, “yet I have never, for one moment, doubted that the Lord did, then and there, forgive my sins and give me religion.”<sup>74</sup> Others were less fortunate and had to struggle against serious doubts. “It was not long before the devil came and powerfully tempted me to doubt my conversion and regeneration,” Ezekiel Cooper recollected. “However, I [again] felt the deliverance from guilt, from the fear of death and hell, a hatred to all sin, and an unspeakable joy in my soul.”<sup>75</sup> Crucial to the person’s renewal was his joining a Methodist society. “O how I needed the help arising from Christian communion!” Cooper explained, also noting that his decision to “form acquaintance with the Methodists” ended up being “a great blessing.”<sup>76</sup> Importantly, Joseph Smith’s 1838 history is the only autobiographical account of his early visions that includes this fifth and final step. Smith explained that he “was left to all kinds of temptations.” One reason was that he united with no religious group and was consequently left to “mingl[e] with all kinds of society.”

I frequently <fell> into many foolish errors, and displayed the weakness of youth, and the <foibles> of human nature; which, I am sorry to say, led me into divers temptations, offensive in the sight of God. In making this confession, no one need suppose me guilty of any great or malignant sins: a disposition to commit such was never in my nature; but I was guilty of Levity, & sometimes associated with Jovial company &c., not consistent with that character which ought to be maintained by one who was called of God as I had been.<sup>77</sup>

Smith’s subsequent renewal came one night while praying “to Almighty God for forgiveness of all my sins and follies” and hoping for reassurance of “my state and standing before him.” In response to his supplication, an angelic being appeared in his room and explain-

<sup>74</sup>Cartwright, *Autobiography*, 38.

<sup>75</sup>Cooper, *Beams of Light*, 18.

<sup>76</sup>*Ibid.*, 18–19.

<sup>77</sup>Smith, “History—1839,” in Jessee, *The Papers of Joseph Smith*, 1:275–

ed that God had an important work for him to perform.<sup>78</sup> That work was the translation of an ancient record, ultimately resulting in the publication of the Book of Mormon and the formal establishment of the Mormon Church, which finally provided Smith with the sort of society that could help him and others rebuff further temptation.

These various stages and characteristics of conversion were not necessarily unique to Methodists (though they were more common among them). Charles Grandison Finney, the noted Presbyterian preacher and revivalist, for example, experienced a visionary conversion in a secluded grove that closely parallels Joseph Smith's experience.<sup>79</sup> Nevertheless, as already noted, Methodist accounts of conversion maintained distinctive identifiers. They emphasized the importance of both form and power inherent in true religion. In contrast to other evangelicals in early America, the Methodists also drew a more direct connection between their conversion to Christ and their conversion to Methodism. In the Methodist mind, conversion and the attendant forgiveness of sins and subsequent regeneration were intimately linked to the decision to unite with the Methodist Church.<sup>80</sup> Jacob Young thus celebrated the fact that, after he and several members of his family had experienced conversion, they collectively joined the Methodists. "Father and mother, and almost the whole family, embraced religion and joined the Methodist Episcopal Church."<sup>81</sup> Immediately following his conversion, Ezekiel Cooper "resolved to form an acquaintance with the Methodists, and to join [a] society as soon as I conveniently could."<sup>82</sup>

Methodist preachers apparently instructed audiences at camp meetings and revivals that they should unite with the Methodists after conversion. The author of an anti-Methodist tract from the 1820s expressed his frustration:

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<sup>78</sup>Ibid., 1:276.

<sup>79</sup>Charles Grandison Finney, *Memoirs of Rev. Charles G. Finney, Written by Himself* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1876). Finney himself was heavily influenced by Methodists and modeled his own revival techniques after those of the Methodists.

<sup>80</sup>Dee Andrews makes this same point in *The Methodists and Revolutionary America*, 91.

<sup>81</sup>Young, *Autobiography of a Pioneer*, 49.

<sup>82</sup>Cooper, *Beams of Light*, 18.

A seventh evil of Camp Meetings is, that the Methodists *design* and *use* them as their greatest means of making proselytes of their own denomination. . . . They may design and attempt to turn men from sin, to God; but they certainly do design at Camp Meetings, to make as many proselytes as they possibly can, whether they are made Christians or not. . . .

Examine the measures they employ to induce persons of other denominations to attend. They invite, and even urge them. They would be ashamed, and detected in their design, if they asked them plainly to become Methodists; but they can ask them to go to Camp Meeting, and there make them Methodists, and not be suspected. They urge, most commonly, the young to attend. If there be any revival in the place, they circulate their invitations most industriously; and assure the thoughtful, that they “will get religion.”<sup>83</sup>

This aspect of Methodist proselytizing helps contextualize Joseph Smith’s later accounts of the “unusual excitement on the subject of religion” that “commenced with the Methodists” near his boyhood home. “Some were contending for the Methodist faith, Some for the Presbyterian, and some for the Baptist, for notwithstanding the great love which the Converts to these different faiths expressed at the time of their conversion,” Smith remembered, “it was seen that the seemingly good feelings of both the Priests and the Converts were more pretended than real. . . . [A]ll their good feelings one for another (if they ever had any) were entirely lost in a strife of words and a contest of opinions.”<sup>84</sup> While Smith “kept myself aloof from all these parties,” he still “attended their several meetings as often as occasion would permit” in an effort “to get Religion”—“to feel and shout like the rest.”<sup>85</sup>

Furthermore, such attendance highlights a previously overlooked consistency between Smith’s earlier accounts and his later accounts. While forgiveness for his sins preoccupied the earlier account, and the concern with which church was right consumes the later narrative, within the Methodist tradition, the two were not mutually exclusive questions. In fact, they were closely linked with one another. Perhaps Joseph Smith asked “which of all the sects was right” pre-

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<sup>83</sup>*Camp-Meetings Described and Exposed; and “Strange Things” Stated* (n.p., circa 1820s), 9; copy in the Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University.

<sup>84</sup>Smith, “History—1839,” in Jessee, *The Papers of Joseph Smith*, 1:270.

<sup>85</sup>*Ibid.*; Neibaur, *Journal*, May 24, 1844.

cisely because he felt that forgiveness of his personal sins was intimately tied to his joining a certain church. This is even more pronounced in the 1844 account recorded in Alexander Neibaur's journal. Smith told Neibaur that his petition was not "which of all these sects was right," but more specifically, "must I join the Methodist Church[?]"<sup>86</sup> The answer he claimed to receive—"No, they are not my People, [they] have gone astray" was probably not what Smith expected to hear. In one sense, the promise of Methodist ministers—that God would personally answer the teenage boy's prayer, perhaps through miraculous means—proved to be right. Smith experienced the visionary conversion so many other Methodists had reportedly undergone, and there was nothing particularly unorthodox about what he reported. The difference, of course, is in the answer to Smith's prayer. Compare the answer Smith received in answer to his prayer with that of Benjamin Abbott: "At the time of my conviction I used to consider what church or society I should join, whether the baptists, presbyterians, or methodists; but at this time the Lord said unto me, 'You must join the methodists, for they are my people, and they are right.'"<sup>87</sup>

Furthermore, in contrast to the conversion narratives of Freeborn Garrettson and others who celebrated the fact that Methodism possessed not only the form but also (and more importantly) the power of religion, Joseph Smith reported God's condemnation of other sects, including Methodists: "The Personage who addressed me said that all their Creeds were an abomination in his sight, that those professors were all corrupt, that 'they draw near to me with their lips but their hearts are far from me; They teach for doctrines the commandments of men, *having a form of Godliness but they deny the power thereof.*'"<sup>88</sup> Smith thus drew upon the same biblical imagery that John and Charles Wesley had used to define their movement; that Francis Asbury and his cadre of itinerant elders had carried over into American Methodism; and that multitudes of Methodists had used in expressing the contrast between their former religious lives and what their new religion offered. But Smith used the passage from 2 Timothy to denounce, not celebrate, Methodism. The Methodists, he re-

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<sup>86</sup>Neibaur, Journal, May 24, 1844.

<sup>87</sup>Abbott, *Experience and Gospel Labours*, 17.

<sup>88</sup>Smith, "History—1839," in Jessee, *The Papers of Joseph Smith*, 1:273; emphasis mine.



ported, no longer had the power of godliness, and only a dead form remained.

This understanding explains as well as anything the severe reproof Smith received from the Methodist minister to whom he related his vision: “He treated my communication not only lightly but with great contempt, saying it was all of the Devil.”<sup>89</sup> Benjamin Abbott received the same response from the Presbyterian minister to whom he reported his vision. After relating “my conviction and my conversion,” Abbott wrote, “he paid a strict attention, . . . and then told me that I was under strong delusions of the devil.”<sup>90</sup> Such a response did not surprise Abbott, who was sure that there was not “one converted christian among” the Presbyterians he knew, but it did leave Smith “greatly surprised,” probably because of the many other Methodists of the era who related visions and dreams accompanying their conversion experiences. It is also interesting to note that the specific Methodist minister identified as the one in whom Smith confided—George Lane—would later work as a publisher for the Methodist Episcopal Church, where he published a number of the autobiographies discussed here.<sup>91</sup> Of course, as historians have pointed out, about the time that Joseph Smith was participating in revivals, Methodism underwent a significant shift in its attitudes towards enthusiastic religion and acceptance of dreams and visions. In fact, historian Jon Butler pinpointed 1820—the very year Smith reported having his first vision—as a turning point. “Methodists’ distinctive and popular

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<sup>89</sup>Ibid.

<sup>90</sup>Abbott, *Experience and Gospel Labours*, 19–20.

<sup>91</sup>Joseph Smith never mentioned Lane by name as the Methodist minister who censured him for telling his vision, but his associate Oliver Cowdery did, and the claim was later repeated by Smith’s brother William. Oliver Cowdery, “Letter III,” *Messenger and Advocate* 1, no. 3 (October 1834): 42; and William Smith, *William Smith on Mormonism* (Lamoni, Ia.: Herald Steam Book and Job Office, 1883), 6. See also Larry C. Porter, “Reverend George Lane—Good ‘Gifts,’ Much ‘Grace,’ and Marked ‘Usefulness,’” *BYU Studies* 9 (Spring 1969): 321–40. Michael Quinn, “Joseph Smith’s Experience at a Methodist ‘Camp-Meeting,’” 51–54, provides persuasive evidence that Lane was not the minister with whom Smith shared his early visions.

syncretism faded after 1820,” he explained.<sup>92</sup> Picking up on this point, historian Stephen Fleming recently noted that “the rejection of Smith’s vision by the Methodist preacher . . . suggests that those looking for the kind of supernaturalism Smith sought, and which had been accepted on the edges of Methodism decades earlier, would now have to look elsewhere.”<sup>93</sup>

This point is further demonstrated in the language Smith used which contrasts with that found in other Methodist conversion narratives written around the same time. Methodists of the day carefully qualified the nature of their visionary experiences with phrases like “by faith, I saw . . .” or by affirming that it was just a dream. Benjamin Abbott and Philip Gatch thus each qualified their visions by noting that it was “by faith” that they saw Jesus Christ (and in Gatch’s case, God the Father). Dan Young likewise saw and conversed with Christ but was careful to explain that it was not a literal vision but rather “a very singular dream” while he slept.<sup>94</sup> Most commonly, individuals described their visions in ambiguous terms. Henry Boehm, for example, described that he “had a view of the atonement of the Son of God,” and “by faith, I realized my interest in it,” while Ezekiel Cooper expressed his conversion in equally vague terms: “I had an opening to my mind of the infinite fullness of Christ, and of the willingness of the Father, through his Son, to receive me into his favor.”<sup>95</sup>

Joseph Smith, by contrast, affirmed unambiguously that “it was nevertheless a fact, that I had had a vision. . . . I had actually seen a light and in the midst of that light I saw two personages, and they did in reality speak to me. . . . I knew it, and I knew that God knew it, and I could not deny it.”<sup>96</sup> It was thus not necessarily a matter of what Joseph Smith experienced, but rather how he explained it. The straightforward and sure language he used to describe his vision filtered its

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<sup>92</sup>Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990), 241.

<sup>93</sup>Stephen Fleming, “The Religious Heritage of the British Northwest and the Rise of Mormonism,” *Church History* 77 (March 2008): 81–82.

<sup>94</sup>Young, *Autobiography of Dan Young*, 28–29.

<sup>95</sup>Wakeley, *The Patriarch of One Hundred Years*, 17; Cooper, *Beams of Light*, 18.

<sup>96</sup>Smith, “History—1839,” in Jessee, *The Papers of Joseph Smith*, 1:274. Compare Smith’s language with that of Dan Young, *Autobiography of Dan Young*, 28–29, who affirmed that his vision of Christ was “a very singular

meaning, making it more threatening to the Methodist minister in whom he confided.

When examined within the context of Methodist conversion narratives and concerns over the form and power of religion, Joseph Smith's first vision takes on more particular meanings. The Methodist context highlights a consistency between his several unique accounts, emphasizing the connection between conversion to Christ and conversion to a specific church evident in Smith's narratives. Furthermore, it helps make sense of the negative reaction Smith reported receiving from the local Methodist minister. By tapping into a community of discourse that bemoaned formal religion that lacked power, Smith directly challenged Methodist claims to possess the form and power of godliness. Such a message resonated with those Smith attracted to the Mormon religion, many of whom criticized the Methodists as having rejected their heritage as a people who embraced visions, dreams, and miraculous religion.<sup>97</sup>

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dream," but nothing more. Susan Juster, *Doomsayers: Anglo-American Prophecy in the Age of Revolution* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 115–16, notes that "Evangelicals were very careful in the language they used to describe their visionary experiences, always conscious of the porous line separating faith from superstition. They used words like 'seemingly' and 'by faith' to signal their awareness of the enormous channels of truth and knowledge. . . . In general, visions should be *seen*—not felt or heard in any physical way—and seen by the 'eye of faith' alone."

<sup>97</sup>Christopher C. Jones, "'We Latter-day Saints Are Methodists': The Influence of Methodism on Early Mormon Religiosity" (M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 2009), 13–39; and Stephen J. Fleming, "'Congenial to Almost Every Shade of Radicalism': The Delaware Valley and the Success of Early Mormonism," *Religion and American Culture* 17 (Summer 2007): 140, 142.

# THE CONVERT BRIDE AND THE DOMESTIC GODDESS: REFASHIONING FEMALE SPIRITUALITY IN MORMON HISTORICAL FILMS

*Heather Bigley*

THIS ARTICLE EXPLORES THE CREATION of a filmic historiography of the nineteenth-century origins of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as seen through recent historical epics from independent Mormon filmmakers. Mormon cinema confirms conventional wisdom about religion and globalization: that religious communities revert toward a fundamentalist stance when faced with the destabilizing forces of transnational economic, cultural, and ideological flows under globalization.

Fundamentalism manifests itself in Mormon cinema through portraying religious women as domestic goddesses in the religious community, happily inhabiting house and home, circumscribed by the larger male religious economy. These historiographies, intent on

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educating a burgeoning worldwide membership about the Church's restoration, reflect American Mormon anxieties about a nascent global identity and gendered spiritual growth by the repeated use of visual and thematic tropes of female domesticity that reflect twentieth-century American norms. Ultimately these cinematic histories rewrite female contributions to the early Church, erasing the prominence of nineteenth-century women leaders and exchanging them for the familiarity of twentieth-century gender roles. At the same time, Mormonism has benefited greatly from global transnational flows, using globalization for incredible world-wide expansion. This article connects the development of a global Church both to the development of an independent Mormon cinema and to the representation of women and men in historical narratives.

Mormon engagement with cinema has existed since the beginning of the film industry in the United States. Randy Astle's recent scholarship on Mormon film history reveals that the Church and its practices were the subject of exploitation films in the silent era, most notably *A Victim of the Mormons* (August Blom, 1911, 60 min., Denmark), *A Mormon Maid* (Robert Z. Leonard, 1917, 65 min., U.S.), and *Trapped by the Mormons* (H. B. Parkinson, 1922, 97 min., U.K.).<sup>1</sup> All these films focus on young women (Danish, American, or British) threatened with forced polygamous marriages by roving American Mormon missionaries. In response to those films and other public image opportunities, the Church has produced propaganda and public relations films at different times, like *One Hundred Years of Mormonism* (Norval MacGregor, 1913, 90 min., U.S.) and *All Faces West* (George Edward Lewis, 1929, length unknown, U.S.).<sup>2</sup>

More recently the Church has produced three feature films for tourist consumption at Salt Lake City's Temple Square theaters: *Legacy* (Kieth Merrill, 1990), *Two Testaments: Of One Fold and One Shepherd* (Kieth Merrill, 2000), and *Joseph Smith: Prophet of the Restoration* (T. C. Christensen and Gary Cook, 2005). The Church has also created a large number of institutional films for membership use, which formed the foundation of the Church's video catalog, which became available on VHS and DVD in the 1980s and 1990s. These films serve a number of didactic functions, including use in Church lessons and

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<sup>1</sup>Randy Astle, "A History of Mormon Cinema," *BYU Studies* 46, no. 2 (2007): 24.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*

family instruction. Furthermore, a significant number of Church members, active and inactive, have worked in the Los Angeles film industry. Animator Don Bluth (*Titan A. E.*, *Anastasia*, *All Dogs Go to Heaven*), producer Gerald Molan (*Minority Report*, *Twister*, *Schindler's List*), and director Neil LaBute (*Lakeview Terrace*, *Nurse Betty*, *In the Company of Men*) are among the best known.

Since 2000, an independent Mormon feature film industry has gained a niche market in the Intermountain West of the United States and in North American cities with high concentrations of Mormons, producing narrative films for Mormons about Mormon spirituality and culture. These filmmakers differentiate their films from Church institutional films by aiming for more realism in characterization, plot development, and *mise-en-scène*, yet maintain accepted LDS standards regarding the portrayal of sexuality, violence, and spirituality.<sup>3</sup> Filmmakers also use their Mormon features as entrée to mainstream markets by co-opting Hollywood genres, appearing on festival circuits, four-walling theatrical exhibition practices, utilizing family entertainment distributors for home markets, and casting industry actors. Thus, Mormon filmmakers are out to capture a market share in the established mainstream film industry by producing assimilationist texts that work to legitimize the filmmakers and their audiences for Hollywood and the rest of America.

Mormon filmmakers make what Hamid Naficy calls an “accented cinema,” because Mormon films in general and Mormon historical films in particular explore the tensions surrounding affiliation with a disenfranchised religious community in a secular nation-state, creating an American Mormon identity that embraces both American exceptionalism and Mormon dogma; indeed, the former is essential to the latter. Naficy’s work highlights qualities of postcolonial alternative cinemas. Careful to remind us that these cinemas are too diverse to categorize as a genre, he divides postcolonial cinema into three groups: Exile, Diaspora, and Ethnic/Identity films. All three focus on the relationship of the main character/filmmaker to the homeland and to the refuge country. Naficy calls them “accented” and then extends that name past postcolonial cinema: “All alternative cinemas are accented, but each is accented in certain specific ways

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<sup>3</sup>Travis T. Anderson discusses the paradoxes of community viewing standards in Mormon culture in his “Seeking after the Good in Art, Drama, Film, and Literature,” *BYU Studies* 46, no. 2 (2007): 231–46.

that distinguish it.”<sup>4</sup> I add religious cinemas that are marginalized within their host nations, such as the Mormons in America, and for this reason produce stories of migrants and exiles. The films I explore here present characters with ties to multiple communities, cultures, and cognitive systems, often delineated as the national versus the religious, who move between these communities, even as they are traumatized by dislocation.

Mormon films traverse Mormon religious spaces of revelation like the Sacred Grove, the Susquehanna River, or temples and tabernacles against a backdrop of American iconic landscapes (the Rocky Mountains, the deserts of the American West, New England forests, and megacities like Los Angeles and New York), creating a migrant, mobile Mormon who dominates both religious and secular topographies.

### HISTORICAL EPICS

Mormon independent historical films dialogue with, answer, and revise the 1990 institutional film *Legacy*, produced by the Church for exhibition at Temple Square for tourists, shown six days a week for almost a decade. The film follows a group of Mormons from baptism in the 1830s to their emigration to Utah in the 1840s. Many members regarded the film as an event, part of a day of sightseeing while visiting Salt Lake City. Coincident with the screenings of *Legacy* was the publication from 1990 to 1998 of Gerald Lund’s nine-novel historical fiction series *THE WORK AND THE GLORY*, which inspired “tremendous output from LDS publishers of historical fiction series.”<sup>5</sup> The series covers the historical period from Joseph Smith’s First Vision to the Mormon migration to what would become Utah—about 1820 to 1860. *Legacy* and *THE WORK AND THE GLORY* series proved that a Mormon audience existed for historical fiction centered on the early years of the Church.

I tie globalization’s impact on the Church to this nascent Mormon market. As American members begin to think of themselves as part of a world-wide organization, efforts at self-definition abound.

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<sup>4</sup>Hamid Naficy, *An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001), 23.

<sup>5</sup>“*THE WORK AND THE GLORY*,” Mormon Literature and Creative Arts Database (Provo, Utah: BYU, 2003), [http://mormonlit.lib.byu.edu/lit\\_work.php?w\\_id=1104](http://mormonlit.lib.byu.edu/lit_work.php?w_id=1104) (accessed November 26, 2010).



*Legacy's* production began in 1988, ten years after the Church had lifted restrictions on priesthood ordination for worthy male members of African descent. Between 1978 and 1991, when *Legacy* debuted at Temple Square, Church membership had doubled and expanded from congregations in 54 nations to congregations in 130 nations, reflecting new membership on the African continent, Latin America, and in post-Wall Eastern Europe.<sup>6</sup> What had once been an American church peopled by white descendants of Mormon pioneers was now a church with a diverse population from all over the globe.

The entire Mormon cinema movement, emerging as Church membership numbers continued to mushroom, could be construed as an ontological exercise. Mormon documentarians, often women and people of color, explore this nascent diversity. Melissa Puente's *Brides on the Homefront* (2000, 43 min.), winner of a 2001 regional Emmy, depicts how World War II affected three women's marital aspirations. Her later *Sisterz in Zion* (KBYU, 2006, 58 min.) follows several teenage Mormon converts from Harlem who attend a private religious summer camp at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah. Erin Fox's trilogy of short documentaries, *Heather the Mailman* (1999, 3 min.), *Pat Asplund: A Merry Widow* (2002, 4 min.), and *Portrait of Enkhzul* (2008, 4 min.) focuses on Mormon women at different stages of life. The third film documents the efforts of a Mongolian returned sister missionary searching for a job in Ulaanbaatar. Tasha Oldham's *The Smith Family* (Smalltown Productions, 2002, 79 min.) explores the daily life of a Salt Lake Mormon couple dealing with the gay husband's infidelities, compounded by the realization that both are HIV positive. Darius Gray and Margaret Young's *Nobody Knows: The Untold Story of Black Mormons* (Independent Features Projects, 2006, 73 min.) examines the experiences of black members in the Church, focusing on the last half of the twentieth century when black men were granted access to priesthood ordination. Manju Varghese's Salt Lake City-based documentary production company, Mirror Lake Films, currently holds a contract with the Church to produce a reality series about seven missionaries in the field.

Independent Mormon feature films, on the other hand, have become the domain of male directors. Judging from the feature films produced, to be Mormon is to be white, male, and firmly situated in

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<sup>6</sup>Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Mormonism*, edited by Reid L. Neilson (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 129.

the middle class. I focus on historical films in this study because they win wider distribution and are better known by average Church-goers than the documentary films. The historical films examined here attribute the growth of the Church to domestic women and martyred men, reflecting the retrenchment ideologies that have pervaded Church leadership decisions over the past sixty years. Even though Church members celebrate international growth and expansion, American Mormon popular cultural production conflates spiritual power with white, middle-class masculinity.

At the same time, the historical films are films of exile and migration, portraying the Mormons' move from New York to Ohio to Missouri to Illinois to Utah.<sup>7</sup> These films offer communal self-definition through an examination of the separation trauma of the Church's beginnings, thrust from the heart of the American nation into a political and physical wilderness to forge Mormon identity. Plots turn on leaving in hope to gather with the Saints in a new Zion, being driven by persecution to yet another place, making do in refugee camps, building another city in another new gathering place, etc. The visuals are made up primarily of travel on horseback or by foot, canal, or wagon, and then once arrived, of cutting timber, framing houses, traversing muddy streets, establishing economic networks, and organizing community government. These scenes give way to sequences in which mobs, militia, or traitors in the community destroy all the hard work, forcing Church members to flee yet again. These departures and arrivals create emotional tensions as loyalty to the Church amid such demanding circumstances separates family members, lovers, and friends, both physically and psychologically.

The films establish that the male Mormon is the central martyr, but the films also complicate Mormons' relationship to America. The narratives repeatedly portray Mormons as constantly thrust out of American society, even while the Mormons claim that they are thoroughly American, demanding their constitutional rights of freedom of religion, suffrage, property ownership, and due process.

These same films that focus on male martyrdom also create Mormon historiography about the contribution of women to Church beginnings, borrowing from contemporary expectations in Mormon culture that focus primarily on male prominence, power, and responsibilities in the family and the institutional life of the Church. These

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<sup>7</sup>Naficy, *An Accented Cinema*, 225.

historiographies contrast with other understandings of female power that have existed in Church history, such as the separate-spheres autonomy that the Relief Society enjoyed in the post-Nauvoo period and through about World War II.

#### FEMALE DOMESTICITY AND *THE MARY WHITMER STORY*

Women's contributions to the nineteenth-century Church were vast. During the Nauvoo and Utah periods, women occupied institutional positions of authority and prominence that used their labor, skills, and talents to establish and secure the Church. These positions were based on essentialized notions of ideal motherhood and wifery, yet women used these positions to create female support networks, which in turn helped educate, promote, and advance women's accomplishment in both domestic and institutional spheres. The recent historical films, by focusing primarily on events that occurred between 1829 and 1847, place women firmly in the domestic sphere and valorize their private contributions to home and family.

*Fourth Witness: The Mary Whitmer Story* (Spencer Filichia, 1997, 20 min.) is an excellent example of women making their contribution to Mormonism by acting in their domestic roles. The film covers the period in 1829, during which Joseph (played by Joel Bishop) lived in Peter and Mary Whitmer's home while he completed his translation of the Book of Mormon. At the end of the film, Mary (played by Barta Heiner) receives an angelic visitation as a reward or blessing for her increased labors.

The opening scene features Mary awake too early one morning. She lies in bed next to the serenely snoring Peter, planning for her visitors. "I want everything to run smoothly for Joseph to translate," she says mostly to herself, but almost as a prayer. Her contribution to the translation work consists of female domestic labor highlighted through the film's visual focus on female work: washing dishes, beating laundry, kneading bread, and serving dinner with the help of various young women while, in the background, men lounge about, eating and chatting. This attention to female labor visually inverts the compositional hierarchies we might expect; instead of men at work with women busy in the background, it is the men who become set dressing for the women's all-encompassing labor. The film's composition highlights not only Mary's importance in the narrative, but also her guests' thoughtless impositions. No one offers to help Mary; instead her guests laugh and tell stories, oblivious not only to Mary's

work, but also to Mary herself. Although these separate spheres of gendered labor are consistent with nineteenth-century norms, the neglect of Mary's male relatives and the guests contrasts strikingly with Mary's deep concern for the Prophet as she expresses it in the opening scene.

Two friends visit Mary, her former pastor (David Jensen), and a choir member from her former church (Elizabeth Hansen). Each expresses concern about her heavy workload as well as her emotional isolation. The film portrays Mary as a lonely character who strains to meet all of the obligations her houseguests create, trudging gallantly under the burden of water buckets, laundry baskets, or platters of food. The musical soundtrack consists of hymns rescored in minor keys, and the film confines its visual palette to grays and blues, while scene transitions use the image of water, rain, and dew to move from plot point to plot point. The effect can be interpreted as externalizing Mary's disappointment in the Prophet's obliviousness of her needs and lack of appreciation for her efforts to care for him.

The film also visually separates Mary from the men's translation work, although it suggests that she is wistful and curious about it. In one scene, Mary hangs linens to dry in the backyard. We follow her eye-line to the window of the guest room where Joseph sits down at a table to begin his morning's translations. He draws the curtain across the window, obscuring the translation setting. The camera then cuts to Mary who draws a sheet across the line, hiding her face. This veiling establishes the boundary between Mary's work and the men's work. Mary makes no further attempts to cross it, even when her former pastor and choir-member friend encourage her to ask to see "these golden plates." Mary responds to the second suggestion with tear-filled eyes and a simple, "I don't think God will allow it."

Ultimately, Mary receives her reward for her domestic work.<sup>8</sup> At the end of the film, a stranger, understood from an earlier plot set-up to be an angel, stops Mary in her yard and shows her the golden plates, unseen by the film audience. The film presents the visitation in the

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<sup>8</sup>Randy Astle, email to Heather Bigley, May 2010, reported that the film evolved as an experiment at BYU, as the filmmakers tested Paul Schrader's theory of "revelation of the imminent" by "depicting many scenes of banality followed by . . . transcendence." The filmmakers chose a female protagonist at the Church's beginnings because of the oppressive conditions in which nineteenth-century women found themselves.



*Mary Whitmer separates herself from the male work of translation. Fourth Witness: The Mary Whitmer Story. Spencer Filichia, 1997.*

same restrained style used throughout the film. The angel, costumed in contemporary dress, calls Mary's name. She glances behind her; and after a cut to a medium shot of the man, the rest of the scene captures Mary in either over-the-shoulder medium shots or medium close-ups. The film cuts to a medium-close-up as Mary cries out in surprise and ultimately gladness. The film rests here for a moment. The medium close-up separates Mary from her work and her sorrow by visually isolating her in the frame against the sky as backdrop. The film then cuts to a long shot of Mary and the angel as she handles the plates. This long shot creates two effects: First, it allows Mary some privacy as the camera distances the audience from her; second, it re-establishes Mary's connection to the rest of her life, her work. She stands at the yard gate, buckets at her feet, momentarily pausing between household chores. The vision confirms her testimony of the work she performs. Then she picks up her water buckets and continues into the barnyard.

The film ends on this note. Mary's reward for her selfless completion of female domestic labor, which supports and makes possible male religiosity, includes such a dramatic event as an angelic visitation. Her visitation does not relieve her from continued labor. Further, the film argues that the male religious economy exists only because women furnish, clean, and prepare the spaces in which reli-



*An angel shows Mary Whitmer the golden plates, as she pauses in her work. Fourth Witness: The Mary Whitmer Story. Spencer Filichia, 1997.*

gious transactions, conversions, meetings, and testimonials occur.

The film differs from the others under investigation here because of its subtle critique of the gender roles in force at the time. Mary works harder than anyone else to provide for the religious work, yet her labor is invisible to and unappreciated by those around her. She performs the duties expected of her, and so the characters within the film, notably her husband and guests, see no reason to take notice of her work. Yet the film carefully points out that Mary's work is constant, arduous, and confining. She does not have time to talk with the Prophet or share her thoughts about his message or his translations. She does not have time to visit with her friends or worship in ways familiar to her like her participation in choir.

In contrast, *The Work and the Glory* trilogy (Manchester Pictures, 2004) and *Emma Smith: My Story* (Gary Cook and T. C. Christensen, Morning Dew Entertainment, 2008) naturalize female domestic labor and celebrate that labor as the sole contribution women made to the Church. The subtext is that women's fidelity to traditional family roles leads to their spiritual growth, which in turn strengthens the Church. The distinction is an important one. In *The Mary Whitmer Story*, the film critiques the invisibility of women's labor and asks viewers to interrogate both how men regard female domestic labor and also how cultural expectations confine women to that labor. In

the other films, female labor becomes the activity that the women *should* be doing. Their skill in performing it—and they are uniformly shown as competent—helps them contribute to the male work of institutional religiosity. For example, in *Emma Smith: My Story* Emma's brief tenure as Joseph's scribe ends when Oliver Cowdery, a new, male scribe, arrives. The scene opens with Emma hauling water in the cold dawn. We glimpse her from inside the house, looking through a window pane. The film then dissolves to Oliver sitting down at what was previously her seat at the table; her image, burdened with two water buckets, fades slowly from the screen. The film's message is that she maintains the household so that the more significant spiritual work could continue. More importantly, such labor is exactly what she should be doing.

On one level, this attention to female work is crucial in understanding the heavy responsibilities that nineteenth-century women shouldered in establishing and maintaining homes, families, and the spread of "civilization" across the western frontier in America. The detailed reenactment of this work valorizes female labor in important ways. *Fourth Witness: The Mary Whitmer Story* delicately and sensitively draws our attention to the invisibility and hardship of female domestic labor. Yet female labor in the nineteenth-century Church was not exclusively domestic. Historical films, by focusing primarily on the Church's first fourteen years—before Joseph Smith's assassination—fail to capitalize on women's accomplishments in later Mormon history.

### RETRENCHMENT AND ITS INFLUENCE

Latter-day Saint filmmakers' representations of women in the pre-Utah period are influenced by twentieth-century attitudes discussed below, resulting in the historical films already mentioned that, despite their other strengths, have restricted women's contributions to the private familial sphere. These films further reduce the limited, gendered power that women employed during the founding of the Church. This section examines how historical films use *mise-en-scène*, plot points, and historical revisionism to depict a limited female engagement with early Church growth. Specifically, these films tie female spirituality to female sexuality within marriage through plot development and *mise-en-scène*. The films limit female contribution to Church growth to domestic work in the home and emotional work in the family and use that domesticity to invoke the prosperity and stability of the Church.



Twentieth-century Mormons had to deal with what sociologist Armand Mauss calls the “predicament of respectability,”<sup>9</sup> a predicament that resulted from its success in living down the disrepute of nineteenth-century polygamy through assimilating to American cultural norms. By the mid-twentieth century, many felt assimilation had gone too far. Mauss charts a number of differentiating strategies, including a “renewed assertion of continuous revelation through modern prophets; renewed emphasis on temples, temple work, and genealogical research; expansion of standardization of missionary enterprise; family renewal and retrenchment; [and] expansion of formal religious education in the service of parochial indoctrination.”<sup>10</sup> Thus, “family renewal and retrenchment” deemphasized women’s institutional roles and instead put greater emphasis on women’s responsibilities within a patriarchal nuclear family. The Church leadership explained this paradigm shift to the membership as fundamental in keeping the family unit strong during tumultuous social changes.<sup>11</sup>

This deemphasis accompanied increased emphasis on priesthood (male) authority and the correlation movement,<sup>12</sup> which began in the 1960s to, among other goals, centralize and standardize Church curricula and programs. Such standardization was seen as necessary if the Church were to run efficiently in areas with few members isolated

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<sup>9</sup>Armand Mauss, “Identity and Boundary Maintenance: International Prospects for Mormonism at the Dawn of the Twenty-first Century” in *Mormon Identities in Transition*, edited by Douglas Davies (London: Cassell, 1996), 9.

<sup>10</sup>Armand Mauss, *The Angel and the Beehive: The Mormon Struggle with Assimilation* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 85.

<sup>11</sup>Theodore A. Tuttle, “A New Emphasis on Priesthood,” in *Speeches of the Year* (Provo, Utah: BYU Press, 1973), <http://speeches.byu.edu/reader/reader.php?id=6109&x=43&y=5>. See also the most recent admonition of this type from Boyd K. Packer, “The Power of the Priesthood,” *Ensign*, May 2010, <http://new.lds.org/ensign/2010/05/the-power-of-the-priesthood?lang=eng>.

<sup>12</sup>Marie Cornwall, “The Institutional Role of Mormon Women,” in *Contemporary Mormons: Social Security Perspectives*, edited by Marie Cornwall, Tim Heaton, and Lawrence Young (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 257.

from Church headquarters.<sup>13</sup> Correlation used the priesthood (male) line of authority to accomplish centralization. Instead of Church-wide organizations communicating with their local chapters, all organizations are currently expected to transmit their communications through priesthood channels. This streamlining leads to greater conformity among organizations that operate under male oversight. In addition, women's institutional responsibilities in welfare, education, and healing were handed over to the priesthood quorums, resulting in increased male institutional value and decreased female institutional value.<sup>14</sup> Women also lost the authority to perform healing blessings, a privilege that had been extended to them by various Church leaders until the 1940s.<sup>15</sup>

Historical films since the mid-1990s quite naturally reflect these late twentieth-century values and assume that the current priesthood responsibilities and institutional values have always been in place. Whether purposely or not, this assumption confirms these policies' authenticity by tying them to the Church's beginnings. As Roger Bromley argues about British heritage films in Thatcher, England, "[The past] is constantly being reconstructed as a means of lining up present economic and social imperatives with certain dominant ideological preoccupations."<sup>16</sup> Dominant ideological preoccupations for the Church center on identity formation and maintenance in the face of changing tensions between the Church and its host nation, the United States, as well as between the American-situated Church and its increasingly postcolonial, globalized membership. In the next section, I analyze three films set in Mormonism's first generation: THE WORK AND THE GLORY trilogy (the films are, respectively, *The Work and the Glory*, *American Zion*, and additional analysis of *Emma Smith: My Story*.) Their underlying assumption is that they accurately reflect timeless gendered expectations (which should therefore continue),

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<sup>13</sup>Mauss, *The Angel and the Beehive*, 82.

<sup>14</sup>Cornwall, "The Institutional Role of Mormon Women," 257.

<sup>15</sup>Bettina Lindsey, "Women as Healers in the Modern Church," in *Women and Authority: Re-emerging Mormon Feminism*, edited by Maxine Hanks (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992), 439. See also Jonathan A. Stapley and Kristine Wright, "Female Ritual Healing in Mormonism," *Journal of Mormon History* 39, no. 1 (Winter 2011): 1–85.

<sup>16</sup>Roger Bromley, *Lost Narratives: Popular Fictions, Politics, and Recent History* (London: Routledge, 1998), 16.

embodied in and articulated by the romantic figure of the convert bride.

### CONVERT BRIDES IN *THE WORK AND THE GLORY*

*The Work and the Glory* (Russell Holt, Manchester Pictures, 2004) is the first in a trilogy of films adapted from Gerald Lund's nine-novel historical fiction series about the beginnings of the nineteenth-century Church. This film opens with the Steed family relocating to Palmyra, New York, where they have purchased a farm. Ben (Sam Jennings) and Mary Ann (Brenda Strong) have five children, among them two grown sons, Joshua (Eric Johnson) and Nathan (Alexander Carroll). Joshua, stubborn and passionate, begins a romance with the town grocer's sophisticated, educated daughter, Lydia (Tiffany DuPont). Nathan, younger and more cautious, makes friends with the Steeds' day laborers, Hyrum Smith (Ryan Wood) and his younger brother, Joseph (Jonathan Scarfe). Soon the family is divided over Joseph's claim to have seen visions. Nathan and Joshua become even more distanced when Nathan begins to court Lydia in Joshua's absence. Lydia eventually joins the Church and marries Nathan.

While the most obvious example of the convert bride plays out in *The Work and the Glory*, two other historical films, *Emma Smith: My Story* (Gary Cook and T. C. Christensen, 2008) and *Eliza and I* (Richard Dutcher, 1997) also employ this theme. Contemporary romances like Jack Weyland's *Charly* (Adam Thomas Anderegg, 2002), *Pride and Prejudice* (Andrew Black, 2003), and *The Singles' 2nd Ward* (Kurt Hale, 2007), and other historical films of different Church eras, like *The Other Side of Heaven* (Mitch Davis, 2001), based on contemporary Apostle John H. Groberg's missionary experience, also mobilize the convert bride for narrative and thematic depth. The convert bride collapses female spirituality with sexuality by combining a young woman's quest for romantic love and companionate marriage with her religious conversion to Mormon doctrine and rituals.

In this way, the convert bride makes use of conventional Hollywood romance narratives, where young women resolve life challenges through choosing the appropriate marriage partner. The young woman in Mormon romances is smart, capable, and headstrong. She finds her romantic interest captured by a young man affiliated with the Church, and their continued relationship depends on her acceptance of the religion. Once she converts to the Church, they can develop spir-

itually side by side in marriage. This spiritual-romantic union constitutes a cultural and doctrinal Mormon ideal: a man and woman progressing through marriage as each accepts and fulfills his or her gender-specific responsibilities. These films invariably imagine those responsibilities as domestic and familial for women<sup>17</sup> and present a woman's personal relationship with God as coupled to her position as a wife. Such conflation and binaries obscure women's individual spiritual growth and confine female responsibilities, interests, and achievement within the narrow parameters of the private.

The convert bride is a central component of a larger religious economy between men. Men in these films share spiritual experiences, challenge religious authority, critique secular and pious attitudes, and mediate acceptable doctrines, forming the plot of the narrative. The male characters occupy various positions on a spectrum of religious belief and engagement. In *The Work and the Glory*, Joseph is the religious visionary, Joshua the logical secularist, Ben the independent believer, Nathan the searching neophyte, the Murdocks (townie friends of Joshua) the sensualist materialists, Lydia's father the man of orthodox religiosity. As these men interact over the spiritual events/plot points of the film, the women's lives and opportunities are impacted by male prerogative. The women are granted or denied access to a spiritual life through their men; they are often literally extended spiritual knowledge (in the form of a book or invitation to participate) from men. The women must function within the men's economy, never truly free to make their own decisions.

This economy opens up possibilities for a patriarchal critique within the film, most obviously commenting that, due to the patriarchal nature of Republican America, the women cannot freely make their own religious decisions. THE WORK AND THE GLORY trilogy explicitly argues that mobs, state legislatures, governors, newspapers, and even the president of the United States work to disfranchise the Mormon community, not only politically, but economically, militarily, and religiously. Given this political critique, the films establish the foundation for a parallel critique about female disfranchisement

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<sup>17</sup>Films like *The RM* (Kurt Hale, 2003), *The Singles Ward* (Kurt Hale, 2002), *Picadilly Cowboy/Anxiously Engaged* (Tyler Ford, 2007), and *Baptists at Our Barbecue* (Christian Vuissa, 2004) propose that men must gain religious faith to win their female mates; the men's strengthened spirituality results in institutional responsibility and prominence.

in the nineteenth century. Unfortunately, the feminist critique fails, or the film shuts down the critique, primarily by showing that the women's male-enabled religious conversions are celebrated and valorized in the narrative.

For example, Nathan brings his mother the Mormon message. Mary Ann is characterized throughout the film as a moral woman, hardworking, knowledgeable about scripture, and loyal to her husband. Once Nathan has heard Joseph Smith's visionary experiences, he shares his wonder with Mary Ann when they find each other awake early on Easter morning. Nathan discovers Mary Ann sitting on the stairs, reading her Bible in the light from an east-facing window. As Nathan tells her of Joseph's visions, the light through the window brightens and surrounds them both, visually alluding to the light that Joseph Smith said fell upon him in his First Vision. The scene ends without showing a response from Mary Ann. Later, when Nathan and Joseph again discuss his visions, it is against a backdrop of trees, another allusion to the cinematic iconography surrounding Joseph's early visions. Nathan confides that Mary Ann believes Joseph's stories. Nathan thus articulates Mary Ann's conversion experience, which is central to the main conflict of the entire trilogy, and which should be Mary Ann's privilege.

Instead of developing a scene to further characterize Mary Ann and underscore how her decisions and beliefs will affect the entire family—how female agency reforms familial relationships and power structures—the film appropriates her implied character development to strengthen Joseph and Nathan's growing emotional intimacy. Throughout these films, the religious economy defines relationships between men. Women's operation within that economy can strengthen or destroy these male homosocial associations. Nathan's loyalty to Joseph endangers his eventual engagement to Lydia, who recognizes that their male friendship takes precedence over her heterosexual relationship with Nathan. Lydia and Nathan's romantic relationship is intertwined with Nathan's growing belief in the Mormon faith, and the two intimacies form the narrative arc of the film. Near the climax of the film, Lydia presents Nathan with an ultimatum: "Are you willing to choose me over Joseph?" Nathan says no and makes an ultimatum of his own: Lydia will have to join the Church or end their engagement.

In a like manner, Ben presents ultimatums to Mary Ann, telling her that she cannot discuss her new faith in the fledgling religion nor read the Book of Mormon. Though Mary Ann accepts this restric-

tion, Ben's mandates injure his relationship with Nathan. Ben expresses distrust of Mormonism throughout the film, but it is not until Ben creates barriers between Mary Ann and her new faith that Ben and Nathan find themselves at odds. Ben's control of Mary Ann can be read as a swipe at Nathan, the man who introduced Mary Ann to Mormon beliefs. Ben's fatherly relationship to Nathan begins to heal only when Ben allows Mary Ann to participate in Church meetings and read the Book of Mormon. This moment realigns Ben within the male religious economy.

For Lydia and Nathan's relationship to succeed, though, Lydia must convert. When Lydia discovers that her father has thrown away a copy of the Book of Mormon that Nathan has sent her, she reacts angrily and runs from her father's store to Nathan's house, an acceptable pathway in the male economy. While she waits for Nathan to return from an out-of-town conference, she reads the book all night in his house. Her conversion and their marriage are foreshadowed—assumed even—by her presence in the house he had begun to build. The foreshadowing strengthens when Lydia kneels on Nathan's bed, soon to be her marriage bed, to pray about what she's read. In the morning, Lydia leaves the house, still reading, and walks on the surrounding hills. An extreme long shot shows her silhouetted, book in hand, against the glowing horizon. The rising sun becomes a metaphor for the dawning knowledge inside Lydia—her growing testimony of the book and its doctrine. When Nathan discovers her at his homestead that morning, she confesses that she knows the book is true and quotes Ruth 1:16 to express her religious/personal commitment: "For whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." In the Old Testament, Ruth pronounces this promise to her mother-in-law, but the narrative co-opts the verse to capture the ideal in wifely submission and conversion fervor. Lydia tells Nathan, "I want to believe, Nathan. . . . I love you, Nathan Steed," thus intertwining religious belief with hetero-normative marriage. They emerge from his house together, the day bright about them, their faces joyful.

The convert bride in these films also represents a twentieth-century middle-class ideal. The woman is young, no older than her mid-twenties, beautiful, and marked through costuming, diction, and setting as middle-class. These young women, costumed in brightly colored hoop skirts with carefully dressed hair, are courted in well-groomed gardens and well-furnished drawing rooms. Lydia is the cul-

tured daughter of a leading town merchant. She has not only been educated in science, literature, and math but is also a talented violinist. She first meets Nathan as she practices chamber music. Likewise, Emma Smith in *Emma Smith: My Story* is a schoolteacher. She and Joseph play chess by the fireside in the days leading up to their elopement. Eliza in *Eliza and I* is a published poet as well as an accomplished seamstress and educator. Though the film finds Eliza impoverished, her nostalgic storytelling locates her in finer times. These female characters are situated firmly within an established middle class, distinct from the impoverished frontier living that other female characters experience.

The fact that the convert bride trope connects female spirituality to women's roles as wives interprets Mormon doctrines that require temple marriage for men and women as prerequisites for spiritual progression. These films translate doctrinal exigencies into character and plot points that are culturally recognizable. Yet these films expand this doctrine by creating an unquestioned male religious economy that circumscribes women's spiritual choices, in and out of the Church. I propose that the reading sequence is an important component of the male religious economy found in these films. *THE WORK AND THE GLORY* presents an especially vivid example, which I have discussed above. But other films also manifest variations of these tropes.

#### READING SEQUENCES IN *EMMA SMITH: MY STORY*

*Emma Smith: My Story* presents Emma's reading sequence for a book that Emma (in this fictional account) helped produce. Gary Cook and T. C. Christensen co-directed the independently produced *Emma Smith: My Story*, the romanticized narrative of Joseph and Emma's marriage told from Emma's perspective. Cook and Christensen also co-directed *Joseph Smith: Prophet of the Restoration* (2005), an institutional film produced by the Church and *Praise to the Man* (2005) a docu-drama about Joseph Smith for the production and distribution company Living Scriptures. The films use many of the same actors and blur the line between genres as well as those between institutional and independent production. Christensen also worked as cinematographer on all three films and *THE WORK AND THE GLORY*, with the result that he may be the most influential aesthetician among Mormon filmmakers. Reading sequences are quite common in most Mormon conversion genre films, including the missionary sub-genre, as conversion within these narratives is contingent upon accepting the Book of Mormon as the word of



God. As discussed above, though conversion is portrayed as occurring within tightly controlled patriarchal parameters, Mormon cultural identity is based largely on ideals of personal witness, independent conversion, reason, and knowledge, even for members whose family heritage reaches back to the Church's beginnings. These scenes of personal conversion reinvent for the screen narratives common to family and institutional histories.

Hence, historical films have created their own iconography based on these reading sequences, which function to chart the progress of a woman within the male religious economy and which position men as gatekeepers to the religious community. These gatekeepers include a father or husband who prevents the woman from accessing the religion, and they are structurally paired with a husband or son who provides access to the religion. The gatekeepers hand off the women between them, from father to husband, or from husband to son, in ways that mimic patriarchal exogamy. The reading sequences consist of three to four parts: the exchange of the book, the refusal, the reading, and the conversion. The exchange of the book, from hand to hand, among family and friends, generally from male to female, is framed in two-shot, emphasizing the relationship between the giver and the receiver. Close-ups on the book in hand are prevalent, and so are torso shots of the book cradled to the receiving individual's bosom.

In *Emma Smith: My Story*, Joseph bursts into the house as Emma scrubs the floor. He kneels next to her and hands her the newly published Book of Mormon. The film cuts to a two-shot as she opens to the title page. He reads to her, and they both smile in delight as she reads the byline: "By Joseph Smith, Jr." Joseph's character resonates with an ambivalent duality in this film. He is both the visionary prophet of God and also the boyish husband whose goofy charm contrasts with Emma's class, education, and refinement. The moment when he hands the book to Emma contains both qualities. He embodies both the prophet offering new doctrine and the husband providing access to the religion. Joseph's arrival from the public space of town and print shop with the book to find Emma on her knees scrubbing the floor exemplifies my argument that wives and mothers gain access to religion through their husbands or sons, yet provide for their husbands the domestic stability needed to accomplish institutional success. As I'll discuss below, the moment is also somewhat strained because Emma, who scribed part of the text as Joseph dictated, should be well acquainted with at least some of the text.

The second component in the reading sequence presents a refusal of the book by the woman whose husband or father will not allow her to read it. This woman usually shies from the extended book, though she may profess a desire to read it. The films interpret this woman's plight as tragic; she's connected to the wrong part of the male religious economy and has no man to secure correct doctrine for her. In *The Work and the Glory*, Nathan offers his mother a copy of the Book of Mormon, but Mary Ann must refuse it because of Ben's edict against Mormonism. She holds the book, handsome in its newness, hopefully, but must hand it back to Nathan.

In *Emma Smith: My Story*, Emma offers the book to her own mother as Emma packs for the Church's move to Ohio. Emma's father has never approved of religion in general and Joseph's visions specifically, and so this will be the last time Emma sees her parents. As they pack, Emma's mother offers her an heirloom water pitcher of red and white china. She explains that it was her grandmother's, passed down through the women in the family. The camera follows Emma's mother from the sideboard to the table, moving into a two-shot as she holds Emma and lets her know she "can always come home." Emma considers the water pitcher, a useful domestic vessel, associated with women's work through not only its purpose but also through its value as a trade commodity. She hands it to her mother to pack, then reaches for a copy of the Book of Mormon. Via shot-reverse shot, the film captures the rejection of the book, which, as an object of leisure, reintroduces the male religious economy into their relationship, interrupting the female space of domestic work and maternal warmth with paternal disapproval at the key woman's marital affiliation. Emma's mother holds the book away from her, examining the spine, brings it to her breast in a wistful gesture, and then swiftly hands it back to Emma and flees from the room. Emma sorrowfully packs the book with the rest of her things. The moment elides a critique of Emma's father's right to grant permission to her mother, only that he should refuse to do so. Hence, the film does not question the patriarchal structure of the family, even though the patriarch does not agree with Mormon patriarchy.

The third iconographic moment in the reading sequence portrays the actual reading. *The Work and the Glory* offers an especially powerful example of Lydia reading while seated on her future marriage bed. *Emma Smith: My Story* contains an equally effective scene that creates parity between Joseph and Emma's spirituality. Emma

reads the book in the grove that Joseph has shown her when he explained his visions to her, the film's *mise-en-scène* intimating that she will receive a divine witness of this book in the same place where Joseph first encountered God. She reads standing in the midst of spring foliage, the straight, narrow white trunks of beeches all around her, green light illuminating the scene. The film uses a dissolve, a frequent edit in these films to convey the passing of time and an intensifying of emotion, to move into a medium shot of her figure and the book. The soundtrack utilizes a voice-over of Emma reading from the last chapter of the book, paired with a sweeping musical score. Here she receives some kind of immaterial witness, raising her eyes from the book and looking off-screen left.

This scene also provides the fourth and last part of the sequence: receiving confirmation. Emma here feels something that we as viewers understand through the *mise-en-scène*, sound, and performance. Later we will see her stand at her window, looking out into the gray morning light, holding the book to her breast. She sings softly to herself, and then opens the book to study it again. *Emma Smith* does not portray Emma's testimony with the dawning sun like Lydia's in *The Work and the Glory*, but instead as a constant series of small events such as her attendance at the Church's formal organization and her father-in-law's baptism. That a reading sequence was developed at all for Emma is a paradoxical choice within the narrative, for the film shows Emma serving as one of Joseph's transcribers as he translated the Book of Mormon. The source material for the book was stored in her home, and the film imagines her contact and interaction with the plates, and her desire to page through the plates, though Joseph refuses her permission to do so.

I propose that Emma's reading sequence functions as a substitute for her institutional presence in the film. The film presents a believing Emma—obedient, hard-working, and supportive, though still distanced from the institution of the Church. The film does not show Emma's baptism. It shows her among the congregation, but she is one of the many who listen to Joseph and his fellow leaders from the pulpit. The film presents her spiritual progress solely within the private, usually domestic, *mise-en-scène*. For example, Emma receives instruction from Joseph in the form of a formal revelation, available to the viewing audience in its published form in the Doctrine and Covenants. Yet in the film, this revelation is discussed over the dinner table. The revelation required her to edit a collection of hymns for the

new Church, a task that she pursues throughout her home: the dining room, the bedroom, the kitchen. The revelation also requires her to “expound scripture” but the film interprets this instruction as occurring within the private and domestic sphere—in the garden, at the general store, in the home. When Emma finally exhorts men and expounds to them, its dramatic meaning is that she has lost control and is/has become an embarrassment to her husband. The film genders Emma’s contributions, relegating them to the domestic sphere, careful to isolate her from any institutional power or prominence.

The emphasis on the domestic sphere continues as the narratives portray married female characters safely located within their family and the Church. The work is important, demanding, even isolating, and the films discussed here imagine domestic labor as both a burden and privilege. The films narrow women’s influence to the domestic realm—even eliding female networks within the extended family that were crucial to family survival in this era—in favor of a twentieth-century nuclear family ideal. This is especially true in *Emma Smith: My Story* because the film monogamizes and romanticizes Joseph and Emma through the use of *mise-en-scène*, filters, and composition, establishing them firmly within the middle class.

In *The Work and the Glory*, *American Zion*, and *Emma Smith: My Story*, domestic stability and prosperity represent the Church’s growth and success, underscoring the uprootedness of the Church’s pre-Utah period. While the films clearly present both men and women working diligently to build cities and homes and maintain them through hard physical labor, women become symbols of Mormon prosperity and safety through their physical location within the homes as part of the films’ *mise-en-scène*. Female characters in the three films unpack household goods, work diligently to clean and produce more goods, exchange gifts with female relations, birth children, and mother them as they grow. The film locates the characters in the kitchen, bedrooms, and cold cellars, or looking out from their windows, standing in the doorway of the home, or hovering on the front porch.

The farthest these women roam is to the grocer’s. Only female characters who are not Mormons or not yet Mormons move independently through streets or the night (Lydia at the beginning of *The Work and the Glory* trilogy while she is stealing away from her family to meet Joshua), or in an inn or tavern (Jessie, Joshua’s first wife in *American Zion*, and Madeline, his second wife in *A House Divided*). In *Emma Smith: My Story*, Joseph and Emma progress through a succession of

homes, each becoming larger and more substantial, until Emma moves into the Nauvoo House, a red brick, two-story structure that is also a hotel. In *American Zion* and *A House Divided*, Mary Ann and Ben make several moves, following the Church eventually to Nauvoo. Mary Ann repeatedly re-creates a home for her family at each new stop, cleaning and polishing with visible satisfaction.

Female domesticity characterizes women in these films, culminating in the figure of the convert bride as domestic goddess. Her work inside the home signifies her contribution to the Church, is intended to communicate the Church's growing success, and comes to symbolize Church strength. *Praise to the Man* (T. C. Christensen and Gary Cook, 2005) does not recreate Smith's murder; instead the film represents his assassination with a still life of broken household items: spilled ink, smashed glasses, a broken water pitcher, and a shattered teacup.

### CONCLUSION

In general, most active American Mormons are acquainted with the stories the historical films present, and the films I discuss here deviate little from established Church historiography. Yet, through visual and narrative tropes, recent historical films make no effort to expand the historical significance of women's roles in the early Church, instead portraying them as embedded in the private, domestic sphere. Thus, they communicate the contemporary Mormon attitudes toward female engagement in Church growth and stability. These films are the result of turning to traditional models for self-definition. Indeed, the films discussed here are created by men now at the center of Mormonism (male, middle-class, living in the American West) in reaction to the ever-expanding, fluid margins of Mormonism's self-created diaspora. Even though the filmmakers who produce these films usually work outside the institutional networks of the Church, the films reflect an engagement with and valorization of current Church understandings on female power and autonomy.

# SHAKER RICHARD MCNEMAR: THE EARLIEST BOOK OF MORMON REVIEWER

*Christian Goodwillie*

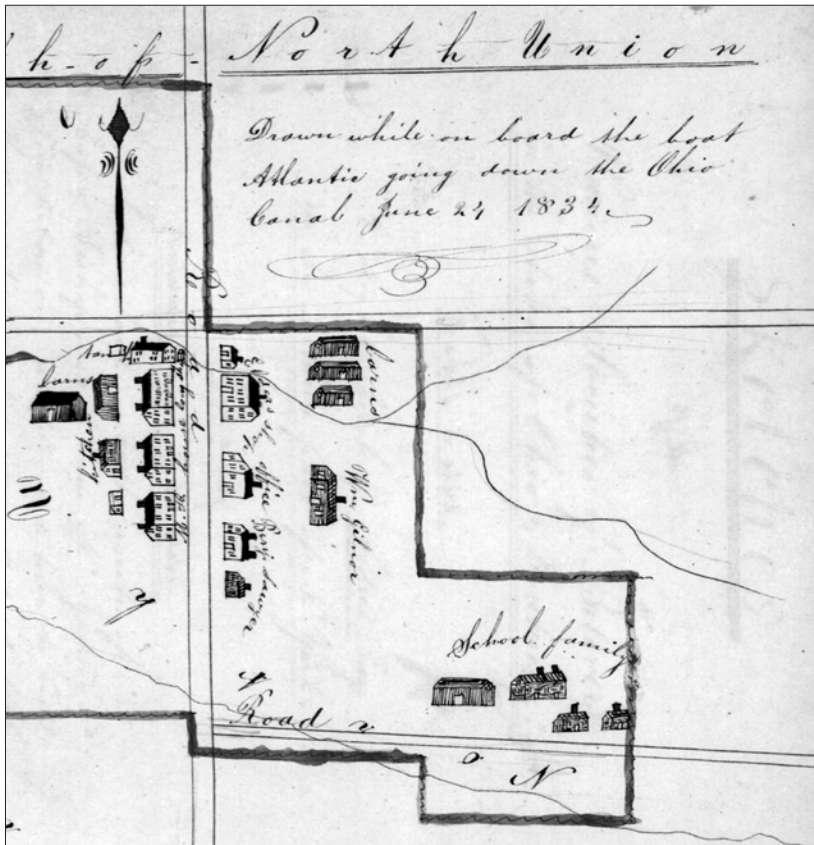
## INTRODUCTION

IN JANUARY OF 1831, RICHARD MCNEMAR, a prominent Shaker and former Presbyterian minister, read a copy of the Book of Mormon that Oliver Cowdery had presented to the Shaker community at Union Village, Ohio. Subsequently, McNemar penned one of the earliest theological reviews of the Book of Mormon, though written for his own private consumption. This newly discovered source has shed further light on Mormon-Shaker interactions in Ohio and on Oliver Cowdery's travels during this important period in Mormon history.

Scholars of both Shakerism and Mormonism have long known

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*North Union, Ohio. This Shaker community was the scene of intense interactions between Mormon missionaries and the Shakers during 1830 and 1831. Collection of the Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division, G1206.E423 Y6 1835 Vault.*

of the visits made in 1830 by Oliver Cowdery and unnamed companions to the Shaker community at North Union, Ohio. During the initial visit, Cowdery shared his testimony with the Shakers in meeting and loaned them multiple copies of the newly printed Book of Mormon. The Shakers, who were generally open to examining other systems of belief, distributed seven copies of the Book of Mormon among their membership. These were all returned to the Shaker Elders, who recorded that the brethren and sisters regarded the book



“as not interesting enough to keep them awake while reading.”<sup>1</sup>

During a second visit to the North Union Shakers a group of Mormon missionaries (the specific individuals in this contingent are unknown) retrieved all but one copy of the Book of Mormon, which they left as a gift for Elder Ashbel Kitchell.<sup>2</sup> A third—and quite contentious—encounter that occurred at North Union sometime after March of 1831 between Kitchell and Mormons Leman Copley (a former Shaker who converted to Mormonism during March of 1831), Sidney Rigdon, and Parley P. Pratt has been well documented.<sup>3</sup> Further Mormon-Shaker interactions in Ohio at this time were unknown until the recent discovery of Richard McNemar’s comments on the Book of Mormon.

On October 17, 1830, at Manchester, New York, Oliver Cowdery, Parley P. Pratt, Ziba Peterson, and Peter Whitmer Jr., signed a missionary covenant that would bind them together on the first LDS mission to preach the gospel to the Lamanites (Native Americans) in the Missouri Territory. After traveling to Ohio, the missionaries stopped at Kirtland, where they found significant success in preaching to Sidney Rigdon’s congregation. Later that autumn Cowdery paid his aforementioned visit to Ashbel Kitchell at North Union.<sup>4</sup> Having made this first contact with the Shakers, new evidence has revealed that Cowdery later called at Union Village, the leading Shaker community west of the Appalachians.

Located immediately west of Lebanon, Ohio, Union Village was

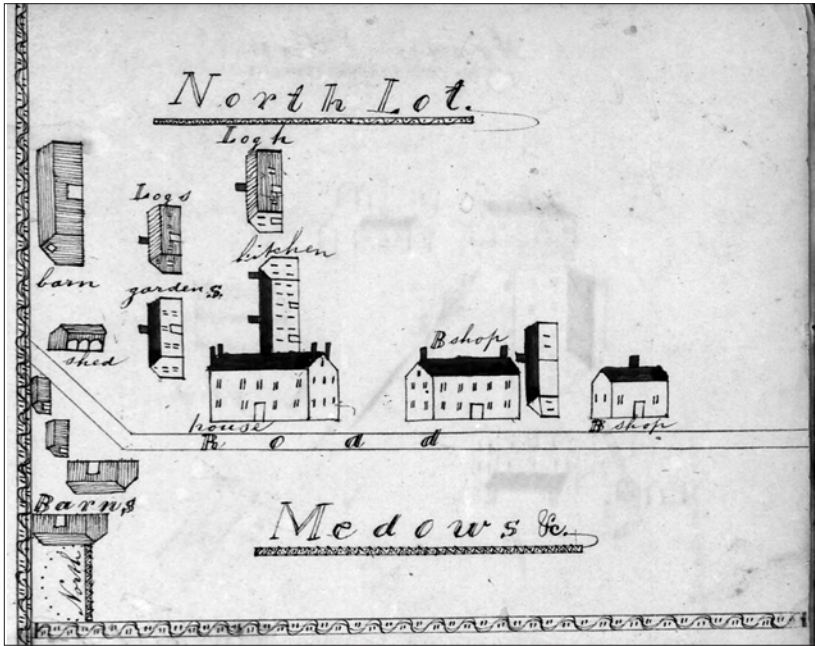
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<sup>1</sup>North Union Shaker Elder Ashbel Kitchell, as quoted in Lawrence R. Flake, “A Shaker View of a Mormon Mission,” *BYU Studies* 20, no. 1 (Fall 1979): 94–99.

<sup>2</sup>The exact date of this visit is unknown. The primary account of it comes from Shaker Ashbell Kitchell. *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.* Mario S. De Pillis first wrote about the Shakers at North Union, Ohio, and the Mormons in “The Development of Mormon Communitarianism, 1826–1846” (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1960). See also Robert F. W. Meader, “The Shakers and the Mormons,” *Shaker Quarterly* 2, no. 3 (Fall 1962): 83–96.

<sup>4</sup>Richard Lloyd Anderson, “The Impact of the First Preaching in Ohio,” *BYU Studies* 11, no. 4 (Summer 1971): 474–96, and Leland H. Gentry, “Light on the ‘Mission to the Lamanites,’” *BYU Studies* 36, no. 2 (1996–97): 226–32. I thank Matthew J. Grow for bringing these articles to my attention.



*Union Village, Ohio. The "North Lot," site of Oliver Cowdery's visit in November 1830 (History of the Church, 1:206) drawn by Shaker George Kendall in 1835. Collection of the Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division, G1206.E423 Y6 1835 Vault.*

formed largely from members of the Turtle Creek congregation of Presbyterians. Richard McNemar, their former minister, was highly intelligent and had benefited from the tutelage of Minister Robert W. Finley at his "classical school" established near Cane Ridge, Kentucky, during the 1790s. McNemar was one of the leading lights of the Kentucky Revival. Eventually he became part of a group of radicalized Presbyterian ministers who broke with the church's Kentucky Synod in 1803 due to the radicals' adherence to Arminian, or Free-Will principles, which were at odds with the core doctrines of Calvinism. This group—which included Barton W. Stone—formed the independent Springfield Presbytery in 1803. McNemar was converted to Shakerism during March and April of 1805 by three missionaries from New Lebanon, New York. After his conversion, McNemar turned his considerable talents toward the public defense of the Shakers. He published myriad books and pamphlets, and proselytized among pockets

of Shaker converts and potential converts throughout Ohio, Kentucky, and Indiana. Most notably, McNemar visited with Tecumseh and his brother, the prophet Tenskwatawa (also known as Lalawethika, or the Rattle), near Greenville, Ohio in 1807.<sup>5</sup>

On January 20, 1831, McNemar returned to Union Village after a trip of nearly ten months attending to Shaker legal business in Kentucky. He learned from Elder Solomon King that Oliver Cowdery had recently visited the “North Lot” family of Shakers at Union Village, leaving there a copy of the Book of Mormon. On January 28–29, McNemar read the Book of Mormon and wrote a lengthy appraisal in his journal.<sup>6</sup> These comments are published here for the first time.

McNemar gave a relatively accurate summary of the Book of Mormon before ridiculing the process of translation and proclaiming it doctrinally inept. As a Shaker, he was particularly disturbed that it contained “not a lick about the cross of the flesh.” This assessment of the text from a theological perspective is roughly contemporary to Alexander Campbell’s review which was published in the *Millennial Harbinger* on February 7, 1831.<sup>7</sup> A survey of other Union Village journals and correspondence covering the period surrounding Cowdery’s visit has yielded no further mention of him or the Book of Mormon.

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<sup>5</sup>For McNemar’s conversion date, see Richard McNemar, Diary, Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Shaker Collection, Item 254. For his education with Finley, see James B. Finley and W. P. Strickland, eds., *Autobiography of Rev. James B. Finley or, Pioneer Life in the West* (Cincinnati, Ohio: Methodist Book Concern for the Author, 1856), 26. For his break with the Kentucky Synod and organization of the Springfield Presbytery, see [Richard McNemar], *Observations on Church Government, by the Presbytery of Springfield, to Which Is Added; the Last Will and Testament of That Reverend Body* (Cincinnati, Ohio: Press of John W. Browne, Office of Liberty Hall, 1807). For his conversion to Shakerism, see Benjamin Seth Youngs, Diary, 1805, [77], Winterthur Library, Winterthur, Del., ASC 859. For his mission to the Shawnee, see Youngs, “A Journey to the Indians,” Winterthur Library, ASC 860.

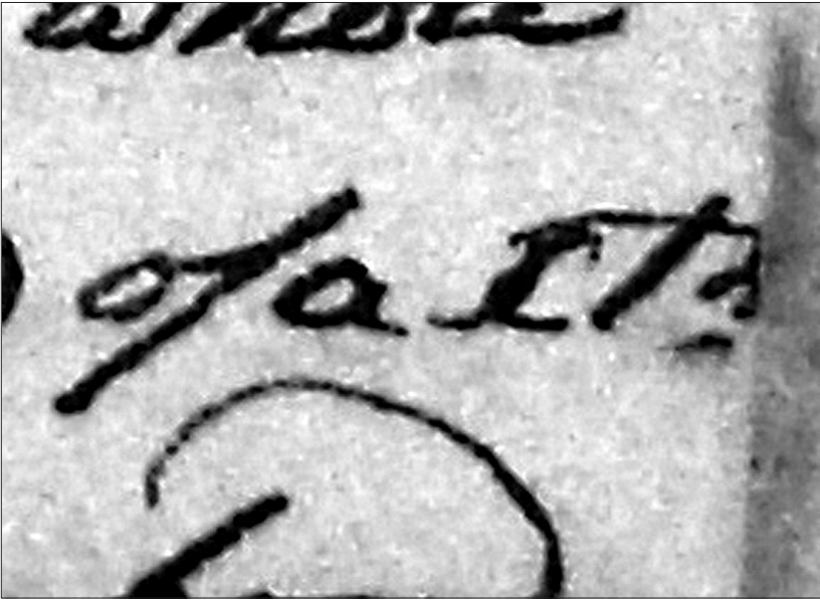
<sup>6</sup>Richard McNemar, Diary, Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Shaker Collection, Item 253, p. 45.

<sup>7</sup>Alexander Campbell, “The Mormonites,” *Millennial Harbinger* 2, no. 2, (February 7, 1831): 86–96.

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Friday & saturday I spent mostly in reading the book of Mormon which was handed me by Elder Solomon. It is a duodecimo volume of 590 pages printed at Palmyra in the state of New York a certain Joseph Smith securing the copy right as author & proprietor. It claims its origin from original engravings on plates of brass deposited in a stone box & buried in the earth sometime in the fourth century & showed to the said Smith by an angel, & dug up by the said Smith & translated by inspiration. The engraving being unintelligible to learned & unlearned. there is said to have been in the box with the plates two transparent stones in the form of spectacles thro which the translator looked on the engraving & afterwards put his face into a hat & the interpretation then flowed into his mind. which he uttered to the amanuensis who wrote it down, The said amanuensis by name Oliver Cowdery, was lately at the North lot & gave this account. He & others being on their way to Missouri to open this new revelation to the Indians whose genealogy it professes to trace from the line of Joseph & from the time of their first settlement in America at the period of the Babylonian captivity. this curious volume contains thirteen books— viz. The book of Nephi, of Jacob, of Enos, of Jarom—Omni, Mormon, Mosia, Alma, Helamon, Nephi, Mormon, Ether & Moroni. It is all written in imitation of the scripture style & contains a history of one Lehi & his family who left Jerusalem just before the siege wandered thro the wilderness to the sea coast brought with them the national records, & embarked for the new world. landed in America multiplied & replenished the earth—divided into two general parties the Nephites & the Lamanites & so it goes on with their wars till the coming of Christ who after his ascension made them a visit opened the gospel very extensively verbatim as in the new testament, appointed twelve apostles who formed churches through out the land & administered the ordinances &c &c all which was finally supplanted by civil rulers & wars again broke out & nations were exterminated to a man till Moroni closed the records in the year 420 & deposited the whole aperature in the box, some where not far from Lyons in the state of New York, thence to be dug up by Joseph Smith translated & published to all nations.

In looking thro this curious volume it reminded me of the Persian tales which I used to read when a boy & with which I was much delighted. and excepting what this inspired writer & dictator took from the scriptures I supposed there was as much truth & reality in the one as the other. When we come to the reality & comprehensible part of



*I have been unable to decipher the scribble at the end of the line. (See Note 7.) Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Shaker Collection, Item 253.*

the subject, the whole story seems to have originated in the mind of a [\*]<sup>8</sup> Baptist, there being no intelligible correspondence between the marks on the plates, & the dictates of the pretended interpreter. All his ideas were acquired by looking into a hat, where in all probability the translation appeared quite plainly in our english language. we must therefore conclude that the confabulation was cunningly devised, whether by visibles or invisibles & whether those bright & unsullied plates had been deposited in ancient or modern times.

Whatever benefit the Indians may derive from this book of Mormon certain it is we can derive none. Its endless genealogies & Chronologies, afford no light to a Believer. In the New heavens & earth

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<sup>8</sup>[\*] = indecipherable scrawl preceding “Baptist.” Reasoning that McNemar may have been referring to a particular sect of Baptists with a shorthand abbreviation, I obtained digital images of this portion of the page taken from multiple angles but remained unable to decipher it. Others likewise have had no luck. I tentatively conclude that these characters are a meaningless scribble.

these old things are not to be remembered neither come into mind. We can have no idea of a new & better generation starting up from those brass plates. or that the seed of Joseph is any better to begin with than the other tribes whatever Ghost they may have to minister. it will prove to be the same old unclean spirit or the spirit of an unclean devil. In all the history of those American churches there is a not [sic] a lick about any cross against the flesh. or any association on the principle of self denial, Water baptism was their all.

To give heed to those cunningly devised fables [which?] minister strife rather than godly edifying may suit an apostate but not a settled believer the law of Christ is not written on plates of brass or kept in boxes of stone but on fleshly tables of the heart & kept in the chh. to which we do well to take heed.

# THE SEMINARY SYSTEM ON TRIAL: THE 1978 *LANNER V. WIMMER* LAWSUIT

*Casey Paul Griffiths*

IN ANY SOCIETY, EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS cannot help but reflect the local culture, no matter how neutral they may strive to be. Schools in the predominantly LDS regions of the Intermountain West are no exception. When educational historian Frederick Buchanan once remarked to a non-Mormon acquaintance that Salt Lake City had the lowest percentage of school-age children in private or parochial

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schools in the nation, his listener replied that he felt the pervasive culture of Mormonism in the city made all public schools *de facto* parochial schools supported by taxes.<sup>1</sup> The peculiar relationship of LDS religious education programs and public schools throughout the West has at times led to some conflict. A supporter of these programs would argue that Mormon leaders have gone to great lengths to provide daily religious education while remaining within the confines of the law. An opponent would say the institutions are too entangled in the public school system for comfort. Given these conflicting viewpoints, a showdown was perhaps inevitable. After all, a chief purpose of the Church's educational institutions is to maintain Mormonism's unique culture and theology and to assure its continuance among the Church's younger generation. In Utah, where an LDS seminary stands adjacent to nearly every secondary school, the seminary program is to some an uncomfortable visual reminder of the close relationship.

But the conflicts emerging from the differing cultures of church and state need not always end with negative results. While many of the participants in the lawsuit of *Lanner v. Wimmer* (662 F.2 1349, 10th Cir. 1981)<sup>2</sup> might argue otherwise, the case presents a good example of how a heated conflict can result in good for both

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In addition, Clifford Mayes, in the Educational Leadership and Foundations Department at Brigham Young University, and Paul Murphy, a seminary teacher at Jordan High Seminary, both offered suggestions on the paper and provided guidance, for which I am deeply grateful. Finally, any historian working in the field of LDS educational history owes a debt of gratitude to Frederick Buchanan, whose fine work inspired this article.

<sup>1</sup>Frederick S. Buchanan, "Masons and Mormons: Released-time Politics in Salt Lake City, 1930-56," *Journal of Mormon History* 19, no. 1 (1993): 67.

<sup>2</sup>The official title of the trial was *Ronald M. Lanner, Harriet F. Lanner, John A. Scherting, on behalf of themselves and all others similarly situated, Plaintiffs-Appellants, v. Joanne WIMMER, Thad Carlson, E. Malcolm Allred, Ronald A. Peterson, Maria Ellworth, constituting the Board of Education for the City of Logan, Utah; James C. Blair, Superintendent of Schools for the City of Logan, Utah; Rulon C. Olsen, Principal, Logan High School, Logan, Utah; Sherman Hansen, Principal, Logan Junior High School, Logan, Utah; and their officers, employees, agents and assigns; and the Utah State Board of Education, Defendants-Appellees, and Cross-Appellants. Lanner v. Wimmer, 463 F.Supp. 867 (D. Utah 1978) af-*

sides. Examining this case study in culture clash and accommodation can help to explain how a degree of separation between the school and the seminary can ultimately be a blessing to both.

### THE LDS SEMINARY PROGRAM

As Mormonism entered a major transition in the late nineteenth-early twentieth centuries, it sought new ways to use education as a tool to transmit its doctrines and values to future generations. In the formative years of Mormonism between 1847 and 1879, public schools in Mormon community were essentially parochial schools that served Mormon communities in the Great Basin. Later, as Protestant-sponsored schools came to the region, scattered attempts were made to launch stake academies. In response to the passing of the Free School Act (1890), the Church undertook a coordinated effort to build a Church-wide school system of academies scattered throughout the Intermountain West.<sup>3</sup> The academy system proved to be relatively short-lived. While numerous factors were involved, perhaps the most important was the influence of the burgeoning public school system in Utah. With free public high schools spreading throughout the region, Latter-day Saint parents had a difficult time supporting public education through taxes and Church education through tuition and tithing. Latter-day Saints began searching for alternatives that would allow them to take advantage of the public schools, while still providing weekday religious education for their youth. Church leaders started a religion class program for those who could not attend the academies and receive religious education.<sup>4</sup> What was really needed was an institution that could bridge the gap between the state-run schools and Church education.

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*firmed in part, reversed in part, 662 F.2d 1349 (10th Cir. 1981).* Due to this name's unwieldy nature, I refer to it as *Lanner v. Wimmer*. 662 F.2d 1349 refers to the 662nd volume of the Federal Reporter, Second Series, with the case starting on page 1349. (10th Cir. 1981) refers to the fact that the case was decided by the Federal Court of Appeals, 10th Circuit in 1981. Photocopies of the trial records are in my possession and will be cited "Trial Record."

<sup>3</sup>See Scott C. Esplin, "Closing the Church College of New Zealand: A Case Study in Church Education Policy," *Journal of Mormon History* 37, no. 1 (Winter 2011): 86–114.

<sup>4</sup>D. Michael Quinn, "Utah's Educational Innovation: LDS Religion

The solution came in 1911, when the first released-time seminary was opened adjacent to Granite High School.<sup>5</sup> Under this new program, students could attend public schools and be released during a class period to attend religion classes at a nearby Church-owned building. Generously, the local board of education even agreed to offer credit for Bible courses taught at the seminary. The Utah State Board of Education followed suit in January 1916, allowing one elective credit for Bible studies to go toward the sixteen credits needed for graduation. Following this decision, seminaries began offering non-denominational classes in the Old and New Testaments, along with a third non-credit course, Church history, designed to teach the fundamentals of the LDS faith.<sup>6</sup>

While the LDS released-time program has been recognized as the first of its kind begun on the secondary level, it was not created in a vacuum.<sup>7</sup> As early as 1905, an interdenominational conference in New York called on local schools to allow children to “absent themselves, without detriment,” for the purpose of receiving religious education.<sup>8</sup> In 1914, just a few years after the first LDS released-time program began, William Wirt, school superintendent in Gary, Indiana, launched a released-time program that became a pattern used in many states.<sup>9</sup> As the released-time programs spread around the country, the LDS program blossomed as well, becoming the delivery method of choice in areas with LDS populations large enough to jus-

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Classes, 1890–1929,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 43, no. 4 (Fall 1975): 379–89.

<sup>5</sup>Joseph F. Merrill, “A New Institution in Religious Education,” *Improvement Era*, 41, no. 12 (January 1938): 55–56.

<sup>6</sup>William E. Berrett, *A Miracle in Weekday Religious Education* (Salt Lake City: Salt Lake Printing Center, 1988), 29.

<sup>7</sup>R. W. Wilkins, “Constitutionality of Utah Released-time Programs,” *Utah Law Review* 3 (1953): 329–39; E. L. Shaver, “Weekday Religious Education Secures Its Charter and Faces a Challenge,” *Religious Education* 48 (January–February 1953): 38–43; A. Theodore Tuttle, “Released Time Religious Education Program of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints” (M.A. thesis, Stanford University, 1949.)

<sup>8</sup>Donald Rex Gorham, “A Study of the Status of Weekday Church Schools in the United States” (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania Press, 1934), 3.

<sup>9</sup>Shaver, “Weekday Religious Education,” 19.

tify it. By 1918, just six years after the first seminary opened its doors, there were thirteen seminaries, and the program had grown from 70 students to 1,528.<sup>10</sup> By 1925 nearly every Church academy had been closed in favor of the seminaries.<sup>11</sup> While the growth of released time was more dramatic in the LDS-heavy regions of the Intermountain West, its growth mirrored the national expansion of released time. By 1947, there were nearly two thousand communities with some form of religious instruction on the released-time plan in all states except New Hampshire.<sup>12</sup>

Were these released-time plans legal? Initially, few questions were asked. After all, the First Amendment to the Constitution reads simply, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." The language of this clause, which at least one Supreme Court justice has called, "at best opaque,"<sup>13</sup> has been the battleground for numerous conflicts over the relationship of church and state. Released time was no exception. The practice would soon enjoy its share of controversy, both nationally and in Utah.

In Utah, concerns were raised that the practice created too close an association between the state-run schools and Church organizations, thus violating the establishment clause of the First Amendment. The first real salvo of this battle was fired in 1930 when I. L. Williamson, the Utah state high school inspector, wrote a scathing report on the seminary program, calling for an immediate disassociation of Utah's public schools and their adjacent seminaries. During the upheaval, the state board suggested seeking out a citizen willing to file a "friendly lawsuit" to settle the question.<sup>14</sup> However, no taxpayer volunteered to take that role. After a year of public wrangling, the Utah State Board of Education voted to uphold released-time semi-

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<sup>10</sup>Berrett, *A Miracle in Weekday Religious Education*, 31.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>12</sup>Ross Patterson Poore, "Church-School Entanglement in Utah: Lanier v. Wimmer" (Ph.D. diss., University of Utah, 1983), 99.

<sup>13</sup>Warren Burger, *Lemon v. Kurtzman*, 403 U.S. 602 (1971).

<sup>14</sup>State Board Minutes, June 28, 1930, see also "Status of Church Seminaries Seek Court Decision," *Deseret News*, June 28, 1930, in Journal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (chronological scrapbook of typed entries and newspaper clippings, 1830–present), LDS Church History Library (hereafter cited as Journal History).

nary, with the LDS Church agreeing to remedy the more problematic parts of its program.<sup>15</sup> While this action temporarily stilled statewide threats against the seminaries, the battle continued to rage in the Salt Lake School district for several decades.<sup>16</sup>

Nationwide, released-time programs became the subject of several controversial U.S. Supreme Court decisions testing the limits of the establishment clause. Three cases brought before the court established some nebulous boundaries for the practice, leaving the way open for the Lanner lawsuit in 1978. The first, *McCollum v. Board of Education*, in 1948 dealt with a released-time program in Champaign, Illinois, in which students attended religion classes taught in the school's classrooms. There were separate classes for Protestants, Catholics, and Jews, with the teachers being paid by a local interfaith religious council. The Supreme Court ruled the program unconstitutional because it used tax-supported buildings and the compulsory education system to enroll students in classes.<sup>17</sup> The decision seemed to strike a serious blow at the constitutionality of released-time classes.

Only four years later, the court seemingly reversed itself in *Zorach v. Clauson*, a released-time program in New York City. While challengers of the program argued that, like the Champaign situation, it was a violation of the establishment clause, there were several key differences. The religion classes were not taught on school property, and no public funds were involved. Students were released upon written request of their parents. Though the churches involved gave weekly attendance reports, the schools did not enforce attendance. The court ruled against the plaintiffs, arguing that the program was legal because no public funds were spent.<sup>18</sup> While the ruling did not overthrow *McCollum*, it represented a significant shift in direction and, to some legal minds, created an irreconcilable contradiction. Associate Justice William O. Douglas wrote on behalf of the court:

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<sup>15</sup>Casey Paul Griffiths, "Joseph F. Merrill and the 1930 Church Education Crisis," *BYU Studies* 49, no. 12 (2010): 92–134.

<sup>16</sup>Buchanan, "Masons and Mormons, 67–114.

<sup>17</sup>Scott Hansen, "Released Time Religious Instruction Revisited," Unpublished paper, Brigham Young University, 1986, 6; Greg Taylor, "Released Time Religious Instruction: The Zorach and McCollum Cases," unpublished paper, Brigham Young University, 1979, 6.

<sup>18</sup>Hansen, "Released Time Religious Instruction Revisited," 7.

We are a religious people whose institutions presuppose a Supreme Being. We guarantee the freedom to worship as one chooses. We make room for as wide a variety of beliefs and creeds as the spiritual needs of man deem necessary. We sponsor an attitude on the part of government that shows no partiality to any one group and that lets each flourish according to the zeal of its adherents and the appeal of its dogma. When the state encourages religious instruction or cooperates with religious authorities by adjusting the schedule of public events to sectarian needs, it follows the best of our traditions.<sup>19</sup>

Douglas felt that outlawing the use of such programs would be “preferring those who believe in no religion over those who do believe.” Both programs made similar use of compulsory educational laws; but in *Zorach*, the court established the constitutional line as the use of public funds.

Reconciliation between the two rulings came with *Lemon v. Kurtzman*. Though the case itself involved parochial schools in Pennsylvania and not a released-time program, it established a test used to measure the legality of church-state relationships. Chief Justice Warren Burger articulated the three prongs of the test as follows: “First, the law must have secular legislative purpose, second, its primary effect must be one that neither advances nor prohibits religion, and finally, the statute must not foster ‘an excessive government entanglement with religion.’”<sup>20</sup>

Where did the LDS released-time program fall relative to these three cases? Its position was unique, not easily defined by either the *McCollum* or *Zorach* rulings. In both cases, the released-time programs under consideration were considerably different from the LDS practice. In both *McCollum* and *Zorach* students were released for only one hour a week for religious instruction while LDS students were released for an hour daily, making them absent from school classes for a much longer time. Second, while most other released-

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<sup>19</sup>*Zorach v. Clauston*, 343 U.S. 306 (1952). William O. Douglas, the Justice who wrote the *Zorach* opinion was himself a committed civil libertarian. Though his opinion here would seem to fall in line with a more conservative viewpoint, *Time* magazine once called him “the court’s most undeviating liberal voice.” <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,913732-1,00.html> (accessed November 29, 2010).

<sup>20</sup>Hansen, “Released Time Religious Instruction Revisited,” 10; *Lemon v. Kurtzman*, 402 U.S. 602 (1971).

time programs were relatively small and homegrown, the size and organization of the LDS program made it susceptible to charges that it violated the establishment clause. Third, and perhaps stickiest, was the granting of elective credit for Old and New Testament studies. Given these conditions, it is somewhat surprising that no serious challenges, at least on a state-wide level, appeared after the 1930 episode with the State Board of Education. While the arrangements of the 1930 compromise had allowed the seminary program to flourish, it had not answered any of the pertinent legal questions. Thus, the LDS brand of seminary was still unproven legally.

### THE SETTING: LOGAN, 1976

In the 1970s, Logan, Utah was a small community in northern Utah with about 30,000 residents. Its city school district comprised three elementary schools, a junior high (grades 7–9), and a senior high (grades 10–12). Logan's robust LDS population was reflected in the enrollment in the seminary programs at both the junior<sup>21</sup> and senior high schools. Out of the 870 high school students, an estimated 85 percent were enrolled in seminary.<sup>22</sup> Students earned two credits for Old and New Testament studies, which counted toward the total of sixteen credits needed for graduation. The situation was standard throughout Utah; at the time thirty-nine of the state's forty school districts had similar arrangements. The only exception was the Salt Lake City school district.<sup>23</sup>

Though Logan was technically located in a rural area (Cache Valley), it was medium sized by Utah standards and had the state's land-grant college, Utah State University (formerly Utah Agricultural College). As a result, it was more cosmopolitan than the location would otherwise predict. Among those brought to Logan by the university were Ronald and Harriet Lanner and their two children. Ronald Lanner, a professor of forest biology at USU, was raised in a Jewish family. Harriet, raised a Catholic, had left that faith at a young age and

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<sup>21</sup>Typically, seminary is taught only to ninth-grade students in junior high.

<sup>22</sup>Poore, "Church-School Entanglement in Utah," 175.

<sup>23</sup>Paul Carter, "ACLU Intends to Sue Board," *Herald Journal*, March 16, 1977, 2. Almost since its inception, the released-time program was a cantankerous issue in the Salt Lake school district. For an excellent treatment of this subject, see Buchanan, "Masons and Mormons," 67–114.



converted to Judaism. They had moved from St. Paul, Minnesota, to Logan in 1967.<sup>24</sup> In 1974, the Lanners established a local chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union and were energetically involved in the community. When Logan High denied permission for their teenage daughter, Deborah, to print an article on student rights in the school paper, Ronald Lanner challenged the school action as an infringement of freedom of the press. A compromise was reached when the school board agreed to place a statement in the student handbook specifying publication guidelines for the student paper.

The Lanners' involvement with the seminary program began when their daughter, Deborah, passed on some comments from a non-Mormon friend who enrolled in seminary about some things she had heard in her religion classes. Upon hearing this description, Lanner became alarmed and launched an investigation. Acting on his instructions, Deborah and her friend obtained some handouts from the seminary classes. After reading the materials, Lanner became convinced that the courses were sectarian in nature.<sup>25</sup>

Lanner then contacted Kathryn Collard, an ACLU attorney in Salt Lake City, and told her he would be willing to serve as a plaintiff in a challenge to the constitutionality of the Logan released-time program. On October 14, 1976, the Logan chapter of the ACLU sent a petition of complaint to Malcolm Allred, president of the Logan City Board of Education, citing their concerns about the released-time program. The letter requested that the Board "cease accepting religious instruction for High School credit" and declared that the "entanglement of the public school's business and that of the LDS Seminary must be ended."<sup>26</sup>

The school board made no immediate response to Lanner's request but forwarded the letter to Dan Bushnell, attorney for the Utah

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<sup>24</sup> Trial Record, Vol. 10:146. The trial transcripts consist of seventeen volumes housed at the 10th Circuit Court in Denver, Colorado. David J. Singer, the records administrator of the United States District Court, District of Utah, facilitated my access to them for this study. See also Robert Bryson, "'Religious Segregation' Charged in Seminary Suit," *Salt Lake Tribune*, July 6, 1978, in *Journal History*.

<sup>25</sup> Ronald Lanner, telephone interview with Casey Paul Griffiths, June 26, 2008; notes in my possession.

<sup>26</sup> Ronald M. Lanner, Letter to E. Malcolm Allred, October 14, 1976, Logan, Utah, quoted in Poore, "Church-School Entanglement in Utah,"

State School Board Association. A month later, Bushnell responded with a fourteen-page memorandum answering the legal charges and upholding the constitutionality of Logan's seminary program. Bushnell declared the Logan program to be one of the very best in the state and stated that the school's relationship with the seminary "complies fully with all applicable state or federal laws." After receiving this legal opinion, James Blair, the Logan superintendent of schools, called off a public hearing intended to discuss Lanner's complaints<sup>27</sup> and forwarded Bushnell's memo to Lanner. Dissatisfied, Lanner again requested a meeting with the board to discuss the issue. The board declined. Given the absence of communication, the situation quickly began to escalate.

Why did the board refuse to meet with Lanner? Interviewed after the case was over, Blair indicated that he had previously discussed several religious issues with Lanner, specifically, school prayer, and felt that any such meeting would accomplish little. In his own interview, Lanner responded to this statement by saying, "Blair should have taken me more seriously." Lanner stated that he would have been willing to compromise on most issues, excepting credit, as a way of allowing the school board to save face.<sup>28</sup>

With Lanner and the ACLU satisfied that all administrative appeals had been frustrated, they began preparations for a legal challenge. Less than two weeks after the board rebuffed Lanner's request for a meeting, Collard and Lanner held a press conference on December 15, 1976, announcing the ACLU's intentions to sue the Logan School District. Collard was careful to point out that the move was based on law, not religion: "Our action is not against the Mormon Church or the Mormon seminary. We are taking action against school officials." Speaking at the same press conference, Lanner depicted seminary as a cause of religious discrimination, saying that students who chose not to take seminary were "second class members of the student body."<sup>29</sup> With hope for an out-of-court resolution quickly dissipating, both sides began to ready themselves for the coming legal battle.

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283-84.

<sup>27</sup>"Logan Seminary Program Upheld," *Deseret News*, December 9, 1976, in *Journal History*; Poore, "Church-School Entanglement in Utah," 185.

<sup>28</sup>Poore, "Church-School Entanglement in Utah," 185-86.

<sup>29</sup>"ACLU May File Seminary Suit," *Deseret News*, December 16, 1976,

**HIGH STAKES: 1977**

Following the ACLU announcement in December, little was said or done publicly for the next three months. No public meetings were held to discuss the issue. Seminary students at Logan High continued to attend classes, receiving credit for Old and New Testament studies. The silence was broken on March 13, 1977, when the Logan *Herald Journal* ran an advertisement announcing the ACLU's intention of suing the school district and calling for other parents to join the suit.<sup>30</sup> Only one, John Scherting, an English professor at Utah State, joined as a plaintiff.<sup>31</sup> Three days later, Collard told the *Herald Journal*: "They've given us no other alternative but to sue." The defendants included the Logan superintendent of schools, the principals of Logan High School and Logan Junior High, and the city school board. Superintendent Blair appeared shocked at the actual filing, saying that he expected a lawsuit on the seminary issue to come against a larger school district.<sup>32</sup>

On March 21, the ACLU and plaintiffs held another press conference, which announced the suit and revealed grander intentions than Lanner's original complaints. Shirley Pedler, executive director of the Utah ACLU, declared the suit's intention to prohibit "any integration, cooperation, or other contact with the [seminary] program." While Lanner's original complaints had been about the credit received for Bible classes, the suit now intended to outlaw released time. The end of credit would have been an inconvenience which might have had an impact on seminary enrollment; but if the suit as outlined was successful, it could mean an end to Utah's released-time seminary program altogether. Pedler was specific: "It's not just the credit part. We would not be satisfied if they just discontinued credit."<sup>33</sup> Further, the Logan suit would be a test case: "If it is successful, we will use it as a

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in *Journal History*; "ACLU Threatens to Sue," [*Logan Herald Journal*], December 16, 1976, 1.

<sup>30</sup>Advertisement, [*Logan Herald Journal*], March 13, 1977, 6.

<sup>31</sup>Bob Findlay, "Seminary Fosters Religious Division," *Herald Journal*, July 7, 1978, 1.

<sup>32</sup>Paul Carter, "ACLU Intends to Sue Board," *Herald Journal*, March 16, 1977, 1-2.

<sup>33</sup>"Seminary Suit Filed by ACLU," *Deseret News*, March 21, 1977, B1, in *Journal History*.

precedent to dismantle the program all over the state.”<sup>34</sup> The stakes had just been raised to a whole new level.

A suit over credit for seminary classes, while important to the Logan School District, would not have had a great impact on the Church’s educational program as a whole. Released time already existed without credit in the Salt Lake City school district and areas outside Utah without seriously impairing seminary attendance. But an end to the practice of released time altogether could have thrown the entire educational system of the Church into havoc and had consequences for released-time programs operated by other faiths. While the early morning and home study seminary programs used in areas with smaller LDS populations could have taken the place of released time, dismantling the massive released-time program in Utah would have been painful. Statistics from the era showed that 98 senior high seminaries and 46 junior high seminaries were functioning in Utah alone.<sup>35</sup> Closure of these seminaries would have meant the firing of 496 full-time teachers.<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, a 1978 report issued by the Utah State Board of Education placed student enrollment in Utah’s released-time programs at 60,072. If those students were suddenly thrust back into the classroom, the report estimated, it would require at least \$6,279,000 to pay the additional 378 teachers who would have been required, in addition to classrooms, materials, and other expenses.<sup>37</sup> Further, Collard indicated her hopes that, if successful, the lawsuit would stand as a test case leading to more ACLU actions throughout the nation.<sup>38</sup> What had begun as a local disturbance in a rural school district was now ballooning into a full-blown educational crisis with potential national consequences.

The U.S. district court required an answer to the ACLU complaint within only twenty days, leaving the Logan School District

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<sup>34</sup>“ACLU Files Seminary Lawsuit,” *Herald Journal*, March 21, 1977, 1.

<sup>35</sup>Frank Day, Assistant Commissioner of LDS Church Education System, Letter to Ross Patterson Poore Jr., August 27, 1982, quoted in Poore, “Church-School Entanglement in Utah,” 243.

<sup>36</sup>“ACLU Battle over Seminaries Could Be Costly,” *Herald Journal*, March 20, 1977, 1.

<sup>37</sup>This report is quoted in Poore, “Church-School Entanglement in Utah,” 161.

<sup>38</sup>Paul Carter, “ACLU Intends to Sue Board,” *Herald Journal*, March 16, 1977, 1.

scrambling to produce a response. At a special session of the school board, Blair signaled his intentions to enlist the cooperation of the Utah State School Board and the Utah Attorney General's office to meet the threat. He publicly defended the credit policy, calling it "fair because it accepts credit from parochial schools as well as from LDS Church Seminaries." He used the parallel further to defend the seminary curriculum by saying, "We accept credit from any parochial school, not knowing what the contents of their curricular offerings are. . . . So we're being fair about that."<sup>39</sup> In Blair's mind the seminaries were the same as parochial schools and, as such, did not require extensive oversight for the schools to grant credit.

While the ACLU and the Logan School District readied for the coming battle, the LDS Church found itself in an awkward position. As the party perhaps with the most to lose, there was strong pressure for the Church to enter the case as a defendant or at least to help shoulder the legal costs. However, the law firm of Kirton and McConkie, the Church's legal counsel, recommended that the Church's interests would be best served by pursuing neither option, and the Church kept its distance.<sup>40</sup> David Sorensen, the regular counsel to the Logan school district, suggested Arthur H. Neilsen to serve as their attorney for the trial. Neilsen was one of the premiere trial attorneys in the state at the time. He was also an active Latter-day Saint who naturally sympathized with the plight of the school district.<sup>41</sup> Several Church employees were called to testify, but the Church made no official statements and did not formally take sides during the course of the legal battle. Stanley A. Peterson, a Mormon educational administrator, later commented, "If we had gotten involved legally it would have proven that we were in bed with the school district and everything else. If we had paid for the legal costs, it would have given them

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<sup>39</sup>"Board to Study Strategy in ACLU Lawsuit," *Herald Journal*, March 23, 1977, 1.

<sup>40</sup>Oscar W. McConkie, Letter to Casey Paul Griffiths, Salt Lake City, September 29, 2008, in my possession; Oscar W. McConkie, Telephone interview by Casey Paul Griffiths, September 26, 2008, notes in my possession.

<sup>41</sup>Clark Nielsen, Telephone interview by Casey Paul Griffiths, November 16, 2010, notes in my possession.

more fodder. It was better for us to stay neutral.”<sup>42</sup> Given the high stakes in play, it might have been advisable for the Church to lend its resources to the fight, but Church leaders chose to observe from the sidelines as an issue of propriety.

The controversial nature of the case led to other consequences. Aldon Anderson, the U.S. District judge for Utah, recused himself from hearing the case because he was a Latter-day Saint. In his place, Clarence Brimmer, U.S. District judge for Wyoming, was named to hear the case. Since the case was to be tried without a jury, Brimmer would become the key figure in deciding the outcome of the trial.<sup>43</sup> Tension also increased within the Logan community. Ron Lanner recalled that his family received negative attention for bringing the suit: “A lot of people shunned us. People who had been friendly before tended to not notice us on the street or in stores. My daughter was elbowed a couple of times. I received a lot of letters telling us to move out. I also received letters from Mormons thanking us for bringing the suit.”<sup>44</sup> Thad Carlson, who became president of the Logan School Board during the suit, recalled the tension that the trial caused during a Logan High graduation ceremony. During the convocation Carlson stepped to the podium and announced he would read a passage from the book of Numbers. A gasp came from the crowd, after which Carlson proceeded to read from the phone book! He later recalled, “Afterward, we had some of our opponents come up and shake hands with us. It was the first time I had seen they had a sense of humor!”<sup>45</sup>

### THE TRIAL: STRATEGIES

Roughly one year after the lawsuit was filed, the trial began. Kathryn Collard served as ACLU’s chief counsel, assisted by Stephen Cook. The Logan School District employed Arthur Nielsen as its defense counsel, with assistance from David Sorenson, the Logan district’s attorney, and Thomas C. Anderson, who represented the state of Utah. Each side had months to prepare its strategies. Be-

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<sup>42</sup>Stanley A. Peterson, Telephone interview by Casey Paul Griffiths, July 14, 2008, notes in my possession.

<sup>43</sup>“Seminary Credit Trial Opens,” *Herald Journal*, March 9, 1978, 1.

<sup>44</sup>Ronald Lanner, Telephone interview by Casey Paul Griffiths, June 26, 2008, notes in my possession.

<sup>45</sup>Thad Carlson, Telephone interview by Casey Paul Griffiths, June 28, 2008, notes in my possession.

cause Judge Brimmer was required to frequently return to Wyoming to hear cases there, the trial stretched from early March 1978 into August.

The ACLU strategy was threefold. First, it attempted to document excessive entanglements between the seminary and schools, to show that seminary Bible courses were denominational in nature, and to prove the injurious effect of the seminary programs upon non-LDS students in the Logan schools.<sup>46</sup> To prove these claims, the ACLU attorneys called as witnesses several religious experts they had asked to review course materials, several students enrolled in Logan seminary classes, and most of the schools' chief administrators and their seminary counterparts. They also called Ronald Lanner and John Sherting as witnesses of parents' perspectives on the program. The ACLU even called a photographer, who pointed out architectural similarities between photographs of seminaries and those of the high schools they were associated with, thereby visually demonstrating the alleged involvement.<sup>47</sup>

The defense team employed its own group of religious experts to evaluate the seminary courses, several current and former Logan High students, and several seminary officials including Joe J. Christensen, who was then serving as the Associate Commissioner of Church Education.<sup>48</sup> A large part of Neilsen's defense strategy was to consistently point out that Utah law required the teaching of moral values in public schools. If the law required the teaching of moral values in a public school, then it could not deny the teaching of morality in parochial schools, which Neilsen argued the seminaries were. He further contended that the seminaries "have as much freedom to teach knowledge, whether it is scientific, political, ethical or whatever, as do the public schools." He continued, "The Constitution can limit what is taught in the public schools, but whatever is authorized in public schools must obviously be authorized in private schools." Nielsen also argued that the same Utah law that required teaching morality also required the schools to seek the "volunteer uniting of the efforts of education, civic, community, and church to accomplish the pur-

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<sup>46</sup>Poore, 197.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid.



poses of this act.”<sup>49</sup> A theme of Nielsen’s arguments during the trial would be that seminary classes were merely using the Old and New Testaments to teach the moral values required to be taught by the Utah statute. Since this goal was required by Utah law, any ventures outside of teaching the Bible as simply history or literature could be justified under this statute.

With the trial spread out over six months and including testimony of twenty-five different witnesses, it is not possible or even desirable to examine all of the witness testimony chronologically. However, it is important to understand the contributions of each group of witnesses: first, the religious leaders and experts called to review the content of the seminary courses; second, the students and parents who testified about the day-to-day functioning of the seminary system; and third, testimony from the teachers and administrators of both the Logan School District and the Church educational system.

#### RELIGIOUS LEADERS AND EXPERTS

Some of the most dramatic and emotional testimony of the trial came during the questioning and cross-examination of the religious experts brought in by both sides to evaluate the seminary materials. ACLU witnesses included leaders from local Presbyterian, Methodist, United Church of Christ, and Jewish congregations.<sup>50</sup> They also called one Latter-day Saint, Lewis Max Rogers, who grew up in Logan and was a professor of Old and New Testament thought in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Utah<sup>51</sup> and a former BYU professor. The testimony of these religious leaders generated the most acrimony in the trial, inside and outside of the courtroom.

In preparation for the trial, Collard and Cook had asked each witness to examine seminary materials for sectarian teachings. The ACLU witnesses called were nearly unanimous in their evaluation that the

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<sup>49</sup>Bob Findlay, “Bible Classes Teach Morality, Not Mormonism,” *Herald Journal*, March 12, 1978, 1-2.

<sup>50</sup>Bob Findlay, “Pastor Gives Testimony in LDS Seminary Trial,” *Herald Journal*, March 10, 1978, 1-2; “Trial Resumes, ACLU Suit against District,” *Herald Journal*, 1-2; “Teaching of Morality Argued at Trial,” *Herald Journal*, May 4, 1978, 1. “Rabbi Charges ‘Scholarly Dirty Pool,’” *Herald Journal*, May 10, 1978, 1-2.

<sup>51</sup>Bob Findlay, “Witness Says Bible ‘Misused’ in Seminary,” *Herald Journal*, May 5, 1978, 1-2.

course materials contained religious concepts unique to the LDS faith. Most objected to the doctrinally based approach of the materials, as opposed to a historical or literature-based reading of the Bible. William H. Simmons, a Methodist, argued against claims in the manuals that the LDS Church is the one true faith. "My concern is that any student taking the seminary courses who are not LDS would either conclude that they are all wrong and must convert or they would be hurt by their church being inappropriately put down."<sup>52</sup> At the same time, Simmons conceded that it was probably impossible to teach the Old and New Testament from anything *but* a faith perspective.<sup>53</sup> Horace McMullen of the United Church of Christ accused seminary of being "an indoctrination program" and disdained the curriculum's literal approach to the scriptures presented, calling it "unacceptable."<sup>54</sup>

The defense countered by arguing that the seminary curriculum was written for a worldwide audience.<sup>55</sup> Naturally, the Church Education System expected teachers to adapt course materials for the settings in which credit was offered.<sup>56</sup> Neilsen's strategy attempted to undermine the plaintiff's witnesses by showing that none of them had seen how the materials were used in the Logan Seminary classrooms.

Among the religion experts called for the defense was Robert M. Bellah, a sociology and theology professor at the University of California, Berkeley, and a member of the ACLU. Bellah agreed with the plaintiff's witnesses that the materials were religious in nature but praised the seminary program for its scholarship. Bellah said he "would be delighted" if every student coming to Berkeley "had the background in the Bible that this course would give them."<sup>57</sup> Another witness for the defense, J. Jermain Bodine, a consultant for the Hartford Seminary Foundation, also found the course materials denomi-

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<sup>52</sup>Bob Findlay, "Trial Resumes, ACLU Suit Against District," *Herald Journal*, May 3, 1978, 1.

<sup>53</sup>*Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>54</sup>Robert Bryson, "LDS Seminary an 'Indoctrination,' Pastor Testifies in U.S. Court Case," *Salt Lake Tribune*, May 4, 1978, in *Journal History*.

<sup>55</sup>Bob Findlay, "Professor Cross-Examined," *Herald Journal*, May 9, 1978, 1.

<sup>56</sup>Joe J. Christensen, Testimony, Trial Transcripts, 16:41; photocopies in my possession.

<sup>57</sup>Bob Findlay, "Professor Lauds Seminary Bible Course," *Herald Jour-*

national but noted that they could be presented in ways acceptable to all faiths. “A fair percentage . . . is certainly devoted to advocacy of LDS principles and practices,” he commented, “but a fair percentage is devoted to generally accepted principles . . . embraced by most all Christians.”<sup>58</sup>

Some of the trial’s uglier moments came when the defense tried to attack the motives of the experts appearing on behalf of the plaintiffs. Perhaps the most hostile exchange of the trial came when Nielsen questioned Lewis Max Rogers, who had previously taught religion at LDS seminaries in Idaho and Utah and also at Brigham Young University. Rogers admitted that he had left Church education and any activity in the Church partly because BYU president Ernest J. Wilkinson had asked the bishops of faculty members to turn over tithing receipts to him. Rogers resigned in protest.<sup>59</sup> This line of questioning led to a heated exchange between Nielsen, Rogers, Judge Brimmer, and plaintiff attorney Stephen Cook:

Nielsen: Has it [Rogers’s experience at BYU] disturbed you to the point where since that time you have never paid any tithing to the Church?

Cook: I will object to that, Your Honor, as being first of all completely irrelevant and second of all a matter between he [sic] and his Church. It’s a privilege.

Judge Brimmer: He may answer.

Rogers: You realize, don’t you, that is my private business between the bishop and me?

Nielsen: Yes, I do realize that but I want to know to what extent, Max, that this has caused you over the years to have deep-seated feelings, either one that you were coming in here to court to testify as you have as apart—

Rogers: Now wait a minute now.

Nielsen: Just answer the question.

Rogers: Okay. It is not a deep-seating [sic] feeling. You have isolated a point—

Nielsen: Since that time have you paid tithing to the Church?

Cook: Same objection, Your Honor.

Judge Brimmer: Overruled, same ruling.

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*nal*, July 12, 1978, 1.

<sup>58</sup>Randy Hatch, “LDS Seminary Programs Cited as Denominational,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, July 12, 1978, B1, B3.

<sup>59</sup>Robert Bryson, “Scholar Questions LDS Bible Study Credit,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, May 6, 1978, in *Journal History*.

Rogers: No, I haven't paid tithing to the Church since that time.<sup>60</sup>

Nielsen's hard-hitting tactic seemed to have worked, as Rogers went on to list of litany of other issues he had with Church practices and doctrines, among them the Church's aggressive missionary program, scriptural interpretations, and host of other issues. Nielsen succeeded in painting Rogers not only as a nominal member of the faith but also one who had an axe to grind.<sup>61</sup>

Another tense testimony was that of Rabbi Abner L. Bergman, then the only Jewish rabbi in Utah. Bergman's objections centered on the way the Old Testament was presented and racial overtones he perceived in certain seminary materials. Bergman pointed out as "repugnant" a story in the manual of "Brother Kahn, a Belgian Jew [who] was spared from extermination and is an excellent convert." Bergman asked, "Are my children to believe they will be spared from extermination if they convert to the LDS faith?" Nielsen countered that "Brother Kahn" converted to Mormonism after the Nazi holocaust and that his life's being spared was not based on his conversion. When Nielsen took issue with another of Bergman's statements, confusing the historical event with a recent television movie entitled, *Holocaust*, Bergman became upset: "I'm talking about reality, Mr. Nielsen, not a TV show. A lot of members of my family I wish could have seen that TV show. Unfortunately they're now glue."<sup>62</sup>

The emotional debates in the courtroom also began to spill over into the community. One letter to the *Deseret News* excoriated the ministers who were witnesses for the plaintiffs: "If these so-called 'men of God' are so worried about Mormon doctrine being taught, why don't they start their own seminaries next to each junior high and high school to teach morality and decency?" A Baptist minister in another letter to the *Deseret News*, stated that he was in favor of the lawsuit but objected to the ministers' portrayal of biblical scholarship. "I do not want the large number of Mormons who read

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<sup>60</sup>Lewis Max Rogers, Testimony, Trial Transcript, 4:559-60, copies in my possession.

<sup>61</sup>*Ibid.*, 561-63.

<sup>62</sup>Robert Bryson, "Rabbi Testifies on 'Racial Overtones' in Materials Used by LDS Seminaries," *Salt Lake Tribune*, May 11, 1978, in *Journal History*; Bob Findlay, "Rabbi Charges 'Scholarly Dirty Pool,'" *Herald Journal*, May 10, 1978, 1; Bob Findlay, "Rabbi's Assertion Is Sternly Rejected," *Herald Journal*, May 11, 1978, 1.

your paper and members of other religious groups to believe that only the unlearned and irresponsible accept the first five books of the Bible as history.”<sup>63</sup> Feelings were rising on both sides. After his experience in court, the trustees of Rabbi Bergman’s congregation voted to make a statement of public support for the ACLU. The statement called attention to the group’s dismay “over what seems to be a trend away from the Constitutional ideal of ‘separation of church and state in Utah.’”<sup>64</sup>

### THE TRIAL: STUDENTS AND PARENTS

The trial was less rancorous during the testimonies of parents and students who were called on both sides. Likely, both sets of attorneys knew that blunt confrontation with minors and their concerned parents was no way to curry favor with the judge. The ACLU team intended witnesses in this category primarily to show the divisive effects on the student body at the Logan schools. The defense in turn tried to portray any social ostracism as an unfortunate but normal part of the high school experience, not necessarily linked to religion or seminary.

The students who testified came from Mormon and non-Mormon backgrounds. David Campbell and Belinda Barrett, both LDS seminary students, were quizzed primarily concerning course content. Both testified that LDS concepts were taught but that, in the credit classes, the majority of time was spent learning from the Bible. Campbell conceded that he had concluded from the course that “the Mormon Church is the true church” but said he had felt no coercion from the teacher to serve a mission.<sup>65</sup> Barrett was questioned about various class activities which may have been unfamiliar to the judge and the attorneys. With Nielsen role-playing a seminary teacher, he and Barrett even acted out a “scripture chase” in the courtroom to demonstrate the type of learning games which took place in the semi-

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<sup>63</sup>Norma Richardson, “She Defends Seminary System,” *Deseret News*, May 24, 1978; John P. Baker, “Disputes ‘Saga’ Claim,” *Deseret News*, May 12, 1978, both in *Journal History*.

<sup>64</sup>“ACLU Action Supported,” *Deseret News*, July 19, 1978, ; “Jewish Trustees Favor ACLU in Logan Case,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, July 19, 1978, both in *Journal History*.

<sup>65</sup>Bob Findlay, “Trial Resumes in Suit Against School Board,” *Herald*

naries.<sup>66</sup> Campbell and Barrett both admitted that specific LDS teachings were heard in the class, among them temple marriage, the priesthood, and the apostasy of the early Christian Church. Campbell also praised the moral traits taught and said it would have made no difference to him whether credit was offered or not in the courses.<sup>67</sup> Barrett, in turn, testified she had never been told that the teachings of other religions were false.<sup>68</sup>

Deborah Lanner had graduated from high school the previous spring, but her younger brother, David, and Kurtis Scherting, the children of the plaintiffs, both testified that the seminary program resulted in divisive elements. David Lanner listed several examples of harassment he had experienced at school. Among them, he was “slugged,” a teacher accosted him because his family was suing the school district, and a female student told him that his family and the ACLU were “Communist Anti-Christ.” However, under cross-examination, Lanner also told of an LDS teacher who had put his arm around his shoulders and said, “If anyone gives you trouble over the litigation, you just come to me.”<sup>69</sup> Still, Lanner said he never dated at Logan High School, had never gone to a football game, and had avoided most social activities because he didn’t feel accepted.<sup>70</sup> Kurtis Scherting testified that he felt seminary was “the wrong place to be” and that “the Mormons are hard to make friends with.”<sup>71</sup> Under questioning by the defense, he also admitted that he had taken seminary only to be with an LDS friend, who then ended up in another class. When Nielsen asked, “If you had been able to get into the LDS seminary class with your friend the preceding year, you would have stayed in that

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*Journal*, July 5, 1978, 1.

<sup>66</sup>Robert Bryson, “‘Religious Segregation’ Charged in Suit,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, July 6, 1978, in *Journal History*.

<sup>67</sup>Findlay, “Trial Resumes in Suit Against School Board,” 1.

<sup>68</sup>Bryson, “‘Religious Segregation’ Charged in Seminary Suit,” 1.

<sup>69</sup>“Seminary Divides, Witness Testifies,” *Deseret News*, July 7, 1978, in *Journal History*.

<sup>70</sup>Bob Findlay, “‘Seminary Fosters Religious Division,’” *Herald Journal*, July 7, 1978, 1.

<sup>71</sup>“Student Felt ‘Wrong’ in Bible Class,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, July 8, 1978, B1, B2.

class, though?" Scherting replied, "Yes."<sup>72</sup>

The defense called two non-LDS students, Wendy Long and Jeff Martinez, to refute any charges of social ostracism. Long, a cheerleader and homecoming queen at Logan High, said her three best friends at school were all LDS and so was the boy she dated most frequently. Martinez praised the quality of his education at the school and also said most of his friends were LDS. Both mentioned hearing L. Tom Perry, an LDS apostle, speak at a candlelight observance at the school. Neither could recall any hassling or persecution because they did not attend seminary. The plaintiff attorneys were quick to point out that both students were popular and made more efforts than most to make friends and become involved in school activities.<sup>73</sup>

The strongest feelings during this phase of the trial came from the parents involved in the suit. John Scherting charged that the line between church and state had been "obliterated" by the seminary program. "I personally would like our children to grow up understanding the distinction between church and state, understanding that the two are and should be, as oil and water," he said during his session on the witness stand. Scherting went on to cite the death of Socrates, the crucifixion of Christ, the Holocaust, and, shrewdly, the persecution of early Latter-day Saints as examples of what happens when the religion and government mingled too closely.<sup>74</sup>

When Ronald Lanner took to the stand, he continued to press his constitutional objections to the seminary program, but focused more on the social consequences of the situation. Citing his objections as a citizen and taxpayer, he spoke at length about his children. "Any parent is harmed when he sees his children harmed. I have seen my children suffer in ways that I have considered very serious for a good many years. . . . They were social outcasts. They were part of a small minority that was baited by some of the children, by some of the kids of the majority, but ignored by most." He saw the effects of the seminary as having "no different effect on the children than segregation based on race because, in effect, what comes about is religious

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<sup>72</sup>"Higher School Costs Cited without Seminary," *Deseret News*, July 8, 1978, in *Journal History*.

<sup>73</sup>Bob Findlay, "'No Hassling,' Say 2 non-LDS students," *Herald Journal*, July 13, 1978, 1.

<sup>74</sup>John Scherting, Testimony, Trial Record, 12:41, 27; photocopies in my possession; Findlay, "Seminary Fosters Religious Division," 1.



segregation.” Lanner continued to press the point under cross-examination but grudgingly agreed with Nielsen when the attorney reasoned that “you can’t effect what students talk about or legislate how children choose their friends.”<sup>75</sup>

Parents throughout the state continued to be involved. Although this article does not explore the community reactions that would have emerged from interviews with seminary teachers, administrators, parents, and students in other towns, some indication of feelings appear in letters to the editor. One mother wrote to the *Deseret News*: “You, who want ‘academic freedom’ for my child, please do not chop at the roots until you are certain which tree it is that produces the fruit.”<sup>76</sup> Confrontations took place outside the courtroom as well. When the Logan newspaper published a letter, inferring that, in seminary “students are made powerless to change anything for the better,”<sup>77</sup> another concerned citizen visited her at home and asked her to cite one specific example. When she failed to do so, her challenger wrote his own letter to the editor requesting she write a public retraction of her accusations against the seminary system. He ended his letter with, “May the seminary go on forever.”<sup>78</sup>

### THE TRIAL: TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS

The educators from the Logan school district were called primarily to examine the charge of “excessive entanglements” between the schools and the seminaries. The school officials stressed the financial benefit to the public and taxpayer because of tremendous costs which the district would incur if the seminary program ended.<sup>79</sup> These witnesses were also quick to point out precedents for the program, such as the existence of another, albeit smaller, released-time

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<sup>75</sup>Ronald Lanner, Testimony, Trial Record, 10:176–79; Robert Bryson, “‘Religious Segregation’ Charged in Seminary Suit,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, July 6, 1978, in Journal History; Findlay, “Seminary Fosters Religious Division,” 2.

<sup>76</sup>Shirley L. Nielson, “Likes Seminary Program,” *Deseret News*, May 17, 1978, in Journal History.

<sup>77</sup>Rhoda Thurston, “The Truth,” *Herald Journal*, July 16, 1978, 7.

<sup>78</sup>Paul Harris, “Go On Forever,” *Herald Journal*, July 20, 1978, 22.

<sup>79</sup>Bob Findlay, “An End to Seminary Would Be Costly, He Says,” *Herald Journal*, July 9, 1978, 1; “Higher School Costs Cited without Seminary,” *Deseret News*, July 8, 1978, in Journal History.

program operated by the Presbyterian Church, just down the road from the high school.<sup>80</sup>

With most of the public administrators, the strategy of the plaintiff attorneys was to show that teaching in the religion classes occurred without monitoring, while the defense attempted to show that such supervision was not only unnecessary but would be legally inappropriate. Both Superintendent Blair of the Logan district and Walter Talbot, the Utah State superintendent of public instruction, admitted that they had made no attempt to examine the content or determine if seminary courses would be sectarian or not. Talbot felt that the responsibility for doing so, if one existed, was not his but would be the province of the local school districts.<sup>81</sup> Responding to the same line of questioning, Blair shot back, "We respect private institutions for what they are. I see no way of evaluating on a day-to-day basis the instructional material presented by an instructor. The transfer of credit is a system in America that has been long established. It has integrity."<sup>82</sup> The defense argued that such an investigation would be "a reverse kind of discrimination," i.e., the state invading the province of religion.<sup>83</sup>

When teachers and officials from the seminary system took the stand, the topic again became how a class on the Bible could be taught without injecting sectarian doctrine. When asked by Cook if he could separate his LDS background from his classes, Darrell Dixon, a Logan seminary teacher, replied, "I don't think I could. I am LDS and I will have those feelings, but I feel I can teach what is in the Bible." Dixon also noted frankly, "I don't know where you draw the line between something peculiarly LDS and other views held in common by Christianity."<sup>84</sup> Dixon noted that seminary teachers were instructed to be careful what they taught in the credit course, but he also mentioned that nothing in the curriculum had been specifically forbidden.<sup>85</sup> All of the seminary personnel who took the stand strongly denied any in-

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<sup>80</sup>Rulon C. Olsen, Testimony, Trial Record, 8:152.

<sup>81</sup>Tom McCarthey, "School Chief Denies Aid Sought in Seminary Challenge," *Salt Lake Tribune*, July 11, 1978, in Journal History.

<sup>82</sup>James C. Blair, Testimony, Trial Record, 13:141.

<sup>83</sup>Bob Findlay, "State School Chief Testifies at Trial," *Herald Journal*, July 11, 1978, 2.

<sup>84</sup>Robert A. Bryson, "Taught Some Mormon Doctrine, LDS Seminary Teacher Testifies," *Salt Lake Tribune*, May 13, 1978, in Journal History.

tentional improper conduct between the seminary and school. The last witness called in the trial was Joe J. Christensen, then the Associate Church Commissioner of Education, in charge of seminaries and institutes. Christensen testified that teachers were instructed to be “doubly sure” their instruction stayed clear of any “peculiarly LDS” doctrines. He also addressed the denominational nature of the course materials by noting that there were 200,000 seminary students worldwide, with slightly under half receiving instruction in the released-time setting. Materials, he noted, were prepared primarily for non-professional, part time, early morning teachers. “We’re teaching this course around the world. We’re teaching it to a lot of young people who do not have parents in the Church at all, or if their parents are in the Church, they’re relatively new members. They don’t know a Latter-day Saint interpretation of the Old or the New Testament.”<sup>86</sup> At the same time, Christensen frankly acknowledged the reality of how the courses would be taught. When asked about unique LDS doctrines, particularly marriage, Christensen noted, “It’s hard to teach a group of teenagers or college people that [the Bible] without involving marriage in every one of the classes.”<sup>87</sup> When Christensen was asked by Collard if the credit courses were religious in nature, he frankly replied, “Absolutely. I would never expect them not to be.”<sup>88</sup>

The trial caused some bad feelings between several of the school officials and the Church leaders. Superintendent Blair, in particular, felt betrayed by some of the information which came out during the trial. In an interview several years later, he stated that he was “shocked at the statements of the seminary teachers and principal that clear Mormon doctrine was taught in the Bible courses.” While listening to the testimony of the seminary officials he “felt as if he was living his own personal Dunkirk.”<sup>89</sup> Despite Blair’s protestations, however, Church educators described the nature of their curriculum with a high degree of transparency. State Superintendent Talbot,

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<sup>85</sup>Bob Findlay, “Seminary Teacher Trial Witness,” *Herald Journal*, May 12, 1978, 1.

<sup>86</sup>Bob Findlay, “Judge’s Illness Forces Seminary Trial Delay,” *Herald Journal*, July 14, 1978, 2; Joe J. Christensen, Testimony, July 13, 1978, Trial Record, 16:207.

<sup>87</sup>*Ibid.*, 178.

<sup>88</sup>Findlay, “Judge’s Illness Forces Seminary Trial Delay,” 2.

<sup>89</sup>Poore, “Church-School Entanglement in Utah,” 246.

shortly after the lawsuit was filed, discussed the plaintiffs's claims with the Church Education office and received a letter from Frank W. Hirschi, an administrator for the seminary program. This letter included a forthright assessment of the LDS curriculum, noting that a significant proportion of the lessons included LDS content. Because Hirschi's letter was in Blair's possession before the Logan Board of Education before the trial began,<sup>90</sup> Blair could not have been too shocked at what came out in the courtroom.

Only hours after the testimony of Christensen, attorneys on both sides were preparing their final arguments when Judge Brimmer collapsed and was hospitalized with sharp stomach pains.<sup>91</sup> He was diagnosed with a hernia and severe gastritis, delaying the end of the trial for another month and a half.<sup>92</sup>

Final arguments began with Thomas C. Anderson, the Assistant Attorney General for the state. He argued that an outright end to the seminary program was tantamount to religious persecution. "Great care must be taken to avoid equating neutrality with hostility. . . . I despair at the forces in the community that would remove the God of the Old and New Testament and the God of the founding fathers from our institutions." Arthur Neilsen, largely making the same point, said, "What about the kids who do attend seminary? They should not be discriminated against—they should still have their rights." He went on to argue that the plaintiff's arguments had been a case where "the tail wagged the dog." Neilsen contended that the opposing attorneys had spent 90 percent of the trial trying to prove that the classes were religious, something the defendants had never de-

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<sup>90</sup>For example, Hirschi noted that in the Old Testament course, 3 percent of the lessons included non-biblical LDS scripture, 19 percent included LDS-oriented support materials, 60 percent included statements by LDS leaders, and 16 percent focused on LDS-oriented concepts. In the New Testament curriculum, 13 percent of the lessons included non-biblical LDS scripture, 36 percent included LDS-oriented support materials, 39 percent included statements by LDS leaders, and 8 percent of the lessons focused on LDS-oriented concepts. "Support materials" were defined as handouts, filmstrips, audio, and visual materials. Hirschi's letter is reproduced in Poore, "Church-School Entanglement in Utah," 292-97. See also *ibid.*, 188.

<sup>91</sup>Findlay, "Judge's Illness Forces Seminary Trial Delay," 2; "Judge 'Satisfactory,'" *Deseret News*, July 15, 1978, in *Journal History*.

<sup>92</sup>"Seminary Trial Judge Improves," *Herald Journal*, July 16, 1978, 1.

nied. If they weren't religious in nature, he argued, they could be taught on the school campus, and there would be no need for "released time." But just because they are religious, there was no need to deny any credit, he continued, citing several other programs where just such an exchange took place.<sup>93</sup>

Kathryn Collard in response argued that the school district's policies constituted public approval of LDS teachings. "It is a sponsorship of religion contrary to the whole concept set forth by the Supreme Court." She urged the judge to "go further than the [Supreme] Court has done, and reform the nature of the program." Collard also called for the Logan School District to order a condemnation of the seminary building adjacent to the school, so that it could be used for class work instead and recommended that the program be entirely moved to before or after school because "there is no way for the seminary to operate during school hours without excessive entanglements with the school."<sup>94</sup>

For his part, Judge Brimmer was very hesitant to give any indications of how he would rule. He remarked, "I think this is a very unusual release time case. I don't think that in the books there is another one quite like this. And, the question of whether there are things that the school has done or intends to do [will] become public accommodations or in total affect amount to a chilling effect is I suppose a judgment."<sup>95</sup> Thanking the attorneys, the judge ended the trial; and Logan, along with the rest of Utah, waited anxiously for his decision.

It would be another three and a half months before Brimmer issued his opinion. In the meantime, the new school year began. The tension was somewhat less because the seminaries were not teaching a "credit course" that year, but speculation and fear were rife among the Church's seminary teachers. Randy Osbourne, who was then

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<sup>93</sup> "Logan Awaits Verdict," *Deseret News*, August 31, 1978, in Journal History; Arthur Neilson, Closing Arguments, August 30, 1978, Trial Record, 18:47-48, copies in my possession.

<sup>94</sup> "Logan Awaits Verdict," *Deseret News*, August 31, 1978, in Journal History; Robert A. Bryson, "Judge Hears Final Debate on LDS Classes," *Salt Lake Tribune*, August 31, 1978, in Journal History; Kathryn Collard, Closing Argument, August 30, 1978, Trial Record, 17:16.

<sup>95</sup> Clarence Brimmer, Closing Statements, August 30, 1978, Trial Record, 17:67, copies in my possession.

teaching at a seminary in the Salt Lake valley, recalled, "There was a worry of how it would affect us. When we first started, there was no guarantee that we would have seminary at all. These people were trying to destroy seminary."<sup>96</sup> Another recalled, "We didn't know if we would have jobs or not. We really thought that it might spell the end to the entire seminary program as we knew it."<sup>97</sup>

On both sides, there was some breaking of ranks. One former seminary teacher wrote to the *Tribune*, saying that credit should be withdrawn so "kids would then take seminary because they elect it, and for the value of the courses, not for public high school credit."<sup>98</sup> The *Tribune* also printed a letter from a former member of the ACLU complaining that "the ACLU considers itself to be in possession of a kind of total secular and total rational truth that must be forced down the throats of all those, especially followers of a system of religious beliefs, who have a different perception of reality."<sup>99</sup> The same writer flamboyantly stated that the "inquisitorial system" of the ACLU "makes Tomas de Torquemada look like a dull and unimaginative chairman of a fraternity initiation committee."<sup>100</sup>

### THE VERDICT: DECEMBER 1978

Judge Brimmer's decision finally came in mid-December 1978. In some ways, it provided some long-awaited legal guidelines for the unique released-time system in Utah. In other ways, it only muddied the waters further. Brimmer was conciliatory toward both parties in his language. "We find that the aims and objectives of the program—its development of character, faith, integrity in the youth of the LDS Church—are most laudable and praiseworthy. . . . The program is good and fine, but unfortunately, it is constitutionally flawed."<sup>101</sup> Brimmer stated that released time itself did not constitute a *per se* violation of the

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<sup>96</sup>Randy Osbourne, Telephone interview by Casey Paul Griffiths, April 23, 2008, notes in my possession.

<sup>97</sup>Hal Romrell, Conversation August 7, 2009, notes in my possession.

<sup>98</sup>John W. Fitzgerald, "A Simple Solution," *Salt Lake Tribune*, June 10, 1977, in *Journal History*.

<sup>99</sup>Ed Brennan, "Touching ACLU Concern," *Salt Lake Tribune*, May 28, 1978, in *Journal History*.

<sup>100</sup>Ed Brennan, "New Religion," *Salt Lake Tribune*, January 1, 1979, in *Journal History*.

establishment clause but that certain practices, chiefly the granting of “course credit” and the collection of seminary attendance by the school did. The decision did not condemn the program outright or require its termination. He wrote, “There is no constitutional mandate requiring governments to be hostile to religion.”<sup>102</sup> But Brimmer’s ruling made continuing the program problematic. Not only did he outlaw course credit but he also declared that students could not receive credit for meeting the minimum attendance requirements by attending released-time classes, and schools could not factor released-time students attending the classes into their requests for state funds. In point of fact, the impact of the ruling on funding was insignificant. Since every school district in Utah allowed released time, the school funds would still be substantially equally divided, even if seminary students weren’t counted. But the judge’s decision not to allow seminary to count toward a student’s minimum school attendance could be devastating. In essence, Brimmer had declared seminary to be legal but had then removed the means by which public school students could attend. Worries that the end of credit would curtail seminary attendance were now replaced by the worry that students might not be able to attend during school hours at all.

Brimmer’s ruling was followed by great confusion over what it actually meant. Both sides claimed victory. Stephen Cook, speaking on behalf of the ACLU, said, “It’s a significant victory for those who believe in the separation of church and state. . . . In terms of practicality we got all we wanted.” State Superintendent Talbot issued his own victory statement: “I am of the impression that we have won at least 90 percent of what was at stake in the litigation.” At the same time, Talbot also acknowledged bewilderment over the inconsistencies in the judge’s language: “If released time cannot be counted during the time school is held, I see that as a conflict.” Capturing the critical problem in a nutshell, he said: “If released time is not permitted during the school day, then obviously it’s not released time.”<sup>103</sup>

Interpretations varied on the ruling’s practical impact. Thomas C. Anderson, Utah’s Assistant Attorney General, reasoned, “If you’re

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<sup>101</sup>“Judge Explains LDS Seminary Ruling,” *Herald Journal*, December 17, 1978, 10.

<sup>102</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>103</sup>Bob Findlay, “Judge Rules LDS Seminary Credit Illegal,” *Herald Journal*, December 14, 1978, 1; “‘We Won 90 Per Cent’ of Issue at Stake,”



talking about seminary programs, the clear thrust of the decision is that released time is permissible. If Judge Brimmer had intended to have released time held outside of regular school hours then it would not be released time. That's a contradiction." Perhaps the best assessment of the ruling was offered by Wayne May, principal of the Logan High seminary. "I would call it a compromise decision. It affects both sides for good and for bad. I feel better that it's out—that we know where we stand."<sup>104</sup>

Beyond the confusion, however, was the clear conclusion that the relationship between state education and Church education in Utah had been changed forever. The Logan newspaper declared, "The public school system of Utah and the seminary system of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, closely associated for the past 30 years, must go their separate ways." At the same time, the paper acknowledged that "the changes don't need to be very drastic" and predicted that, although the ruling would most likely reduce seminary enrollment, the drop would not be anything serious.<sup>105</sup> The *Salt Lake Tribune* praised the decision for settling "the long-lingering question of granting credit in public schools for religious instruction." The same editorial, however, criticized the decision for leaving the question of released time dangling.<sup>106</sup>

Brimmer's ruling did not mean an end to the conflict. Kathryn Collard immediately predicted that the suit would set a precedent nationally, talked of filing an appeal in hopes that the case would eventually reach the U.S. Supreme Court, and predicted that the Court—tougher now since its last released-time case in 1952—"may be willing now to strike down released-time per se."<sup>107</sup> Initially, it appeared that Collard might have been correct as the decision began to have an impact outside of Utah. In August 1979, less than a year after the deci-

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*Herald Journal*, December 18, 1978, 1; "Released Time Issue Remains," *Herald Journal*, December 15, 1978, 1.

<sup>104</sup>"Released Time Issue Remains," *Herald Journal*, December 15, 1978, 1; Findlay, "Judge Rules LDS Seminary Credit Illegal," 1.

<sup>105</sup> Editorial, "Impact of the Decision," *Herald Journal*, December 17, 1978, 14.

<sup>106</sup>"Long Standing Issues Settled by Logan Seminary Ruling" (editorial), *Salt Lake Tribune*, December 19, 1978, in *Journal History*.

<sup>107</sup>Joe Bauman, "Educator Says State Won in Ruling," *Deseret News*, December 15, 1978, in *Journal History*.

sion, the Idaho State Board of Education declared that credit would no longer be granted in released-time classes.<sup>108</sup>

The ruling was appealed by the ACLU, eventually being argued again before the 10th Circuit Court in Denver.<sup>109</sup> It would be three more years before the 10th Circuit Court in Denver finally settled the issues raised by Brimmer's ruling. Justice Monroe McKay, a distant relative of Church president David O. McKay,<sup>110</sup> writing on behalf of the court, considerably softened the earlier 1978 verdict, declaring every type of credit except academic credit appropriate for released-time seminary.<sup>111</sup> He reasoned that "it is clear that the mere release of students during school hours to attend religious courses does not unconstitutionally advance or inhibit religion, even though as a practical matter, any accommodation is beneficial to religious interests just as failure to make some accommodation can be injurious to religious interests."<sup>112</sup> McKay's decision even opened the door for released-time credit to be given: "If the school officials desire to recognize released-time classes generally as satisfying some elective hours, they are at liberty to do so if their policy is neutrally stated and administered."<sup>113</sup>

Despite this considerable softening of Brimmer's initial ruling, it was unlikely that credit would ever return. After the decision was is-

<sup>108</sup>"Idaho's Board of Education Refuses Credit for Special Religious Classes," *Salt Lake Tribune*, August 11, 1979, in *Journal History*.

<sup>109</sup>Clark Neilsen, Telephone interview by Casey Paul Griffiths, November 16, 2010, notes in my possession. Clark Nielsen took the place of his father, Arthur Neilsen, during the appeal hearings.

<sup>110</sup>Oscar W. McConkie, Telephone interview by Casey Paul Griffiths, September 26, 2008, notes in my possession.

<sup>111</sup>"Seminary 'Released Time' Plan Upheld," *Salt Lake Tribune*, October 14, 1981, in *Journal History*.

<sup>112</sup>Monroe McKay, 662 F. 2d 1349, 1 Ed. Law Rep. 138, United States Court of Appeals, Tenth Circuit, 14. The copy I use here was part of a letter from Church legal counsel and leaders of the Church Educational System. See C. Keith Rooker and Dale A. Kimball, Letter to Stanley A. Peterson, October 23, 1981, CR 102 320, LDS Church History Library, Salt Lake City. For a copy of McKay's decision, see also [vlex.com/vid/36981619](http://vlex.com/vid/36981619) <http://openjurist.org/662/f2d/1349/lanner-v-wimmer-e-a-c-c> (accessed November 15, 2010).

<sup>113</sup>Rooker and Kimball to Peterson, October 23, 1981, 23.

sued, Church attorneys sent a letter to CES head Stanley Peterson, advising him to not attempt to restore credit. The attorneys suggested that “in the long run the best interests of the released-time program and of the Church generally would be served by laying aside the issue of public school credit.” If the Church attempted a return to the former system, it was clear that the fight would happen all over again. The LDS legal counsel advised, “It does not seem desirable to us to seek credit, thereby incurring inevitable and continuous criticism, and invite the state forever to have power over insuring our teachers’ qualifications and standards.” The attorneys also warned that the case was “on the frontier of the developing law” and “there can be no certainty how another judge in another case would utilize the precedent of this case.”<sup>114</sup> The Church seemingly agreed with this advice; while the released-time program has continued, no attempt has been made to restore the element of academic credit.

#### AFTERMATH

What was the cost of the trial to all sides involved? Total attorney costs for both sides were estimated to be in excess of \$250,000.<sup>115</sup> Shirley Pedler, ACLU director, stated the case cost the organization more than \$5,000. While that figure may seem relatively small, the total budget for the Utah ACLU at the time was only \$25,000. Pedler brushed off the enormous cost, saying, “The case was worth it if it served notice to the public that the public schools are not an arm of the church.”<sup>116</sup>

The greatest expenditures in the case fell upon the Logan School district and the Utah State Board of Education. The two school organizations not only had to cover their own legal fees but Brimmer ordered them to pay the ACLU’s attorney fees and court costs, a total of \$43,989.83. In ordering the remittance of plaintiff fees, Brimmer laid blame for the whole affair squarely at the feet of the State School Board. He wrote, “The Court is of the view that the Utah State Board of Education basically created this situation. Had it given strong and clear rules and guidance to the school districts of the State of Utah prohibiting the granting of academic credit for sectar-

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<sup>114</sup>Ibid.

<sup>115</sup>Poore, “Church-School Entanglement in Utah,” 249.

<sup>116</sup>Ibid.

ian courses in LDS Seminary Schools, this litigation may not have arisen.”<sup>117</sup> The blow was especially harsh to the Logan School district. It was softened somewhat by the 1981 appeal which excused the district from paying additional court costs. Still, the suit cost the Logan district more than \$80,000.<sup>118</sup>

The most difficult cost to gauge may be the impact the suit had on the seminary program itself. There appear to have been some fluctuations in seminary enrollment during and immediately after the suit.<sup>119</sup> One LDS official explained the drop as part of a decline in potential students, pointing out that seminary declines followed a similar drop in public school enrollment.<sup>120</sup> When asked about the impact of the ruling in 1982, Henry B. Eyring, the Church Commissioner of Education, was fairly sanguine. While recognizing that public schools outside of Utah were more cautious about offering credit, he noted: “We see no change in seminary growth and enrollment.” When asked about the impact the ruling may have had on seminary enrollment, Eyring commented, “We’ve had to work harder, which has made us, and the students, appreciate seminary more.”<sup>121</sup> However, the full impact that removing credit for released-time coursework had on student enrollment or the quality of the classroom experience remains speculative.

### LEGACY: THIRTY YEARS LATER

Does more than thirty years of historical hindsight offer any new

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<sup>117</sup>“Order Awarding Attorney Fees and Costs,” October 1, 1982, quoted in Poore, “Church-School Entanglement in Utah,” 249.

<sup>118</sup>“A Sigh of Relief on Seminary Issue,” *Deseret News*, October 15, 1981, in *Journal History*.

<sup>119</sup>According to Ross Poore, enrollment at Senior High Seminaries in Utah initially rose from the 1977–78 level of 46,875 to 47,503 in 1978–79, then dropped to 44,999 in 1979–80, then to 44,334 in 1980–81. At Junior High Seminaries, the fluctuation was more dramatic, dropping from 13,015 in 1977–78 to 9,914 in 1978–79. It then dropped to 9,654 in 1979–80, and 8,685 in 1980–81. Poore, “Church-School Entanglement in Utah,” 244.

<sup>120</sup>Frank D. Day, Letter to Ross Poore, August 27, 1982, Salt Lake City, quoted in Poore, “Church-School Entanglement in Utah,” 243.

<sup>121</sup>Diane Cole, “Growth May Push LDS to Change System,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, April 4, 1982, B1, B2.

perspective on the *Lanner* case? Surprisingly, yes. While this culture clash may have appeared to have ended in a forced accommodation, nearly every party involved has positive feelings about the outcome. *Lanner v. Wimmer* is a unique case where all sides can claim victory and may well be right.

While Ronald Lanner felt the case should have gone beyond the circuit court decision, he was pleased with the outcome, speaking of the episode as “a highlight of our time in Utah.” Lanner felt the appeal decision tried to “soften” the impact of the case, but he was still willing to say, when interviewed in 2008, “We were the winners in the lawsuit, even though we didn’t get everything we asked for.” At the same time, Lanner recognized the effect of the trial on his own children: “Neither one would ever go back to Utah.” Ronald and Harriet Lanner eventually left the state and now reside in California.<sup>122</sup>

The ACLU claimed the lawsuit as a significant victory, having “challenged the state power structure and dominant church and won.”<sup>123</sup> Stephen Cook recalled the case as “a hot political potato” but was quick to downplay any assertions of religious overtones in the suit. “We weren’t targeting the Church. The name of the institution was unimportant to us. It could have been the Catholic Church or any other organization.”<sup>124</sup> ACLU members were also quick to praise the work of their lead attorney, Kathryn Collard. A regional director of the ACLU commented, “Kathy gave the ACLU in Utah a big boost. She won court-awarded fees, which she turned over to the ACLU, and she raised the profile of the ACLU as a litigator.”<sup>125</sup>

For state educators, an immediate effect was the cessation of credit for Bible classes, but others were more gradual. A 1983 survey relative to the court ruling indicated that as many as a third of Utah schools were still violating certain provisions of the ruling, for instance, by collecting attendance reports from the seminaries or figur-

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<sup>122</sup>Ronald Lanner, Telephone interview by Casey Paul Griffiths, June 26, 2008, notes in my possession.

<sup>123</sup>Linda Sillitoe, *Friendly Fire: The ACLU in Utah* (Salt Lake City, Signature Books, 1996), 52.

<sup>124</sup>Stephen Cook, Telephone interview by Casey Paul Griffiths, June 27, 2008, notes in my possession.

<sup>125</sup>Sillitoe, *Friendly Fire*, 53.

ing seminaries into funding calculations.<sup>126</sup> Whether any of these violations are still occurring today could only be measured case by case. It seems, however, that most several Utah school districts adjusted their schedules and credit requirements so that students could still take seminary and graduate from high school.<sup>127</sup> Many schools initiated an eight-period system, spread over two days to allow students to take additional electives, including enrolling in seminary.<sup>128</sup>

Surprisingly, the group that has expressed the most positive feelings about the ruling is full-time seminary teachers. For them the trial provided the firm legal basis for the particular LDS brand of released-time religious education. While released time had existed for decades throughout the nation prior to the ruling, no program was as extensive and time-intensive as the LDS seminary program. In the crucible of the *Lanner* case, the seminary program had undergone a baptism of fire, and emerged stronger. The most controversial elements of the program had been purged. Stanley Peterson, the lead CES administrator of the time, remarked, "It was an affirmation of released time, that it was alive and well."<sup>129</sup> Bruce Lake, an assistant administrator in the Church system, remembered, "Initially there was a lot of anxiety about it." Ultimately, however, he concluded that the case "wasn't a big deal. We figured young people would go to seminary because they wanted to and their parents wanted them to. Receiving credit would be a factor but not a deciding factor. At the same time we were moving released time into other states where credit wasn't even an issue."<sup>130</sup>

In some ways, the case removed the academic requirements that had barred teachers from integrating LDS theology into their teaching of the Old and New Testaments. Without the need to keep instruction interdenominational, teachers had a greater degree of freedom in what could be taught and testified of in the seminary classes. Joe J. Christensen remarked, "The issue had been bubbling for a lot of years. When I began teaching seminary in 1955 we were instructed

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<sup>126</sup>Poore, "Church-School Entanglement in Utah," 253.

<sup>127</sup>Sillitoe, *Friendly Fire*, 53.

<sup>128</sup>Poore, "Church-School Entanglement in Utah," 255.

<sup>129</sup>Stanley A. Peterson, Telephone interview by Casey Paul Griffiths, July 14, 2008, notes in my possession.

<sup>130</sup>Bruce Lake, Telephone interview by Casey Paul Griffiths, April 12, 2008, notes in my possession.

not to teach Elijah in the Kirtland Temple when we taught Old Testament. We had some unusually effective insights, which made this difficult. The outcome of the case was, in my opinion, favorable to the Church. I think we had a spiritual uplift throughout the entire system when we didn't have those restrictions."<sup>131</sup> Years after the case was resolved, Stan Peterson, by then a head CES administrator, remarked, "In the court case the school district was trying to prove that we were merely teaching a history of the Old Testament and the history of the New Testament. That we were really not teaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ. That's what they were really trying to show, that this is really secular. . . I said if we win I'll really be in trouble, as far as I am concerned, because if we can prove we have not been teaching the gospel in seminary, then we better quit."<sup>132</sup>

How did the average seminary teacher feel about the change? David Barrus, a teacher at the time of the suit, recalls with disdain teaching the credit classes before the decision. "It was ridiculous before. You'd want to share a quote in class, and you'd have to introduce it by saying, 'A prophet of God has said . . . ' instead of just citing it as Joseph Smith. It really handicapped us. I was grateful when the change came."<sup>133</sup> Randy Osbourne, a relatively new teacher when the trial took place, added: "Before this [the trial] we were involved in assemblies, faculty basketball games, we could volunteer. Then they put a limit on some things. . . . It drew a definite line between Church and State." Now nearing retirement, Osbourne still feels that the ruling had an affirmative effect on the seminary program. "I think the change was positive. It gave us freedoms. . . . We thought we'd lose students, but we didn't."<sup>134</sup>

Since the decision was handed down, the *Lanner* case has served as an important guide in church/state relationships in education. The case has been cited more than twenty times as a precedent since 1981, the most recent being *H.S. v. Huntington County Community*

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<sup>131</sup>Joe J. Christensen, Telephone interview by Casey Paul Griffiths, July 2008, notes in my possession.

<sup>132</sup>Stanley A. Peterson, Oral History, interviewed by Jeffrey L. Anderson, February 25, 2000, 31, LDS Church History Library.

<sup>133</sup>David Barrus, Interviewed by Casey Paul Griffiths, August 7, 2009, notes in my possession.

<sup>134</sup>Randy Osbourne, Telephone interview by Casey Paul Griffiths, April 23, 2008, notes in my possession.



*School Corporation* (616 F. Supp. 2d 863, 245 Ed. Rep. 798, N.D. Indiana), in which a court enjoined a trailer being parked on school property for thirty-minute, released-time sessions. It has been cited more than eighty times in other legal settings such as law reviews, annotations, etc. As of this writing (2010) the *Lanner* decision remains valid law, yet Stephen Cook has expressed concern that “the principles of *Lanner*, and similar cases, will not hold and the line between church and state will be blurred.”<sup>135</sup>

What lessons can be gleaned from this case study in culture clash and accommodation? While *Lanner v. Wimmer* may not be remembered alongside the epic nineteenth-century church/state battles experienced in Utah, it is a reminder of the tensions between Mormonism and the secular traditions of the larger American society. As Mormonism has moved closer to the American mainstream, its educational system has played a vital role in sustaining a unique Mormon identity and transmitting that identity to the next generation. It is perhaps ironic that the end of academic credit, fiercely resisted by the generations prior to the *Lanner* case, was a boon to Church educators in allowing them to more directly teach the stories and doctrines of Mormonism to their students. While this case may have highlighted two cultures in conflict, it also demonstrated how the struggles which ensue can ultimately benefit the aims of all parties involved. In the case of the seminary program, the old cliché that “what didn’t kill it made it stronger” was true, and a more cohesive and comfortable relationship between Church and state was the result.

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<sup>135</sup>I am indebted to Stephen W. Cook and his associates for this legal analysis. Stephen W. Cook, email to Casey Paul Griffiths, August 19, 2010, print-out in my possession.

# CHANGING PORTRAITS OF THE ELECT LADY: EMMA SMITH IN NON-MORMON, RLDS, AND LDS HISTORIOGRAPHY, 1933–2005

*Max Perry Mueller*

THE PROPHET HESITATED TO PUT the revelation in writing—so remembered William Clayton, one-time personal secretary to Joseph Smith, president and prophet of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In his testimony before a notary public recorded in Salt Lake City in 1874, Clayton recalled that, on July 12, 1843, in Joseph Smith's office above his Red Brick Store in Nauvoo, Illinois, Clayton, the Prophet, and his brother Hyrum gathered to discuss the much-rumored-about but not yet publicly acknowledged practice of celestial marriage among some of the Saints' leadership.

Clayton recalled hearing Hyrum Smith urge his brother to put the revelation on paper. Though the Mormon prophet had putatively received the revelation sometime before, Clayton stated that Joseph had yet to make an official record of the fact that God required faithful men take plural wives. Joseph feared the response to such a man-

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*Emma Hale Smith (1804–79) has been portrayed differently according to the various religious traditions. Used by permission, Utah State Historical Society, all rights reserved.*



date from Emma Hale Smith, his first and—during his lifetime—only publicly recognized wife. Hyrum optimistically assured Joseph that, because of the revelation’s obvious truth, he could “convince any reasonable man or woman of its truth, purity and heavenly origin.” Once on paper, Hyrum would take the revelation “to Emma and I believe I can convince her of its truth and [you] will hereafter have peace.”

While Joseph relented and dictated to Clayton what would later be canonized in the LDS Doctrine and Covenants as Section 132, Joseph remained skeptical that Hyrum could turn Emma around: “You don’t know Emma as well as I do,” Joseph warned. The enthusiastic Hyrum went to Emma but returned to the office crestfallen. Hyrum reported to Joseph and Clayton that not only had he failed to convince Emma, but he “had never taken such a severe lecture in all his life and that Emma remained resentful and angry.” Joseph commented, “I told you [that] you do not know Emma as well as I do.”<sup>1</sup>

In one form or another, this story is included in almost all Joseph Smith biographies and, more recently, in treatments of Emma Hale

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<sup>1</sup>William Clayton’s Testimony, Salt Lake City, February 16, 1874, recorded in Andrew Jenson, “Plural Marriage,” *Historical Record* 6 (May 1887): 225–26.

Smith and Joseph Smith III, the Smiths' oldest surviving son who became in 1860 the founder of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (RLDS; since 2001 Community of Christ). Thus, the episode is an essential feature in the lore that has made Emma Hale Smith one of the most divisive personalities in the historiography of the Latter-day Saints. Since her falling out with the Mormon patriarchy after the 1844 assassination of Joseph and her subsequent decision not to follow the Brigham Young-led faction of the Mormons to Utah, Emma's true character has been the subject of much debate, both within Mormon scholarly circles and outside them.

To show how Emma's character has been interpreted in modern scholarly historiography, I analyze how biographies of Joseph Smith, Emma, and Joseph III employ the story of the first recording of Doctrine and Covenants 132, and other stories involving Emma. Of particular interest is how these biographies, written by non-Mormon, RLDS, and LDS scholars handle (or do not handle) three important events in Emma's life and in the history of the early Church: (1) Emma's response to Joseph's activities in instituting polygamy; (2) Emma's role as the founding president of the Female Relief Society, the women's charitable organization; and (3) the widowed Emma's decision to remain behind in Illinois and to cut herself and her children off from the Mormon community that settled in Utah. In examining the use of these different episodes, I also call attention to the possible theo-politics behind the varied images of Emma. I see portrayals of Emma's character as an important window into historians' understandings of women's roles in the family and religious communities of nineteenth-century Mormonism, and by inference, what role women should play in the modern Church.

Before beginning this examination, it is worth recognizing the potential pitfalls inherent in a project that attempts to place in a single analysis biographies produced by scholars who worked in different eras (from the 1930s to the 2000s), who come from different theological perspectives (non-Mormon, RLDS, and LDS) and who often make competing historical claims. However, it is also worth stating why, despite these pitfalls, I believe such a project is potentially fruitful. Put simply, the historiography of Mormonism has long been a virtual minefield of partisan interpretation. As Jan Shipps has written, it was not until after World War II that the "olden days" of unsophisticated pro- and anti-Mormon writings were replaced by the work of "well-trained Mormon scholars [who] started examining critically their

own history and culture, and [by] non-Mormon scholars [who] began investigating Mormonism without preconceptions.”<sup>2</sup> According to Ronald W. Walker, these perils are particularly true for the genre of the Mormon biography, which until recently “has seldom been well balanced and ‘alive,’ full of human realism and descriptive of ‘times’ through which an individual passed.”<sup>3</sup> Part of my own interest in uniting this disparate group of biographies—which though all produced by professionally trained academics, approach Emma Hale Smith more often with devotion or derision instead of some sort of historians’ positivism—involves bringing to light these changes in Mormon scholarship, changes that speak to a story of more fits and starts than steady progress towards an idealized historicity.

Walker has also asserted that even modern Mormon biographers have been wary of “investigation[s] into personality, psychology, physiology and health, and sexuality,” yet such questions which, along with “arguing God’s cause,” are required to delineate something that approaches the historical “full truth.”<sup>4</sup> The converse could be said of some non-Mormon biographers who seem interested only in asking the more salacious questions while giving no credence to the possibility of transcendence as a force in history.

Yet I believe that this limitation inherent to the genre of Mormon biography can itself prove illuminating. In comparison to, say, Church histories, because they are more interested in fleshing out character than filling in chronology, biographies can better provide the historiographer with two levels of focus: first the way the biographers choose to portray the character they analyze and, second, the way this portrayal might reflect the biographers’ own understanding of cultural or religious behavioral norms. Therefore with these two levels of focus in mind, this article studies how Emma Hale Smith is portrayed in the influential biographies in which she appears as a central figure. I believe that, if these biographies are not representative, they at least speak to the major concerns of the three major stakeholders in the history of early nineteenth-century Mormonism: historians of American religion writing from outside official LDS Church

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<sup>2</sup>Jan Shippis, *Sojourner in the Promised Land: Forty Years among the Mormons* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 164.

<sup>3</sup>Ronald W. Walker, David B. Whittaker, and James B. Allen, *Mormon History* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 113.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 137, 139.

structures, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and the Community of Christ.<sup>5</sup>

### FAWN BRODIE

Fawn Brodie's *No Man Knows My History* was the first professional, non-Mormon<sup>6</sup> biography of the Mormon prophet to meet both critical and popular success. Brodie, the niece of LDS president David O. McKay, grew up among the LDS elite, but left the Church while doing graduate work at the University of Chicago, a period dur-

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<sup>5</sup>Except for Roy Arthur Cheville, *Joseph and Emma Smith: Companions for Seventeen and a Half Years, 1827–1844* (Independence: Herald House, 1977), all of the biographies in this study are analyzed in Ronald W. Walker, "The Challenge of Mormon Biography," in *ibid.*, 113–52.

<sup>6</sup>The question of how to properly categorize Brodie's religious affiliation has long been a high-stakes parlor game for both Brodie's supporters and detractors. Many Mormons assert that, because of her thoroughly Mormon cultural background, Brodie should best be understood as a disenchanted Mormon with an ax to grind, but a Mormon nonetheless. Marvin S. Hill's "Secular or Sectarian History? A Critique of *No Man Knows My History*" *Church History* 43 (March 1974): 78–96. To support her more "secular" bona fides, non-Mormon readers point to the fact that, though she acknowledged that she was motivated to study Joseph Smith because she was raised in the LDS faith, Brodie insisted that she was "not a devout Mormon" when she began her research on Joseph Smith. What's more, Brodie stated that her research did not lead to her disenchantment with the Mormons. I thus conscientiously use "non-Mormon"—and intend ambiguity in the term—as an attempt to place Brodie between the Mormon and "secular" identities. Michael Kammen, *In the Past Lane: Historical Perspectives on American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 1999), 20–24. While other "non-Mormon" scholars have written biographies of Joseph Smith since the initial publication of *No Man Knows My History*, no book from outside, or for that matter from within the Mormon community—except for Richard Lyman Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*—has had a greater influence on the public and scholarly perception of Joseph Smith. While Dan Vogel in his much-praised *Joseph Smith: The Making of a Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2004), takes another path to reach his conclusion, his claim that Joseph was a "pious fraud" does not deviate much from Brodie's perception of the Mormon prophet. For this reason and because Vogel's book does not treat Mormon history past 1831, I have chosen to focus on Brodie's work as representative of non-Mormon scholarship on Joseph and Emma.

ing which she dedicated most of her energies to studying Mormon origins. Following the publication of Brodie's biography of its founding prophet in 1945, the LDS Church excommunicated her.<sup>7</sup>

According to Marvin S. Hill, soon after *No Man Knows My History's* publication, "most professional American historians" recognized it "as the standard work on the life of Joseph Smith and perhaps the most important single work on early Mormonism."<sup>8</sup> Walker characterizes Brodie's biography as a "troubling enigma" for generations of Mormons coming of age in the 1940s and 1950s. "Powerfully written, it asked fundamental and largely unanswered questions. . . . [I]t demanded an increased openness about Mormon origins and about Mormon history generally."<sup>9</sup> Yet according to Hill, "there is evidence that her book has had strong negative impact on popular Mormon thought as well, since to this day in certain circles in Utah to acknowledge that one has 'read Fawn Brodie' is to create doubts as to one's loyalty to the Church."<sup>10</sup>

Brodie's portrayal of Joseph is that of a "bucolic scryer," whose source of "power lay not in his doctrine but in his person[. T]he rare quality of his genius was due not to his reason but to his imagination."<sup>11</sup> Starting with primitive magic and folklore techniques, Joseph invented a religious system and a new cosmology, in part to satisfy his own sexual desires. Along with convincing thousands of others, Joseph ended up convincing himself of his own divine mandate. For Brodie, Emma is her husband's ever-patient, self-sacrificing wife who, though having given her all to her husband, could not bear to give him to other women.

For example, Brodie carefully describes the deaths of four of the nine children born to Emma and Joseph (327). She even details the fact that a pair of twin infants Joseph and Emma had adopted in Ohio contracted measles. Brodie implies that this infection was due to the

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<sup>7</sup>Shippis, *Sojourner in the Promised Land*, 165.

<sup>8</sup>Marvin S. Hill, "Brodie Revisited: A Reappraisal," *Dialogue: Journal of Mormon Thought* 4 (Winter 1972): 72-85.

<sup>9</sup>Walker, Whittaker, and Allen, *Mormon History*, 47.

<sup>10</sup>Hill, "Brodie Revisited: A Reappraisal," 72.

<sup>11</sup>Fawn McKay Brodie, *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith, the Mormon Prophet* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1945), 405, ix. Further quotations from this work in this section are cited parenthetically in the text.



Smiths' constant need to move, as Joseph was forced to both quell factions within his nascent movement and avoid anti-Mormon mobs. The twins, whom the Smiths had adopted the same day they lost their own prematurely born twins, fell sick while the Smiths were staying with the John Johnson family of Hiram, about thirty miles from Kirtland, Ohio. According to Brodie, though for Joseph, the children's "illness in another man's house was not easy to bear" (119), the family's enforced transience was not the worst of it; both adopted father and mother were forced to leave the twins' sickbed as an indirect consequence of Joseph's insatiable sexual appetite. Brodie writes that a "gang of Mormon-baiters," formed to punish the prophet for "being too intimate" with one of the gang member's sisters, dragged Joseph from the Johnsons, threatened him with castration, "stripped him, scratched and beat him with savage pleasure, and smeared his bleeding body with tar from head to foot" (119). That night, instead of nursing the twins, Emma devoted herself to nursing Joseph, "patiently scrap[ing] . . . the tar" from her husband's bruised body. Brodie points out that the Prophet quickly recovered from the attack. He was even able to preach to a gathering of Mormons the very next morning. Yet five days later one of the two twins died, "leaving only the little girl, Julia Murdock to the sorrowing pair" (120). For Brodie, this vignette captures Emma's misdirected familial loyalties: instead of caring for her innocent children at the time when they needed their mother most, Emma cared for her philandering husband at a time when he seemed to be reaping what he had sown.<sup>12</sup>

Yet despite such repeated acts of devotion, Emma could not win Joseph's marital loyalty. More than a decade later in Nauvoo, Illinois, where Joseph ruled over a city-kingdom of several thousand faithful, Brodie suggests that Joseph used the pretext of a divine revelation to subdue Emma's wifely jealousy so he would be free to satisfy his sexual appetite.<sup>13</sup> Brodie writes that the revelation itself, which Clayton dictated and became part of Mormon canon, contained "a special commandment to Emma to 'receive all those that have been given unto my

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<sup>12</sup> For an analysis of this episode, including Brodie's historical errors, see Mark Lyman Staker, *Hearken, O Ye People: The Historical Setting of Joseph Smith's Ohio Revelations* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2009), chap. 27.

<sup>13</sup> Many historians have challenged Brodie's assertion that the motivation for Smith's revelation on plural marriage can be reduced to his sex-

servant Joseph” (340). Brodie writes that ‘the penalty for [Emma’s] disobedience [of this commandment] was savage: “But if she will not abide this commandment she shall be destroyed” (341). Emma took this admonition seriously; Emma reportedly told William Law, whose *Nauvoo Expositor* would soon report on Smith’s secret practice of plural marriage, that “the revelation says I must submit or be destroyed. Well I guess I’ll have to submit” (341). Yet Brodie writes “with the passing days [Emma] grew more courageous. However inspired the revelations of the past may have been, she felt in her heart that this was a concoction of John C. Bennett and the devil” (341).

According to Brodie, Emma’s fears and frustrations about her husband’s marital plans and practices came to a head when she caught her husband and his already pregnant plural wife, Eliza R. Snow, a poetess and teacher to the Smith children, embracing outside the Smiths’ bedrooms in the Nauvoo Mansion House. Drawing from sources, which later biographers would seriously question, Brodie writes: “In a sudden rage—for apparently she had trusted Eliza above all other women—[Emma] seized a broomstick and began beating her. Eliza tried to flee, stumbled and fell down the full flight of stairs. Still not content, Emma pursued her in a frenzy that Joseph was powerless to stop, and drove her out of the house in her nightdress”<sup>14</sup> (345–46). According to Brodie, Emma had endured the constant flights from danger and the deaths of some of their children. She even briefly accepted plural marriage. Yet Emma could not accept Jo-

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ual appetite. Richard Lyman Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, 326, has proposed to understand Smith’s motives this way: “Was he a libertine in the guise of a prophet seducing women for his own pleasure? The question can never be answered definitively from historical sources, but the language he used to describe marriage is known. Joseph did not explain plural marriage as a love match or even a companionship. . . . He understood plural marriage as a religious principle.”

<sup>14</sup>Linda Newell and Valeen Avery have disputed Brodie’s claims that any violent altercation between Emma and Eliza resulted in a miscarriage. Nevertheless, Newell and Avery state that after “the incident,” Eliza abruptly left the Mansion, and the “separation between the two women” who had previously worked closely together on the Mormon community’s behalf “was permanent.” Linda King Newell and Valeen Tippetts Avery, *Mormon Enigma: Emma Hale Smith, Prophet’s Wife, “Elect Lady,” Polygamy’s Foe, 1804–1879* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1984), 134–37.

seph's polygamy when she came face to face with it just outside her own bedroom.

In Brodie's biography, Emma is too blinded by jealousy and too stubborn to be a leader of women. Brodie writes that after Joseph established the Female Relief Society "with Emma as President," the new group's efforts were "quickly diverted from charitable offices to purging of iniquity" (305). Brodie suggests that Emma used this new authority, not to care for the poor but to sniff out would-be polygamists. "With a passion that probably came less from her exalted standards of moral behavior than from an unuttered dread of what she might discover, Emma probed and questioned every woman who came into the organization" (306). Yet these efforts were for naught: "Eventually every one of [the early leadership of the society] became [Joseph's] plural wives with the exception of Mrs. [Elizabeth Ann] Whitney, who granted him instead the privilege of marrying her seventeen-year-old daughter Sarah" (305-6). Emma's character did not lend itself to the strength needed to form this community institution. Instead the part of her personality that might have manifested in leadership showed itself in her dogged devotion to what Brodie calls the "lie" that Joseph had stayed loyal to her (399). Even after Joseph's death, Emma shielded herself and her sons from the possibility that they "discover one day that their father, for all his genius and spiritual insight, was a common libertine—for she never could see a polygamist as anything else" (327).

According to Brodie, this complete rejection of the polygamist cause had three important results. First, it meant that Emma clashed with Brigham Young, whom she blamed for officially instituting polygamy among Mormons and, as a result, stayed behind in Illinois with her children. Second, in 1860 when Joseph Smith III accepted the leadership of disaffiliated believers to reclaim Joseph's legacy in establishing the RLDS Church, Joseph III could rely on his mother's testimony that polygamy was a monstrous fraud created by the false prophet, Brigham Young (399). Finally, according to Brodie, Emma's denial of polygamy was her own personal vehicle of "revenge and solace for all her heartache and humiliation. This was her slap at all the sly young girls in the Mansion House who had looked first so worshipfully and then so knowingly at Joseph" (399).

In insisting that Joseph Smith had always remained monogamous, Emma was able both to become the beloved matriarch for the Reorganization and protect her public dignity. Yet for Brodie, it is be-

cause of Emma's great power of self-denial that she becomes a tragic feminine figure, the greatest victim of Joseph's religious swindle. As Brodie believed is typical for wives—especially the Mormon wives with whom she grew up—Emma gave up too much for Joseph, including her ability to tell herself the truth.<sup>15</sup> To underscore this belief, it is worth returning to the importance of Emma's violent encounter with Eliza R. Snow, which Brodie suggests had two catastrophic results. First, Eliza's "fall, it is said, resulted in a miscarriage"; and second, it ended Emma's innocence about her husband's true nature (346). By including the story about Emma pushing Eliza down the stairs, Brodie provides a literary vehicle to lead her readers to their own loss of innocence about Joseph Smith (345).<sup>16</sup>

### RLDS VIEWS OF EMMA

Adherents of the Reorganized Church of Latter Day Saints who espoused lineal succession and rejected polygamy under the leadership of Joseph III, have had vastly different interpretations of Emma's

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<sup>15</sup>RLDS historian Robert Flanders called *No Man Knows My History* the "best and the worst" of a genre of "'neo-nativist' histories of Mormonism." "Mrs. Brodie's work is ultimately her own, a subtle yet emphatic declaration of spiritual and intellectual independence from her Mormon origins and antecedents, set in a format of wide research and a popularized journalistic writing style, with an abundance of blood, sex, and sin." Robert B. Flanders, "Writing the Mormon Past," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 1 (Autumn 1966): 57, 59.

<sup>16</sup>Reviewing the second edition of *No Man Knows My History*, Marvin Hill, "Brodie Revisited," 72, states that "the work has had tremendous influence upon informed Mormon thinking, as shown by the fact that whole issues of *B.Y.U. Studies* and *Dialogue* have been devoted to considering questions on the life of the Mormon prophet raised by Brodie." Walker, "Mormon Biography," 47, comments that for non-Mormons as well the book was a "watershed"—"a brilliantly written synthesis of the old sources that gained credibility by acknowledging Joseph Smith's ability and creativity." Shippo, *Sojourner in the Promised Land*, 165, has written: "[The] Saints were exceedingly offended by [Brodie's] interpretation . . . [that] Smith was a gifted young farmer who dabbled in folk magic and made up a story about golden plates that he himself later came to believe." Brodie had not participated in the Church since college and was excommunicated in 1945, following the book's publication. Yet "the influence of Brodie's book," Shippo concludes, "could not be expunged."

place in Church history. Established in 1860 and based in Independence, Missouri, RLDS scholars have historically understood Emma, not as her promiscuous husband's victim, but instead *either* as a devoted partner who helped Joseph fight forces bent on establishing immorality in the young but booming Mormon community at Nauvoo or more recently as a symbolic defender of morality, a matriarchal storehouse preserving the truth of the Restoration until her son could reorganize the Church.

In 1977, Roy A. Cheville, a University of Chicago-trained religion scholar published *Joseph and Emma Smith: Companions for Seventeen and a Half Years 1827–1844*. Cheville, the first Presiding Patriarch of the RLDS Church who was not a direct descendent of Joseph Smith to hold that position, critically examined LDS claims about the origins of polygamy. He writes extensively about how Emma ran the domestic and business interests of Nauvoo's most prominent residence, the Mansion House. For example, citing Joseph III's memoirs, Cheville writes that Emma once chastised her husband for allowing a friend to set up a liquor bar in the Mansion while she was in St. Louis purchasing furniture for the section of the Mansion House that served as the growing Mormon community's hotel. Joseph III recalls:

With no excitement or anger in Mother's voice . . . but a distinctiveness and earnestness I have never forgotten Emma asked her husband, "How does it look for the spiritual head of a religious body to be keeping a hotel in which is a room fitted out as a liquor selling establishment?" When Joseph replied that he merely wanted to help his friend, and "it was the way of taverns to sell liquor," Emma threatened to take the children and leave Joseph to "find some other person to look after things here."

Cheville concludes: "The bar was removed and Emma presided over the Mansion House."<sup>17</sup>

Cheville also claims that Emma played a vital role in the early formation of Mormonism's key institutions. For example, Cheville writes that while Joseph "directed the organization of the group" it was the "women of the church [who actually] organized the Female

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<sup>17</sup>Roy A. Cheville, *Joseph and Emma Smith: Companions for Seventeen and a Half Years 1827–1844* (Independence, Mo.: Herald Publishing house, 1977), 100. Additional quotations in this section from Cheville's work are cited parenthetically in the text.

Relief Society” to serve the hundreds of Mormons who became destitute after the Church collapsed in Missouri and the newly converted “British Saints” who had used all their resources to emigrate from England (90). As the first president of the society, Emma not only worked to fulfill her husband’s charge that the organization bring “relief of the poor, the destitute, the widow and the orphan” but also worked to root out “questionable notions about love and marriage” that were circulating among some members of the Church. Citing the October 1, 1842, issue of the *Times and Seasons*, the Church’s monthly newspaper, Cheville writes that “Emma and other members [of the Relief Society] prepared [a] statement” in which they testified that they knew of “no other system of marriage practiced in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints than the one contained in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants” and that the practice of a “secret wife system” was unacceptable for the community (91). Cheville points out that Joseph and Hyrum Smith reaffirmed this statement sixteen months later in the February 1, 1844, issue of *Times and Seasons*. Almost seven months after Joseph dictated his revelation on celestial marriage to William Clayton, Joseph and Hyrum Smith signed a statement—at the behest of Emma’s Female Relief Society—that condemned polygamy and “other false and corrupt doctrines” (91). Thus according to Cheville, through her work in the Female Relief Society, Emma, in conjunction with her husband, not only helped meet the material needs of the community but also helped police its moral limits.

Challenging Brodie’s analysis, Cheville also dismissed the idea that the motivation for plural marriage was simple lust. Instead he claims that it was based on a misogynistic theology of power that a priesthood-holding man was superior to women and thus should be able to take “as many wives as he pleases” (169). Citing Joseph and Emma’s relationship as exemplary, Cheville writes that the couple’s “marriage was a companionship” first and foremost: “Emma Smith supported Joseph but did not surrender to him.” And even according to the nineteenth-century plural marriage “theory of [Utah] Mormons, the husband was required to procure the sanction of his wife before marrying another woman. If Joseph had made such a proposal, Emma would have replied negatively as she spoke up about the bar in the Mansion House. She would have told Joseph that if he brought home another woman, she, Emma, would leave” (174).

Cheville describes Mormonism’s first couple as sharing true in-

timacy, an intimacy that Cheville characterizes as based on Joseph and Emma's complementary natures: "Joseph needed Emma's stability, while she was helped by his warm, friendly, outreaching qualities" (154). These natures nevertheless coalesced to form a "common devotion to "what was right" (164) And according to Cheville, the act of taking plural wives without "procur[ing] the sanction" of Emma would have put Joseph beyond the pale of the couple's shared understanding of righteousness (164, 174). Cheville therefore argues that the presence of Joseph and Emma's intimacy and the absence of "pregnancies and progeny" among "all the wives attributed" to Joseph as compelling evidence that "Joseph and Emma continued in the monogamous relationship" until Joseph's martyrdom (164, 175).

Yet within the RLDS community of scholars, Cheville's explanation of the history of plural marriage—blaming the eventual Utah Mormons for its origins and insisting on Joseph's matrimonial faithfulness to the politically as well as morally powerful Emma—has not been in vogue since at least the late 1980s. In 1988, the prolific RLDS historian, Roger D. Launius published his *Joseph Smith III: Pragmatic Prophet* (1988). Launius does not dispute the fact that the doctrine and practice of plural marriage began with Joseph Smith and his circle at Nauvoo.<sup>18</sup> What's more, unlike Cheville's portrayal of Emma as Nauvoo's courageous guardian of Mormon morality and the perfect matrimonial complement to Joseph Smith Jr.'s religious genius, in Launius's narrative, Emma's role as a moral and political leader in the Nauvoo community goes unexamined. Emma Hale Smith appears as Joseph Smith III's affectionate, if not overly protective mother and, on occasion, a private counselor to him as she had been to her martyred husband (319). Yet while this portrayal shows her as wielding less public power over both the Mormon community and Joseph Jr. in the years when the Saints were formulating the physical and doctrinal bounds of their kingdom at Nauvoo, Launius's Emma nevertheless plays an important role during this critical period, as the guard-

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<sup>18</sup>Roger D. Launius, *Joseph Smith III: Pragmatic Prophet* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988). For additional information on Emma, see Ronald E. Romig, *Emma's Family* (Independence: John Whitmer Books, 2008). Community of Christ historian Mark Scherer, is fond of describing the RLDS Church as "Emma's Church." See his forthcoming three-volume history of Community of Christ. Additional quotations from Launius in this section are cited parenthetically in the text.



ian of the *potential* for a future reorganization of the Restoration.

In his own discussion of Emma's famously angry response to the celestial marriage revelation, Launius challenges Cheville's logic that Joseph was faithful to Emma because Emma would have accepted nothing else. Instead, citing documentation that both the Mormons and their detractors recorded during the summer of 1843, Launius concludes that "without question the prophet was teaching some form of marital experimentation in Nauvoo." Yet according to Launius, while Emma's objections were not powerful enough to make Joseph stop practicing plural marriage, he wasn't entirely indifferent to her rage. "Hoping that it would soothe her anger," Joseph did allow her to burn the original revelation after a copy had been made (192).

For Launius this dramatic gesture holds symbolic importance for the formative history of the Reorganization. By burning the document, Emma separated herself from the Saints that accepted it (including Joseph himself). She considered that these believers had betrayed the Prophet's message by connecting what she considered the sin of plural marriage to the sanctity of the restored Church. By making this symbolic separation, Emma preserved the potential for an eventual complete restoration. She began to fulfill this potential when, following the assassination of the Prophet, she rejected the leadership of Brigham Young and, with twelve-year-old Joseph III and her four other children, remained in Illinois and remarried, while those who accepted Brigham Young's leadership trekked to Utah.

According to Launius, Brigham Young "would have considered Joseph Smith III's candidacy for the presidency of the church very strongly if the young Smith would accept the theological and administrative direction Young gave the church following his father's death." But because of Emma's animosity toward Young over plural marriage and financial disagreements, Emma saw to it that such a reconciliation between Joseph III and Young never occurred (34, 35). Instead she taught her children to view the Mormons as apostates who had unlawfully denied them their rights to their father's wealth and property and, against God's will, prevented the Smith scion from assuming his birthright: his father's prophetic mantle.

The very public battle between Emma Hale Smith and Brigham Young over the Mormon community's wealth and Joseph Smith's legacy, which even included Mormon threats against the physical safety of Emma and her children, did not cease with Young's departure from Illinois. Yet by that point, Launius argues, Young had success-

fully colluded with the local magistrates administrating Smith's estate to obtain the control of much of Joseph Smith's properties and his recorded papers, leaving the Smith family with only their household goods, a few farm animals, and some income from rental property. Hiding it for years in a false-bottom trunk, Emma Hale Smith did however prevent Young from obtaining the document he wanted most: Joseph Smith's "inspired revision" of the King James Bible, which the Saints called the "New Translation" (38–39).

According to Launius, the feud between his mother and Brigham Young influenced Joseph III's character, developing in the young man "an abiding hatred of all for which Young stood" and guaranteeing that "Joseph adopted his mother's view of plural marriage, fighting his entire life to prove that his father had never been involved in the practice. . . . Brigham Young, therefore, was the great villain. . . . He had instituted polygamy and had tried to place the burden of its origination on the prophet" (43). In his portrayal of Emma, at least on the issue of plural marriage, Launius decouples Emma Hale Smith from her husband and connects her with her son, for whom she safeguarded the invaluable "New Translation" of the Bible and in whom she, at least in her estimation, instilled the uncorrupted message of his father's church.

Reasons internal to the RLDS community motivate Community of Christ scholars to elevate Emma's stature. In Cheville's case, by strengthening the bond between Emma and Joseph and by framing Joseph as a faithful monogamist who did not and, for that matter, could not simply lord it over his willful and righteous wife, Cheville might have been aiming to reappropriate Joseph from the polygamist Utah Mormons who have always attributed to him the doctrine and practice of plural marriage. Moreover, perhaps the historical process of (re)-emphasizing Emma's legacy during the 1970s and 1980s was part of the RLDS's move toward greater female leadership in the Church, culminating in the ordination of women in 1985.<sup>19</sup>

In Launius's biography of Joseph Smith III, Emma serves as the quasi-apostolic link between Joseph Smith's original Restoration and his eldest surviving son Joseph III, who in 1860 would as-

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<sup>19</sup>See Rita M. Lester, "Women in the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints" in *Encyclopedia of Women and Religion in North America*, edited by Rosemary Skinner Keller and Rosemary Radford Ruether (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2006), 728–32.

sume his place as president of what became the RLDS Church. By understanding Emma as the temporary guardian of the Restoration, Launius succeeded in 1988 in doing what Cheville had been unable to accomplish in 1977: to seriously grapple with the overwhelming evidence that plural marriage began with the Saints' original prophet while also maintaining the RLDS claim to an uninterrupted line of succession back to what they consider Joseph Smith's true legacy of restoration.

But Cheville and Launius may have also been influenced by the changing roles of women in American culture and by the changes to how women were portrayed in American history. All but ignored by the early Mormon biographers of Joseph Smith, for a growing number of LDS historians trained in the era when feminist scholarship helped to make gender a central category of historical inquiry, Emma became a symbolic representative of "womanhood," employed either to justify stereotypes and reaffirm traditional gender roles or employed to challenge them.

### JOHN HENRY EVANS

In 1933, Mormon historian John Henry Evans published *Joseph Smith: An American Prophet*. As he makes clear in the preface, he aimed to write the first "scientific treatment of Joseph Smith" based on "the available facts, without smothering these facts in opinion."<sup>20</sup> However, Evans, the author of biographies of other early Mormon leaders, including Brigham Young and Charles C. Rich, was only partially successful. His upbeat presentation means that his *Joseph Smith* comes across more like hagiography than critical biography. Nevertheless, the work influenced future LDS Church historian Leonard J. Arrington to study Church history.<sup>21</sup> Beyond the Utah Mormon audience, the book was also intended to reframe the image of Joseph Smith for the American public, to see him not as a religious charlatan and a sexual deviant, but as a genuine religious leader to whom "close to a million people" in "thirty nations" look to as "a revealer of truth, as the

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<sup>20</sup>John Henry Evans, *Joseph Smith, An American Prophet* (New York: Macmillan, 1933), vii. Additional quotations from this source in this section are cited parenthetically in the text.

<sup>21</sup>Richard L. Bushman, and editors Reid Larkin Neilson and Jed Woodworth, *Believing History: Latter-day Saint Essays* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 263.

founder of a church [and as] the exponent of a large body of religious thought" (vii). And even if Evans's non-Mormon readers could not accept this image, the powerful Macmillan Company, which published the book, hoped that readers could at least view Smith as a "fascinating personality"—perhaps even the "most uncommon of our [American] countrymen" (vii).

Yet to accomplish this feat, Evans had to overcome the legacy of polygamy. The LDS Church had officially withdrawn permission for new plural marriages in 1890 and had continued to retreat by successive steps up till 1911 when it began actively exercising Church discipline against those who engaged in new marriages. This withdrawal was matched by a corresponding coalescence of Mormons who still shared a conviction in the righteousness of practicing plural marriage. In the 1930s it became possible to identify a separate body of believers who came to be known as Mormon "fundamentalists" and who organized themselves geographically and theologically outside the Temple Square hierarchy's reach. This development caused much chagrin among the increasingly anti-polygamist leaders at Salt Lake City, since the national press displayed an endless fascination with this group, making plural marriage the dominant characteristic of Mormonism in the American imagination.<sup>22</sup> In his very limited treatment of plural marriage (266–75), Evans hoped to dispel the tantalizing image, still present a decade later in Brodie's biography, of early Mormon leaders using the principle of plural marriage to satisfy their sexual appetites. To challenge this image, Evans asserted what had already become the common LDS response to critics—that polygamy arose primarily out of the "social" reality that there were more righteous women of "marriageable age" than men in the early Mormon community.

Quoting the "poet-apostle" Parley P. Pratt's 1855 *A Key to the Science of Theology*, Evans asserted that polygamy satisfied "the privilege of every virtuous female who has the requisite capacity and qualifications for matrimony" to be married (269). "Plural marriage" also staved off the "deep-rooted blight of prostitution," which Evans asserts is "widespread" in monogamous societies but was non-existent in "Utah till the non-Mormons took it there" (268, 273). Moreover, plural marriage made women both equal in their homes—"there was equality as between the wives and as between the children"—and

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<sup>22</sup>Shipps, *Sojourner in the Promised Land*, 98.

equal in the eyes of society. Evans quotes nineteenth-century Apostle George Q. Cannon, who was also a member of four First Presidencies: “There are (sic) no refuse among us—no class to be cast out, scorned, and condemned; but every woman who chooses can be an honored wife, and move in society in the enjoyment of every right which woman should enjoy to make her the equal of man, as far as she can be equal” (269).

Evans asserts that most importantly, Mormonism is, at its core, about the personal development of “all souls,” which cannot occur “in isolation.” “Character [is] chiseled out through attrition, through human contacts, through the method of give and take.” Polygamy thus guaranteed that participants could have their characters “brought to perfection” through the intimacy of the family unit. Wives and mothers, “in addition to increasing the number of objects of [their] affection,” would learn to “subject [their] petty irritations [and] jealousies to the larger ends of life.” Husbands and fathers “would be called upon to fight for an ideal of justice, fair-dealing, and suspended (sic) judgment, in the home.” And having developed their strength of character in the family unit, these faithful Mormons “would carry [their character] into other and larger social contacts.” The principle of plural marriage did not come from “Joseph Smith’s sex-urge” but from God who provided the Mormons with an institution in which all women could be loved and treated with equality and in which “all souls” would be refined for the betterment of their own earthly and heavenly lives and health of the Mormon community at large (270, 271).

Evans makes no mention of Emma’s unfailing dedication to either Joseph himself or to his efforts to restore the Church. While Evans acknowledges that Emma was the Female Relief Society’s first president, he defines its purpose as “provok[ing the] brethren to do good works” and to corral the “emotionalism” inherent to women, which “unless checked, might prove dangerous in bringing about spiritual rigidity” (265). In his only other reference to Emma, Evans quotes William Clayton’s description of recording the celestial marriage revelation (LDS D&C 132). He implies that plural marriage’s logical and spiritual reasonableness were the factors that led Hyrum Smith to believe “any woman could be convinced that the principle was true.” Joseph’s retort (“you don’t know Emma as well as I do”) implies that Joseph knew of Emma’s inherent unreasonableness, even unrighteousness. Evans writes that, in addition to giving Hyrum a tongue lashing, Emma demonstrated her willful rejection of the new Mormon dispensation

by coaxing the “original document” away from Joseph and burning it: “Fortunately,” Evans wrote, “Bishop [Newell K.] Whitney had made a copy of it.” In other words, Emma’s unwillingness to submit herself to the refining powers of plural marriage showed her to be obstinate and capricious. Evans quotes Apostle Orson Pratt as recalling that Emma was “embittered against Joseph, and at times fought against him with all her heart; then again she would lead forth ladies and place their hands in the hands of her husband, and they were married to him, according to the law of God” (274).

Evans asserts that among Mormon women, Emma’s negative reaction was rare. “On the whole, the Mormon women accepted the principle of plural marriage in the same spirit as the men, especially those who had been taught to look at it in the larger way.” In fact, Evans concludes his discussion of polygamy by documenting that thousands of Mormon women protested against anti-polygamy laws imposed in Utah during the last three decades of the nineteenth century. According to one protester, instead of being akin to “white slavery,” as polygamy was often called among anti-Mormons, plural marriage was ““necessary for the redemption of the human family from the low state of corruption into which it has fallen”” (275). Thus, the fact that Emma did not accept this “Godly institution” and excluded herself from the Restoration meant that Evans could justifiably exclude her from the most of his biography of Joseph.

Beyond the scope of the narrative, there are three other possible reasons for Emma’s non-presence in *Joseph Smith: An American Prophet*. First, Emma’s rejection of Brigham Young’s leadership was particularly painful for Utah Mormons. As Joseph’s long-time wife and closest confidante, she rejected Brigham Young’s leadership, contested Young’s claim that polygamy originated with Joseph, and eventually joined the rival movement established by her son that worked to refute claims that Joseph had engaged in polygamy.<sup>23</sup> To acknowledge her importance in the formation of the early Church would, in part, validate her claims about Joseph’s distance from plural marriage. Second, as part of diminishing Emma’s influence among Utah Mormons, such popular stories about Emma pushing a pregnant Eliza R. Snow down the Mansion House stairs positioned her as knowing about polygamy and as causing an alleged miscarriage that killed the

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<sup>23</sup>Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, 493–94.

Prophet's potential heir.<sup>24</sup> Finally, perhaps the most obvious reason for Emma's absence is that women in general appear infrequently in *Joseph Smith: An American Prophet*. When Evans does mention women, he describes them literally as the fertile fields in which children, "Utah's best crop," were produced (259). Many if not most historians of Evans's generation simply did not pay much attention to the important roles women played in the formation and perpetuation of early Mormonism.<sup>25</sup>

### CONFLICTED IMAGES OF THE 1970S

By the 1960s and 1970s, second-wave feminism brought profound changes to gender relations in American culture, including in American religious communities. As more and more women took official leadership roles in American congregations, ecclesiastical and liturgical structures were often revised to be more gender neutral or even to recognize women's unique religious experiences.<sup>26</sup> Yet these changes did not come without tension as many religious men and women pushed back against these modernizations, seeing them as threatening the order established by God and buttressed by tradition.

A battlefield of this cultural struggle was women's place in American religious history. Many historians revised the historiography of American religion in ways that consciously sought to recognize women's contributions to American religious life and even to rediscover precedence for women assuming greater leadership. Other historians, however, reinterpreted American religious history in ways that reinforced both traditional gender stereotypes and gender roles. Starting in the 1970s, LDS historians produced conflicting portrayals of Emma as a jealous and uncontrollable woman, as a dedicated wife and mother, and as an exemplar of female leadership. These contested images reflected the on-going debate over the proper place of women in both family and religious life that took place in the LDS community during this same period.

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<sup>24</sup>Newell and Avery, *Mormon Enigma*, 134, 164.

<sup>25</sup>Ann Braude, ed., *Sisters and Saints: Women and American Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 1.

<sup>26</sup>Rosalyn Baxandall and Linda Gordan, "Second-Wave Feminism," in *A Companion to American Women's History*, edited by Nancy A. Hewitt (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2002), 420.



For example, Francis M. Gibbons, long-time secretary to the LDS First Presidency, published *Joseph Smith: Martyr, Prophet of God* in 1977, only a year after the LDS Church announced its official opposition to the Equal Rights Amendment to the Constitution (ERA) and secretly mobilized its massive fund-raising and political operations behind the amendment's defeat. Describing it as "a moral issue with many disturbing ramifications for women and for the family as individual members as a whole," the leaders of the LDS Church based its opposition to the amendment, which would have guaranteed equal rights to all citizens regardless of sex, on the belief that if the amendment became law it could not only lead to the disruption of traditional gender roles but also to increased sexual permissiveness, abortion, and homosexuality.<sup>27</sup> While the majority of LDS Church members opposed the amendment, others supported it and did so vocally.<sup>28</sup> As a long-time Church employee and future General Authority, Gibbons most likely shared the fear of Church President Spencer W. Kimball that, if passed, the ERA "would strike at the family, humankind's basic institution." And while the assertion that Gibbons's book was directly affected by the ERA debate is speculative, his portrayal of Emma certainly matches the conventional LDS view that women who rebelled against Church authority in the social sphere and their husband's authority in the family sphere would become self-centered, prideful, and dangers to the truths of which they are witnesses and to the stability of their families.

Gibbons fits into a long line of LDS leaders, including Evans, who wrote scholarly but hagiographic biographies of Mormon leaders.<sup>29</sup> The book's preface even strikes the same tone as Evans's; while he makes no claims to be "scientific," Gibbons does promise his readers an "honest portrayal" of Joseph Smith, "taking into account both

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<sup>27</sup>Shipps, *Sojourner in the Promised Land*, 197.

<sup>28</sup>Neil J. Young, "'The ERA Is a Moral Issue': The Mormon Church, LDS Women, and the Defeat of the Equal Rights Amendment," *American Quarterly* 59, no. 3 (September 2007): 623–44.

<sup>29</sup>Gibbons's nineteen biographies of LDS leaders include portrayals of all of the first sixteen Church presidents, ending with Ezra Taft Benson in 1996. Francis M. Gibbons, *Dynamic Disciples, Prophets of God: Life Stories of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1966).

the strengths and the weaknesses of this unusual man.”<sup>30</sup> And like Evans, to explain the continued interest in Joseph Smith, Gibbons also cites the Church’s expansive reach, “three million members, distributed worldwide” and the quality of the people, “distinguished by their sobriety, thrift and prosperity,” all who call Joseph their founding “prophet” (viii). Yet one feature that distinguishes Gibbons’s book from that of Evans is the amount of space devoted to Emma and the complexity of that portrayal.

Emma enters in a substantial way for the first time into Gibbons’s narrative in the description of the revelation Joseph received in the summer of 1830 (now LDS D&C 25). Most of this revelation was directed at Emma herself, chastising her for selfishness and urging her to continue to support her husband’s endeavors. Referring to Emma’s future rejection of the principle of plural marriage, Gibbons interprets the contents of the revelation forward: “In light of subsequent events, [the revelation] takes on added significance because of the insight into Emma’s character that it provides. Emma was told to ‘murmur not because of the things which thou hath not seen, for they are withheld from thee and from the world, which is wisdom in me in a time to come.’ She was also warned to ‘beware of pride’ and assured that she need not ‘fear’ about how Joseph would support her.” For Gibbons, this revelation means that, in fact, Emma “was a proud, fearful, murmuring woman, and later events corroborated this analysis to a large extent” (89, 90).

Yet Emma’s true nature would come fully to light only during the controversy over plural marriage, some thirteen years after this revelation. For most of their life together, Gibbons writes, “Emma was the Prophet’s strongest supporter, save only on the issue of plurality of wives. Warmly affectionate, she was a woman of intelligence and spirit. When Joseph was in trouble, she defended him tenaciously. When he was ill, she nursed and comforted him. When he did something worthy of note, she was in the front rank of his admirers” (307). Gibbons does not depict Emma as fulfilling any kind of official leadership role and does not mention the Relief Society. He depicts Emma’s strength as “stoic calm.” She endured repeated bereavements, including six dead infants, and repeated threats to her life and the life

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<sup>30</sup>Francis M. Gibbons, *Joseph Smith, Martyr, Prophet of God* (Salt Lake City, Deseret Book, 1977), viii. Additional quotations from this source in this section are cited parenthetically in the text.

of her husband, with “remarkable resiliency.” “These and other difficulties,” Gibbons writes, Emma “faced without complaint as being the common lot of the wife of an uncommon man.” And for such dedication, as the summer 1830 revelation revealed, Emma was Joseph’s “elect lady,” the definition of female companionship for the prophet (307).

According to Gibbons, despite Emma’s steadfastness, by denying the principle of plural marriage, Emma showed the extent of her limitations. She had often been the closest witness of Joseph’s prophetic calling. From his translation of the Book of Mormon to his later years as a healer of the sick and great leader of a growing kingdom, she, above all others, knew of “Joseph’s forthright character.” And when Hyrum initially presented to her the revelation of plural marriage, she did not find it inconsistent with what she had always seen emanating from her husband, “a man of God whose spiritual qualities had opened the heavens to him.” Nevertheless, though she knew “the mandate was true . . . she rejected it and fought against it” (303). Her character was marked, according to Gibbons, by a “gross inconstancy,” a disloyalty to her husband and to the truth. She thus vacillated between “joy and despair”: acceptance of the principle and a jealous rejection of it.

Yet after the Prophet’s death, Gibbons writes that the loss of her husband’s steady presence meant that Emma’s attitude toward polygamy and toward the LDS leadership “hardened.” And this hardening had dire consequences, not only for herself and her children, but for the history of Mormonism. Potentially responding to the position taken by Cheville and Launius, Gibbons asserts that, although she had designated four young women as Joseph’s plural wives and was present for the sealings, she swiftly withdrew her support and later “refused even to admit that he had ever taken another wife. So industriously did she inculcate this false idea in the minds of her children that young Joseph, in writing his memoirs as an old man, prefaced them by declaring that his mother, Emma, was the only wife the Prophet Joseph Smith ever had” (308). Gibbons thus blames Emma for the split between the leadership of the Church, the Smith family, and eventually the founding and flourishing of the RLDS Church, which he seems to bemoan as the loss of the Church’s most direct biological connection with the Prophet.

Gibbons presents to his readers a much more complicated portrayal of Emma than Evans presented some forty years earlier. In *Jo-*

*seph Smith: Martyr, Prophet of God*, Emma is depicted as a loyal and faithful wife, fulfilling the needs of her husband with resilience and patience. Yet in Gibbons's view, when her position as "elect lady" was challenged by the revelation of plural marriage and by Joseph's death, Emma was no longer able to put her duty to serve her martyred husband, her community, and God before her own desires and fears.

This more complex treatment of Emma appeared in many of the biographies of Joseph Smith that LDS historians published during the late 1960s and early 1970s. For example, in *Joseph Smith and the Restoration: A History of the Church until 1846* (1967), BYU religion professor and historian Ivan J. Barrett depicts Emma as the strong-willed president of the Female Relief Society, as the divinely mandated "elect lady," and as "the mother in Israel" empowered to "give instruction, as may be requisite in her calling."<sup>31</sup> Beyond relieving the suffering and the poor, part of her calling involved defending her husband against a "tide of persecution" that arose in Illinois in 1842. To counter anti-Mormon charges waged against her husband—including that he was a polygamist—Emma circulated a petition of support for Joseph and presented it in person to the Illinois governor, appealing to him to intervene in the Mormons' defense.<sup>32</sup> Yet Barrett argues that, by rejecting counsel from Hyrum and Joseph on the doctrine of plural marriage, Emma turned away from the Restoration, became an apostate, and thus broke her eternal seal to her husband and to their children.<sup>33</sup> In Barrett's treatment of Emma, a portrait emerges of a woman who is faithful to her husband, but whose faith falls short of meeting all the demands of God and his faithful servant, Joseph.

In 1977, Donna Hill's *Joseph Smith: The First Mormon*, was an explicit attempt by a Mormon scholar to replace Fawn Brodie's portrayal of Joseph as a "bucolic scryer" and "sensualist" in the popular Mormon and non-Mormon memory. Hill presents Joseph as a flawed but genuine prophet whose religious insights have affected the spiritual lives of millions of followers throughout the world. Richard Bushman has praised Hill's book as the biography of Joseph that, in the last three decades, most Mormons would recommend to their inter-

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<sup>31</sup>Ivan J. Barrett, *Joseph Smith and the Restoration: A History of the Church to 1846*, 2d ed. (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1973), 506.

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*, 507.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*, 525–27, 640.

ested non-Mormon friends.<sup>34</sup> For many intellectual Mormons like Bushman, Hill succeeded in meeting the challenge extant since the initial publication of *No Man Knows My History*—to present a thinking Mormon’s rebuttal to Brodie’s assertion that Joseph Smith was, in the end, no more than a religious fraud.

Yet Hill restates the rumor that Emma pushed Eliza down the stairs and does so by referencing Fawn Brodie as her source, signaling perhaps that, while Hill wants to challenge Brodie’s portrayal of Joseph, she is, for the most part, satisfied with Brodie’s portrayal of Emma.<sup>35</sup> In the last substantive mention of Emma, Hill juxtaposes Emma’s 1879 “last testimony,” in which Emma denies that her husband ever practiced polygamy with the direct response that Eliza R. Snow printed six months after Emma’s death. After Joseph’s assassination, Snow became the plural wife of Brigham Young and, from that position, became one of most revered Mormon woman in Utah, president of the revived Relief Society, sponsor of the Young Ladies’ Mutual Improvement Association and the Primary Association, matron in the Endowment House, and a prolific writer of both poetry and prose to express public themes. In Hill’s narrative, Snow gets the last word on both the origins of polygamy and on Emma: “I once dearly loved ‘Sister Emma,’ and now, for me to believe that she, once honored woman, should have sunk so low . . . as to deny what she *knew* to be true, seems a palpable absurdity. If what purports to be her ‘last testimony,’ was really her testimony she died with libel on her lips.”<sup>36</sup> Hill thus uses Eliza R. Snow, whose (allegedly) miscarried child would have been Joseph’s true heir, to perhaps signal to her readers that Emma’s perfidy had not been forgotten. While Eliza should be taken as an exemplar of Mormon womanhood, Emma was a cautionary tale for other Mormon women who deny their responsibilities to their family and to their faith.

Taken as a whole, these portrayals of Emma present a clear message: women can serve as loyal helpmeets to their husbands, families, and faith communities. But the strength for this service comes from a woman’s connection to her family, at the center of which stands her husband. Any change that disrupts this connection—be it the result of the

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<sup>34</sup>Bushman, Neilson, and Woodworth, *Believing History*, 291.

<sup>35</sup>Donna Hill, *Joseph Smith, the First Mormon* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1977), 352.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, 359.

death of her husband or, as Gibbon's narrative implicitly implies, the liberalization of societal and legal norms that endorse greater autonomy of the sexes—could lead to disastrous consequences for a woman, her family, and her culture. As such, this message reflects the chief contention of the LDS leadership regarding the ERA and more broadly regarding the changing landscape of gender relations in America.

#### LINDA KING NEWELL AND VALEEN TIPPETS AVERY'S *EMMA*

In 1984, historians Linda King Newell and Valeen Tippetts Avery released through Doubleday Press the first full-length biography of Emma Smith. Newell and Avery researched and wrote their book during a period when early Mormon women's journals, diaries, and other writing were being (re)-discovered as rich but underappreciated source material for histories of nineteenth-century Mormonism. With access to this new historical information, the support and mentorship of the New Mormon Historians like Leonard Arrington, Davis Bitton, and James B. Allen, along with the intellectual tools of critique emerging out of second-wave feminism, Newell and Avery were part of a new generation of moderate feminist historians who were also practicing LDS women. Periodicals like *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, for which Newell and her husband served as co-editors, and *Exponent II*, a journal started by, among others, Laurel Thatcher Ulrich and Claudia L. Bushman and which traced its roots back to the nineteenth-century Mormon women's journal, *Woman's Exponent*, provided the space outside of the Church's control to publish and debate these historians' new findings. And these findings consciously shifted women's religious experiences from the periphery to the center of Mormon history.<sup>37</sup> The tight control the LDS Church had, for the most part, maintained over the publication of its own history among its faithful was under challenge, this time not from gentiles or disenchanted former Church members, whom the Church could easily dismiss, but from orthodox LDS women who were often the mothers of large families, who served as Relief Society leaders and Sunday school teachers.<sup>38</sup>

The title of Newell and Avery's book, *Mormon Enigma: Emma Hale Smith, Prophet's Wife, "Elect Lady," Polygamy's Foe, 1804–1879*, says

<sup>37</sup>Shipps, *Sojourner in the Promised Land*, 198.

<sup>38</sup>Claudia L. Bushman ed., *Mormon Sisters: Women in Early Utah* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1976). See also Maureen Ursenbach

a lot about their project. It shows that they intended to move past the standard LDS image of Emma as a woman whose break with the Utah Mormons meant that she was doomed to either be characterized as an apostate or simply “written out of the official Utah Mormon histories.” Yet while Newell and Avery treat Emma’s entire life, they also challenge the standard RLDS portrayal of Emma, as “a careful image of her: perpetually patient, always valiant, silently stoic, the mother of Reorganization.”<sup>39</sup> Their goal was to bypass rumor and myth and place Emma squarely at the center of her own drama: to “reconstruct the full story of this remarkable and much misunderstood woman’s experiences” (xii).

For the purposes of this article, three points of comparison between this treatment of Emma and those that preceded it are worth making. First, Newell and Avery portray Emma as a forceful leader in the Nauvoo community, with the organization and activities of the Female Relief Society as a central event in Newell and Avery’s narrative. The Relief Society not only demonstrates Emma’s importance in the early Church community but also the importance of women more broadly in the ecclesiastical structure the Prophet envisioned. Quoting the Nauvoo Relief Society history that was reported decades later in the Utah-based *Woman’s Exponent*, Newell and Avery assert that in March of 1842 Joseph organized the leading Mormon women into the Relief Society “under the priesthood and after the pattern of the priesthood [because] a part of the priesthood belongs to [Mormon women]” (106). During the organizational meeting, Joseph stated that the president and the counselors of the society would “preside just as the Presidency preside[s] over the Church” (106, 107). After the society’s founding members elected Emma as the group’s first president—an act that, according to Joseph, fulfilled his 1830 revelation that Emma was his “elect lady”—Emma did not hesitate to assert her authority. For example, the discussion over what to call the society was veering between two choices, “the Female Benevolent Society,” favored by Joseph and Apostle John Taylor, and the “Female Relief Society” favored by Emma. According to Newell and Avery,

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Beecher and Lavina Fielding Anderson, eds., *Sisters in Spirit: Mormon Women in Historical and Cultural Perspective* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987).

<sup>39</sup>Newell and Avery, *Mormon Enigma*, xi–xii. Additional quotations from this source in this section are cited parenthetically.



Emma engaged her husband “in a dignified debate” over the matter. Emma objected to “Benevolent” because it was associated with the “Washington Benevolent Society,” which she called “one of the most corrupt institutions of the day.” Her husband responded that “Relief” connoted “calamity” and that such a title suggested that “the Society would only respond to extraordinary occasions instead of common occurrences.” Emma’s response to this assertion was emphatic: “We are going to do something *extraordinary*! When a boat is stuck in the rapids with a multitude of Mormons on board, we shall consider that a loud call for *relief*. We expect extraordinary occasions and pressing calls.” The force of her argument was, as John Taylor put it, “so potent” that the men capitulated and the women adopted “Relief Society” as the name of their organization (107, 108).

The Female Relief Society, which over the course of a few months grew to include almost all the women of Nauvoo, became the central moral policing and social relief network in the expanding Mormon kingdom. According to Newell and Avery, Emma was an effective president, hearing and fairly judging accusations of immorality, gossip, and sexual impropriety within the community. Newell and Avery even credit Emma with exposing the Mormon apostate and polygamist John C. Bennett, which ended in his expulsion from Nauvoo.<sup>40</sup> She also led efforts to collect and distribute money to the needy, settled labor disputes, and found homes for orphans. According to Newell and Avery, while Joseph founded the society under a divine mandate, it was Emma who made it successful (106–18).

Newell and Avery provide the most detailed discussions of the popular stories: Did Emma burn the revelation on polygamy? Did Emma push Eliza down the Mansion House stairs? According to Newell and Avery, these episodes—all of which, they believe, are based on limited, conflicting, or biased sources—detract from what is really important about Emma’s experiences: her vacillation between accepting what Joseph (and Hyrum) told her about the divine origin of plural marriage and her rejection of it (134). What comes through is a portrait of a very modern woman who is struggling to accept her husband and to support his ambitions, yet who also feels that, despite his supposed sacred motivations, he is knowingly com-

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<sup>40</sup>The problem with Bennett’s practice of “spiritual wifery” is that it was not authorized by the top Mormon leadership and was accused of lacking “any moral or theological framework” to justify its practice. *Ibid.*, 111, 112.

mitting adultery (152–53). The fact that, according to Newell and Avery, Joseph hid most of his plural wives from Emma and the rest of the community, suggests that her suspicions of betrayal were not without merit (145), even given the political and social outcry that would have greeted an open proclamation of the new doctrine. Even Emma’s rejection of the bar in the Mansion House, which features so prominently in Cheville’s narrative, is framed, not as a fight over liquor, but as one over polygamy, according to Newell and Avery. Upon her return from St. Louis where Emma was conducting business on her husband’s behalf, what upset Emma was not that alcohol would be served in the Prophet’s home but that, in her absence, Joseph had taken another wife (158).

Newell and Avery present a narrative of Emma that goes beyond portraying her as an honorable wife forced to confront a patriarchy which was acting dishonorably. They present a historical challenge to the authority of the LDS patriarchy itself. They assert the controversial idea that Joseph had intended for the worthiest Mormon women to receive “the fullness of the priesthood” and thus to enjoy a spiritual authority all but equal to the worthiest men. Newell and Avery claim that Emma was the first woman to receive a “second anointing,” which assured that in the next life she would reach the highest levels of Mormon cosmology. In the language of the anointing ceremony, she was Joseph’s queen (161).

In *Mormon Enigma*, this assertion of Emma’s singular exaltation and the possibility of greater spiritual authority for women in the priesthood add another possible layer to Emma’s decision to not make the trek to Utah. While Brigham Young worked to create an autocracy after Joseph’s death, Emma’s resistance to his authority was not simply about plural marriage but also about who had power within the Church. Joseph died before he could solidify the proper shape of marriage within Mormonism. Newell and Avery suggest that perhaps he also died before he could establish the proper roles of men and women in the restored Church’s ecclesiology.<sup>41</sup> With the martyrdom of her husband, Emma lost her spiritual benefactor and special status within the community. Thus, she was forced to consolidate her resources, spiritual and material, for the well-being of her

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<sup>41</sup>Linda King Newell, “The Historical Relationship of Mormon Women and the Priesthood,” in *Women and Authority: Re-Emerging Mormon Feminism*, edited by Maxine Hanks (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992), 27.

family, which she believed could only happen away from Brigham Young (206).<sup>42</sup> From Newell and Avery's perspective, Emma was not only a faithful wife fighting injustice but also perhaps a full priestess, whose authority had been wrongly suppressed.

*Mormon Enigma* became a relative "best-seller" in Mormon studies. Newell and Avery received numerous invitations from LDS women's groups and other adult forums to speak about their book. They received the prestigious Evans Award for Biography, the annual prize given to the authors of the best research and study of the "Interior West." Yet soon after Newell and Avery received the award, LDS authorities circulated the instructions to local Church authorities throughout Utah and the western United States—but not to the authors themselves—that Newell and Avery were not permitted to speak about *Mormon Enigma* or any "aspect of religious or church history in any Mormon church-related meetings or institution."<sup>43</sup> Despite this attempt to silence discussion of Newell and Avery's work in official LDS settings, *Mormon Enigma* has had a lasting effect on Utah Mormons' views of Emma. In the last twenty-five years at least a half dozen books and, more recently, two feature films have been published or distributed by Deseret Book, portrayals of Emma that uniformly aim to reintroduce Emma to the LDS community as an empathetic character who, despite her choice to reject Brigham Young, can *now* be accepted by Mormonism's women as someone whose dedication to her husband and to the gospel is "faith-promoting." Yet beyond motivating Church-endorsed writers to produce characterizations of Emma as the Prophet's innocuous wife, *Mormon Enigma* has also impacted Mormon scholarship beyond the shelves of the Church-sponsored bookstores.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> See Dallin H. Oaks and Joseph I. Bentley, "Joseph Smith and Legal Process: In the Wake of the Steamboat *Nauvoo*," *Brigham Young University Studies* 19 (Winter 1979): 167–199.

<sup>43</sup> Shipps, *Sojourner in the Promised Land*, 200. Newell and Avery also detail the fallout of *Mormon Enigma*'s publication in the preface to the book's second edition published in 1994.

<sup>44</sup> During my 2010 summer-stint at the LDS Church History Library in Salt Lake City, I noticed that several recent biographies on Emma had been placed on special display. Though I did not see *Mormon Enigma* counted among these works, I did see two missionary sisters who work at the

**RICHARD LYMAN BUSHMAN**

In his prize-winning *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, Richard Lyman Bushman relies heavily on Newell and Avery's findings in his own portrayal of Emma. Nevertheless, Bushman's analysis of Emma is different from theirs; he does not present the controversial image of a long-forgotten priestess but instead sees Emma as a long-suffering and devoted wife who, in the end, acted more on practical motivations than on idealistic ones. For example, though he supports Newell and Avery's caution not to accept without critique the rumored episodes of Emma's violence, Bushman writes that Joseph's obvious support for Emma's election as Relief Society president was not a symbol of her spiritual prominence but perhaps merely "a small compensation for the sorrows she bore."<sup>45</sup> In the end, what is understandably most important for Bushman as a biographer of Joseph Smith is how Emma affected Joseph's activities in life and his legacy after death—not Emma herself. As such, what Bushman emphasizes is the fact that, even after her painful break with Brigham Young, Emma continued to profess complete belief in the Book of Mormon, showing her true fidelity to Joseph as a prophet and to the truth he claimed to bring to the world (555).

Like other Joseph Smith biographers, Bushman is limited in how he can portray Emma Hale Smith. She inevitably appears peripheral to the narrative, portrayed in reference to her husband. *Mormon Enigma* broke new ground by making Emma's ability to act and affect history—both scholars of American religion and Latter-day Saints call this "agency"—the focus of its attention. Avery and Newell also broke ground by making substantial use of Mormon archives, like the Relief Society minutes, in which women themselves were the leaders and constituents of their own spiritual and political communities. Yet *Mormon Enigma* should not represent the end point on professional scholarship on Emma Hale Smith; it is potentially too influenced by the modern feminist movement's discovery of "feminine religious agency" within the LDS academy and within the field of American re-

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library reading the book.

<sup>45</sup>Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, 448. Additional quotations in this section from this source are cited parenthetically in the text.

ligious history broadly conceived.<sup>46</sup> Now twenty-six years after the publication of *Mormon Enigma*, the conversation—and the scholarship—on Emma is far from over.

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<sup>46</sup>Catherine A. Brekus, “Mormon Women and the Problem of Historical Agency,” this issue, delivered as the Tanner Lecture at the annual conference of the Mormon History Association, May 2010, Kansas City, Missouri.

## REVIEWS

Royal Skousen, ed. *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2009. 789 pp. Introduction by Grant Hardy. Editor's Preface. Appendix: "Significant Textual Changes." Hardback: \$35. ISBN 978-0300142181

*Reviewed by Brant A. Gardner*

The subtitle of Skousen's reconstruction of the Book of Mormon calls it "the earliest text." That term is slightly misleading. Skousen is presenting a version of the Book of Mormon that never existed in print and, in fact, never existed in any written form. Skousen explains the problem he is facing in producing this edition of the Book of Mormon: "Constructing a printed version of the earliest text of the Book of Mormon presents particular challenges. Joseph Smith dictated the book to scribes who wrote down his words. His dictation did not indicate punctuation, sentence structure, or paragraphing. These he left, ultimately, to the discretion of the printer. Consequently, *The Earliest Text* constitutes a scholarly effort to present to the reader a dictated rather than a written text" (xlii).

While we understand very little of the actual process by which the plate text became our English text, one firm aspect is that Joseph Smith dictated the translation to a scribe who then wrote it down. Thus the true "earliest text" preceded even the first written version. The task of reaching past the written text to produce a plausible dictated text means not only using the best techniques of textual criticism to find the earliest *written* version, but also examining the written versions to see when they might indicate a communication issue that would show that there was something perhaps different in the dictation than what was actually recorded—in short, analyzing the probable source of a garbled text in the manuscript. That is not only ambitious, but would be well beyond almost any other scholar of the Book of Mormon text. Even for Royal Skousen, it comes only after at least twenty-one years of work on the text of the Book of Mormon (xlv). The tremendous scholarship, care, and tenacity he has exhibited over those years yield this valuable contribution to Book of Mormon studies. It is a

logical conclusion to his extensive work on the textual variants in the multiple editions of the Book of Mormon.<sup>1</sup>

Although it is the result of meticulous scholarship and the introductory materials and the appendix anchor it in a scholarly tradition, I suggest that this is a book that transcends the scholarship. It should appeal to a wider readership. Beyond the scholarship that it took to create the volume, I see it as a contribution to experiencing the Book of Mormon.

First, however, I must acknowledge the important scholarship behind it. Grant Hardy provides a very nice introduction that anchors both the Book of Mormon and this particular project in its historical and academic contexts. Hardy's introduction to a volume that is printed by a secular press necessarily introduces information that is well known to those who accept the Book of Mormon as scripture. He gives an overview of the Book of Mormon storyline. However, he also includes material that might be less well known to the believers, but which nevertheless represents the best current historical research. Hardy describes a translation process that did not require the physical presence of the plates and includes descriptions of using the interpreters or a seer stone by placing them in the crown of a hat. That translation process may feel somewhat different for many who have grown up on visual representations that do not adequately represent the historical information. Nevertheless, the section is very tastefully written and preserves the religious mystery while acknowledging the contrast with modern expectations.

Hardy also includes an overview of the Critical Text Project of the Book of Mormon. The present volume would not exist without the work of that project. That project includes a typescript of the extant Original Manuscript in one volume, typescripts of the Printer's Manuscript in two volumes, and six volumes analyzing the textual variants found among all manuscripts and printed editions.<sup>2</sup> In particular, the volumes comprising the *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon* are the raw data that allowed Skousen to settle on the text he presents in the current volume.

Hardy does make one claim with which I must take minor exception.

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<sup>1</sup>Royal Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon*, Vol. 6 of THE CRITICAL TEXT OF THE BOOK OF MORMON (Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 2004–6).

<sup>2</sup>Royal Skousen, ed., *The Original Manuscript of the Book of Mormon*, Vol. 1 of THE CRITICAL TEXT OF THE BOOK OF MORMON (Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 2001); his *The Printer's Manuscript of the Book of Mormon*, Vol. 2 (2 parts) of THE CRITICAL TEXT OF THE BOOK OF MORMON (Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 2001); and his *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon*, in THE CRITICAL TEXT OF THE BOOK OF MORMON (6 parts) (Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 2004–6).



Hardy indicates: “*The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text* is the most accurate edition ever published” (xvii). I understand what he means, but that meaning requires explicit clarification, which he did not include. Most likely he was so familiar with what he intended that he didn’t notice the caveat that I see as necessary. This book is the most accurate edition for understanding what Joseph Smith *dictated*. Because Joseph himself participated in editorial revisions that were included in the 1837 and 1840 editions, the accuracy of the *meaning* may be rightly traced in his revisions even while the accuracy of the *dictation* is what is represented in this text.

It is a minor quibble, but readers should not assume that this edition supersedes, or even intends to supersede, the current official version. As Hardy notes, the LDS Church will likely not accept this reconstructed text as the official version of the Book of Mormon (xx). Joseph Smith made many of the substantive changes in the text and those should be honored. The decision to improve the grammar increases the readability without diminishing the inspiration of the text. Those considerations should tell us that we can make a conceptual difference between this most accurate representation of the earliest dictated text and the spiritual accuracy of the authorized version.

In a second introductory section, Skousen discusses the basic methodology for creating this “earliest text,” as well as some of the interesting information about the text that he discovered in his examination. He ends with an Appendix, “Significant Textual Changes,” that will likely be the reason that many purchase this volume. All of these changes have been culled from the six volumes of his *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon*, but most who purchase this book will never consult any of those very important volumes. This appendix’s summary of the more important variants will serve most readers well.

Some of the variants listed are minor, while some are more important. Some contain interesting indications of both the translation and the editing process behind our English Book of Mormon. For example, the following is the sequence of changes that appear to be occasioned by a difficult word in the Original that may have been mispronounced in the dictation. These are the variants for 1 Nephi 15:35:

and the devil is the *prepiator* of it. (Original Manuscript)

and the devil is the *preparator* of it. (Printer’s Manuscript and 1830 Edition)

and the devil is the *father* of it. (Joseph’s first revision of the Printer’s Manuscript)

and the devil is the *foundation* of it. (Joseph’s second revision of the Printer’s Manuscript and 1837 edition)

The dictation did not produce a clear word in the first written text. In the preparation for printing, the attempt was made to make sense of this non-standard word. In the Printer’s Manuscript, the attempt was made to recreate

the plausible word as dictated. Subsequent variants were attempts to recover the sense rather than the word. Skousen indicates that his conjecture for the original dictation is that it would have been “proprietor.”

In addition to reconstructing the dictated text of the Book of Mormon, Skousen has also thought carefully about the best way to represent that dictation in written form. The dictation did not include any indication of punctuation, sentence, or paragraphing structure. It did, however, include some indication of when there was a change in chapters. How should this raw oral data appear in a written presentation?

Skousen’s answer is the result of careful consideration. He has added paragraphing and punctuation in order to make the reading experience easier. However, he has attempted to keep both to a minimum. He has retained the modern chapter and verse numbers so that a reader may more easily cross-reference to the current edition. However, the chapters and verses of our LDS editions were the result of Orson Pratt’s revision in 1879. The 1830 edition was organized into chapters and paragraphs, but not verses. Not only did Pratt add the verse apparatus, but he also altered the chapter formation, often creating multiple chapters from a single chapter in the 1830 edition.

The chapter breaks in the 1830 edition appear to follow some indication in the plates that allowed Joseph to dictate when a chapter break was to occur. There is no indication of how Joseph communicated these breaks, so Skousen cannot enter the word or words Joseph spoke to allow his scribe to begin a new chapter. Skousen has elected to enter a symbol in the text to mark where these originally dictated chapter breaks occur. This simple addition allows the reader to see the text as more closely resembling the way Mormon organized it. I believe that we lost some information about Mormon’s text when Pratt changed the chapter structure.<sup>3</sup> I applaud the opportunity to read the text and see the this rendition of the original chapters.

Perhaps the most noticeable presentation change is Skousen’s decision to break the text into sense-lines rather than sentences or paragraphs. The intent is to more closely replicate the experience of the dictated text rather than a composed text (xlii). Skousen has suggested that Joseph dictated between twenty and thirty words at a time,<sup>4</sup> but the reason for the sense-lines is to make *sense*, not to replicate the presumed dictation fragments. The sense-lines make no attempt to reconstruct that dictation block. Nor do the sense-lines at-

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<sup>3</sup>Brant A. Gardner, “Mormon’s Editorial Method and Meta-Message,” *FARMS Review* 21, no. 1 (2009), 90–92.

<sup>4</sup>Royal Skousen, “Translating the Book of Mormon: Evidence from the Original Manuscript,” in *Book of Mormon Authorship Revisited: The Evidence for Ancient Origins*, edited by Noel B. Reynolds (Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1997), 71–75.

tempt to view the text in poetic structures, although Skousen acknowledges that the text contains poetic structures (xliv). I selected an example from a well-known verse (Moroni 10:4):

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

Not seen in this example is that Skousen adds extra space between our verses 2 and 3, and between 7 and 8, creating a text block that he sees as an internal sense-unit. In some cases, the sense-unit breaks inside one of our verses. The following is his sense-line rendition of Alma 60:23.

Do you suppose that God will look upon you as guiltless  
 while ye sit still and behold these things?  
 Behold, I say unto you : Nay.

Now I would that he should remember that God had said  
 that the inward vessel shall be cleansed first,  
 and then shall the outer vessel be cleansed also.

In this case, the first part of verse 23 is the conclusion to a sense-unit that began at verse 20. The last part of verse 23 becomes the beginning of a sense-unit that ends with the conclusion of verse 24. The sense-lines are augmented by these blocks to better understand how the lines are built into sections. Nevertheless, the use of space makes that division without the need for punctuation (which was not in the original dictation). Of course, neither the sense-lines nor these sense-units are intended to represent anything from the dictation. They are visual aids for reading.

The only possible drawback to the sense-lines is that they are fragments that make sense to Skousen. They and the sense-units are the least reconstructed aspects of the text and owe more to Skousen than Joseph. However, that is an extremely minor quibble and is quite unlikely to have any real effect on the way we understand the text. It is much more likely that his reading will guide us to a newer and better understanding of the text. Failing the creation of these sense-lines by Joseph himself, I willingly trust Skousen's experience with the text to do so.

What then, should we do with yet another edition of the Book of Mormon? The answer is really very simple. We should read it. There is important scholarship behind this text, but it would be unfortunate for readers to limit their

use of this edition to the scholarship of the introductions and the appendix. This text is meant to be read. It is designed to be read. Because it attempts to reproduce the oral dictation, I would even suggest rich rewards from reading it aloud from time to time.

So much of what was required to produce *The Earliest Text* is invisible in this book. That is unavoidable. It is also fortunate. Those who want the scholarship can access it in the other sources. What is here, prominently, is the Book of Mormon. There is a reverence for the text that shows in the thought and care that has gone into reconstructing the text and in finding the right way to present it. I hope that many will appreciate and replicate that reverence by taking advantage of the real power of this volume, which is to create a fresh encounter with an old friend.

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Gerald N. Lund. *The Undaunted: The Miracle of the Hole-in-the-Rock Pioneers*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2009. 804 pp. Maps, notes, bibliography. Hardcover: \$34.95; CD (unabridged): \$69.95. ISBN: 978-1-60641-191-9

*Reviewed by Morris A. Thurston*

Historical novelist Gerald N. Lund is probably the most widely read author writing about Mormon subjects. His epic THE WORK AND THE GLORY series, consisting of nine novels, is said to have sold nearly three million copies.<sup>1</sup> That series follows the fictional Steed family through the main events of Mormon history in the United States, from the founding of the Church in upstate New York, through its migrations to Ohio, Missouri, and Illinois, to its final settlement in Utah. On the heels of that series, Lund published the stand-alone *The Fire of the Covenant: A Novel of the Willie and Martin Handcart Companies* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1999). All ten of these works were published during the 1990s, an astounding literary output totaling nearly 6,000 pages.

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<sup>1</sup>Richard H. Cracroft, "Telling the Restoration Story: Gerald N. Lund's The Work and the Glory Saga," *Journal of Mormon History* 29, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 233-34, quoting untitled news item, *Irreantum*, Winter 2000-2001, 102.

It is commonly said that more Church members of our generation have learned about Mormon history from Lund's books than from any other source. Lund has attracted a wide, appreciative LDS audience by injecting new life into the founding stories we've come to know by rote. His fictional characters experience some of the primary events of Mormon history, mingle with revered Church leaders we sometimes have trouble visualizing, and move about in a world that somehow seems more real and immediate than it feels in Sunday School lessons and history books. This is the magic of historical novels. But, in a way unusual for a novelist, Lund communicates a scholarly, authoritative tone to his narrative with a liberal use of chapter endnotes that document his source material. Along the way, Lund's stories reveal new insights about people and events that, I suspect, may be new to the average Mormon reader.

Although Lund's historical novels may open the eyes of his readers to some of the controversial elements of Church history, his approach is unflinching faith-promoting. He generally sidesteps the more problematic issues in favor of emphasizing the positive aspects of the Mormon story. As a long-time seminary and institute instructor, Lund seems more interested in strengthening testimonies than in tackling difficult or contentious matters. As he put it in a recent interview, "I love to write, because I love to teach. A novel is a sneaky way to slip in some teachings."<sup>2</sup>

In 2002, after producing three more novels, set in the time of Christ, Lund was called to be a member of the Second Quorum of Seventy. After serving six years in that calling, some of them spent in England, Lund has returned to Mormon historical fiction with his latest novel, *The Undaunted: The Miracle of the Hole-in-the-Rock Pioneers*.

As the subtitle suggests, this novel tells the story of the famous colonizing expedition by Mormon settlers to the San Juan Mission in 1878–79, during which they were required (or chose) to pass through territory that was little explored and proved enormously inhospitable to wagons and teams. The journey involved descending to the Colorado River through a gap in the cliffs that became known as "the hole in the rock." The descent was harrowing and dangerous and required the settlers to use blasting powder and innovative engineering methods to jury-rig a roadway sufficient for teams and wagons to pass through. Constructing a roadway three-quarters of a mile from the top of the plateau down to the river took a month and a half. No one was killed, a fact that the settlers considered to be a miracle. Elizabeth Morris Decker, a

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<sup>2</sup>Gerald N. Lund, quoted in Carma Wadley, "Gerald Lund Highlights Pioneers' Struggle across Untamed Southern Utah," *Deseret News*, August 9, 2009, <http://www.deseretnews.com/article/705321916/Gerald-Lund-highlights-pioneers-struggle-across-untamed-southern-Utah.html> (accessed July 28, 2010).

twenty-two-year-old mother of two, described the experience in a letter to her parents shortly after her arrival in Bluff:

If you ever come this way it will scare you to death to look down [the roadway] . . . [I]t is almost strait down, the cliffs on each side are five hundred ft. high and there is just room enough for a wagon to go down. It nearly scared me to death. The first wagon I saw go down they put the brake on and rough locked the hind wheels and had a big rope fastened to the wagon and about ten men holding back on it and then they went down like they would smash everything. I'll never forget that day. When we was walking down Willie looked back and cried and asked me how we would get back home.<sup>3</sup>

Although the best-known obstacle the colonizing party faced was the descent to the Colorado River, other portions of the journey—particularly the relatively unexplored stretch between the Colorado and San Juan Rivers—proved equally challenging. The settlers blazed new trails on every mile of this section and constantly relied on their scouts to make the best decision concerning the course of travel. Although they had expected to complete the entire trip in six weeks, it took them nearly six months before their journey ended. Most of the pioneers settled the new town of Bluff; a few continued on to Montezuma Creek, where a few families from an earlier exploring party had settled the previous year.

The Hole-in-the-Rock expedition was part of the larger Mormon expansion in the Mountain West during the nineteenth century. From almost the moment the Mormons settled in Utah, it had been Church policy for its members to occupy as much land as possible. Sometimes migrations to form new communities occurred naturally, but often settlers were recruited through official Church callings. This was the primary method used to assemble the San Juan pioneers, and no wonder, since the area to be settled (located in the Four Corners region of Utah) was remote, cruelly inhospitable, and seemingly inaccessible. The Church's purpose in settling this area seems to have been to claim it as Mormon territory before cattlemen from Colorado could occupy it and to create a buffer between other Mormon settlements and Native Americans (many of whom were still hostile to settlers), and outlaws (who used the remote territory to hide out from pursuing lawmen).<sup>4</sup> This area hardly held out enticing prospects for Mormon farming families.

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<sup>3</sup>Elizabeth Morris Decker, Letter to her parents, William and Sarah Morris, February 22, 1880, reproduced in David E. Miller, *Hole in the Rock*, 2d ed. (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1966), Appendix 8, 197.

<sup>4</sup>Miller, *Hole in the Rock*, 3–9. Miller cites several sources identifying these purposes, including Albert R. Lyman, "The Fort on the Firing Line," *Improvement Era*, December 1948, 797, and Morgan Amasa Barton (son of Joseph F. Barton, a participant in the trek), "Back Door to San Juan," unpublished manuscript. Miller, *Hole in*

In this novel, Lund's characters are the "eyes" through which his readers view the unfolding events. The protagonist is David Dickenson, whom we meet on page 1 as he is celebrating his sixth birthday with his mother and father in a coal-mining village in Yorkshire, England. Book 1, consisting of 141 pages, covers 1862 to 1872, during which David becomes a teenager, his mother dies, and he and his father, John Dickenson, leave the deadly mines and immigrate to America. Their conversion to Mormonism in Liverpool is a matter of convenience (and a clever plot device) to garner them a place on a less-expensive Mormon ship. They know little about their new religion; and when they finally arrive in Utah, they are bewildered to learn that Mormonism, rather than being a minuscule sect, counts ninety thousand adherents in the Mountain West, spread over a territory larger than England.

Although John Dickenson soon comes to fully accept Mormonism, David is more ambivalent. He secures a job as a mail carrier and arranges to be on the trail on Sundays to avoid going to meetings. He doesn't believe that God hears and answers prayers; certainly He had not heard their prayers to spare his mother. In all other respects, however, David is nearly perfect. He is resourceful, honest, brave, hardworking—and handsome, to boot. Although he doesn't value his Church membership, he isn't antagonistic either. He doesn't drink or smoke and seems to keep every commandment. He just doesn't have a testimony.

During a mail run to Cedar City, David meets the McKennas, a close-knit, well-to-do, locally prominent Mormon family consisting of father Patrick, mother Sarah, son Patrick Jr. (whom David dubs "Billy Joe"), and two older daughters, Abby and Molly, both in their late teens, David first meets Molly, who is wearing a "long, full skirt . . . [that] emphasized the slenderness of her waist. . . . But it was her hair that arrested his gaze. It was honey-blond and cascaded down her back in long, soft curls" (182). The two are soon smitten.

Abby, however, is a different matter. She, too, is attractive, though perhaps not so eye-catchingly beautiful as her younger sister. She is, however, steady and contemplative. She is also outspoken, devoted to her religion, and committed to converting David. It is through Abby's mouth and pen that David learns his doctrinal lessons—the lessons Lund wants his readers to learn.

David begins working for Patrick McKenna and is soon beloved by the entire family, with the possible exception of Abby, who is frustrated by his stubborn agnosticism. David asks Patrick for permission to court Molly, and it is readily granted. Only one thing seems to stand in the way of eventual wedded bliss—David's equivocal attitude toward the Church.

In this setting, the call is issued to some of the citizens of Parowan and Ce-

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*the Rock*, 8, 16. As noted below, Lund accepts these purposes and incorporates them into his narrative.



dar City to leave their homes and colonize the remote reaches of the San Juan. Although McKenna is a successful businessman and the owner of a thriving hotel and dining establishment in Cedar City—hence, hardly the sort one would expect to be called on a farming mission—his name is nevertheless on the list. The entire family accepts without hesitation, something David finds confounding and foolish. Nevertheless, when Patrick is called to go with a preliminary exploring party to the region, David willingly accompanies him as his paid employee. During this expedition, David learns many lessons about himself, the devotion of the settlers, and the character of the McKennas that lead him to begin to change his outlook.

David still rejects the concept that God is moved by human prayers, nor has he determined whether eventual marriage to Molly is in the cards. He does, however, decide to join the colonizing party after his father returns from a mission to England and volunteers for the move. David and Molly put their courtship on hold because there will be stresses enough on the journey without adding romantic tensions, an amazingly adult decision by two young would-be lovers. For those who are familiar with Lund's style, it would hardly be a plot-spoiler to note that David learns important lessons in faith and humility during the journey and that the romantic issues eventually sort themselves out, though not without some twists and turns.

Judging from reviews and comments on various consumer websites, the majority of readers who have taken the trouble to comment are enthusiastically positive about this book. Lund continues his practice of providing chapter endnotes that document the sources he has used in creating the background to his story, so the reader is left with a sense of having studied history in addition to enjoying a novel. The book is handsomely printed and contains a number of nicely drawn maps, including a beautiful two-page spread that serves as an informative decoration on the front and back endpapers.

Even better is the engaging website Lund (or Deseret Book) has established at <http://www.undaunted-thenovel.com/>. The site has, among other things, a copy of the color map found in the book. The online version, however, has clickable “buttons” on key locations. When you click on one of the locations, a pop-up window opens revealing further buttons, which in turn provide access to photographs of the area along with a video containing beautiful aerial photography and a narration by Lund.<sup>5</sup> Text boxes explain the significance of that particular location to the story. It is a terrific way for the reader to better visualize what Lund describes in the

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<sup>5</sup>Lund has made several trips along the Hole-in-the-Rock Trail in ATVs, so he brings a compelling first-hand experience to his narration. The website contains a link to a PDF file that provides detailed instructions on how to retrace the steps of the *Undaunted* pioneers.

narrative and greatly enhances the reading experience.

The book is also available as an unabridged audio recording. I purchased the audio book and whiled away much of a drive from Utah to California immersed in the saga. The narrator is Simon Vance, an “A-list” reader from England<sup>6</sup> whose familiarity with British dialects is particularly helpful in voicing the first portion of the book. It was much more fun to *hear* the Yorkshire brogue of John Dickenson than to imagine it by trying to decipher Lund’s written rendition, which, of necessity, contains so many misspelled words I found the result a bit distracting. Unfortunately, one needs to do a lot of driving to finish an audio book of such length and I eventually elected to revert to the print version.

Two primary questions need to be asked when evaluating a historical novel: Is it based on sound history, and is it good literature? Regarding the question of history, many of the facts Lund relies on are contained in the leading nonfiction account of the trek, *Hole in the Rock* by University of Utah professor David E. Miller, first published in 1959. Lund’s rendition of these facts is unabashedly hagiographic, due in part to his reliance on recollections mostly written well after the fact by participants or their children that, inevitably, are idealized. Moreover, Lund’s own predilection, as a former LDS Church Educational System teacher and General Authority, is to present a faith-promoting story.

Unlike the history of the Church in New York, Ohio, and Illinois, there are no contemporaneous non-Mormon accounts that might provide a counterbalance to the stories of the participants and their children. Lund acknowledges that some historians have questioned the wisdom of sending men, women, and children on such a hazardous and grueling journey, blazing a route that would soon be discontinued, and establishing communities in remote and hazardous outposts that were never destined to grow beyond a few hundred souls. Lund tackles this issue in his introduction, comparing such historians to “Monday morning quarterbacks.” One of his objectives in writing the book was to counter such interpretations and to hold up the example of these settlers as “a compelling motivation for us all” (ix, citing Gordon B. Hinkley, “Faith of the Pioneers,” 3).

Lund dramatizes Miller’s statement of the purposes of the San Juan expedition by including them in an address given by Apostle Erastus Snow at a stake conference in Parowan on December 29, 1878 (253–63). Lund acknowledges that, although the conference minutes show Elder Snow attending the conference, they do not provide any details concerning the substance of his

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<sup>6</sup>Vance has been awarded three Audies and thirty-one Earphone Awards and is the narrator of a number of my favorite audio books.

talk. Lund states that his aim in having Snow explain the purposes of the expedition is to “help correct [the] misperception” that “although the San Juan Mission was an incredible example of faith and courage, in concept it was seriously flawed, and that the mission itself was a mistake” (263). Of course, even acknowledging these “purposes,” one might still question whether they justified uprooting families and subjecting them to the hardships that the journey and subsequent settlement imposed upon them. Questions that might be asked include the following: How important to the gospel plan was it to claim this desolate and remote land before Colorado ranchers could do so? Clearly this region was no “breadbasket” that might benefit the rest of Utah. How necessary was it to provide a “buffer” between Native Americans or outlaws and the rest of Mormon country? Doesn’t the very difficulty of the journey made by the San Juan expedition illustrate that the Colorado River, the San Juan River, and the mountainous terrain surrounding them, provided a natural buffer? And who was going to “buffer” the hole-in-the-wall Saints from these dangers? Was it fair to send men, women and children as human guinea pigs to serve this function?<sup>7</sup>

The second question—the literary quality of a historical novel—is more subjective. Lund’s decision to idealize, without exception, the Hole-in-the-Rock pioneers results in a book that lacks serious interpersonal conflict, which greatly diminishes its literary appeal. The conflict between brutal natural conditions and human beings, which tests their resourcefulness and sheer endurance, thus becomes the chief conflict. However, I found this conflict insufficient on its own to sustain the novel. Perhaps I am different from most of Lund’s readers in this respect, but I longed for some serious scheming or back-biting or second-guessing—in other words, for some characters who would either grow during the course of the journey or be put in their place by our righteous heroes. Having read a number of first-hand accounts of pioneer treks and settlements of Mormon outposts, I know that conflicts were common. Indeed, human nature makes such contestations over authority and resources inevitable. Lund may have been concerned about alienating the descendants of the trekkers, who will be among his most avid readers,<sup>8</sup> but he could have created fictional characters to fill these roles.

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<sup>7</sup>Lund acknowledges that many, if not most of the original members of the San Juan expedition left the Four Corners region within a few years after arriving (798–800). It may be relevant to note that the principal settlement founded by the San Juan expedition (Bluff, Utah) had a total population of only 320 in 2007. The other community where some of the expedition members settled (Montezuma Creek) had a population 507 in 2007, 96 percent of whom were Native Americans. Statistics from [www.city-data.com](http://www.city-data.com).

<sup>8</sup>There are certainly tens of thousands of descendants of these pioneers today. As

Some might say it is not the role of the historical novelist to create conflict where none can be proven to exist, but I believe that such creative efforts are the very reason for writing a *novel*, rather than a *history*. Fictional characters fulfill the roles of people we all know existed, but whose more distasteful thoughts and actions are not recorded by their descendants, who are unwilling (or unable) to do so. Great historical novels, then, seem even more genuine than fact-anchored histories because they are able to tell the emotional truth of those who lived through the depicted events.

*The Undaunted* does seek to create a conflict between David, on the one hand, and Molly and Abby on the other, centering on David's disbelief in the efficacy of prayer. But these differing perspectives are hardly serious enough to maintain our interest for 800 pages, since David has no other flaws and there is never any doubt about how it will turn out in the end. Couldn't David have been given some serious failings, such as dishonesty, or unfaithfulness, or at least a Word of Wisdom problem? Lund's WORK AND THE GLORY series gave us Joshua Steed, who for a time, at least, cheated at cards, was a bit of a womanizer, and actively persecuted the Saints. Couldn't such a character have at least temporarily vied for the affections of Molly or Abby? There is no scoundrel in this novel.

In the same vein, the McKenna family members are all uniformly sweet toward each other and toward David. They are the idealized "Ozzie and Harriet" family of the fifties transported to 1880s Utah, who manage to maintain their aplomb and loving generosity through every stressful situation. Though both Molly and Abby have strong feelings about David, their occasional spats quickly end in their embraces and expressions of sisterly love. None of the McKennas are estranged from each other. None of them die or are even seriously injured. Most families have their share of anger, bitterness, and sadness; the McKennas do not.

When I think of the novels I have enjoyed most, they always involve flawed characters who struggle with themselves and their life and don't always prevail. Their very imperfections make them real. One of my early favorites was Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, whose protagonist is a murderer, unrepentant for much of the book. I loved Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*, featuring a hero who is a troublemaker, a thief, and a runaway. More recently, I have enjoyed Steig Larsson's wildly popular *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, whose title character is a tattooed, pierced, bisexual computer hacker with a borderline schizophrenic personality disorder. I suspect most people are engaged by stories with dynamic, flawed characters who have the potential to grow and

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a matter of disclosure, I am related to at least one of those mentioned by name in Lund's history, Danielson Buren (or Buron) Barney, who was a son of my great-great-grandfather, Edson Barney.

meaningfully change during the narrative. *The Undaunted* does not fulfill my need for real conflict. One potential source of conflict might have been the practice of plural marriage, which was outlawed at the time of these events, but nonetheless engaged in by a significant number of Church members. However, this practice is only mentioned once in passing and plays no role in the story.

Another problem I found a bit distracting in this novel was the dialogue, which often sounded too modern for the nineteenth century. It is said that Patrick O'Brian, one of my favorite historical novelists and author of the Aubrey-Maturin sea series set during the Napoleonic wars of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries,<sup>9</sup> never used a word or phrase that wasn't in use during the timeframe of his novels. If he wasn't sure, he consulted the unabridged Oxford English Dictionary. As one of the greatest historical novelists ever, O'Brian sets an admittedly high standard. However, when Lund's characters use words and phrases like "Are you insane?" (238), "Yippee!" (318 and 319), "Neat!" (467), "There was no way" (700), "Don't be so . . . male" (720), and "Yay! Yay!" (791), I have difficulty hearing a nineteenth-century voice.

Lund also has the people conducting his meetings use stereotypical Mormon catch-phrases, like, "That completes the reading of the names as given" (257), "All in favor please manifest it by raising your right hand" (492),<sup>10</sup> "Those opposed may likewise signify" (258), "The voting has been unanimous in the affirmative" (493), and "It shall now be our pleasure to turn the remainder of our meeting over to . . ." (258). I associate these turns of phrase with the present, not with the nineteenth century.

Finally, the book could have used an editor who had demanded that it be cut by 40 percent or so. I suspect that many people will find *The Undaunted* to be so lengthy that the action moves with agonizing slowness. David and John Dickenson don't leave England until page 130, but everything we need to know about them for purposes of the novel might have been handled in twenty pages. At one point, the main narrative comes to a halt while a non-Mormon rancher kills a Navajo, prompting a damage-control journey by Jacob Hamblin and some associates to head off a retaliatory raid, complete with scenes and dialogue (Book 2: "Setting," 143–66). This episode has very little to do with the actual Hole-in-the-Rock expedition.<sup>11</sup> The settlers do not even meet any Native Americans during their trip, and Jacob Hamblin plays no

<sup>9</sup>The first novel of the series was called *Master & Commander* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1970).

<sup>10</sup>Similar Mormon vote-calling clichés are found throughout the book. For example, "All of you who feel to sustain the proposal your presidency now puts before you, please show it by raising your hand."

<sup>11</sup>It is briefly referred to in the dramatized talk by Apostle Erastus Snow to the

part in it. It is true that there is an encounter with a rogue chief during the exploratory expedition, but that preliminary trip itself takes up 81 pages (“Book 5: “Exploration,” 381–462). By the time the actual Hole-in-the-Rock journey gets underway, the narrative is up to page 522. It feels as if the expedition is almost an afterthought.

I don’t mean to be overly critical of this novel. After all, Lund is the best-selling of all Mormon historical novelists for a reason. He is an engaging storyteller who creates a heroic past for us; and many of his fans have, without doubt, found *The Undaunted* inspiring and delightful.

Lund is most engaging when he dramatizes interpersonal conflicts, brief though they are, in the form of crisp dialogue. Here is an example of Molly and Abby discussing the fact that it will be necessary for the scouts to leave the main camp again to try to find a route up and out of the Colorado River gorge:

“And David will be asked to go?” [Molly] dropped back again, knowing the answer to that. “It’s not fair. He’s done his part.”

“Oh?” Abby said, with a touch of impatience. “And just exactly what is his part?”

Molly gave her a look. “He was gone six months with the first group,” she snapped. “Now that we’re on the road again, they’re sending him out all the time. Ten days with Kumen. Two days with Lyman. Now another who-knows-how-long trip.”

“Somehow I thought that was what scouts did.”

“He’s not the only scout. It’s not right, Abby. Let someone else do it.”

Abby’s lips pressed together into a tight line. “Go back to sleep. I’m sorry I woke you up.”

Molly’s hand shot out and grabbed her. “No, Abby. You tell me. Is it asking too much to let him spend some time with us?”

After additional dialogue, the discussion between the sisters ends with a moral being taught and perhaps a lesson learned:

Abby started to turn away, then swung back, thoroughly exasperated. “You don’t even see it, do you? There are bigger issues here. This isn’t about Molly or Abby or David. Maybe it’s about finding a way to San Juan.”

“If that’s true, then why doesn’t God show us the way to go, so we can accomplish His purpose and get on with our life?”

“Maybe,” Abby said slowly, “because for now, this *is* our life.” (546–47)

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Parowan Stake Conference when he says, “How do we make sure that another non-Latter-day-Saint doesn’t grab a rifle and shoot more Navajos down in cold blood?” (260) The assumption, of course, is that no Mormon would kill anyone in cold blood, an assumption that is belied by several documented instances of such killings.

Although the Hole-in-the-Rock expedition has many heroes, I was particularly moved by the story of the crippled Jens Nielson, who emigrated from Denmark and was a member of Willie Handcart Company in 1856 when his legs became frostbitten. Twenty-two years later, when he no doubt would have preferred remaining in one of the settled communities of southern Utah, he answered the call to play a leading role in the Hole-in-the-Rock expedition. When many of the original settlers of Bluff left after a few years, Nielson steadfastly remained for the rest of the twenty-six years of his life, serving as bishop most of that time (800).

So notwithstanding my desire for more rounded characters, more serious conflicts, more realistic dialogue, and fewer words, I did come away from my reading with a tremendous admiration for the sacrifices made by the women, men and children who made up the Hole-in-the-Rock expedition.

And that, of course, was Lund's main purpose in writing the novel.

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Mary Jane Woodger, ed. *Champion of Liberty: John Taylor*. Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 2009. xviii, 397 pp. Photographs, notes, index. Cloth: \$24.95. ISBN: 978-0-8425-2736-1

*Reviewed by Kenneth L. Cannon II*

*Champion of Liberty: John Taylor* is a timely collection of essays from the John Taylor Church History Symposium convened at Brigham Young University in 2008 to celebrate the bicentennial of the birth of the Church's third president. The essays cover a relatively broad array of topics and explore the personality, talents, and experiences of this important nineteenth-century prophet. Unfortunately, the level of scholarship and quality varies a good deal, from first-rate to quite mediocre. As a result, the book



falls somewhat short of what it could (and should) have been.

Although a lovely floral arrangement in the Salt Lake Tabernacle at John Taylor's funeral spelled out "Champion of Liberty" (a photograph of the interior of the Tabernacle prominently showing this floral message precedes the introduction), it is not at all clear that he was generally referred to by this description during his life. B. H. Roberts states in his biography of John Taylor that this "noble title [was] won by John Taylor in his early manhood" but Roberts's reference is Daniel H. Wells's sermon at Taylor's funeral.<sup>1</sup> The term does make for a catchy title, however.

John Taylor has always been an important figure to my extended family. His first wife, Leonora Cannon, was George Q. Cannon's aunt, and it was Taylor who introduced the Church to George Q.'s parents, George Cannon and Ann Quayle Cannon, in Liverpool in 1840. As a result, new scholarship on John Taylor is always welcome to me and other Cannons, as well as to all with an interest in nineteenth-century Mormon history. Taylor's life as a Mormon covered most of the important developments in the Church of the nineteenth century. He was converted by Parley P. Pratt; was called early as an apostle; served as a valiant missionary to Europe (and not just to English-speaking peoples); was a leading participant in Joseph Smith's presidential bid; was eyewitness to the martyrdom of Joseph and Hyrum Smith in Carthage Jail during which he was grievously wounded himself; was a leading exponent of Mormonism in print, publishing several periodicals; was a polygamist with at least sixteen wives (though the official number from B. H. Roberts's biography was seven) and thirty-five children; helped in the Saints' migration west to Utah; acted as an emigration agent in England and at eastern ports at a critical time as new members of the Church gathered to Zion; faced and met the challenge of following the extraordinary Joseph Smith and Brigham Young as third prophet and president of the Church; was visionary, receiving a substantial number of revelations (including one or two that are quite controversial); was the leader of the Church during the most difficult period of the federal government's anti-polygamy campaign; and was ultimately a martyr to his beliefs as he died while in hiding from the U.S. government on the Mormon Underground. He was also, perhaps before everything else, a spiritual man with a devout testimony who courageously shared his religious views and feelings and who viewed his discipleship as *the* critical part of his life.

Most of these facets of John Taylor are covered in *Champion of Liberty*, and there is much here to explore about Taylor's life. Some of the essays in this volume are equal to the task with excellent and original work. Many of the best

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<sup>1</sup>B. H. Roberts, *The Life of John Taylor, Third President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: George Q. Cannon & Sons, 1892), 437, 455.

presentations come from seasoned, oft-published scholars such as David J. Whittaker, Fred E. Woods, and Richard Neitzel Holzapfel, and Christopher C. Jones, whose essays on Taylor's European imprints in the 1840s, on Taylor as emigration agent, and on Taylor's written revelations, respectively, are excellent. Other first-rate articles come from somewhat less predictable sources. For example, Patrick A. Bishop's piece on the succession of John Taylor to the presidency of the Church, while a bit facile and certainly taking a traditional, faithful approach to the subject, is very well researched and written, and it bravely and competently takes on recent scholarship on the subject, arguing that the changes in seniority of the Quorum of the Twelve which resulted in John Taylor's succeeding Brigham Young as president instead of Wilford Woodruff, Orson Hyde, or Orson Pratt permitted the Lord to teach certain precepts in seniority to the Quorum of the Twelve.

Jeffrey N. Walker, addressing multiple facets of John Taylor's life during the Nauvoo period, specifically and movingly discusses his twice singing "A Poor Wayfaring Man of Grief" in Carthage Jail at the request of Joseph Smith, also identifying the tune Taylor sang and the history of the hymn. He ends with the question of how John Taylor must have felt about the hymn and sets forth Taylor's hymn written in memory of the martyrdom, "O, Give Me Back My Prophet Dear."

Douglas J. Geilman's essay on *Étoile du Deseret*, a French-language newspaper published by the French mission under the direction of John Taylor (1851–52), provides new information and addresses relatively important writings of Taylor which appeared only in French.

Two inherent weaknesses of a collection of essays that is not intended to be an integrated biographical study on a historical figure are (1) almost inevitable overlaps among essays as they retrace the same general biographical background, and (2) important parts of the figure's life that remain insufficiently addressed. For example, we learn of John's birth in England, his pursuing a calling as a Methodist preacher, and his meeting and courtship of Leonora Cannon, who was twelve years his senior, no fewer than five times. As a group of faith-promoting, apologetic presentations at a religious symposium, few controversies from Taylor's life are addressed in the essays, raising the question in the reader's mind whether deeper understandings could have been culled from the historical record.<sup>2</sup> Important allegations that George Q. Cannon took control of the Church during President Taylor's last

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<sup>2</sup>Samuel W. Taylor once made the silly suggestion that John Taylor supporters might have poisoned Brigham Young to avoid the possibility that he would abdicate the Church presidency in favor of one of his sons. Samuel W. Taylor, *The Kingdom or Nothing: The Life of John Taylor, Militant Mormon* (New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1976), 2–5, 259. This suggestion does not merit serious discussion, but its complete

year or two are left unaddressed. Some analysis is probably restricted by the faith-promoting purpose of the presentations.

One of the most substantive controversies of John Taylor's presidency is glossed over in the otherwise fine essay by Richard Neitzel Holzapfel and Christopher C. Jones. John Taylor's September 27, 1886 "alleged" revelation on the continuation of plural marriage forms the cornerstone of Mormon fundamentalists' continued practice of polygamy and, therefore, creates controversy in the modern Church. The authors acknowledge that such a document "surfaced after John Taylor's death in July 1887" (295). They present circumstantial evidence against its authenticity based largely on (1) the failure of George Q. Cannon and L. John Nuttall, who were generally in close proximity to Taylor at the time, to mention the episode in their diaries, and (2) the current apparent absence of a holographic original.<sup>3</sup> The authors do not mention the most credible evidence for the revelation. Apostle Abraham H. Cannon, one of George Q.'s sons, noted on April 1, 1892, that John W. Taylor, also an apostle and one of John Taylor's sons, announced in a meeting of the Twelve that he had found a revelation among his father's papers "in which the Lord told him that the principle of plural marriage will never be overcome. Pres. Taylor desired to have it suspended, but the Lord would not permit it to be done."<sup>4</sup> Certainly the Fundamentalist claim that Taylor ordained a few followers to carry on polygamy even if the Church were required to abandon the practice is open to significant question, but the revelation's existence and authenticity are far less subject to doubt. Holzapfel and Jones's failure to address this revelation more seriously detracts somewhat from their otherwise outstanding essay.

A fuller description of Taylor's writings, interactions (and periodic disagreements) with other Church leaders, and his home and family life would

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omission may leave readers familiar with the claim in some doubt about whether the presenters were aware of it.

<sup>3</sup>J. Max Anderson, in his *The Polygamy Story: Fiction and Fact* (Salt Lake City: Publisher's Press, 1979), 34, includes photographs of George Q. Cannon's holographic diary for September 25–28, 1886, to show that Cannon did not describe the revelation in his diary. Leaving aside the question of why Anderson would be permitted to view the diary, which is usually restricted, for the sole purpose of shedding doubt on the revelation's existence, both D. Michael Quinn and Richard S. Van Wagoner assert that Frank Y. Taylor, Taylor's son, donated the holograph original to the Church on July 18, 1933, one month after the First Presidency issued an "official statement" that the "archives of the Church contain no such revelation." D. Michael Quinn, "LDS Church Authority and New Plural Marriages, 1890–1904," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 18 (Spring 1985): 28–29; Richard S. Van Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy: A History* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1986), 193–94.

<sup>4</sup>Abraham H. Cannon, Diary, April 1, 1892, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

also have improved the volume.

The book contains a few apparently careless errors. The introduction quotes Taylor's "hope when the *Improvement Era* commenced" that young people would keep bound copies of the magazine if the content were worthwhile (xvi), a statement repeated on the dust jacket's back cover. However, the *Improvement Era's* first issue appeared on November 17, 1897, more than ten years after John Taylor's death. The magazine's first number may well have quoted a more general statement that Taylor made about Church publications for young people, but he did not make the remark about the *Improvement Era*.

A mistake that only a Cannon would notice (or probably care about) identifies Leonora Cannon Taylor's brother (and George Q. Cannon's father) as "Captain" George Cannon (196). In fact, Captain George Cannon was George Q. Cannon's grandfather, killed by his mutineering crew in 1811 while voyaging home after delivering a cargo of slaves in the New World.

These criticisms notwithstanding, overall, *John Taylor: Champion of Liberty* does what it is intended to do: introduce the reader to this remarkable and fascinating early Church leader in a positive, faith-promoting light. Some of the essays are excellent, even significant, pieces of original scholarship, while others add little to the understanding of this complicated man. From my perspective, the volume would have been improved by a more thorough examination of certain controversies in John Taylor's life but it is, nevertheless, an appropriate celebration of this great man.

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Kevin L. Mortensen, comp. and ed. *Witnessing the Hand of the Lord in the Dominican Republic*. Centerville, Utah: DR History Project, 2008. 309 pp. Illustrations, maps, footnotes, appendices, bibliography. Hardback: \$69.00 (Spanish edition: \$24.00); ISBN (English) 978-0-9821491-5-7, <http://drlsdhistory.info>

*Reviewed by Jared Tamez*

*Witnessing the Hand of the Lord in the Dominican Republic* is an interesting compilation of information about the LDS Church's first five years (1978-83) in the Dominican Republic, chiefly compiled by Kevin L.

Mortensen, one of the first missionaries to serve there. It consists of a wealth of both contemporary and retrospective contributions from many early missionaries, mission presidents, and some members.

I hadn't known that the Church had officially established itself in the Dominican Republic as recently as 1978, and I quickly supposed that the principal reason was the priesthood ban. As the book opens, however, there is no indication that this is the case. A brief introductory paragraph mentions two contacts with the Caribbean during Brigham Young's presidency and the lack of a Church organization or presence before 1978, but no indication as to why this was the case. In February 1978, President Richard L. Millett, who presided over the Florida Fort Lauderdale Mission (the boundaries of which encompassed the Caribbean), received a letter from Rey Martinez, a Church member from the United States who was working in the Dominican Republic on a dam and flood control project. He informed Millett that other LDS families were similarly engaged and invited President Millett and his wife, Denna, to visit. Millett wrote in his personal history: "We felt it would be an opportunity to look at the country for possible missionary activity and to meet with the six or seven members in San Juan de la Maguana" (13).

After an enjoyable and, at times, adventurous visit, Millett, in a 2007 email reflection to Mortensen, noted simply, without reference to race or any other factor: "As we surveyed the country and the people, it appeared that it was not yet the time to send missionaries. Sister Millett and I did feel that the Dominican Republic would be a fruitful area of the Lord's vineyard. Indeed, we had an overwhelming peaceful feeling about the people and teaching them the gospel, and we have not been disappointed: its growth has been astronomical" (15).

Finally, in Chapter 3, "The Advent of the Revelation of the Lord," the text brings the revelation on priesthood to the fore (Official Declaration—2). Millett affirmed, "Few areas of the world were impacted by the historic revelation allowing all worthy male members to hold the priesthood more than the Caribbean. . . . We never anticipated that the revelation given to President Spencer W. Kimball would come when it did, or that it would have such an impact upon the Caribbean." According to Millett's journal, on June 9, 1978, he received a call from Elder M. Russell Ballard (then a member of the Seventy and executive administrator over that area) with news that the priesthood ban was being lifted, a development that Ballard described as "of earthshaking consequences for our mission." Millet continued, "What an impact this is going to have on our mission. Instead of just 3 to 4 million that we can teach, it now expands to approximately 30 million. We will begin to make plans and request permission to go to Jamaica, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic in the near future" (18).

Though restrained, since few treatments of the priesthood ban deal with

its role in the Church's development in the Caribbean, this book provides some of the most detailed and useful information to date about the interaction between the racial dynamics of the Caribbean and the Church's long-held policy on ordaining black Church members to the priesthood.

The following seventy-plus chapters (mostly two to four pages each) offer inspirational and sometimes humorous accounts of the development of Church organization, conversions, and interactions between missionaries, members, and the larger Dominican society. The first baptisms and Church meetings after the priesthood revelation were conducted by Church members living in the Dominican Republic who had earlier joined the Church in the United States. A few months later, in November 1978, the first group of ten full-time missionaries arrived in the Dominican Republic (41). Interestingly, unbeknown to the arriving missionaries, Church television advertisements had been running in the country since before the reception of the priesthood revelation. As a result, the elders found that many of the Dominicans they encountered recognized the name of the Church and its emphasis on family. Television further served to familiarize the nation with the Church through a weekly television show presented by Sisters Ada Davis (senior missionary) and Mercedes Amparo (local Church member) which the *Deseret News* described as, "a weekly, prime-time show that has fascinated Dominican housewives for the past 15 months. The show is a mixture of homemaking skills, frequent mention of the Church, and a soft-sell of gospel principles. It started out as a single performance and has stretched into more than 60 programs" (191).

In addition, other efforts such as public health fairs featuring a popular "smoking machine" garnered widespread attention in the Dominican press. The curious device attempted to illustrate the dangers of smoking by pumping smoke from a lit cigarette through two bottles filled with cotton balls (representing lungs). The black residue left on the cotton balls prompted many observers to ditch their cigarettes on the spot. "So we almost never have to buy cigarettes for the machine—it's self supporting," wrote missionary Daniel Rasmussen. The success of the smoking machine conflicted with the interests of the corporate owner of the plaza in Santo Domingo where the fair was first held—Marlboro. President Millet explained, "They obviously were not pleased with our smoking machine and asked us to move our Fair out of their mall" (182–84). Accounts such as these, chronicling the joys and struggles of the missionaries and the fledgling Church, account for the bulk of the text.

After a little over two years and more than 2,000 baptisms, the Dominican Republic Santo Domingo Mission was organized from the Puerto Rico San Juan Mission on January 1, 1881 (233). Nearly twenty years later, on September 17, 2000, the Church's ninety-ninth operating temple was dedicated in Santo Domingo, a photo of which is featured prominently on the book's cover. Several useful appendices with statistical information about baptisms, meet-

ings, the Santo Domingo Temple, the organization of Church stakes, and other facts round out the volume.

Physically, the book is very attractive, with many high-quality reproductions of color and black and white photographs taken by missionaries who, it is clear in the text, were very aware of their “pioneering” role. One photograph shows a T-shirt created in the mission that announces the elders’ status as “Pioneer Missionaries in the Dominican Republic” (77). Though the book includes some voices and stories of converted Saints, the experience of local Saints is often mediated through missionaries’ memories and reports. Hopefully the effort to collect the personal accounts of local Church members continues.

In conclusion, Kevin Mortensen and his numerous co-contributors have spent a great deal of labor contacting former missionaries and some early members and soliciting statements, scans of documents, photographs, and journal entries. The effort is remarkable and exciting. The final product is well executed. My hope is that the raw materials this project uncovered will be donated to a repository for the use of future historians. This is an important publication which will prove invaluable to those interested in the history of the Church in the Caribbean, and a useful model for similar efforts in other missions.

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Robin Scott Jensen, Robert J. Woodford, and Steven C. Harper, eds. *Revelations and Translations: Manuscript Revelation Books, Facsimile Edition*. In THE JOSEPH SMITH PAPERS, edited by Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman. Salt Lake City: Church Historian’s Press, 2009. 708 pp. Photographic facsimiles with transliterations, charts, maps, analytic materials. Cloth: \$99.95. ISBN: 978-1-57008-850-6

*Reviewed by John W. Welch and Dallin T. Morrow*

*Revelations and Translations* is an exquisite volume, and it is a joy to join in the chorus of praise, thanksgiving, and congratulations to all (named and unnamed) who have brought forth this splendid publication. For the serious student of Mormon history, it is a primary source *par excellence*.

This volume gives all historians unprecedented access to some of the oldest and most important documents in the Church. As James Hutson, chief of the



Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress, comments on the dust jacket: “This volume is a model of modern documentary editorial practices. Every conceivable device, including color coding of editorial changes, has been used.” One may blanch a little at its price tag,<sup>1</sup> but the complete per-page hardbound price provides a better perspective: only about 13 cents per page. It contains full-size, color-corrected photographic reproductions of two manuscript volumes known as the Book of Commandments and Revelations (BCR) and the Kirtland Revelation Book (KRB), the earliest known manuscripts of revelations received by Joseph Smith between 1829 and 1834. The Book of Commandments and Revelations (8–405) and Kirtland Revelation Book (407–665) allow readers to see the earliest transcriptional stages, along with modifications and editing marks, on pages that served as the main source for the printing of the 1833 Book of Commandments, which in turn led to the first edition of the Doctrine and Covenants in 1835.

Having access to these manuscript images is truly remarkable. One review has already dubbed it “the crown jewel of the *Joseph Smith Papers* project.”<sup>2</sup> It is indeed rare for such important documents to be made so elegantly available. When a guest lecturer at the J. Reuben Clark Law School, who is working on a documentary edition of papers by people involved in writing the Declaration of Independence, saw this volume, her reactions—which surely bespeak a typical first reaction—visibly exuded astonishment mingled with glee, together with expressions of sincere congratulations and longing admiration. The following review of the contents of this volume shows ample reasons for that reaction.

Having the Book of Commandments and Revelations so readily accessible is especially significant. While the Kirtland Revelation Book has been available for scholarly research for some time (the KRB was included in the 2002 set of DVDs, *Selected Collections from the Archives of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, edited by Richard E. Turley), the BCR was not in the LDS Church History Library but in a small safe that contained papers belonging to President Joseph F. Smith. The discovery of the Book of Commandments and Revelations came shortly before 2005, when the manuscript was turned over to the LDS Church History Library. This publication was released on September 22, 2009—no small feat. The competence and dedication of those who prepared this volume for publication are commensurate with the volume’s importance, and the dedication to the memory of Larry H. Miller, the bene-

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew J. Grow, review in *Journal of Book of Mormon and Other Restoration Scripture*, 18, no. 2 (2009): 58–59.

<sup>2</sup> Joe Geisner and Jeffrey Needle, “Review of The Joseph Smith Papers: Revelations and Translations, Vol. 1,” <http://www.ldsbooklovers.com/bookreview.asp?rid=239&bid=2449&pid=18> (accessed October 20, 2010).

factor of the Joseph Smith Papers project, should not go unnoticed by anyone who opens this book.

The helpful front matter includes a detailed revelation-by-revelation table of the contents of both revelation books (xii–xv), with each revelation identified by type of document (usually “Revelation” but occasionally other). For example, six revelations were recorded in September 1830, identified by letters A through F with the corresponding section or part of section in the Doctrine and Covenants of the revelation when it was canonized. To illustrate, C, D, and E all became part of Doctrine and Covenants 30. However, “Revelation, 15 May 1831” was not canonized. In addition to the page in this published volume on which the revelation appears (or begins), the contents also lists the original scribe(s). An outstanding map of Joseph Smith’s major places of residence was designed by John C. Hamer. Contextual information continues with one essay introducing the Joseph Smith Papers series, and another introducing this volume. Together, they effectively explain the importance of revelation to the Latter-day Saints and how these manuscripts were originally used.

Most thorough is the next essay, “Editorial Method” (xxxix–xxxvii), which contains most, if not all, of the details any expert would want to know about the transcription, verification, and annotation of these texts, as well as the ingenious use of editorial symbols and colors. For example, rules for making judgments about capitalization and deciphering ambiguous spellings are clearly disclosed (xxxix), and the elegant transcription symbols are sensibly explained (xxxiv–v). Using blue for one scribe, green for another, and bold for Joseph Smith allows information to be conveyed easily and accurately, as never before. These documents were edited in ways that surpass even the highest professional standards. And, for those who have any doubts, all the photographs are there to be compared with the transcriptions. Each verso features a photographic reproduction of an individual manuscript page, with the transcription of that page appearing on its facing recto.

The fascinating and generously illustrated “Note on Photographic Facsimiles” (xxxvii–xliii) describes in specific detail the equipment and procedures used to create the textual photographs. While there were some limitations to the manuscript reproduction, such as the need to adjust shadows or to remove a slip of paper affixed to an original page that obscured some text, the methods and equipment used were absolutely state-of-the-art. For example, multi-spectral imaging was used to recover worn or heavily stricken text, or erased pencil notations. In some ways, using these photographs is better than handling the otherwise indispensable original documents themselves.

A “Source Note” and “Historical Introduction” precede “Revelation Book 1 [BCR]” (3–7) and “Revelation Book 2 [KRB]” (407–10), and explain the books’ physical composition—descriptions made concrete by full-color frontispiece-style illustrations of the two closed documents, edges worn, stitching

coming loose in the paper-covered Book of Commandments and Revelations but the marbled cover intact in the Kirtland Revelation Book. The detailed introduction documents the date of creation, how it was used in the early Church, and the chain of custody.

The Book of Commandments and Revelations (8–405) originated sometime between the summer of 1830 and March of 1831. John Whitmer was the principal scribe, using the Book of Commandments and Revelations (it is more a notebook than a bound ledger) as a place simply to collect and preserve Joseph Smith's revelations. He was called as Church historian and recorder on March 8, 1831 (D&C 47), having served as Joseph's secretary in recording many revelations previously given. This book contains 117 items, most of them revelations, the earliest dated July 1828, the latest December 1832. Most begin with the words "A Revelation . . .," but one begins "A Vision of Joseph and Sidney" (243), and another begins "A Sample . . ." (265).

Church publishers eventually used the Book of Commandments and Revelations as a source text for printing revelations, most notably in the Church's first newspaper, the *Evening and the Morning Star* and in the 1833 Book of Commandments. Several scribes, including John Whitmer, Oliver Cowdery, Sidney Rigdon, and William W. Phelps made editorial changes or adjustments in the Book of Commandments and Revelations in the process of preparing those publications. These changes are, typically, adding punctuation, inserting versification, and making some substantive changes, which usually clarify and expand the meaning of certain items. For example, in what would become Doctrine and Covenants 64, the revelation originally read "now it is called to day & verily it is a day of Sacrifice," to which Joseph inserted a clarification so that the line reads "now it is called to day until the Coming of the son of man & verily it is a day of Sacrifice" (193). The Book of Commandments and Revelations contains the only surviving early manuscripts of some revelations, as well as a few previously unpublished. In a special issue of *BYU Studies*, Robin Scott Jensen conveniently and thoroughly tells the history of the Book of Commandments and Revelations.<sup>3</sup>

The Kirtland Revelation Book (406–665) was a bound book in which scribes copied revelations for collection and preservation. The first of its fifty-three items is "the Vision" (LDS D&C 76) dated February 16, 1832. After revelations dated in December 1833 (583), additional revelations dating from other periods and not always in chronological order complete the book (585–659). Again, most are revelations, but the last item is a set of 1843 notes for Joseph Smith's history and more notes by Thomas Bullock dated "spring 1845," after Joseph's death (667). Frederick G. Williams was the principal scribe at

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<sup>3</sup>Robin Scott Jensen, "From Manuscript to Printed Page," *BYU Studies* 48, no. 3 (2009): 18–52.

first, but several others also inscribed items in the Kirtland Revelation Book, including Orson Hyde, Oliver Cowdery, and Joseph Smith himself.

The Kirtland Revelation Book, in conjunction with the Book of Commandments and Revelations, the 1833 Book of Commandments, and the *Evening and the Morning Star*, became the primary text source for the 1835 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants. A few editorial redactions were also made in the Kirtland Revelation Book in preparation for publication. Some of its items are uniquely documented here, such as Frederick G. Williams' descriptive table of contents (413).

And not to be overlooked in this massive volume is the back matter. The appendices begin with a chronology of events through fall 1835 relating to publication efforts (not to be confused with the Joseph Smith timeline), a scribal directory, and Works Cited. An extremely handy scholarly tool is the chart, "Correspondence of Items in Revelation Books 1 and 2 with Selected Published Versions" (691–94), showing how the manuscript pages in this volume correspond with all the main printed versions of those revelations. Users should note that these page numbers are the original manuscript pages (found in green at the top of each transcribed page), not the page numbers in black at the bottom of the printed pages. In addition to a revelatory document's appearance—either in the Book of Commandments and Revelations, in the Kirtland Revelation Book, or in the *Evening and the Morning Star*—it also keys their appearance to the 1833, 1835, and 1844 editions of the Doctrine and Covenants, plus the 1981 LDS edition and the 2004 Community of Christ edition.

Most interesting is the "Scribal Directory" (679–84) with biographical sketches and photographs of each. "Professional genealogists" on the project staff went back to "original sources to ensure accuracy," thereby sidestepping decades of "sometimes incorrect data." The directory also identifies "ambiguous or unusual habits" that affected the transcriptions (679). Three tables work together to describe, first, the "Relationship between Items in Revelation Book 1 and the *Evening and the Morning Star*" (695–97), the "Relationship between Items in Revelation Book 1 and the Book of Commandments" (697–700), and the "Relationship between Items in Revelation Books 1 and 2 and the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants" (701–5). These tables are important in understanding the editorial marks and changes throughout the Book of Commandments and Revelations and the Kirtland Revelation Book.

The value of having access to these revelation books is immediately apparent. People have already begun thinking about and working on research topics prompted and made possible by this publication. In the special issue of *BYU Studies*, Robert Woodford outlines a dozen ways in which this volume "opens

up exciting possibilities for additional research on Joseph Smith.”<sup>4</sup> For example, among the few new documents found here is a January 1830 revelation regarding an effort to publish the Book of Mormon in Canada. Historians now know much more about what was contingently promised in that case than ever before. Success of this mission was expressly contingent upon the people in the four Provinces not hardening their hearts “against the enticeings [sic] of my spirit and my word,” and the promise was “that the faithful & the righteous” may retain the temporal blessing as well as the spiritual blessing “even as much as ye are able to bear” (33).

In that same issue of *BYU Studies*, Steven Harper gives an informative survey of information that can be gleaned from the headnotes and index of contents, both part of the manuscript of the Book of Commandments and Revelations.<sup>5</sup> For example, Harper points out that the date of Doctrine and Covenants 20 in the Book of Commandments and Revelations is not the traditional date of April 6, 1830, but April 10. An interesting scribal detail on that revelation is that John Whitmer originally put in the headnote: “Given to Joseph the seer by the gift & power of God.” At some later date, Oliver Cowdery inserted new wording above the line so that the headnote reads: “Given to Joseph the seer & Oliver an Apostle by the gift and power of God.” This wording raises the question of whether the organizational revelation was given to Joseph with Oliver as scribe, or to Joseph and Oliver as joint revelators. In 1868 Brigham Young claimed that “Joseph was two hours laboring with O[liver] C[owdery] to get him to write the revelation [Section 20] in humility,”<sup>6</sup> and historians have inferred that Oliver was reluctant to record the revelation, perhaps because it superseded the Articles of the Church of Christ that Oliver had written in late June 1829. But if the newly found headnote communicates that Oliver was a recipient of the revelation with Joseph, one may need to rethink Oliver’s reaction to, involvement in, and recording of Section 20. Perhaps his reluctance might have something to do with why the recording of this revelation was not completed until April 10.

In fact, the dating of Cowdery’s “Articles of the Church of Christ” to late June 1829 can be securely deduced from the original table of contents in the Book of Commandments and Revelations (691), which shows that pages

<sup>4</sup>Robert J. Woodford, “Introducing A Book of Commandments and Revelations: A Major New Documentary ‘Discovery,’” *BYU Studies* 48, no. 3 (2009): 11–15; also available at [www.byustudies.byu.edu](http://www.byustudies.byu.edu).

<sup>5</sup>Steven C. Harper, “Historical Headnotes and the Index of Contents in the Book of Commandments and Revelations,” *ibid.*, 53–66.

<sup>6</sup>Brigham Young, Provo School of the Prophets, Minutes, April 15, 1868, in Elden J. Watson, ed., *Brigham Young Addresses*, 6 vols. (Salt Lake City: Elden J. Watson, 1982), 5:1, April 15, 1868.

17–21 comprised four revelations given in June (now LDS D&C 14, 18, 15, 16). However, the physical pages 15–22 are missing from the manuscript volume. The “Articles of the Church of Christ” were written on pp. 21–25, and pp. 23–24 are extant. On p. 25, dated June 1829, came Section 17, with Section 19 dated nine months later in March 1830, following on pp. 25–28. Because these Articles of the Church of Christ were recorded in the Book of Commandments and Revelations between Sections 16 and 17, both revealed in June, and before Section 19, received in March 1830, the probability is high that the Articles were written in June 1829, immediately upon the completion of the translation of the Book of Mormon.

Also in the special issue of *BYU Studies*, Grant Underwood writes about insights that the Book of Commandments and Revelations provides about “the process by which Joseph Smith received, recorded, and published his revelations,”<sup>7</sup> but much of this remains open to further examination and analysis. In this process, generalizations and broad conclusions will need to be carefully stated, for virtually all of these pages after January 1832 (237–665) contain few, if any, editorial revisions. While new thoughts will spring forth from even these jots and tittles, after the initial euphoria subsides, what is left is an overriding appreciation for the dedication and the providence that created and preserved these pages and has now brought them forth to the world.

In how many ways will this volume change the course of early Mormon historiography? That is yet to be seen; but at a minimum, greater attention will probably need to be paid to the revelations themselves. These premier historical documents were not only the inner sanctum of the Restoration, but also the working engines that drove the main decisions and shaped the character of early Mormonism. Through manuscripts of this quality, as we often heard Larry Miller exclaim, “Millions shall know Brother Joseph again”—and in some ways for the first time.

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<sup>7</sup>Grant Underwood, “Revelation, Text, and Revision: Insight from the Book of Commandments and Revelations,” *BYU Studies* 48, no. 3 (2009): 67.

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Alexander L. Baugh, ed. *Days Never to Be Forgotten: Oliver Cowdery*. Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center/Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2009. ix, 403 pp. Photographs, notes, index. Cloth: \$24.95. ISBN 978-0-8425-2742-2

*Reviewed by M. Guy Bishop*

*Days Never to Be Forgotten* publishes, with two additions, the papers presented at a 2006 symposium held at Brigham Young University on the “life and contributions” of Oliver Cowdery (ix).

The chapters are: “Oliver’s Joseph” by Richard L. Bushman; “The Conversion of Oliver Cowdery” by Larry E. Morris; “Oliver Cowdery as Book of Mormon Scribe” by Royal Skousen, “Oliver Cowdery as Second Witness of Priesthood Restoration” by Steven C. Harper, “Oliver Cowdery in the Doctrine and Covenants” by Susan Easton Black, “Oliver Cowdery’s Correspondence with Joseph Smith” by Grant Underwood, “Images of Oliver” by Patrick A. Bishop, “Raising Money in Righteousness: Oliver Cowdery as Banker” by Mark E. Staker; “Oliver Cowdery as Editor, Defender, and Justice of the Peace in Kirtland” by John W. Welch; “‘Guilty of Such Folly’: Accusations of Adultery or Polygamy against Oliver Cowdery” by Brian C. Hales; “Oliver Cowdery’s Legal Practice in Tiffin, Ohio” by Jeffrey N. Walker; “Elizabeth Ann Whitmer Cowdery: A Historical Reflection of Her Life” by Ronald E. Romig; and “In Memoriam: Honoring Oliver Cowdery in 1911” by Richard Neitzel Holzapfel and Robert F. Schwartz.

Richard L. Bushman, Howard W. Hunter Chair of Mormon Studies at Claremont Graduate University, California, finds Oliver “one of the intriguing and puzzling figures in our [LDS] early history” (1) but who was fatally flawed by his jealousy about his place in the Church and by financial insecurities. “Oliver, while attractive and intelligent, did not have the rocklike qualities of Brigham Young or Wilford Woodruff. He wavered; he waxed hot and cold” (3). In Oliver’s writings, “Joseph remains a shadowy figure in the background—a voice and a mouth—while Oliver sits in the spotlight” (7). Still, “we should be grateful that his needs and anxieties led him to see a side of Joseph we might otherwise have missed,” notably, Joseph’s “singular willingness to admit others into the revelatory process” (12, 1).

One of the most absorbing chapters, not among the original presentations, is Brian C. Hale’s examination of Cowdery’s alleged polygamy in the Kirtland period. He finds that these views “are not based on any contemporary evidence” (279) and surveys both nineteenth-century and modern scholars’ assessments, including the possible identification of Annie or Mary Ann Lyman



as a plural wife after Oliver married Elizabeth Ann Whitmer or perhaps courted her (or another woman) after becoming engaged to Elizabeth Ann. The nineteenth-century documents include general chastisements and comments about a “transgression” (283). Two strengths of Hales’s essay are his careful chronology of windows for such activity in Oliver’s life and his detailed context for each nineteenth-century statement and why the writer might have said it. He also finds improbable allegations of Oliver’s adultery, given his belief in “complete monogamous fidelity” (287).

Ronald E. Romig, Kirtland Temple Site Coordinator, in his biographical sketch of Elizabeth Ann Whitmer Cowdery, does not deal with Oliver’s alleged misbehavior but tells, touchingly, how Oliver, who was then the Church’s typesetter, had a copy of the 1837 edition of the Book of Mormon “specially bound in lovely red Moroccan leather . . . with Elizabeth’s name embossed across the front in gold lettering.” Romig hypothesizes that it was “a kind of peace offering,” a “precious symbol of his work” which he gave Elizabeth hoping she “would understand and forgive his many long hours away from the family” (330). This copy is on display at the Community of Christ’s Kirtland Temple Visitors Center Museum, and the essay includes as a frontispiece a little-known portrait of Elizabeth by an unknown painter, now in the Community of Christ Museum in Independence, that was probably “painted in 1837 as part of a series of portraits” of leaders and their wives “intended to hang in the Kirtland Temple” (326).

Mark L. Staker’s essay, the longest in the book, documents Cowdery’s little-known activities as director of a bank in Michigan at the same time that the Kirtland Safety Society was struggling to survive in the town’s uncertain economy and which was quickly swamped by the national panic engendered by Andrew Jackson’s financial policies. Not the least of Staker’s important contributions is clarifying the chronology of the Safety Society and reconstructing contemporary banking procedures, regulations, and note-issuing policies. Particularly illuminating are parallel accounts of other organizations in Ohio that succeeded (or not) in obtaining legislative charters, and the impact of the Safety Society’s opening and closing on the unstable Mormon community. “As the spiritual, social, and financial burdens of an entire community rested on the shoulders of a thirty-one-year-old Vermont-born well digger and farmer,” Staker writes sympathetically, “troubles that had simmered under the surface for some time boiled over into an open dispute” (187). This important essay sheds much-needed light on this troubled and troubling episode in Mormon history.

Larry Morris’s essay tackles another controversial topic—whether Oliver and Joseph were acquainted, possibly through their fathers, before their work on the Book of Mormon. He concludes that “Lucy, Joseph, and Oliver” all date the meeting at April 5, 1829, and that those arguing for an earlier date

“have provided undocumented speculation but no real evidence” (48).

Given the frequently plowed-over fields of early Mormon history, an “amazing find” was Jeffrey Walker’s discovery, as he began looking into Cowdery’s post-Mormon legal practice in Tiffin, Ohio. He came across “entire case files still tied together with ribbons.” Ultimately, as part of the Joseph Smith Papers Project, Walker and his associations scanned “more than 2,300 pages . . . of pleadings where Cowdery or his law partners were counsel” (297).

Other interesting insights are the fact that Joseph’s “earliest extant letter,” written on October 22, 1829, was to Cowdery (Underwood, 104); Cowdery’s 1834 list of nine statements of belief, six of which “correlate closely” with Joseph Smith’s Nauvoo Articles of Faith (Welch, 261). Richard Neitzel Holzappel and Richard F. Schwartz contribute an outstanding closing essay on the project spearheaded by Junius F. Wells in 1911 to erect a monument in Richmond, Missouri, honoring Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris as the three Book of Mormon witnesses. Interestingly, President Joseph F. Smith specifically instructed Wells not to invite “representatives from the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints or the Church of Christ (Temple Lot), a snub that expressed Joseph F.’s resentment of Frederick M. Smith’s political collaboration with Frank Cannon and Thomas Kearns of the American Party earlier in the decade (364–65).

Many photographs add to the book’s attractiveness.

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Mary Jane Woodger and Joseph H. Groberg. *From the Muddy River to the Ivory Tower: The Journey of George H. Brimhall*. Provo, Utah: BYU Studies, 2010. Foreword by J. Gordon Daines III. xxxvi, 245 pp. Photographs, notes, appendices, index. Cloth: \$18.95. ISBN 978-0-8425-2765-1

*Reviewed by Gary James Bergera*

Mary Jane Woodger and Joseph H. Groberg’s biography of Groberg’s great-grandfather and early BYU president contributes importantly to the study of Utah and LDS-sponsored education. More ambitious than

most family histories, Woodger and Groberg's study provides an illuminating overview of George H. Brimhall's life and of his supervision of the LDS Church's flagship normal-school-cum-university during the early years of the twentieth century. Though they focus on Brimhall's public career as an educator, Woodger and Groberg do not shy away from possibly painful family events, including mention of the mental decline of Brimhall's first wife and a more extended treatment of Brimhall's suicide not quite fifty years later. They also tackle head-on Brimhall's and BYU's rocky encounter with emerging modernist thought, including biblical criticism and organic evolution.

Born in 1852 in Salt Lake City, George Henry Brimhall and his family of origin spent what Brimhall remembered as an especially formative year-plus (about 1864 to about 1865) as members of the Church's Muddy River Mission in southern Nevada. From there, they moved to Spanish Fork, Utah. From 1871 to 1877, Brimhall attended off-and-on the Provo-based Timpanogos Branch of the University of Deseret (later Brigham Young Academy/University). He married Alsina Wilkins in 1874, eventually fathering six children. He received a normal (or teaching) diploma in 1877 and began teaching elementary school in Spanish Fork. In late 1883, Alsina developed what was termed "brain fever." Her condition deteriorated over the next two years, and Brimhall reluctantly had her committed to the newly opened Utah Territorial Insane Asylum (today the Utah State Hospital) in Provo, where she spent her remaining forty years. While I wish Woodger and Groberg had spent a little more space on Alsina's condition, I understand their wanting to remain focused on Brimhall.

Two months prior to Alsina's institutionalization, Brimhall married Flora Robertson as a plural wife and fathered nine children with her. One of their daughters, Fawn, became the mother of Fawn McKay Brodie, noted biographer of Joseph Smith. In 1888, Brimhall was named superintendent of Provo's schools and in 1891 started teaching at BYA. From 1893 to 1894, and again from 1900 to 1902, he was acting president of BYA. In 1898, he received a doctorate from the LDS Church Board of Education. Not quite six years later, he was officially installed as president of Brigham Young University. (The change from academy to university had occurred six months earlier.)

Brimhall, like his predecessor Benjamin Cluff Jr. (1858–1948), was eager to transform BYU into a first-class showplace of both Mormon and American educational values. Unlike Cluff, who received some of his education outside the LDS Zion, however, Brimhall's education consisted entirely of LDS-oriented instruction. And when LDS and American values seemed to clash, Brimhall sided with his church. In no other episode during Brimhall's presidency was this tension so clearly manifest as during the school's 1911 controversy over higher criticism and organic evolution. In Chapter 6, "Brimhall Confronts

Modernism” (165–90), the authors provide a full treatment of this portion of Brimhall’s biography and BYU’s history, plumbing the relevant secondary sources and offering judicious, if understandably pro-Brimhall, interpretations. When confronted with what Church leaders believed to be the dangerous teachings of a few of his most popular faculty members, Brimhall decided he had no choice but to rid the school of the recalcitrant teachers. The fall-out was painful to many members of the BYU community, the damage to the school’s academic reputation long-lasting.

Brimhall may have believed he was forced to act in what he thought were his church’s best interests, insisting, “The school follows the church or it ought to stop” (126). However, years later, in 1926, he offered a view of LDS education that suggests a broader, more tolerant view of intellectualism:

Perhaps no household has ever been more zealous of the faith of its children than the Latter-day Saint household. Nor has there anywhere been greater anxiety for scientific and research training. But there has grown up the feeling that these two branches of thought are incompatible. . . . that we can’t have both. Some people have answered this problem by drawing into their shells. Preferring the faith of their fathers at any cost, yet unconsciously admitting a doubt as to its strength, they have turned a deaf ear to science and to everything new or challenging. They have enclosed their faith, made a hot-house plant of it, and instead of strengthening it they have weakened it. . . . Their strength is not within their faith but in the ramparts they have built around it.

. . . There is no surer way to display our perfect faith in God than to welcome every truth that is disclosed by scientific research. We thus show that whatever else comes to light we abide in a perfect assurance of the triumph of God and his purposes. (199–200)

Brimhall left the BYU presidency in 1921 and was replaced by Franklin S. Harris (1884–1960), yet remained on campus to chair the school’s Department of Theology and also to supervise the Church’s seminaries. Over the next decade, he also wrote lessons for the Church’s *Relief Society Magazine*, authored articles for the *Improvement Era*, and delivered radio sermons for the Church’s Mutual Improvement Association. His first wife, Alsina, died on January 10, 1926, in the couple’s home (she had been transported there from the mental hospital earlier that same day). His second wife, Flora, died twenty-four years later, on May 1, 1950.

Brimhall struggled throughout much of his life with sometimes extended periods of very poor health. Perhaps stemming in some way, at least in part, from his response to Alsina’s breakdown, Brimhall, by the early 1890s, was “in constant pain” (40), manifested mostly, but not entirely, in stabbing chest pains. Over the next decade, other symptoms of what seems to have been stress- and anxiety-induced illness surfaced (108–9). By 1902 his condition, according to Woodger and Groberg, was exacerbated by Alsina’s “hopeless situ-

ation” (11) and now included severe back, chest, and stomach pain, as well as lengthy nosebleeds. He decided to seek medical help in California. “My improvement,” he lamented during this period, “has been mostly hope” (113). “Many a sunset brought from me the inward exclamation,” he later confessed, “Thank God I’m one day nearer to the end” (108). Despite intermittent periods of respite, Brimhall’s problematic health remained “a constant concern throughout his life” (201). He tried not to dwell on or call undue attention to his ailments; but as he grew older and his situation worsened, he became increasingly despondent, most conspicuously during the months preceding his death. By 1932, as his problems included kidney failure and rheumatism, his doctors “gave no hope of recovery . . . [and] could only prescribe pain medication” (201). On July 29, 1932, Brimhall killed himself with the rifle he kept in his home. He was seventy-nine.

In their unflinching treatment of Brimhall’s suicide, Woodger and Groberg suggest that Brimhall’s mind became so clouded by drugs and weakened by pain that he did not fully comprehend what he was doing and thus was not responsible for his actions. This interpretation, which exonerates Brimhall from the belief shared by some that suicide was a grievous sin, differs from that which posits that Brimhall knowingly and intentionally chose to end his pain and suffering. While the circumstances of many suicides are often shrouded in unknowns, I personally find it easier to believe that a person of Brimhall’s character and inner strength, facing a future of unremitting and intensifying pain, would act in a way that, he believed, would not only terminate his own suffering but also the helpless suffering and inevitable emotional exhaustion of the people he most loved.

As an aside, Woodger and Groberg’s book is published by *BYU Studies* and reflects an interior design modeled on that journal. As a result, scattered throughout the text are full-page mini-essays on topics only mentioned, sometimes fleetingly, in the text. For me, at least, the effect of these extended, highlighted, full-page footnotes tended to be more distracting than helpful. If the authors and *BYU Studies* find this kind of information important for the reader’s understanding, they may want to reconsider treating them as actual notes and not as intrusive text-breakers.

Woodger and Groberg’s book is more than a welcome contribution to LDS history and biography. It opens the door on the life of a man whose accomplishments continue to impact LDS higher education and whose deep humanity remains alive and vibrant.

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Richard E. Bennett. *We'll Find the Place: The Mormon Exodus, 1846–1848*. Paperback edition: Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2009. xix, 442 pp. Photographs, maps, notes, appendix, bibliography, index. Paper: \$21.95. ISBN 978-0-8061-3838-1

*Reviewed by Melvin L. Bashore*

When I am asked to recommend a good Mormon trail history, I unhesitatingly suggest Wallace Stegner's *The Gathering of Zion* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964). I deem it a classic. Barring a few small mistakes discovered since its 1964 printing by modern scholarship, it has stood the test of time—and it is so well written. That is what draws me to read it afresh time and again. Some of Stegner's thoughts and expressions seem forever lodged in my mind, recalled for no explicable reason, except that they are true and so nicely phrased. Regarding Mormon pioneer women—Stegner dubbed them “incredible.” Recall Jim Bridger's legendary thousand dollar wager that the Mormons wouldn't be able to grow a bushel of corn in Salt Lake Valley? Stegner wanted in on that betting action, countering that Mormons were so adept at agriculture that they could “grow corn in a cement sidewalk” (156). Classic.

Richard Bennett's *We'll Find the Place: The Mormon Exodus, 1846–1848*, was first published by Deseret Book in 1997. Now a dozen years later, the University of Oklahoma Press has reissued it in paperback. I think that will prove to be a happy decision for a couple of reasons. *We'll Find the Place* was a sequel to Bennett's prize-winning history of the Mormon sojourn at Winter Quarters, *Mormons at the Missouri, 1846–1852: “And Should We Die”* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987). By my count, that earlier book was widely reviewed and lauded in at least twenty-five journals, many highly respected at a national level. In contrast, when *We'll Find the Place* was printed, it was only narrowly reviewed in mostly Mormon-related journals. For example, *Journal of Mormon History* gave it only a cursory overview (Fall 1999, 158). Hopefully this new printing by a university press will bring it forward to the awareness of a national audience. It is worthy.

When Leonard Arrington wrote the foreword, he was certain it would “become a classic in Mormon and American history” (xii). I think that even the author would agree that this book has fallen short of Arrington's expectations. I trust that the University of Oklahoma Press will aggressively place the book in the hands of scholarly reviewers as it did for Bennett's first book. It needs a wider audience. Can it become a classic? Although Bennett is indeed an eloquent, polished writer who conveys his thoughts with clarity and precision, he is not a Stegner. But that is not to fault him in any way because Bennett

is a very good writer—really an elegant writer. Stegner is just a cut or two or more above all the rest of us.

With his two book titles drawing upon lines in William Clayton's pioneer anthem, Bennett hears the music of that pioneer past in Church history. His words sing for me. I was undoubtedly asked to write this review because of my career-long interest in Mormon Trail history. But to treat *We'll Find the Place* as nothing more than a trail book is to fall way short of doing it justice. This book is as much Church history as it is trail history. In fact, after now having read it twice, once when it was first printed and now in this new reprinting, my sense is that the majority of the book deals with much more than the nuts and bolts (and ruts) of trail history. Only four of twelve chapters principally deal with the trail, but even they are not solely for the trail buff.

A dynamic process was taking place while the Saints were on the move west. Uncertainty shadowed their future and, as Bennett so artfully narrates, the very survival of the Church. Most of the reviewers in the book's first printing saw only the trail, missing out on the real contribution Bennett has made in looking at this pivotal moment in the Mormon past. Where most previous historians had only skimmed the surface of the 1847 pioneer journey, Bennett probes deeply, mining the sub-surface strata of the worry and uncertainty on so many fronts. It was a time fraught with tension. The book's title and Clayton's anthem line, "We'll find the place," reflects both assurance and faith—yet such faith was required precisely *because* of real and serious unknowns that were a genuine cause for worry. In the absence of a reorganized First Presidency, would other prophet-claimants like James J. Strang fill the leadership void and siphon off many of those who previously followed Joseph the Prophet? Would they find a place in time to plant crops? What if their crops failed? What if Brigham Young had died from mountain fever? So many what ifs.

And so much rested on Brigham's shoulders. "I feel all the time like Moses," Brigham voiced before setting out from Winter Quarters for a place in the West (80). In this book, we see him grow into the Mormon Moses. He begins to sound prophetic. We see the people begin to regard him as Joseph's rightful, even inevitable, successor. Six weeks after setting out from Winter Quarters, Brigham voiced his displeasure with the company's levity in a memorable rainy morning meeting. Bennett devotes all of Chapter 5 to this chastisement and the insights it yields into the personality and bearing of the man who would end up leading the Church for three decades. Not only does Bennett help us understand Brigham, but also the Mormon people during this tenuous time. That so many stuck with the Church at this shaky moment is a testament to the strength of Brigham's leadership. As they followed Brigham's lead into the western wilds, they lived and acted as if they knew with assurance that they were children of God. In that rainy early morning meeting just north of Scotts Bluff, Brigham admonished grown men to be good chil-



dren. He decried their card playing, dancing till all hours, and practical jokes. If this people were to merit the blessings of the God of ancient Israel, they must act with soberness. If they weren't good, their new Great Basin beginning might all be for naught. Bennett helps us see how the Mormons began to see themselves, a self-perception that helped define them as a people and that formed the core of life in pioneer Utah for the next two decades. It was a foundational factor in the establishment of every pioneer settlement.

Other than a few changes, corrections, and the addition of a supplementary bibliography, the author states that "this new edition is substantially the same as the first edition." (xix) Although Bennett's book is the best yet for helping us understand the import and meaning behind the basic facts of the exodus, it is not without fault. They are minor and should in no way detract from the important lessons conveyed with such eloquence in this book. Yet in fairness, some of these small mistakes ought to be noted.

My first comment could be addressed not only to Bennett, but to many researchers and historians who use the scrapbook-like *Journal History* that was compiled in the Historian's Office by Andrew Jenson and his staff. Bennett used it as a source and quotes from it frequently. As he notes in his historiographical essay, the *Journal History* is an "essential first stop" in doing research in the Church History Library (382). However, when transcribing original sources into *Journal History*, Andrew Jenson and his staff freely made many editorial corrections and changes to the documents. *Journal History* should only be used as a finding aid to original sources, except in those few instances when it may be the primary source or when obscure or uncited newspaper clippings are pasted into it, as they are at least as early as the 1844 volume. For the sake of accuracy, historians should always use the original sources.

Second, Bennett warns readers in the preface that the book contains "many quotations" (xvii). It does—for my taste, a few too many. Others might disagree, but I believe many of the quotes could have been judiciously summarized or pared down in length to better effect. Bennett is such a good writer that I would much rather read his thoughts and analyses than long quotations.

Third, Bennett has made a few questionable assertions that I would have liked to cross-check, but no sources were cited. For example, he contended that Mormons would have known the "latest safe date for leaving the Missouri River in time to cross the Rockies" (37). I'm not sure how they would have known this prior to gaining experience in crossing the plains. Maybe they did, but a source would have been helpful in expanding my knowledge.

Where did the Mormons learn that shooting a cannon would put fear into Indians? Bennett said they learned it from the writings of explorers like John C. Frémont rather than from their own experimentation (143 note 29). Frémont took a brass twelve-pound howitzer cannon on his 1843–44 expedition to Oregon and California, impressed the Indians with it, and so

wrote about it in his report, but Bennett does not cite Frémont's report. Rather he quotes pioneer N. T. Porter, traveling with the vanguard company, who wrote that the Mormons fired their cannon near Fort Laramie and frightened a group of Sioux Indians. Furthermore, the chronology becomes vague at this point. Porter's reminiscent account seems to be describing an event that occurred on May 24 when they were east of Chimney Rock, but none of the contemporary journals mention that they fired the cannon or prompted an excited reaction by the Indians on that date. Rather, they suggest that they showed the Indians how the cannon worked but didn't actually fire it. Porter's quotation adds color and supports Bennett's thesis, but the incident may not have happened in the way he describes. Also, the vanguard company did not reach Fort Laramie until June 4. Porter's quotation tends to substantiate the point that Mormon knowledge about cannon-shooting as a deterrent to Indian molestation came from experimentation rather than from book-learning.

Other mistakes in the book are mostly minor. I have counted ten or eleven deaths in what Bennett called the large Emigration Camp (or Big Company) that followed on the heels of Brigham's 1847 pioneer company, not the four that Bennett tallied (265). The Liberty Pole was a symbolic marker erected by the pioneers at the assembly place on the banks of the Elkhorn River. Bennett mentioned two other tall Liberty Poles erected by the pioneers (275 note 6), but overlooked a Liberty Pole planted at the place where the companies first reached the Platte River, about thirteen miles west of Loup Fork. Topped by a white flag, it provided a beacon for west-bound Saints through at least the emigration year of 1852. The first ground in Salt Lake City was not watered prior to plowing (218). During the harvest celebration on August 10, 1848, the bowery was located in the fort, not on Temple Square (350). Bennett incorrectly attributes a photograph of one of the bas-reliefs sculpted by Mahonri Young at the base of the Seagull Monument to illustrator Charles B. Hall (347). In my opinion, although the early building of Salt Lake City is known in a general way (237), much more could be written to provide a more accurate and complete picture of those early years.

The members of the 1847 vanguard company with their birth and death dates are listed alphabetically in an appendix (367–80), including "Franklin G. Losee," the spelling given his name by William Clayton. Bullock listed him in the company's 7th Ten as "Franklin G. Loose." Horace K. Whitney listed him as "Franklin G. Lowe."<sup>1</sup> Clayton's list was cast in bronze on the 1897 Brigham Young Monument, located north of the intersection of South Temple and

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<sup>1</sup>Thomas Bullock, *Journal*, May 23, 1847; Horace K. Whitney, *Journal*, April 16,

Main Street in Salt Lake City, but little has been known about this enigmatic pioneer until very recently. He was actually John G. Luce, who returned to Winter Quarters, arriving on October 31, 1847, with Brigham Young's back-trailing band who would bring their families to Utah the next spring. Although more research is needed, it appears that Luce went to Maine with his family and never again came to Utah. This is a minor point of interest, but it leads me to another criticism regarding Bennett's choice of sources.

Of all the journals kept by people in the vanguard company, William Clayton's is one of the most important. Bennett used it heavily but relied on the version published in 1921<sup>2</sup> rather than the holograph. Volunteers who proofread the transcribed holograph journal for the Mormon Pioneer Overland Travel database {[www.mormontrail.lds.org](http://www.mormontrail.lds.org)} in 2005 compared the Lawrence Clayton 1921 version with the original. Some of these volunteers told me that there were numerous differences between the two. Although most were minor, there were enough to warrant that historians should use the original rather than the print version. For instance, Bennett quoted Brigham's severe rebuke of the camp's levity from Clayton's May 29 journal entry. According to the Lawrence Clayton version, Brigham told the men, "You don't know how to control your senses." The original Clayton manuscript reads, "You don't know how to control yourselves." This minor rewording doesn't appreciably alter the meaning, but the transcription of this block of quoted text (161) contains a major error. The text of the last four lines beginning with the words "Saints, a resting place" are misplaced at the end of the quotation. They belong in front of the sentence which reads "Some of you are very fond of passing jokes. . . ." There is also a sizeable section of text missing, which should have been caught in copy editing and which would have clarified the meaning of this part of Brigham's sermon. The missing text (italicized) should read "*Do we suppose that we are going to look out a home for the Saints, a resting place . . .*"

This important book traveled a rough road in its reprinting by the University of Oklahoma Press. When I accepted the *Journal's* invitation to review the book almost a year ago, I was startled to note that the review copy had several defective pages and was fraught with copy errors that should have been corrected before publication. I thought Bennett's book deserved better treatment. Fortunately the press thought so too, although to its credit, it didn't want to taint the review process. It withdrew all the defective copies and reprinted the book again with copy errors corrected. I consider this action an important marker of the press's professional standards on what had to have been a very expensive

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1847, LDS Church History Library.

<sup>2</sup>Lawrence Clayton, ed., *William Clayton's Journal* (Salt Lake City: Clayton Family Association, 1921).

mistake. I look forward to Bennett's important book becoming available to a wider circle of readers now than when it was first published in 1997.

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Morris A. Shirts and Frances Anne Smeath. *Historical Topography: A New Look at Old Sites on Mountain Meadows*. Cedar City: Southern Utah University Press, 2002. iv, 71 pp. Photographs, maps, footnotes, appendices, index. Paper: \$15.00. ISBN 0-935615-08-3

Caroline Keturah Parry Woolley. *"I Would to God": A Personal History of Isaac Haight*. Edited by Blanche Cox Clegg and Janet Burton Seegmiller. Cedar City: Southern Utah University Press, 2009. vii, 221 pp. Photographs, bibliography, endnotes, index. Paper: \$25.00. ISBN 978-0-935615-27-2

*Reviewed by Richard E. Turley Jr.*

The infamous Mountain Meadows Massacre of 1857 took place southwest of Cedar City, Utah, the municipality that today includes Southern Utah University. Thus, it should come as no surprise that the university's press has established a series of monographs on the Mountain Meadows. First in the series is *Historical Topography: A New Look at Old Sites on Mountain Meadows*, a joint work by Morris A. Shirts and Frances Anne Smeath. The next volume is *"I Would to God": A Personal History of Isaac Haight*, a work edited by Blanche Cox Clegg and Janet Burton Seegmiller from materials prepared by Caroline Keturah Parry Woolley, a granddaughter of Isaac C. Haight. Haight was one of nine men indicted for the massacre.

When Morris Shirts died of complications from diabetes in 1997, he left research for a monograph he had planned on Mountain Meadows site issues. Shirts's heirs subsequently asked Frances Anne Smeath to prepare his research for publication; she had earlier assisted family members in publishing his *A Trial Furnace: Southern Utah's Iron Mission* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 2001; coauthored with Shirts's daughter-in-law, Kathryn Hanson Shirts). Morris Shirts's interest in Mountain Meadows arose from the massacre's role in the Iron Mission's demise.

*Historical Topography* examines the military investigations of the massacre

by U.S. Army Captain Reuben Campbell, Assistant Army Surgeon Charles Brewer, Brevet Major James Henry Carleton, and Major Henry Prince at Mountain Meadows in 1859. From extant accounts, it builds a basic chronology of their work, including the recovery and burial of massacre victims' remains. To help understand the setting of the massacre, the book analyzes a manuscript map Prince created that year and orients it to modern landmarks. As Shirts and Smeath point out, "The most tangible artifact of the 1859 site investigations was the monument raised by Carleton to the memory of the massacre victims" (16).

The book next touches on the 1864 site visit of Captain George Frederick Price and his company's reconstruction of the Carleton monument. It notes references to the Carleton and Price monuments in later documents, especially surveys from 1873 to 1899 that include the Mountain Meadows. The book gives considerable attention to the misguided idea that the massacred emigrants were first attacked at a "Cane Springs well" south of the meadows. It refuses to dismiss the idea "out of hand" because of substantial "anecdotal evidence" (31). However, the hypothesis *should* be dismissed because it arose through confusing the Cane Spring at the south end of the Mountain Meadows with the similarly named Cane Spring(s) farther south.

*Historical Topography* describes the "uncertain years" in the early twentieth century that concluded with construction of a new monument at Mountain Meadows in 1932. It follows with descriptions of the 1955 monument in Harrison, Arkansas; the 1990 monument on a hill above the Mountain Meadows; and (near the end of the book) the 1999 monument on the floor of the Meadows (34–41, 59).

A major section of the book is titled "Critical Issues" and tries, among other things, to determine the victims' line of march to their death (42–56). This section includes two highly useful illustrations. The first is a modern topographical map prepared by the staff of the Washington County (Utah) Recorder's Office, who "remapped the meadows in 1999" (47–48). The second is a "Comparative Distances Chart" (49) that collates accounts from several early investigators.

Because *Historical Topography* represents the work of a scholar who died in 1997, at times it feels like a sampling of old arguments that have since been answered or superseded. Yet it still has value for well-versed students of the Mountain Meadows Massacre because it makes readily available some sources that are not otherwise easily accessible in print.

Caroline Woolley's history, "*I Would to God*," seeks to rehabilitate the reputation of her grandfather, Isaac C. Haight, who has been shown in most recent books on the massacre to bear a major responsibility for the crime. Her aim is to exonerate him. In her closing remarks, she pleads, "If I have argued in my grandfather's favor, please grant me that small privilege" (205).

For many years, Woolley sought support of family members in publishing her book. In 1964, she wrote, "I worked for ten years with little loyalty and much bitter opposition from the descendants of Isaac Chauncey Haight. . . . [T]here is a concerted effort to prevent its publication" (ii), although she supplies no details. Before her death, Woolley donated her book manuscript to what became Southern Utah University, with the proviso that it be published. The publication of her book in 2009 by the university fulfills its obligation.

Woolley prefaces her book with a compelling account of learning about the massacre when she was a child. Not recognizing her grandfather's role in it, she eagerly repeated the story around the family dinner table. She did not anticipate her parents' reaction. Her mother (Isaac Haight's daughter Mary Ann) left the table for her bedroom. Her father (John Parry) ordered his "young chatterbox" to the family library (iv). There he told her she was talking about her mother's father. He opened a locked desk drawer and showed her publications about the massacre, telling her that they contained part truth, part lies. The story, he said, was complicated. He offered to let her read the locked-up writings when she had adequate education. The experience created in Woolley an insatiable thirst for learning about the massacre and clearing her grandfather's name.

The early chapters of the book recount her grandfather's lineage, his conversion to Mormonism, his early missionary experiences, his life in Nauvoo, and his eventual immigration west. She describes his settlement in the Salt Lake Valley and his journey south from there in 1849 and 1850 with Parley P. Pratt's exploring company. She reviews Haight's first mission to England, his role in Mormon emigration, his entry into polygamy, and his assignment to the Iron Mission in southern Utah, where he became the most prominent citizen of Cedar City.

After a chapter on the Reformation of the mid-1850s and a "Prologue to Mountain Meadow Massacre" (82), she includes a chapter on the Utah War and Isaac Haight's reaction to news of an approaching army. Here the evidence gets murky.

Throughout the book, Woolley's editors make an effort to document her stories. But in some cases, her dramatized prose makes that difficult. For instance, Woolley has Isaac Haight giving a sermon in first-person singular, with much of the wording in quotation marks (91–93). Readers at first may believe Woolley is quoting from an important, contemporaneous document otherwise unknown to scholars. The editors' note at the end of the account, however, simply states: "The content of this sermon was taken from several accounts," suggesting that Woolley cobbled the sermon together from unnamed sources.

That chapter ends in August 1857, and the next one begins on September 13—two days after the massacre culminates. Like Isaac Haight's own journal, Woolley omits the massacre itself. Throughout the rest of the book, she por-

trays Haight as being innocent of the killings, which she blames predominantly on John D. Lee. Yet despite Haight's supposed innocence, he spent much of the rest of his life running from the law, and the remainder of Woolley's book tracks the wanderings that precede his death.

Woolley writes that in 1870, Lee was "excommunicated for committing a crime" and Haight was excommunicated "for not preventing John D. Lee from committing that crime" (132). Accepting the idea that Haight had been "greatly wronged" by this excommunication, she describes his rebaptism in 1874 and quotes twentieth-century hearsay that Brigham Young *personally* baptized Haight, a claim that contradicts the account of Haight's son-in-law Christopher J. Arthur, who said he had gone to be baptized "*by instruction of* Prest. B. Young" (139–41; italics mine).

As an explanation of the Mountain Meadows Massacre and its causes, "*I Would to God*" leaves much to be desired. It does, however, provide information about Haight's post-massacre days found in no other readily available published source. Haight's fugitive status haunted much of the rest of his life. Like other participants in the massacre, he ran not only from law enforcement officials but also from fellow Church members who connected him with the crime. Because he left Utah, some of his own children grew up dissociated from him.

Of Haight and others accused of the massacre, Woolley writes: "Often their whereabouts was [sic] unknown to their families. They were spoken of with anguish and love, but only by those belonging to this small circle. A price was on their heads. Federal marshals were everywhere. It was unsafe to communicate through the mails, for that was accessible to federal agents. So there was silence and deep anxiety" (198).

Unlike John D. Lee, executed in 1877 for his role in the massacre, Haight and a few others indicted for their parts in it never faced the firing squad but spent their lives on the run. If they escaped execution, they did not escape the anxiety and paranoia of fugitives. In Woolley's words, they were "the living dead" (198).

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## BOOK NOTICES

Catherine H. Ellis. *Images of America: Holbrook and the Petrified Forest*. Chicago: Arcadia Publishing, 2007. 127 pp., 200 photographs, Additional Reading. Paper: \$19.99. ISBN: 0-7385-4885-5

*Holbrook and the Petrified Forest* by Catherine H. Ellis is one volume in a series about the history of early Western towns preserved primarily through photographs, drawings, and other visual media. Holbrook is a rough-and-tumble ranching settlement in northern Arizona, its economy historically based on railroad commerce and the Hashknife Cattle Company. Aside from the saloons, outlaws, and other colorful residents, Holbrook is also the seat of Navajo County and home to the Petrified Forest.

The 200 photographs are organized thematically into six chapters of visual history with a short introduction for each chapter. While the pictures are the book's main contribution, the text provides background information on the photographs and their subjects.

The introduction and first chapter describe the area's early settlement by Hispanics in the 1870s, followed by Mormons from Utah and settlers

from Boston in 1876. Landmark commercial developments were a saloon and Schuster's store. In 1881, a Union Pacific Railroad station was constructed beside the Little Colorado River.

Some of the most interesting episodes describe skirmishes between ranchers and outlaws. Also featured are sheriffs like Perry Owens and Frank Wattron who was said to be "a bad man to cross" (18). One outlaw, W. R. ("Red") McNeil, held up Schuster's store and evaded Sheriff Owens, leaving the following poetic tribute on a tree:

I am king of the outlaws.  
I am perfection at robbing a store.  
I have a stake left me by Wells Fargo  
And before long I will have more. . . .  
Commodore Owens says he would like  
to kill me . . .  
That red-headed son of a gun.  
He handles the six shooter mighty neat  
And kills a jack rabbit every pop.  
But should he and I happen to meet  
It will be a regular old Arkansas hop. (9)

Photographs of early businesses include images of the A&B Schuster Co. established in 1884, William Arbuster's Blacksmith Shop, the Holbrook Hotel built immediately after a devastating fire in 1888, and the

Mormon-owned Arizona Cooperative Mercantile Institution.

The next chapter details interactions between the Holbrook residents and the neighboring Hopi, Navajo, and Apache. Initially, the new settlers feared the natives, and conflicts arose over land and water claims and cattle stealing. Eventually, a fruitful trading relationship was formed between “Anglos” and Indians which benefitted both parties. Describing the Indian trade, Holbrook resident John Addison Hunt said “they’d load horses down . . . and come over into our country . . . and trade the blankets for anything they could eat or wear” (27).

Subsequent chapters focus on the railroad and cattle trade, the creation of Navajo County, and Holbrook as the county seat in 1895, the designation of the Petrified Forest as a National Monument in 1906, and the impact of Route 66 in the 1930. Ellis concludes with a chapter emphasizing Holbrook’s contributions to World War I and World War II, such as the construction of an airport, the establishment of a naval air cadet training program, and the enlistment of local Native Americans (109, 112).

In the introduction to the concluding chapter, Ellis quotes an editorial by Ron Grimsley published on Holbrook’s centennial: “You’ll find most of them call Holbrook hot, dusty, windy, stormy, dry and barren. They also call it home” (103).

photographs. Paper: \$19.99. ISBN: 978-0-7385-5628-4

St. Johns is a small town in Apache County, Arizona, near its eastern state line. Cameron Udall, a seventh-generation St. Johns native, tells her hometown’s distinctive story using two hundred photos provided by the St. Johns Family History Center, the St. Johns Historical Society and Museum, and other collections. The pictures date mostly between 1880 and the early 1900s.

The story begins with Mormon scout Ammon Tenney who recommended the area to Church authorities for settlement. Acting on their instructions, Tenney purchased the property on November 19, 1879 (9). David King Udall, who arrived in 1880, was called as the ward’s first bishop. Mormons and non-Mormon settlers who had arrived previously disputed over the land. (Any relation between Cameron Udall and David Udall is unknown, since the book contains no information about the author.) Cameron Udall quotes a letter dated June 1880, by C. A. Franklin, the non-Mormon district attorney, in which he petitioned the federal government for a post office and complained that the Mormons, “by false and atrocious misrepresentations . . . have so far imposed upon your department as to have a post office established at their *wagon camp*” (7; emphasis his).

As another example of conflict, Marcos Baca, justice of the peace, wrote a letter (no date) signed by thirty townspeople and delivered to

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Cameron Udall. *Images of America: St. Johns*. San Francisco, Calif.: Arcadia Publishing, 2008. 127 pp. 200

Bishop David Udall. It remonstrated: "We have seen members of the Mormon sect, surveying, driving stakes, and living under their wagon covers, making preparations [to transfer] themselves to the surroundings of our town. . . . This you shall take for a town protest. We hope you will desist in your purpose" (17). This effort did not succeed, and Udall tells what is obviously a beloved regional joke: "It is said that the Mormons were passing through the area and said, 'We'll just wait here until the wind dies down'—127 years later, their descendants are still waiting" (7).

The book contains an introduction and five chapters: "The Making of a Town," "Taking Leave of Arizona by the Winchester Route," "Dam That River," "Educating St. Johns," and "Pride and Perseverance." Each begins with one or two short paragraphs of historical context, followed by a thematic collection of black and white images.

Chapter 1 introduces the earlier families and settlers of St. Johns and the development of Commercial Street, the town's business center. Chapter 2 reveals the rougher side of local law enforcement. St. Johns' jail housed such outlaws as members of Butch Cassidy's infamous "Wild Bunch." A number of both outlaws and civilians were either shot (hence the chapter title) or hanged.

Chapter 3 focuses on multiple efforts to tame the Little Colorado River, the town's water source. The sporadic flow of the river caused dry periods, followed by uncontrollable surges. The first dam (1885) required an upstream diversion dam that

washed out "every time there was substantial runoff in the river" (54). Six more dams followed the same pattern. The Saludo Dam (no date) was constructed with "a special sluice gate, which when opened could augment the capacity of the spillway in case of an emergency" (55). In 1905, this dam broke from "a rush of water before the sluice gate could be pulled. With the help of a group of capitalists from Denver," the "Lyman Dam" (constructed 1910–13) at a cost of \$250,000 was finished (56). Although it had almost twice the capacity of the Saludo Dam, it broke on April 14, 1915, drowning seven. Only two bodies were recovered (53).

A recurrent culprit in the washouts was a "little spring buried at the south end of the dam." This time, the residents rebuilt (no date), sealing off the spring and diverting its seepage with "creosote pilings . . . to form a wall of wood from the base of the dam down to the bedrock" and "a pair of sluice tunnels that are 7 feet high, 12 feet wide, and 360 feet long" (59). Although many moved away, those who stayed built one last dam with adequate safety measures to prevent another mishap (no dates on any of these events).

Chapter 4 deals with schools in St. Johns. "The White School on the Hill," as it was known among the locals, was built in the early 1880s and educated youth of all ages, followed by an additional brick schoolhouse. In 1889 the St. Johns Stake opened an academy to offer secondary education. It began as a two-year program with moderately high tuition,

and thirteen students. John W. Brown was principal. The class first met in the Mormon tithing office while the building was under construction, then moved in when it was dedicated on December 16, 1900, by Apostle Joseph F. Smith. A photo of the 1910 student body shows around ninety students of high school age (69). The students formed bands, played on sports teams, and took part in plays. The academy was discontinued in 1921 when the town began construction of St. Johns High School (completed in 1926).

A notable native son was Rex E. Lee, founding dean of the J. Reuben Clark Law School at Brigham Young University and later the university's president. He also "argued a remarkable 59 cases in front of the Supreme Court" as solicitor general under President Ronald Reagan (86).

Udall captures the spirit of St. Johns by quoting J. Golden Kimball, a beloved member of the First Council of Seventy, who said in one general conference (no date): "I would like to take you on a trip down to Arizona, in the St. Johns Country. I preached faith there once, but I want to tell you I haven't enough faith to stay in such an undesirable country. You talk about good people, you talk about righteous people; I can tell you there are people in this city who are not worthy to unlatch their shoestrings. That hard country, and their obedience to God, has made those men of great characters. You can't discourage them. They will build a dam across the Little Colorado River every five years, and if it washes out the next day, they'll live on dry bread and mo-

lasses. Yet that is their home; that is there [sic] country; there they worship God" (89).

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D. L. Turner and Catherine H. Ellis. *Images of America: Latter-day Saints in Mesa*. Charleston, S.C.: Arcadia Publishing, 2009. 127 pp. Photographs, maps. Paper: \$21.99. ISBN: 0-7385-5857-5

D. L. Turner and Catherine H. Ellis, both descended from LDS settlers of Arizona, have compiled a collection of 246 photographs and multiple personal accounts documenting the history of Latter-day Saints in Mesa, Arizona, from the founding of the city in 1877 to the present. The introduction includes a brief history about Brigham Young's decision to send companies of Saints to southern Arizona.

"The first Mormon settlers along the Salt River, later known as the Lehi Company, arrived in 1877," summarizes this historical introduction. "They crossed the Colorado River at the west end of the Grand Canyon and traveled through the Mojave Desert. The next year, other settlers came from Bear Lake, Idaho, and Salt Lake City. They crossed at Lee's Ferry and became known as the Mesa Company. Additional groups arrived in the ensuing years; some of the people settled at Tempe (Nephi), others at Alma, Lehi, or Mesa" (8).

The first chapter discusses these initial companies, describes their

journey to reach Mesa and the surrounding area, and the first years of settlements. The narrative is brief, but the photographs of individuals and families document the important activities, such as freighting, mining, and farming during the development period.

The second chapter focuses on the rise of an educational system in the town, illustrated by photographs of students, schoolhouses, and many school-sponsored activities such as the "Return of Spring Pageant," "Pageant of the Superstitions," marching band and "Rabbette" performances, and several sports teams.

The organization and growth of the Maricopa Stake, Arizona's first LDS stake, organized in 1882, is the subject of the third chapter. The photographs in this section include prominent individuals involved in the stake such as Apostle Delbert L. Stapley and Vida Brinton (Arizona's Woman of the Year in 1966), Boy Scout activities, Relief Society and Sunday School groups, meetinghouses, and performances by the Central Arizona Mormon Choir, known today as the Deseret Chorale. The community grew rapidly, and Church activities played a prominent role in encouraging service, love, and unity.

"Early leaders such as Joseph Smith Jr. and Brigham Young promoted the power of positive play, extolling the virtues of wholesome recreation and cultural pursuits as well as civic and social interactions. Promoting his personal motto of eight hours work, eight hours sleep, and eight hours recreation daily, Brigham Young encouraged programs of

dance, music, and drama" (87). The Latter-day Saints of Mesa took this counsel to heart and participated in a variety of community recreational and cultural activities, which are depicted in Chapter 4: basketball games, stake dances, Daughters of Utah Pioneers, city festivals and parades, and the city's traditional Easter pageant, which is still popular today.

The fifth and final chapter documents the construction, dedication, and operation of the Mesa Temple—the ninth LDS temple—and the many people who have worked closely with these events. The temple's renovation and rededication in 1975, attended by President Spencer W. Kimball who had lived in the area during its original dedication in 1927, was a highlight for the entire LDS community in Mesa.

This book will be particularly useful to historians interested in LDS settlements outside of Utah and in the Church's role in community development. Furthermore, its many photographs and personalized accounts would also be helpful for family historians with a personal connection to Mesa or nearby LDS settlements.

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Catherine H. Ellis. *Images of America: Snowflake*. Charleston, S.C.: Arcadia Publishing, 2008. 127 pp., 229 black and white photographs. Acknowledgements. Paper: \$19.95. ISBN: 978-0-7385-4838-8

*Images of America: Snowflake* is a pictorial history of Snowflake, Ari-

zona, from its founding in 1878 to the present. Catherine Ellis suggests that those to whom this book might appeal most are those “who are interested in northern Arizona Mormon history” (6). Excluding the captions, the text consists of fewer than ten pages, mainly providing names, places, and events. In contrast, the photographs are numerous—black and white images with captions providing historical information about the people and places each depicts.

The book is divided into four sections: “The Early Settlers,” “Holding On,” “Farmers and Ranchers,” and “Changes.” Each section begins with approximately a page of relevant background information and history, introducing the photographs grouped under that theme. Because Mormons founded Snowflake, their portraits and photographs from the pioneer period appear in all four sections. For example, a town founder’s photograph will be accompanied by those of his or her descendants. Such founders include William J. Flake, Joseph Fish, John Hunt, and Jesse N. Smith, Alma and Alzada Palmer, and Louisa Cross. Of particular interest is a photograph of William J. Flake wearing his black-and-white striped convict’s uniform. He “was sentenced to six months in prison at Yuma and received a \$500 fine for practicing polygamy. He later enjoyed dressing in his prison clothes,” while wearing his cowboy hat and boots (32). Among the photographs are family reunions, the most recent dated in 1938.

The second section, “Hold On,” describes the hardships these early settlers encountered, particularly be-

cause of the limited water supply and political strife. “Early prejudice against Mormons centered on polygamy but played out in the political arena,” reads the caption of a political cartoon showing three outlaws breaking into the ballot box (40). This section also features sports teams, students, and faculty of Snowflake Stake Academy, sponsored by the stake beginning in 1898. In 1924 it became Snowflake Union High School (48–51). The book includes photographs of the academy building.

This section also shows men who served in the military during World War I and World War II. Most World War I casualties were buried in France; but a grateful federal government provided means for many women to visit the graves of their loved ones. Emma Larson Smith is shown at her son’s grave in France (58).

Section 3, “Farmers and Ranchers,” shows the area’s main industries: Charles Shumway’s gristmill, cattle ranches, dairies, and acres and acres of farmland planted to alfalfa, hay, sugar cane, cucumbers, and corn. Another industry is logging in the ponderosa pine forest of the White Mountains near Snowflake.

“Changes,” the last section, presents some of Snowflake’s recent economic developments including a paper factory founded in 1961 (112) and the Cholla Power Plant, which “began transmitting electricity in 1962” (114). Judging from the number of photographs about musical groups, this art held a special place in Snowflake, with nine photos de-



voted to the topic. They depict bands, orchestras, and choruses, beginning with guitar-playing Priscilla and Ruth Johnson (ca. 1878) (116).

Another small group of photographs portrays the relationships that the people of Snowflake have had with nearby Navajo, Hopi, and Apache on Arizona's reservations. The area in front of John Bushman's store served as the popular spot to which Native Americans brought cattle to sell to the settlers. A photograph of this store shows a Native American on horseback with two men and two women standing next to him (109).

Snowflake's population in the twenty-first century continues to be predominantly Mormon, and the final pair of photographs displays "the crowning event for northeastern Arizona's Mormon communities"—Snowflake's LDS Temple, dedicated in 2002.

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William W. Slaughter. *Forefathers of the Latter-day Saints*. Salt Lake City: Handcart Books, 2009. 221 pp. Photographs, brief biographies, quotations, preface, in-text citations, and list of abbreviations for sources combined with bibliography. Paper: \$18.95. ISBN: 978-0-9801406-6-8

William W. Slaughter is a photo historian and senior archivist at the LDS Church History Library. This inspirational book consists of biographical sketches, quotations, photographs of significant religious lo-

cations, and historical portraits of twenty-seven influential leaders during the founding of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Slaughter's preface explains the condition of the American government and that of American citizens during the nineteenth century. The photographs depict the "passionate emotions" these twenty-six men and one woman (Eliza R. Snow) had about the U.S. government. One photograph shows Brigham Young (died 1877) standing in front of a window with a view of the Salt Lake City Temple (dedicated 1893). His hand rests on the Book of Mormon, which sits on a table next to the Bible. Beside him on the floor is a globe showing the American continent.

Against this national context, Slaughter then describes the founding of Mormonism: "Founder Joseph Smith was born in Vermont in 1805 when Thomas Jefferson was U.S. president, explorers Lewis and Clark were settling into their newly constructed cabins along the northwest Pacific coast, and the Declaration of Independence was not yet thirty years old" (11).

Slaughter makes connections between the LDS religion and the American political structures, including the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights. His method is to identify a basic LDS religious principle, then show how it intertwines with the nation's political principles.

Slaughter states, "The quotes in this book deal with country, loyalty, patriotism, freedom, and con-



science. They are brought together in an effort to show the dynamic tension between the appreciation early Mormon leaders felt for the founding documents of America and their calling to build the Church of Jesus Christ here on earth" (12).

The twenty-seven leaders are Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, Wilford Woodruff, Lorenzo Snow, Parley P. Pratt, Orson Pratt, Heber C. Kimball, Orson Hyde, Edward Partridge, W. W. Phelps, Willard Richards, George A. Smith, Orson Spencer, Erastus Snow, Charles C. Rich, Ezra T. Benson, Eliza R. Snow, George Q. Cannon, Daniel H. Wells, Rudger Clawson, Moses Thatcher, Jedediah M. Grant, Amasa M. Lyman, Albert Carrington, George W. Hill, and Hosea Stout.

Following the preface is a section describing "core beliefs" of the Church, including support for civil law, which quotes the Twelfth Article of Faith: "We believe in being subject to kings, presidents, rulers, and magistrates, in obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law" (20).

The political motto of the Church, created in March 1838 by Joseph Smith, Thomas B. Marsh, David W. Patten, Brigham Young, Samuel H. Smith, George Hinkle, John Corrill, and George W. Robinson, states: "The Constitution of our country was formed by the fathers of liberty. Peace and good order in society. Love to God, and good will to man. All good and wholesome laws, virtue and truth above all things, and aristarchy [sic], live forever!" (22).

For the post-Nauvoo period, Slaughter reproduces three photo-

graphs incorporating the American flag on Temple Square. The first shows an oversized American flag draped over the exterior of the temple's south wall in July 1897 (a year after statehood). The second shows three flags hanging vertically from a rope attached to both east and west pillars of the Salt Lake City Temple (1917). In the third, a large flag is unfurled across the entire ceiling of the Salt Lake Tabernacle in 1896, the year Utah achieved statehood.

On the following page appears a black and white photograph of the Sacred Grove in Palmyra, New York, in 1907, with a man standing in the distance in rays of sunshine under towering trees. Quotations from Doctrine and Covenants 58:21 ("Let no man break the laws of the land . . ."), 98:4-7, and 98:9 emphasize that Latter-day Saints respect the laws of the land.

The following sections consist of twenty-seven biographies, each averaging about 150 words and accompanied by one to eleven portraits. They include some of the following facts: the individual's birth and death years, ancestry, immediate family background, circumstances of baptism, colleges attended (if any), missions served, positions held in the Church and government, professions, year of ordination to the apostleship (if it occurred), his or her "significant impact" on the Church, special interests, hobbies, and talents, and other important facts but no mention of spouse and children. Each entry also includes one to thirteen quotations giving the featured individual's views on compatible

principles of the American government and Mormonism.

For example, a quotation from President Brigham Young states, “I repeat that the Constitution, laws and institutions of our government are as good as can be, with the intelligence now possessed by the people. But they, as also the laws of other nations, are too often administered in unrighteousness; and we do not and cannot love and respect the acts of the administrators of our laws, unless they act justly in their offices” (48).

Apostle Albert Carrington states, “What about the government under which we live? Why, it is one of the very best, as to its form, that the human family have ever devised. It was founded by excellent, honorable, upright, liberal and high-minded men who, in framing the Constitution, were measurably inspired by that Holy Spirit” (212).

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Michael O’Reilly. *Mysteries and Legends of Utah: True Stories of the Unsolved and Unexplained*. Guilford, Conn.: Globe Pequot Press, 2009. viii, 184 pp. Photographs, map, illustrations, bibliography, index. Paper: \$17.95. ISBN: 978-0-7627-4930-0

Michael O’Reilly is a writer, outdoorsman, and business owner originally from Michigan. He holds a master’s degree in poetry from the University of Utah and resides with his wife and young son in Salt Lake City. *Mysteries and Legends of Utah* presents twelve Utah-based stories

of historical and cultural interest—not all of them either mysterious or legends.

The book is organized into twelve chapters, in roughly chronological order, with one story per chapter. Chapter 1 tells of “Jedediah Smith: Tough Trapper, Shrewd Businessman, Explorer Extraordinaire” who extensively traveled in the western United States during the 1820s. Chapter 2 describes “The Lost Rhoades Gold Mine and the Secret of Carre Shinob,” in which O’Reilly retells the experience of Caleb Rhoades who allegedly saw “two large golden disks, taller than a man, each one engraved with words of a language Caleb had never seen. . . . Skeletons were adorned with elaborate feathers, jewels, and gold artifacts he did not recognize. He had a thousand questions. Could these golden disks, strange masks, anklets, and breastplates belong to the ancient Lamanite people, written about in the Book of Mormon? Young Caleb only hoped he lived long enough to find out the answers” (19).

Chapter 3, “The Mormon Handcart Disaster of 1856” describes the Willie and Martin handcart companies, the last two to attempt the crossing in the 1856 season, primarily through the account left by Patience Loader, “a figure of mythical status among members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints . . . not for the hardships she endured, but for the way in which she endured them” (30). Chapter 4, “The Tragedy at Mountain Meadows,” holds the Church responsible

for the circumstances surrounding the Mountain Meadows Massacre in September 1857.

Chapter 5, "The Castle Gate Robbery and the Fate of Butch Cassidy," depicts Butch Cassidy's robbery of the Castle Gate coal mine payroll train. The mystery was Cassidy's ultimate fate. O'Reilly argues that the outlaw was not shot by Bolivian lawmen, as he wanted people to believe, but adopted the alias of William T. Phillips and lived the rest of his life in peace. Chapter 6, "The Great Utah Manhunt of 1913," highlights the career and eventual capture of another outlaw, Rafael Lopez.

Chapter 7, "The Faithful John Koyle and His Infamous 'Relief Mine,'" begins: "John Koyle was sound asleep in his Utah farmhouse when a gentle voice spoke to him from the foot of his bed. He sat up and rubbed his eyes, noticing a strange, white glow in the room. Koyle's fear and confusion were quickly replaced by overwhelming calm when he recognized the visitor, a bearded man in white, as the angel Moroni. . . . The holy messenger began to speak, describing a setting in the Tintic Mountains, familiar to Koyle. What Koyle saw in vivid detail, the angel assured him, was the exact location of a rich underground gold deposit" (91). Although the mine has been worked sporadically for years, the expected treasure has not materialized.

Chapter 8, "The Legend of the Josephine de Martinique [Mine]," focuses on one of the richest Spanish gold mines in all of North America, the location of which was eventually

lost. In the late nineteenth century, rumors allegedly located it near Hoyt Peak in northern Utah. Chapter 9, "Charlie Steen and the Moab Uranium Boom," more reliably summarizes the rise of Charlie Steen from rags to multimillionaire status when he discovered uranium near Moab.

Chapter 10 describes Michael O'Reilly's unsuccessful visit to "This Is the Place Heritage Park," a reconstructed pioneer village in Salt Lake City, in hopes of meeting the ghost of Ann Eliza Young, the notorious "nineteenth" wife of Brigham Young, as well as the ghosts of other early pioneers. Chapter 11 queries whether "Bigfoot" has made an appearance "in the Beehive State." He cites the opinions of two Bigfoot enthusiasts, Darrell Smith from Salt Lake City and Jeff Meldrum from Idaho State University. Chapter 12, "UFOs and Aliens in Utah," documents O'Reilly's interactions with the Mutual UFO Network (MUFON) and the Utah UFO Hunter's (UUFON) leader, Dave Rosenfeld, as well as a UFO experience of his own.

O'Reilly writes in his introduction: "Whether or not they really happened, whether or not they can ever be proven or resolved, all of the stories in this book are part of Utah's mythology. One thing that is definitely true is that this author did not make up these stories. They were researched and retold, and they were probably changed a little bit, the way every storyteller adds his or her own voice and inflection" (viii).

Carolyn Jessop with Lauren Palmer. *Escape*. New York: Broadway Books, 2007. ix, 413 pp. Photographs. Cloth: \$24.95. ISBN 978-0-76792756-7

Carolyn Blackmore Jessop was born and raised in the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (FLDS), an offshoot group, historically centered in Hildale, Utah/Colorado City, Arizona, known for its practice of plural marriage. By “escape,” Jessop means her middle-of-the-night flight from her home in Colorado City on April 21, 2003. Behind her she left her husband, Merrill Jessop, and six “sister wives.”

She had been hoping for an opportunity to escape and, at 10:00 that night, she “found out that my husband had left earlier in the evening on a business trip. All eight of my children were home—including Arthur, fifteen, my oldest, who often traveled on construction jobs. There were two things that had to happen before I could escape, and they just had: my husband was gone and my children were all home. I had to act within hours. The choice was freedom or fear. I was thirty-five and desperate to flee from polygamy, the only world I had ever known” (1). By arrangement, she met friends from the “outside world” and headed north to Salt Lake City.

The book then moves through a series of flashbacks to her childhood. She was born January 1, 1968, in Hildale, the second of the four children of Arthur and Nurylon Blackmore. She describes many inci-

dents of physical abuse from parents, school teachers, and other community members. Her mother “beat us almost every day. . . . Once the beating was so bad I had bruises all over my back and my legs for more than a week. . . . My mother saw herself as raising righteous children and felt [that] teaching us obedience was one of her most important responsibilities. Spanking your children . . . wasn’t considered abuse; it was considered good parenting” (12–13).

Carolyn graduated from Colorado City High School, dreamed of becoming a pediatrician, and attended a community college (name not given). Then her father informed her that, in less than forty-eight hours, she would marry Merrill Jessop, a fifty-year-old powerful man in the community who already had three wives and numerous children, the oldest of whom was two years her senior. “I was stunned,” Carolyn recalled. “My future had just vanished. . . . I looked at my father in horror. . . . I could barely breathe” (73).

As a plural wife, Carolyn Jessop learned that “perfect obedience produces perfect faith” (204). The husband’s instructions are, in this system, inspired by God and therefore represent God’s will. When Carolyn refused to attend Merrill’s wedding to his fifth wife, “he exploded and said I had no right to challenge him, the man who was my priesthood head. ‘Do you want to have your way or do you want to be in harmony with your husband? I would think you would want to do the will of the

one you belong to!” His appeal to theology rapidly turned to threats: “I won’t allow you to insist on something else. It will cost you heavily if you do. Falling out of favor with me is not something you want to have happen” (120).

Jessop gave birth to her eight children in fifteen years, and began teaching second grade at Colorado City’s elementary school. When Warren Jeffs, son of Rulon Jeffs, rose to power in the FLDS Church during his aging father’s long deterioration, he led the community into a retreat from “the world.” He forbade believers to attend public school, read secular books of any kind, or own anything colored red, and have a burning in their chest at all times or they would be destroyed at the second coming of Jesus Christ. During this period, at age thirty-one, Carolyn gave birth to her fifth child, Harrison—Merril’s fifty-third. At age one, Harrison was diagnosed with cancer, and Merrill blamed Carolyn: “He is going to die because of your rebellion,” Merrill accused. “It is your fault that he is sick. God will take him from you because you have been in rebellion to your priesthood head. . . . God is going to destroy his life because of the sins of his mother” (275).

After Jessop’s successful escape, she found legal protection in Salt Lake City from her husband, received full custody of her children, found a job, celebrated holidays and went to movies (both forbidden by Jeffs), and dated. The book concludes with updates on all eight children one of whom, Betty, returned to the FLDS community after graduating from

high school.

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Truman G. Madsen. *Joseph Smith the Prophet*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2010. 248 pp. Illustrations, endnotes, abbreviations, bibliography, index, list of illustrations. Cloth: \$49.99. ISBN-13: 978-1-60641-224-4

This book consists of eight lectures that Truman G. Madsen delivered on the Prophet Joseph Smith, “at Brigham Young University’s Marriott Center during an Education Week” in 1978 (1). Originally published in that same year as audiotapes which, Madsen states, “enabled me to be conversational, intimate, and also to relate to my listeners on personal implications,” the lectures were published in book form in 1989. In his 1989 introduction, Madsen explains that “something of that style remains in this book. Some corrections made in the written manuscript have been factual. Most are cosmetic: for grammar, for clarity” (4).

Madsen continues: Because his original “audience was ‘in-house,’ with readers I could begin with presumptions and assurances which to others would have appeared startling. But between the lines I was also thinking of many who had posed penetrating queries about Joseph Smith over the years. . . . They were the ‘invisible’ audience. And at certain points it is apparent that I was addressing them” (1). His motivation in giving the lectures “was to

press through the written sources to the center of the man,” Joseph Smith (1-2).

The eight lecture/chapters provide details about the Prophet’s first vision and its aftermath; personality and character; spiritual gifts; trials; relation to the Kirtland Temple; abilities as a teacher, speaker, and counselor; doctrinal developments during the Nauvoo era; and martyrdom. Madsen focuses on the accounts of many of Joseph’s contemporaries to describe Joseph Smith. In Chapter 2, “Joseph’s Personality and Character,” he says:

It is the comment of those visiting from the East and of his [Joseph Smith’s] own convert friends that he was a magnificent man. The word *handsome* recurs, and there are references, at least in the earlier years, to the color and abundance of his hair. It [had] an auburn cast. There was something of a transparency about his countenance. He was beardless: he shaved, but he did not have a heavy or thick beard. Of the shape of his body, one writer says that there was “no breakage” about it. He had a strong and robust pair of shoulders and from there tapered down. (32)

The thirty-nine paintings, reproduced in color, are the book’s highlight. Borrowed for this edition, the paintings are done by several well-known LDS artists including Del Parson, Greg Olsen, Simon Dewey, Liz Lemon Swindle, Joseph Brickey, David Lindsley, Glen Hopkinson, and Al Rounds.

The paintings are prominently featured on the page facing the title page of each chapter and also appear intermittently as full-color pages. A couple

of examples of title page paintings include Simon Dewey’s *By the Gift and Power of God* for Chapter 3, “Joseph Smith and Spiritual Gifts,” and *Final Journey* by Glen S. Hopkins for Chapter 8, “The Last Months and Martyrdom.”

Two examples of in-chapter paintings include: *While Emma Sleeps* by Liz Lemon Swindle for Chapter 2, “Joseph’s Personality and Character” and *A Word of Wisdom Revealed* by Ken Corbett for Chapter 6, “Joseph Smith as Teacher, Speaker, and Counselor.” The paintings often correspond to the chapter content and almost all in-chapter paintings are accompanied by scriptural quotations.

In addition to the illustrations, the entire book uses a pinstripe texture, beige and olive-green color scheme. Each chapter begins with a decorated rubric.

Madsen continues in the introduction, “As for my notes and sources, they point to a veritable feast of documents. They are designed to continue the conversation. . . . Two things should be apparent in the notes: (1) my preoccupation with firsthandness, and even for late recollections if they claim to be firsthand; (2) a preference for those who had the longest and most multifaceted relationships with the prophet” (4).

Madsen, who died in late 2009, was an emeritus professor of religion and philosophy at Brigham Young University. He graduated from the University of Utah, the University of Southern California, and received his Ph.D. from Harvard



University. He was a recognized authority on Joseph Smith.

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Drew Briney. *Silencing Mormon Polygamy: Failed Persecutions, Divided Saints, & the Rise of Mormon Fundamentalism*. N.p.: Hindsight Publications, 2008. xv, 377 pp. Photographs, endnotes, charts. Hardcover: \$39.99; Paper: \$27.99.

Drew Briney, a practicing attorney who graduated from Brigham Young University's J. Reuben Clark Law School, here outlines the major doctrinal claims of Mormon fundamentalist groups on priesthood authority and polygamous marriage, particularly regarding historically controversial events of 1886.

Briney notes in his introduction: "In some instances, fundamentalist Mormons have strong historical support for their priesthood claims. In other instances, fundamentalist Mormons are left without substantial historical support and must face the 'leap of faith' their religion requires. Undoubtedly, both sides will find themselves scratching their heads a little as they analyze the historical record from the unique and thorough analysis that follows" (iv).

The first three chapters present authoritative statements by nineteenth-century Church leaders such as John Taylor, Rudger Clawson, Wilford Woodruff, George Q. Cannon, and others, concerning both the Church's sanction of polygamy and its continual resistance to U.S. laws forbidding cohabitation. John Taylor

in 1880 exclaimed: "When adulterers and libertines [referring to Congress] pass a law forbidding polygamy, the Saints cannot obey it. . . . I defy the United States" (3).

Chapter 2 documents a range of views of Church members during the pre-Manifesto—from a commitment to polygamy to calls for an end to the practice. Briney thus shows the controversial nature of the doctrine even within the Church. These first chapters are meant to create, "a doctrinal foundation for the reader to better appreciate the context of [the] 1886 revelation" (ii).

This revelation, which has never been canonized and which some claim did not occur, is accepted as binding by modern Mormon fundamentalists. According to fundamentalist records by Lorin C. Woolley, John W. Taylor, Daniel Bateman, and others, President Taylor spent the night at the Woolley home, during which he received visitations from Joseph Smith and Jesus Christ concerning plural marriage. The next morning, he recorded a revelation: "I [the Lord] have not revoked this law [of plural wives] nor will I for it is everlasting" (146). Briney then provides a textual analysis of the revelation, reports fundamentalist and mainstream responses to it, and appraises its historical plausibility (Chapters 5–6).

After writing the revelation, President Taylor summoned trusted, nearby men to an eight-hour meeting, also held the day after the all-night visitations, at the Woolley home, during which he reportedly ordained several, granting them au-



thority to continue the practice of plural marriage—if necessary outside the Church—to ensure that the practice would never end. Briney notes the difficulty in reconstructing this crucial event for fundamentalism, acknowledging: “The large majority of . . . accounts are secondhand . . . and they largely come from a questionable source” (168). Chapters 7–9 present those retrospective and second-hand accounts by Lorin C. Woolley, Daniel R. Bateman, Joseph Musser, and others, in which Briney attempts to sort fact from fancy.

Briney also reproduces prophecies attributed to President Taylor foretelling an apostasy of the mainstream Church and the continuation of plural marriage by a handful of dedicated Saints. Briney notes that these pronouncements “are not subject to any objective, historical analysis because they were all documented after the predicted event occurred” (215) by Joseph Musser and Daniel R. Bateman.

The final section, “How Much Authority,” acknowledges: “Believers in Lorin C. Woolley’s claims [concerning priesthood ordinations outside the Church empowering the continuation of polygamy] are inevitably confronted with a serious conundrum—how much authority did John Taylor confer upon him [and others]?” In this final section, Briney looks at the possible meanings of phrases such as “keys of the kingdom” and “fullness of the priesthood” in Woolley’s account and their possible interpretation for fundamentalist Mormons.

A historical appendix reproduces

a number of documents in near-complete form to encourage the reader’s fuller perusal.

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Douglas J. Vermeeren. *When I First Met the Prophet: First Impressions of the Prophet Joseph Smith*. Springville, Utah: Cedar Fort, 2007. xi, 74 pp. Introduction, About the Author. Paper: \$8.99. ISBN: 978-1-59955-023-7

This book contains ninety-six accounts from early Latter-day Saints about their first encounters with the Mormon prophet Joseph Smith. In his introduction, Douglas Vermeeren, a motivational speaker who engages in helping people “achieve goals,” states: “I have been impressed by how early members of the Church were affected when they first met the Prophet Joseph. However, it wasn’t until I met a prophet of God myself that I understood more clearly some of the emotions these early Saints must have felt. It was this meeting with the President Gordon B. Hinckley that prompted me to research and assemble this volume” (ix).

Vermeeren’s sources include autobiographies, biographies, journals, diaries, discourses, obituaries, and letters, covering a wide range of contemporary and reminiscent accounts. They include such prominent figures as Brigham Young, Wilford Woodruff, Elizabeth Ann Whitney, Orson and Parley P. Pratt, Lorenzo Snow, Oliver Cowdery, and many more. However, a majority of

the narratives are from more ordinary converts, including Daniel Tyler, William McLellin, David Osborn, John Harper, Joseph Holbrook, Matthias Cowley, and many others.

A typical account introduces the context of the first meeting and then describes Joseph Smith's physical features and the writer's impressions about Joseph's personality. Parley P. Pratt wrote:

President Joseph Smith was in person tall and well built, strong and active; of a light complexion, light hair, blue eyes, very little beard, and of an expression peculiar to himself, on which the eye naturally rested with interest, and was never weary of beholding. His countenance was ever mild, affable, beaming with intelligence and benevolence; mingled with a look of interest and an unconscious smile, or cheerfulness, and entirely free from all restraint or affectation of gravity; and there was something connected with the serene and steady penetrating glance of his eye, as if he would penetrate the deepest abyss of the human heart, gaze into eternity, and penetrate the heavens, and comprehend all worlds. (49–50)

In addition to describing the Prophet's appearance and manner, the writers record his interactions with the people around him and their personal reaction to him. Emmeline Blanche Wells, who met him in Nauvoo, states: "Before I was aware of it, he came to me, and when he took my hand, I was simply electrified—thrilled through and through to the tips of my fingers, and every part of my body, as if some magic elixir had

given me new life and vitality" (65).

Vermeeren also includes a citation to each source with each account.

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Francis M. Gibbons. *George Albert Smith: Kind and Caring Christian, Prophet of God*. 1990; rpt., Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2010 paperback edition. xi, 388 pp. Photographs, in-text citations, bibliography, index.

*Note:* Francis M. Gibbons, an attorney and, for sixteen years, secretary to the LDS Church's First Presidency, wrote biographies of the first fourteen Church presidents, beginning with Joseph Smith in 1977 and ending with Ezra Taft Benson in 1996. The *Journal of Mormon History* reviewed only three at the time they appeared: those about Joseph Fielding Smith, Harold B. Lee, and Spencer W. Kimball. The reissue of the entire set in paperback in 2009 is an opportunity to provide Book Notices on the other ten over the next few issues.

The first sentence in this biography is: "His name and pedigree were gold plated" (1) and the biography makes frequent mention of George Albert Smith's ancestry (his father was Apostle John Henry Smith, his grandfather was George A. Smith, his great-grandfather was Patriarch John Smith, and his great-great-grandfather was Asael Smith), his connection to other notables, and the fact that his wife, Lucy, was a

granddaughter of Wilford Woodruff. It is somewhat ironic, then, that George Albert “abhorred nepotism and was overly sensitive about the large number of Smiths who occupied positions of authority in the Church” (42). He was not present at the session of general conference on October 6, 1903, when he was called as an apostle at age thirty-three. He had never been a bishop or stake president and “almost one out of every five of the General Authorities was a Smith” (43).

George Albert was born in Salt Lake City on April 4, 1870, suffered his entire life with “nerves,” had eyesight so weak that he was unable to read for any extended period, and married Lucy Woodruff on May 25, 1892, about three weeks after he was called to serve a mission in the Southern States, where a group of anti-Mormons once shot into the house where he was sleeping. Lucy joined him in the field. They became the parents of three children: two daughters and a son, George Albert Jr., who spent his adult life in Massachusetts where he was on the faculty of Harvard University.

Lucy died in November 1937 after a lingering illness. George Albert, who was en route to Buffalo, New York, when Heber J. Grant died, was ordained Church president on May 21, 1945, at age seventy-five after forty-two years as an apostle (275). George Albert, the first Church president to be a monogamist, was also the first (and only) Church president to serve his full term as a widower.

George Albert was an ardent Scouter, appearing in full uniform on

official occasions, a proud member of the Sons of the American Revolution, and deeply interested in Church historic sites. His repeated and cordial contacts over decades resulted in the Church’s purchase of some historic properties and his sponsorship of the This Is the Place Monument at the mouth of Emigration Canyon included his active role in persuading the state legislature to condemn for a public park neighboring real estate that would otherwise have been turned into a high-priced development (350–51). Another interesting episode was President Smith’s gentle bringing Mexican members in the Third Convention back into the Church, ending a long-standing conflict (311–12).

Another was a conflict between daughter Emily Smith Stewart, who was then serving on the Primary General Board, and May Anderson, its general president, over the administration of the Primary Children’s Hospital, then owned and operated by the Primary. When the general board backed Anderson, Emily twice went to the advisors (Presiding Bishop Sylvester Q. Cannon and Apostle David O. McKay), who supported Anderson and “said [Emily’s] release would be necessary because she could not work harmoniously with the Primary president.” Emily then involved her father, who termed the controversy an “injustice to my daughter,” tried repeatedly to get Cannon and McKay to reinstate her on the board, and more than a year later, appealed to the First Presidency. It was not until President Heber J. Grant told him “with final-

ity” to “let the matter rest” that he desisted. Gibbons presents this incident as demonstrating George Albert’s “absolute family loyalty,” his equally absolute obedience to priesthood leaders, and his Christlike character in calling McKay as one of his counselors when George Albert became Church president (152–54).

Given George Albert’s feelings about family, it would be interesting to know more about his reaction when his cousin, Apostle Richard R. Lyman, was excommunicated for adultery in 1943, but this episode is alluded to only in the past tense, or when another cousin, Joseph F. Smith (not to be confused with Church president Joseph F. Smith or his son, Joseph Fielding Smith), was abruptly released as Church patriarch in 1946 because he “was sick” (321). Since patriarchs had traditionally served, regardless of illness, and since Joseph F. lived until 1964, Gibbons leaves this episode underexplained.

Gibbons singles out two dominant characteristics for particular mention: George Albert’s “kindness and caring concern” and his “powerful competitive instinct,” which manifested itself, according to the biography, “in his battles against illness” (xi). Chapter 16 (190–98) compiles several incidents of his compassion, and Gibbons makes special note of the fact that, the day after he was ordained as Church president, he attended the funeral of “a prominent nonmember, Russel Tracy, held in the Masonic Temple,” and also paid a condolence call on the family (279). Gibbons praises George Albert’s “fiery eloquence” (109) as a speaker but pro-

vides no quotations longer than three or four sentences, most of which emphasize Christian love and service.

George Albert served as Church president six years, the briefest tenure of any Church president with the exception of Lorenzo Snow (three years) up to that point. Gibbons describes the prophetic role as “almost universally misunderstood by the world and barely understood by many members of the Church. The essence of it is to receive the mind and will of the Lord and to transmit that to the Church and its members. To do this does not require a vast knowledge of economics, philosophy, politics, science, or world conditions, nor does it require special administrative skills or the vigor of youth. . . . This essential function can as well be performed, indeed, can be better performed, by an older man who has an intimate knowledge of the doctrines and objectives of the Church, a sure understanding of human nature, and, above all, a deep spiritual sensitivity” (275). Part of that preparation had been “serving as an administrative assistant” beginning in 1913 “to President Joseph F. Smith” who was apparently impressed with his young cousin’s “efficiency” in making travel arrangements and organizing events (79), but Gibbons does not mention any particular closeness to George Albert’s immediate predecessor, Heber J. Grant.

Legacy appointments were George Albert’s callings (no mention of consultation with either his counselors or the Twelve) of Mat-

thew Cowley, Henry D. Moyle, and Delbert L. Stapley as apostles and Bruce R. McConkie as a Seventy. Of possibly equal administrative significance was the appointment of Arthur D. Haycock as his personal secretary, administrative assistant, and companion, since Haycock held the same position through the next five presidencies.

President Smith's final illness began after October general conference 1950, marked by gradually increasing weakness and increasingly limited activity until his death on April 4, 1951. His funeral services replaced the Saturday morning session of April general conference.

Sources for the biography include George Albert's "personal diaries" and "official and private correspondence and papers" (xi)

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Sterling D. Sessions. *Where Safety Lies*. Ann Arbor, Mich.: Sheridan Books, n.d. [2009]. 305 pp. Photographs.

This memoir by Sterling D. Sessions, a career academic at Stanford University and Weber State College/University in Ogden, Utah, represents part of the important but little-studied diaspora of highly mobile Mormons who left its geographic core for higher education and the doors that such education opened to them during the twentieth century.

The author was born in 1925 in Kamas, Utah, to Ruth Davies Session and Charles David Sessions, a Brig-

ham Young University graduate in economics who became a seminary teacher in both Kamas and in Thatcher, Arizona, before settling in Provo, Utah, where he owned a furniture store. Sessions's childhood memories are a nostalgic blend of fun and adventures characteristic of a time when boyhood recklessness was a greater danger than drugs, alcohol, or sexual abusers. Serious are the childhood deaths of two siblings, a reminder of the limitations of medical science at that time. "The church at the time postulated a small fraction of instructions/commandments on how to live our lives, compared to today's multitude of handbooks, letters, preachments, and a complex organization," he summarizes his religious experience. "But life then was simpler in every respect" (41).

Drafted into the army on March 16, 1944, Sessions was mustered out in December, before his unit was slated to go overseas, when he reported for his physical "wheezing heavily" with the asthma that had plagued him all his life (48). He accepted a mission. Pre-mission instruction was brief: "living quarters in a Hotel Utah salesman's sample room, meaning spacious, in order to accommodate nine steel cots with one bathroom, . . . a few talks from the General Authorities, a six hour and ten minute temple session which ended at 10 in the evening, lunches at the Hotel Utah cafeteria and a date with Jeanne Whitney for dinner and dancing at the Starlight Gardens atop Hotel Utah the night before we left" (51). Though called to the New

England Mission, he was soon transferred to the Texas Louisiana Mission on account of his asthma.

He met his future wife, Barbara Bickmore, on a blind date only weeks after his return to BYU, and they were married in the Logan Temple in December 1948. They became the parents of seven children. First interested in a career in business that took the young couple to New York where Sessions also graduated from NYU's School of Retailing, they returned to Provo and the family business. A bout with polio led to a reappraisal of his career options and after other moves (to Salt Lake City and insurance, back to New York City, then to Los Angeles), he entered and graduated from Harvard Business School's Ph.D. program, despite a period of intense stress that Session describes with engaging candor.

The return to Brigham Young University during the presidency of Ernest L. Wilkinson was hardly stress free: "I was . . . handling two administrative jobs, MBA director and department chairman held previously by Quinn McKay and Parley Pratt III, teaching a full load of 9–12 quarter hours, working at the Utah Valley Furniture Company on Saturdays, being a Bishop, and spending the rest of the time consulting [with] companies to earn a few more dollars" (107).

A major opportunity, thoroughly documented in a detailed professional diary, was running Stanford's graduate business administration program (ESAN) in Peru in 1966–68. Interestingly, Sessions learned about it through a Mormon connection, Mark Cannon, whom he had met at

Harvard, who sent him a postcard from Cairo about the opening (110). Sessions's experiences reveal much of the mid-twentieth century idealism of Americans hoping to use tools that worked with spectacular success in the United States to jump-start the economies and democratic governments of other countries, and his detailed diaries, which are excerpted generously, provide a running commentary.

The family was active in the Limatambo Branch, but both their limited Spanish and especially "the poverty-stricken position of most of the branch [members], who lived miles away in the slums of Lima" imposed barriers. The branch limped along: "Meetings always started late and Barbara would be asked to play the piano every Sunday without any advance notice as to the songs to be sung. The children's Sunday School classes would typically number three or four other children" (125).

Upon their return to Stanford, Sterling Sessions was called as bishop of the newly formed Palo Alto First Ward, and his musings on that calling and, more generally, Mormonism's functioning (207) include his response to being ordained bishop and set apart. As the ordination ended, "I felt a sense of tranquility, responsibility, insight and compassion that I had never experienced before . . . not so much a gift as . . . a lending of divine influence. Similar, the moment I was released . . . I reverted to being a common man again" (219). Other reflections include a strategic analysis of missionary approaches (207) and a remark-

able experience during the solemn assembly in which Spencer W. Kimball was sustained as Church president (227).

The family's next move was to Ogden where Sterling became dean of Weber State College's business school where he completed his professional career, punctuated by enjoyable travel/teaching, running marathons, serving on the Ogden Stake high council, enjoying "the bright

bonds of friendship with our children" (303) and grandchildren, and painting, an interest he developed with enthusiasm in his retirement years.

The book's title comes from Barbara Cook, writing in the *New York Times*: "The place that seems most dangerous is exactly where safety lies" (86). The cover art, a tawny landscape of Morgan, Utah, is Sessions's own.





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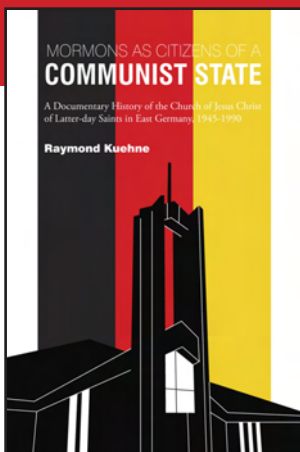
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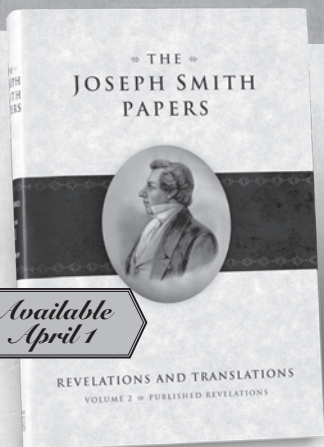
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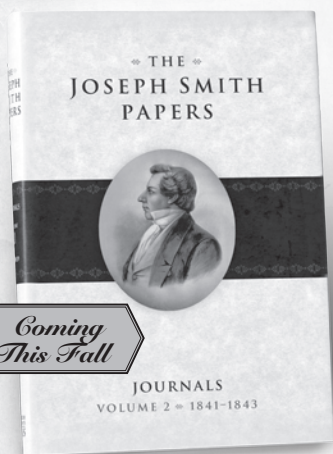
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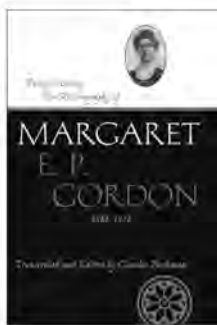
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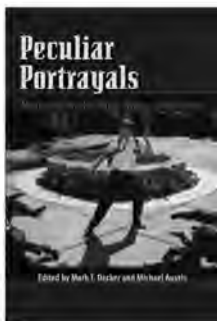
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