

# Journal of Mormon History

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Volume 22 | Issue 1

Article 1

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1996

## Journal of Mormon History Vol. 22, No. 1, 1996

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### Recommended Citation

(1996) "Journal of Mormon History Vol. 22, No. 1, 1996," *Journal of Mormon History*. Vol. 22 : Iss. 1 , Article 1.

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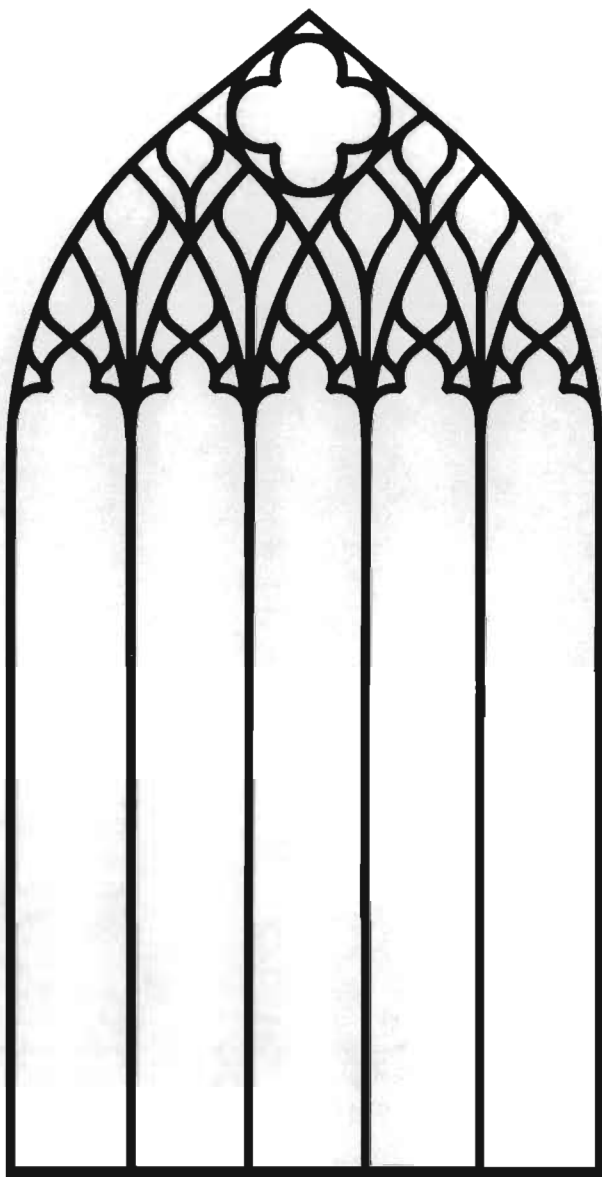


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# JOURNAL OF MORMON HISTORY



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

Articles appearing in this journal are abstracted and indexed in *Historical Abstracts* and *America: History and Life*, published by ABC-CLIO, and in *Religion Index One: Periodicals*, published by the American Theological Library Association.

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ISS 0094-7342

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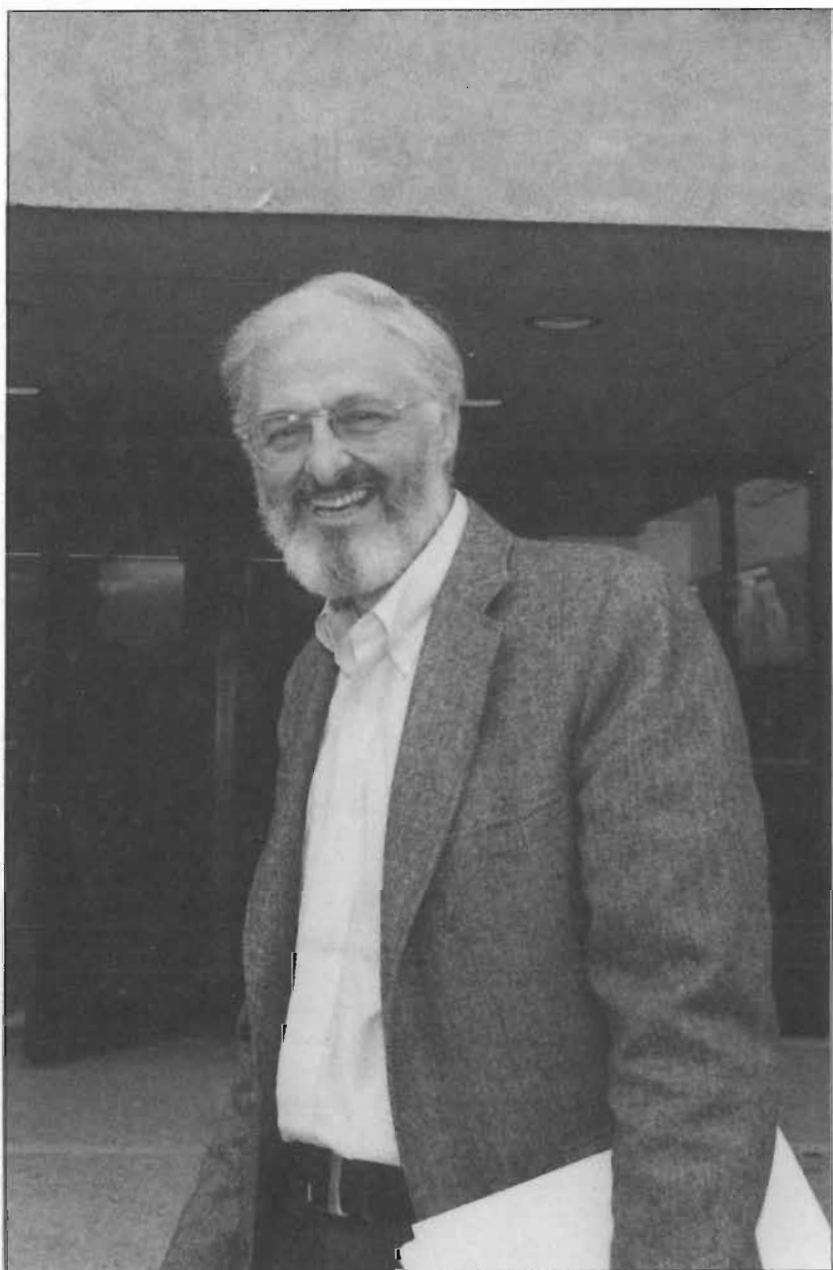
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*Mario S. De Pillis*

## The Emergence of Mormon Power since 1945

*Mario S. De Pillis*

As I look back on the past forty years of scholarly activity, I realize that I have been almost obsessed with the appeal of Mormonism. I continually ask, Why do people join the Mormon Church, and why do they stay? In short, what is the power of Mormonism?

It is clear to me now that I was attempting to answer this question of power and appeal in my first article on Mormonism back in 1966 when I argued that the new movement offered authoritative stability to a Jacksonian generation in chaos.<sup>1</sup> My article was a deeply felt and carefully researched piece of professional history. But I now see that every generation is one of chaos, including today's. The appeal, that is, the *power* of Mormonism, is more complex, even

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MARIO S. DE PILLIS is professor emeritus of social and religious history at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. He delivered a version of this essay as his presidential address at the annual conference of the Mormon History Association in Kingston, Ontario, Canada, on 24 June 1995. He wishes "to thank the *Journal's* anonymous readers for invaluable suggestions, particularly for their forbearance with my quotations from Tony Kushner that are painful for Latter-day Saints to read, but which, for me, represent a powerful perception of Mormonism in American life—and not just intellectual life."

<sup>1</sup>"The Quest for Religious Authority and the Rise of Mormonism," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 1 (Spring 1966): 68-88.

though a people's need for authoritative answers remains central—and not just to Mormons and their converts.

My premise is that Mormon power today takes two forms: public and private. Its private power is old, but its public power is new. I argue that, since World War II, Mormonism has achieved an unprecedented degree of power—influence that it can wield on its own behalf and recognition by others—in American society. The foundation of that power is not merely Mormonism's booming membership or political representation, although both are usually mentioned regularly in media coverage, but rather in a new public perception of Mormonism. In contrast, the sources of private Mormon power originate in four internal religious characteristics which, taken together, are peculiar to the faith: tradition, community, doctrinal authority, and the devotion of its women.

### MORMONISM'S VOICE IN THE CULTURE WARS

The emergence of Mormon public power since 1945, especially in the last fifteen years, has been one of the more remarkable developments in the history of American religion. Mormonism's rise to power occurs at a crucial moment in American social and religious history, a moment characterized by what James Davison Hunter, a professor of sociology and religious studies at the University of Virginia, calls "culture wars," or the contest over who shall define America.<sup>2</sup> More than most Western countries, the United States faces an identity crisis that seems to be tearing the nation apart.

From the question, "How shall we define ourselves?" narrower questions erupt: Who is to define our family life? Many have a vested interest in that definition: women's rights proponents, activists on both sides of the abortion issue, poverty programs, schools, churches, and politicians. Should couple and family rights be extended to gays and lesbians? Who shall determine the canon of required readings in history, literature, political science, and the arts in higher education? Is multiculturalism or a renewed emphasis on the Western European cultural legacy more

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<sup>2</sup>James Davison Hunter, *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America: Making Sense of the Battles over the Family, Art, Education, Law, and Politics* (New York: Basic Books, 1991).



important? In my own religious tradition, Catholicism, like Mormonism, holds an institutional line on an all-male priesthood while trying to respond more sensitively to the contributions and needs of women.

In this contest for self-definition, an energetic and influential right-wing faction has arisen. Most right-wing conservatives work through the political system. Recently, however, Americans are witnessing, almost for the first time, the terrorist acts of extreme individualists in the Northwest, in Oklahoma, in Montana, and elsewhere.<sup>3</sup> Extremists claim the right as Americans to kill federal government agents, defining law enforcement and tax collection as immoral demands.

The Latter-day Saints now have both political and social influence through their committed members and will, therefore, participate in the redefining of America. Maurine Jensen Proctor, coeditor of the Mormon conservative magazine, *This People*, seemed to echo my sense of the new Mormon relationship to national power when she stated that the crucial problem of the day "is a spiritual issue that concerns us all; [it is] the struggle over America's soul" and against "moral relativism."<sup>4</sup>

Many Americans likewise see in Mormonism a beacon of institutional and ideological stability in a maelstrom of change. Hunter appraises Mormonism, remarkably, not as a sect, an offbeat denomination, a denial of Christianity, or a trivial minority of less than 2 percent of the population, but rather as an important Christian voice. He treats Mormonism as simply another biblical tradition like the Evangelicals or Catholics. Hunter deals with Mormonism as part of a coalition of conservative Christians who are

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<sup>3</sup>Most historians dismiss the new terrorism as the same violence that has characterized American culture from the Regulators through Reconstruction, the Populists, and Haymarket bombers. But a decisive difference is that many right-wing terrorists and militia members have no intention of working with "the government." They see the government as an alien force controlled by conspiracies (Zionic, New World Order, Illuminati, etc.). This paranoia is old, but the expressions are new; and many groups exhibit a millennial tone that harkens back to sixteenth-century Germany.

<sup>4</sup>Maurine Jensen Proctor, "Mormons and the New Congress: Fighting for the Nation's Soul," *This People* 16 (Spring 1995): 16, 18.

trying to defend their definition of America.<sup>5</sup> Although not all Mormons agree with Elder Boyd K. Packer's triumvirate of enemies (feminists, homosexuals, and intellectuals), most are concerned about sexual promiscuity, unregulated television (MTV was banned from BYU apartments in 1985),<sup>6</sup> and the drastic erosion of family values. Treating Latter-day Saints as though they were part of the normal, conservative mainstream of churchgoers is entirely new in the grammar of American religious life.

Mormons have arrived socially as well as politically in the mainstream of American society. Fifteen years ago no writer or scholar would have bothered to investigate the Mormon position on the great issues dividing contemporary Americans. Although some denominations, particularly in the South, maintain that Mormons are not Christians, most reputable scholars and journalists simply accept Latter-day Saints as a valid Christian religion and its positions as significant, whether they deal with them in detail or not. The semi-official index to the World Wide Web (part of the Internet) now classifies Mormonism as "Christian." Mormons and Mormon views are increasingly well known. The people of Massachusetts, my own state, largely Catholic and shifting from their traditional Democratic adherence to the Republican party,<sup>7</sup> almost elected Mitt

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<sup>5</sup>Hunter, *Culture Wars*, 72, classifies Mormonism under "traditional faiths," rather than "new faiths," noting that Mormons are "also within the biblical tradition." For his view of the Mormons as conservative see 130, 145, and 181. He remarks, revealingly, that "conservative Catholics, Mormons, and Evangelical Protestants" mistakenly believe that the human "bourgeois family" was "ordained by God" (181).

<sup>6</sup>Brian West, "Local Apartments Censor Cable TV," (*BYU Universe*, 4 February 1985).

<sup>7</sup>George W. Gerner, "Catholics and the 'Religious Right': We Are Being Wooded," *Commonweal* 102 (5 May 1995): 19. E. J. Dionne, Jr., "Is There a Catholic Vote?" *ibid.*, 12-13, concludes that "it's harder and harder to identify a 'Catholic vote,'" because Catholics now vote according to ethnicity and region. The Catholic (or any other) religious crossover vote is getting harder to detect in the absence of good exit polls. But clearly the number of Catholic votes for Romney was significant enough to alarm the Kennedy camp—which then covertly (at first) suggested the anti-woman stance of the Mormon Church to get the strong vote of liberal white women under age forty-five. Labeling Romney as a member of an anti-woman church helped blunt the Republican exploitation of Kennedy's sexual

Romney, a prominent Mormon, over the disgraced nominal Catholic, Senator Edward Kennedy. The Mormons have been arriving since the 1930s, but nowadays they are an established power—a recognized influential group.

## MORMONISM AND AMERICAN CULTURE

### *Angels in America*

One manifestation of that power is the way in which it embodies American social myth—or a set of internalized beliefs by which a society defines itself. Myth differs from ideology in that it most often takes a narrative form. It manipulates symbols like the flag. It exploits stereotypes like the “hysterical woman” or the black with “natural rhythm.” Perhaps the most dominant American myth is the Horatio Alger story of the hero who achieves success in the Land of Opportunity because he or she is hard-working and self-reliant. The past image of Mormons as polygamists made them into immoral cartoon types outside America’s mainstream. Now the social myth of Mormonism has become more positive: the Tabernacle Choir, clean-cut teams of missionaries, domination of Rocky Mountain corporations,<sup>8</sup> numerous employees among the FBI, the CIA, and the Boy Scouts, and intact, father-headed families. Mormonism’s new and positive image enhances its mythic status as a national American icon, a set of symbolic meanings against which both rarefied intellectuals and ordinary folks who admire Mormon family

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immorality. Heavily Catholic cities like Boston and Worcester with old labor constituencies went for Kennedy and carried the election for him, because of Romney’s record of oppressive labor lockouts in his Indiana companies. However, Romney made impressive showings (52 percent) in other Catholic locations like West Springfield. Furthermore, Kennedy won by his lowest percentage in years (56.7 percent). A by-county comparison shows that Kennedy received a much smaller margin of victory in 1992 than in 1988, regardless of the county’s religious makeup. I am deeply indebted to Professor Jerome Mileur for sharing his preeminent expertise on New England elections statistics and voting behavior, and for his clipping collection.

<sup>8</sup>The important topic of Mormon business is beyond the scope of this paper. See John Heinerman and Anson Shupe, *The Mormon Corporate Empire* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985). Mormon representation in corporate board rooms has increased enormously since its publication.

morality can measure the meaning of America. That is why Mormonism is beginning to appear with increasing frequency as a topic in the central question of the culture wars: Who shall define America?

The most impressive representation of the Mormons as the last innocent Americans, as a people both admirable and flawed, is that of Tony Kushner in his Pulitzer Prize-winning drama, *Angels in America* (1992). After a long run in New York, this popular and controversial play closed in the spring of 1995 and went on the road. *Angels* demands attention for its serious exploration of contemporary social issues and conflicts, particularly the relationship of homosexuality to the larger culture, and for its direct examination of Mormonism as a social icon.

The play, baroque in staging, with lightning, thunder, flames, and flying angels, depicts the suffering and death from AIDS of a New York homosexual, Prior Walter. A female angel, parodying Moroni, appears to Prior, calls him "Prophet, Seer, Revelator," and instructs him to dig up a sacred book hidden under the kitchen sink. Proctor has lost his lover, Louis, who is terrified of Proctor's AIDS. Louis then seduces Joe Pitt, a clean-cut married Mormon. Kushner's foil for Pitt, with his guilt and rigidity, is his mentor, Roy Cohn, the cruel, immoral, and historically infamous assistant to Senator Joe McCarthy during the 1950s. Both Pitt and Cohn are closet homosexuals. Lying to his pious wife Harper about overwork, Pitt cruises the streets looking for sex and falls in love with another man. Harper becomes deeply depressed. In the course of the play, Pitt gradually comes out, while Cohn remains in the closet, denying his homosexuality even while he is dying of AIDS.

Despite Cohn's evilness, Kushner makes it clear that, as a religion and as an eastern European ethnic tradition, Judaism is morally and ethnically superior to both Mormonism and to Christianity. For example, Rabbi Isidor Chemelwitz, appearing as the play's first character, is utterly charming, humorous, and compassionate, thus sending a message about the attractiveness of Jewish religion and ethnicity. In a funeral sermon for an aged woman he never knew, he eulogizes her as a heroine who made a perilous voyage from the *shtetls* of the Old World. Juxtaposed to this scene is Kushner's ridicule of the Mormon trek, especially as presented at the New York Visitors Center. Kushner thus contrasts the humanity

of Judaism with the destructiveness of Mormonism/Christianity. Kushner depicts Cohn's rejection of Judaism as immoral but scorns Pitt for remaining a faithful Mormon. In short, the Jewish belief system and ethnic identity are worth keeping; the Mormon faith and ethnic identity are not.<sup>9</sup> Kushner parodies Joseph Smith's First Vision, the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, and its doctrine that human beings can become gods; he also attacks Mormonism as crippled by hollow puritanism, obsessed with reactionary social policies, and oppressive to women.

While the parody of Mormon history is obvious, Kushner does not treat Mormonism itself with contempt. He finds much of it admirable and uses the Pitt family as a foil for the cynical New Yorkers. Thus, even though Kushner parodies the Mormon story, he takes Mormonism as a *religious culture* seriously and presents Mormons as upright, hardworking, middle-class Americans from "the heartland." They represent the voice of American morality and, in the play, speak for American Christianity. But for all their admirable qualities, Kushner denies them the right to define America because they preach a narrow and exclusive worldview—capitalism, patriotism, conformity, heterosexuality, and Republicanism. The middle American morality of Mormonism, says Kushner, conceals "a hollow sweet center."<sup>10</sup> Mormonism becomes the play's real antagonist, while suffering gay America is the protagonist.

One of the play's nastiest moments for Mormons is when Cohn gives Joe Pitt a mock Mormon patriarchal blessing, thus showing his contempt for Mormon ritual. In Mormon culture, patriarchal blessings are written down for permanent preservation. Given their intimate, sacred nature, they are cherished as revelatory by the individual and by descendants. Cohn's obscene desecration is thus particularly repellent. Nevertheless, it makes Kushner's point: While Kushner admires Mormon virtues strongly enough to use Mormonism as the best dramatic foil, he still condemns it. Mormonism may

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<sup>9</sup>Tony Kushner, *Angels in America: A Gay Fantasia on National Themes, Part 2: Perestroika* (New York: Theatre Communications Group, Inc., 1994), 49, 65, 73, 87, 91, 103. Part 1 is *Millennium Approaches*.

<sup>10</sup>Harper describes Joe in these terms at the end of the play. Kushner, *Perestroika*, 122.

be the best of America; but for Kushner, America itself is not very good.

Kushner's contempt for Mormonism (and hence for America's mainstream Christian culture) appears in such passages as these, simultaneously illustrating how this perception of Mormonism shows its efficacy as social myth.

Salt Lake City is described as having "energy but no intelligence."<sup>11</sup> Joe's depressed and pious wife becomes addicted to Valium and confesses to Prior:

HARPER: It's terrible. Mormons are not supposed to be addicted to anything. I'm a Mormon.

PRIOR: I'm a homosexual.

HARPER: Oh! In my church we don't believe in homosexuals.

PRIOR: In *my* church we don't believe in Mormons.<sup>12</sup>

Kushner's Angel, rather than being incorporeal and spiritual, represents erotic carnality. Whenever she appears, the characters react with intense sexual desire. Toward the end of the play, she appears dressed in black to take Prior, the dead AIDS victim/hero, to heaven. Hannah, Pitt's mother from Salt Lake City, is the embodiment of sexual repression and puritanical orthodoxy. The Angel gives her "a long, hot kiss"; Hannah then "has an enormous orgasm as the Angel flies away to the accompanying glissando of a baroque piccolo trumpet."<sup>13</sup> Sexual ecstasy thus becomes the metaphor for redemption as a human being. This scene also mocks such cherished beliefs as sexual chastity. After the kiss, the Angel says, "The Body is the Garden of the Soul," thus parodying the Mormon belief that the body is the tabernacle of the soul, a Christian belief based on Paul: "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God . . ." (1 Cor. 3:16-17). The audience for the New York performance I attended enjoyed an extended laugh at the expense of sexually repressed Mormons as the newly humanized (redeemed) Hannah lay writhing on the stage in sexual ecstasy.

<sup>11</sup>Kushner, *Millennium Approaches*, 82.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, *Perestroika*, 120.

Toward the end of the play, Prior Walter meets Harper Pitt in heaven, a place designed to look like San Francisco after the 1906 earthquakes. He asks Harper to stay and not return to earth, but Harper insists on leaving: "I can't. I feel like shit, but I've never felt more alive. I've finally found the secret of all that Mormon energy. Devastation. That's what makes people migrate, build things. Heart-broken people do it, people who have lost love. Because I don't think God loves His people any better than Joe loved me. The string was cut, and off they went."<sup>14</sup>

Despite Kushner's mockery of Mormonism, he chose it because it represents—not only to him but also to his audience—a constellation of conservative, deeply held American beliefs: thrift, honesty, courage, industry, piety, sexual morality, and marital fidelity. For any belief system to work as a foil, it must first and foremost be respected and taken seriously. Kushner, a leftist, gay New Yorker, acknowledges the Mormon icon even as he rejects it. A comparable example of the use of powerful social and cultural icons is the film *Citizen Kane*, in which the protagonist achieves great financial success but fails in all human relationships. Another instance of the critical use of myth on a larger stage is Rolph Hochhuth's *The Deputy*, a play about Vatican politics during the 1930s. The papacy, an icon of power and Christian morality for millions in the West, emerges from Hochhuth's play as the amoral supporter of Adolf Hitler. Clearly Kushner has used Mormonism as an easily recognizable embodiment of the social myth of middle America. It is not going too far to say that, for Kushner and his very large audience, traditional America is Mormonism.

#### *Eldridge Cleaver, Unlikely Convert*

Tony Kushner thus joins a very interesting group of Americans who take Mormonism seriously and who represent post-sixties ideas and sensibilities that are not a priori hostile to Mormonism. This group includes Eldridge Cleaver, Jan Shipps, John L. Brooke, and Harold Bloom. Shipps and Brooke, though not major media figures like Cleaver and Bloom, are examples of non-Mormon scholars who have written major studies of Mormonism. Their works, at once both

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<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, 122.

scholarly and empathetic, present large, almost metahistorical conceptions of Mormonism, and could never have been published before the 1960s.<sup>15</sup> But the other two figures, Cleaver and Bloom, have loomed so large in the public mind that they better illustrate the iconic power of the Mormon religion.

Leroy Eldridge Cleaver (1935- ) is the most spectacular example of this post-1960s group since he, unlike the others, actually converted to Mormonism, although he is not now fully active. An improbable “golden contact” for missionaries, he was minister of information for the revolutionary Black Panther party after its founding in 1966, a gun-toter, a rapist, and a celebrity. In 1968 after the California police wounded him in a shoot-out in which another Panther died, Cleaver escaped to the supposed freedom of the Communist world for six years: Cuba, North Vietnam, China, North Korea, and Algeria, where he headed the Panthers’ so-called international headquarters. By 1973 in France, he had given up on African-American socialist radicalism, longed to return to the United States, and considered suicide. The turning point came one night in the south of France on a balcony overlooking the moon-lit Mediterranean. In a trancelike state, Cleaver had a vision of his former heroes—Fidel Castro, Mao Zedong, Karl Marx, and Frederick Engels—passing by, but then the image of Jesus Christ appeared in a “dazzling, shimmering light,” and Cleaver fell to his knees weeping.<sup>16</sup>

Baptized a Catholic, Cleaver returned to the United States, founded the evangelical Eldridge Cleaver Crusades in Nevada (1979), and was baptized a Mormon on 11 December 1983 in California.<sup>17</sup> Now fifty-nine years old, the graying, articulate, six-foot

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<sup>15</sup>John L. Brooke, *The Refiner's Fire: The Making of Mormon Cosmology, 1644-1844* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Jan Shipps, *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985). The now classic sociological work of Thomas F. O’Dea, *The Mormons* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), though slightly earlier, must not be overlooked as a pioneering attempt to look seriously at “how and why a small, embattled sect became a substantial American denomination and community” (on dust jacket).

<sup>16</sup>Eldridge Cleaver, *Soul on Fire* (Waco, Texas: Word Books, c1978), 211.

<sup>17</sup>The baptismal date was reported to me by an LDS official in the summer of 1995 but is confirmed in newspaper articles at the time. See also Linda Metzger



three-inch Cleaver is still a commanding presence who occasionally participates in Mormon services in the Bay Area. He describes himself as a supporter of the Church and, as of July 1995, was still a member of record in the Berkeley Ward.<sup>18</sup> In a newspaper interview in February 1995, he described himself as a “true conservative” and called Newt Gingrich a “gargoyle.”<sup>19</sup>

Merely reciting these facts is disturbing to many non-Mormons. The revolutionist Cleaver a Mormon? An African-American in a church which taught, before the revelation of 1978, that black men could not be ordained to the priesthood? The tone of the many newspaper reports, magazine articles, and television interviews ranged from bemusement to consternation. Cleaver explicitly recognized the cultural dissonance incited by his new persona and shrewdly took its measure. Announcing as early as 1981 that he intended to accept Mormon baptism, he remarked, “There will be a lot of flak.”<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, for all his checkered exploits, Cleaver is no exotic, and his assessments of both Mormonism and the American political scene are realistic and sophisticated. In short, he represents, precisely because he is unacceptable, the entrance of Mormonism into the post-1970s public life of America.

### *Harold Bloom: Having Fun with Ideas*

Harold Bloom can best be discussed in relation to Allan Bloom, to whom he is related neither by family nor by ideology; but both are relevant to the social myth of Mormonism and how it defines America. As “public intellectuals” and conservative social critics, both men have been highly visible combatants in the culture wars.

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and Deborah A. Straub, eds., *Contemporary Authors* (Detroit: Gale Research Co., 1986), 16:65-66; Charles Montz, ed., *Current Biography Yearbook 1970* (New York: W. W. Wilson Co., 1970), 85-88.

<sup>18</sup>I am indebted to Newell Bringham for sharing his collection of newspaper clippings on Cleaver and to Robert Larsen for information on Cleaver's current level of activity.

<sup>19</sup>Jennifer Skordas, “Cleaver Did It: From Panthers to Mormonism,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, 15 February 1995, B-4.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, 11 October 1981, B-17, 4 April and 6 April 1981. About the time of Cleaver's baptism the *Christian Science Monitor*, 25 October 1982, 15, ran one of the fairest reports on his many public appearances (mostly on college campuses), this one at Harvard, where he faced angry anti-Reagan hecklers.

I met both of them long enough for a handshake in the 1950s, when I was freshly discharged from the U.S. Army's counterintelligence corps in Germany. They seemed very exotic at the time; but now, forty years later, I sense that I may share their Eastern, perhaps Jewish, way of looking at American culture.

Harold Bloom, at age sixty-four is currently considered the most brilliant literary critic in the United States, has produced some twenty books, several of them quite controversial.<sup>21</sup> In *The Book of J* (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1990), for example, he argued that some of his favorite parts of the Pentateuch were written by a woman. Among the Latter-day Saints, he has won guarded admiration for his stimulating *The American Religion* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992). Mormonism, according to his view, is part of "the American religion," which is, he asserts, a form of Gnosticism. Elder V. Dallas Merrill of the Second Quorum of the Seventy quoted it uncritically in general conference.<sup>22</sup> While *The American Religion* was in preparation, Harold Bloom gave a lecture at the University of Utah that drew an audience of 1,500.<sup>23</sup> Bloom argues that the most successful sects in American religious history are gnostic. He defines gnosticism as "a knowing, by and of an uncreated self, or self-within-the-self, and [this] knowledge leads to freedom, a dangerous and doom-eager freedom: from nature, time, history, community, other selves."<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Adam Begley, "Colossus among Critics: Harold Bloom," *The New York Times Magazine*, 25 September 1994, 32ff.

<sup>22</sup>V. Dallas Merrill, "Power of the Church Rooted in Christ," *Ensign*, May 1993, 28-29.

<sup>23</sup>I am indebted to L. Jackson Newell of the University of Utah for this information. He described audience reaction as ranging from high praise to dismissal as "ridiculous." Others have reported the same mixed reaction.

<sup>24</sup>Bloom, *American Religion*, 49. This definition of gnosticism is confused and self-serving; like feudalism, gnosticism is a historical construct which makes it convenient for historians to talk about the subject. A clearer discussion is Elaine H. Pagels's description of gnosticism as a constellation of views in the two centuries after Christ that emphasizes individual divinity and unmediated personal communion with God. Such belief would, not unnaturally, be seen as a threat to the growing monolithic authority of what became the Catholic Church after the reign of Emperor Constantine (306-337 A.D.). Elaine H. Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels* (New York: Random House, 1979).

Bloom finds Mormonism the most interesting and admirable of all the manifestations of American gnosticism. He is, however, wildly mistaken to make Latter-day Saints into crazy individualists, fleeing from nature, from time, from history, from community, and from others. His complete indifference to the New Testament's important role in Mormonism underscores the emptiness of his "religious criticism."<sup>25</sup> Kushner, interestingly enough, claims Harold Bloom as his "primal father."<sup>26</sup>

*Allan Bloom: Ideas Have Consequences*

Allan Bloom (1930-92), a distinguished professor of classical political philosophy at the University of Chicago, authored the spectacular, though politically incorrect, best-seller, *The Closing of the American Mind* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), a scathing attack on cultural relativism. Bloom was a member of the University of Chicago's Committee on Social Thought, a distinguished translator of Plato, and a man of pronounced moral, social, and academic views, which attracted numerous attacks.<sup>27</sup> Neither the Latter-day Saints nor any other major religious group or religious activity appeared in his book. This omission is serious in a work that includes a portentous discussion of contemporary rock and roll and is particularly regrettable given the probable value of Bloom's contributions as a witty homosexual, an engaged philosopher, and a star teacher of undergraduates. Despite this omission, Bloom shares an absolutistic moral stance with LDS General Authorities, Catholics,

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<sup>25</sup>See "Four LDS Views on Harold Bloom," by Eugene England, Truman G. Madsen, Charles Randall Paul, and Richard F. Haglund, *BYU Studies* 35, no. 1 (Winter 1995): 173-204. Alfred Kazin, a critic equal in stature to Bloom, wrote the best informed review of the Bloom book—actually in part a review of Bloom himself—for the *New Republic*, 8 June 1992, 38-41.

<sup>26</sup>Kushner, "Afterword," *Perestroika*, 158. Bloom, in turn, has expressed similar filial veneration for Elaine H. Pagels. David Remnick, "States of Mind: The Devil Problem," *New Yorker* 71 (3 April 1995): 54.

<sup>27</sup>James Atlas, "Chicago's Grumpy Guru," *New York Times Magazine*, 3 January 1988, 12-15, 25, 31; and Richard Rorty, "That Old-Time Philosophy," *New Republic*, 4 April 1988. For kinder and more truthful assessments, see Clifford Orwin, "Remembering Allan Bloom," *American Scholar* (Summer 1993): 423-30; and Saul Bellow, *It All Adds Up: From the Dim Past to the Uncertain Future* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1994).

and evangelicals, all of whom are seriously engaged in the struggle over who is to define America.

Bloom had almost nothing to say about specific issues like abortion, women's rights, or even homosexuality. His quarrel was with the larger problem of cultural relativism, which defines ethics according to one's time and place. By asserting a Greek absolutist position on the existence of truth and its knowability, Allan Bloom would, I believe, have found admirable much of Mormon teaching on free agency, human rationality, the independent existence of truth, and human access to absolute knowledge. Mormonism is a religion of rational certainty; its veneration for rational science enabled it to escape unscathed when advances in late-nineteenth-century biology and physics shredded many millennial and biblical denominations.<sup>28</sup>

Of course, anyone who has read Sterling McMurrin's classic essay *The Philosophical Foundations of Mormon Theology* realizes that I oversimplify. Neither Allan Bloom nor most Mormons are absolutists or literal rationalists. But both do assume an unchanging reality. "The Mormon philosophy," writes McMurrin, "appears to find an unchanging reality in at least two directions in its metaphysics . . . [an] unchanging character of God [and a stability] in the so-called natural laws."<sup>29</sup> For Bloom, rational discourse on fundamental ideas is the essence of Western learning.

The assertion of an "unchanging" God and immutable "natural laws" also means that, in the culture wars, if the correct definition of America does not win out, then an entire nation will be tied to a false and ultimately disastrous view. Thus, from a philosophical point of view, the major conflict is whether there is a Truth, not specific issues like a woman's right over her own body, the right of a homosexual to express publicly his or her gender identity, the right of an intellectual to question the basic rules of American society, or

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<sup>28</sup>Computer scientist David H. Bailey underlines Mormonism's rationalism in his review of Erich Robert Paul's *Science, Religion, and Mormon Cosmology* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), in "A Shifting Stance," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 26 (Winter 1993): 219.

<sup>29</sup>Sterling McMurrin, *The Philosophical Foundations of Mormon Theology* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1959).

the quarrels over which works undergraduates must read to be considered well educated.

## MORMONISM AND POLITICAL MOVEMENTS

### *Rightist Activities*

In a political form, this search for absolute truth is manifest in the Oklahoma bombing which sprang from the extreme right-wingers' belief that they are the *true* Americans. Perhaps the most shocking aspect of that slaughter of more than a hundred innocents, including children, was sympathy with the dissidents expressed by many arch-reactionary conservatives, including the leadership of the National Rifle Association and of many militias together with the view that the bombing exacted a wholly justified vengeance for the alleged massacre of David Koresh's innocent followers at Waco, Texas. Although the NRA's definition of government agents as "jack-booted thugs"<sup>30</sup> was considered shocking by law-abiding Americans, the NRA, militias, and other advocates of armed citizenry found allies and support in the West, including in Mormon country: Arizona, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington.

The widespread and popular folk belief that the Constitution will "hang by a thread" but that the elders of the Church will step forward to "save it" is a powerful image in the minds of many members who are not political reactionaries. They believe that the Constitution is an inspired document, await the day when Mormonism will take its place as the true protector of the Constitution, and accept as a sacred mission their need to defend it, even against a corrupt government.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup>Wayne La Pierre, executive vice president of the National Rifle Association, used this phrase about the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (BATF) in a letter to members during the NRA's 1995 campaign to repeal the federal ban on assault weapons. However, liberal Congressman John Dingell had called the BATF "a jack-booted group of fascists" in 1980. The fact that the phrase attracted virtually no attention in 1980 is a gauge of how heated the conflict over the definition of America has become in the last fifteen years.

<sup>31</sup>For the best summary of the Joseph Smith prophecy and its subsequent quotations, see D. Michael Stewart, "I Have a Question: What do we know about

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has been a stable and conservative institution in this time of turmoil, despite its location in a region that venerates firearms. It has distanced itself from Mormon survivalists like the Singer family, Ogden Kraut, prolific right-wing propagandist and polygamist, and Patrick Watters, head of the Utah Militia, who combines his Mormonism with British-Israelism.<sup>32</sup> British- or Anglo-Israelism, with roots in the seventeenth century, holds that contemporary Britons are descended from one or more of the lost ten tribes of Israel, usually the tribe of Ephraim. By the late nineteenth century, it had become a kind of religio-political movement and it

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the purported statement of Joseph Smith that the Constitution would hang by a thread and that the elders would save it?" *Ensign*, June 1976, 64-65. For recent official statements on the divinity of the Constitution, see Ezra Taft Benson, *The Constitution: A Heavenly Banner* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1986), 13-15; Dallin H. Oaks, "The Divinely Inspired Constitution," address at America's Freedom Festival Religious Services, 5 July 1987, Provo, Utah, photocopy in LDS Church Archives; Donald Q. Cannon, ed., *Latter-day Prophets and the United States Constitution*, Religious Studies Center Specialized Monograph Series, No. 7 (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1991), 190-91. Arch-conservative Mormons, members of patriot movements, and Westerners attempting to occupy federal lands all appeal to the Constitution. Richard Vetterli, *The Constitution by a Thread* (Salt Lake City: Paramount Publishers, 1967), especially chap. 7; Erik Larson, "Don't Tread on Me: An Inside Look at the West's Growing Rebellion" and Richard Lacayo, "This Land Is Whose Land?" both in *Time*, 23 October 1995, 55, 66, 68-71. A lively critique of right-wing Mormonism by one of its victims, a faithful Mormon feminist, is Cecilia Konchar Farr's "Dancing Through the Doctrine: Observations on Religion and Feminism," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 28 (Fall 1995), 1-12, especially 5.

<sup>32</sup>Watters, quoting scriptures extensively, described his right-wing politics and Mormon beliefs at the August 1995 Sunstone Symposium in Salt Lake City: "People's Militia vs. Law of the Land: A Few Mormon Perspectives: A Panel" moderated by James Salisbury, with Patrick Watters, Randall Edwards, Vicki Singer, and Ogden Kraut; audiotape SL95-172 in my possession. The discussion covered just wars and self-defense in the Book of Mormon and in the Doctrine and Covenants (especially section 98) and food storage. While most Mormons now store food in case of natural disasters or the loss of a job, during the 1960s and currently among survivalist Mormons, the emphasis is on food storage in preparation for the cataclysmic arrival of the Millennium. Watters believes that Gandhi's non-violent revolution succeeded in India only because of the high ethics and moral self-restraint of the "Israelitish" British.

has remained a popular Mormon folk belief to the present.<sup>33</sup>

James (“Bo”) Gritz, the anti-government Mormon and former Green Beret colonel who ran for U.S. President in 1992, garnered 28,000 votes in Utah and 2,800 in Nevada. After resigning from the Church in March 1994, Gritz purchased property for a compound called “Almost Heaven” near Kamiah, Idaho, and praised the Oklahoma City bombing as “a Rembrandt. It was a masterpiece of science and art put together.”<sup>34</sup> Ku Klux Klan leaders and the headquarters of the National Socialist White People’s Party have moved to Seattle, as part of the so-called Northwest Imperative. An expert on such movements estimated that thousands of right-wing true believers are moving to the Northwest. Because the conspiracy activists and militias preach an anti-government, anti-black, anti-Semitic definition of America, they use guns and bombs against federal and even county officials.<sup>35</sup>

I have no reason to believe that Mormons represent more than a small fraction of such groups; but a wider spectrum of attitudes among the Mormons symbolizes their wider diffusion and acceptance in American society. Like Southern Baptists and Roman Catholics, Mormonism can also supply apostates or marginal members to the disaffected sectarian groups.

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<sup>33</sup>John Wilson (died 1871) published *Lectures on Our Israelitish Origin* in 1840. A related movement is Aryan “Christian Identity.” See James A. Aho, *The Politics of Righteousness: Idaho Christian Patriotism* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1990) and Michael Barkun, *Religion and the Racist Right: The Origins of the Christian Identity Movement* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994). There is no general study of the proliferation of “survivalist,” “Christian identity,” and other sects in the West since the 1960s. There is not even a collective noun to describe them.

<sup>34</sup>As quoted in Bill Hall, “Bombing of Babies in Oklahoma Was a Masterpiece—of Senselessness,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, 29 May 1995, C-4. See also news item, *Sunstone* 17 (December 1994): 82; Hugh Dellios, *Chicago Tribune*, “‘Doomsday’ Mormons say LDS Church Rejects Them,” *Provo Daily Herald*, 10 January 1993, D-1; “Associate: ABC Defamed Gritz, Misled Viewers,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, 26 April 1995, A-5.

<sup>35</sup>Tom Reiss, “Home on the Range,” *New York Times* op-ed, 28 May 1995. For an uncritical mainline view of anti-government violence in the West, see Erik Larson, “The Revolt of the West,” *Time*, 23 October 1995, 52-66.

*Traditional Political Activities*

The Church takes pains to distance itself from these unconventional political movements, a stance perhaps best epitomized by First Presidency counselor James E. Faust's insistence on respect for law, even to the point of telling a capacity crowd at Provo's 1995 Fourth of July celebration that "civil disobedience is an abuse of political process in a democracy."<sup>36</sup> The Church proudly affirms its allegiance to the political process by encouraging members to vote, featuring elected Mormon officials or appointees in *Church News* articles and providing reserved front-row seating for them in general conference.

In more conventional national politics Mormons have done well. After the conservative Republican landslide in the Congressional elections of 1994, the Mormon delegation increased from twelve (three senators and nine representatives) in 1985 to fourteen.<sup>37</sup> Professed Mormons now represent many non-Mormons outside of Mormon Country (centering on Utah). When the membership of Congress (535 in both houses) is examined for the contours of religious affiliation, some groups like Episcopalians and Jews are "overrepresented" in relation to their numbers in the

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<sup>36</sup>As quoted in Peter Scarlet, "Faust: Obey Laws of the Land," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 4 July 1995, D-2; Melissa Bean, "Get Involved in U.S., Urges Pres. Faust," *Deseret News*, 3-4 July 1995, B-1, B-3; Sarah Jane Cannon, "Help Cure Government Ills with Personal Involvement," *Church News*, 8 July 1995, 3-4.

<sup>37</sup>In 1985, there were twelve Mormons in Congress, three senators and nine representatives. Alice Allred Pottmeyer, "LDS Legislators Rated," *Sunstone* 10 (July 1985): 42-44; Proctor, "Mormons and the New Congress," 19-22. Religious affiliations in Congress in 1994, according to Albert Menendez, "Report," *First Things*, May 1995, 86, from Newsletter Edition of *Insight*, February 1995, published by the National Association of Evangelicals, are: Catholics 148 (previously 136), Baptists 68 (64), Methodists 63 (70), Presbyterians 59 (57), Episcopalians 49 (50), Jews 34 (42), Protestants 23 (21), Lutherans 21 (22), Mormons 13 [actually 14] (11), United Church of Christ 12 (10), Christian or nondenominational Christian 6 (1), Christian Scientists 5 (4), Eastern Orthodox 5 (4), Unitarian-Universalists 5 (7). Disciples of Christ, Christian Reformed Church, and Seventh-day Adventists each have two. United Brethren in Christ, Christian Church and Churches of Christ, Christian and Missionary Alliance, Church of the Nazarene, and Pan African Orthodox Church have one each. Five members specified no affiliation. The shift to the right is quite apparent.



population. The former, for example, had numbered 49 in 1995 for a population of professed Episcopalians in the country of only 2.5 million. Similarly, Jewish organizations numbered 4.3 million members in 1995, but 34 Jews served in Congress. By contrast the Mormon representation seems small, but the dynamics of change are interesting. After the election of 1994, the Mormon delegation numbered only 14 members, but that included an increase of 3 members (7.8 percent gain) since 1985, while Episcopalians and Jews lost representation relative to 1985: the former going from 50 to 49 and the latter dropping sharply from 42 to 34. The Congressional representation of other influential religious groups like Methodists, Lutherans, and Unitarian-Universalists also decreased.

Mormons have also achieved notable influence as appointed federal officials. Most Americans who lived through the Reagan and Bush administrations recall Brent Scowcroft, a Latter-day Saint who served as President Ronald Reagan's National Security Advisor with considerable influence on the conduct of foreign affairs, and Roger B. Porter, who served as Reagan's economic advisor.

A third influential Mormon federal appointee is James C. Fletcher (1919-91), the only person to head the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) twice (1971-77, 1986-89). Since the Kennedy administration, NASA has made space exploration a central symbol of American idealism and power. According to NASA's Chief Historian, Roger D. Launius, Fletcher's beliefs found direct expression in NASA's direction and policies, and his influence was mostly positive for the nation, for NASA, and for the elected officials he served.

Fletcher's administration of the U.S. space program owed something to his "idea of the western American frontier in a Turnerian sense and its attendant images of territorial discovery, exploration, colonization, and exploitation"<sup>38</sup>—and, as the anti-Turnerian Tony Kushner might add, "devastation" of the spirit. Another interesting influence was Fletcher's Mormon belief in the non-selfish stewardship over all God's creation as a common "inheri-

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<sup>38</sup>Roger D. Launius, "A Western Mormon in Washington, D.C.: James C. Fletcher, NASA, and the Final Frontier," *Pacific Historical Review* 64 (May 1995): 217-41.

tance," a contrast to environmental privatism that made him a liberal by comparison with most Republicans. This belief manifested itself in his emphasis on applications satellites to help make the planet a better place to live and to avoid environmental damage. (One wonders how Fletcher might have squared this concern with the possibly horrific environmental consequences of President Reagan's "star wars" program.) Fletcher's essentially positive attitude toward the uses of science reflected his Mormon faith that each human being has the potential to attain godhood and "create worlds without end." Because of Fletcher's "Mormon belief in many worlds with many peoples," his policies in NASA urged that we "begin to listen to other civilizations in the galaxy." This search was, in fact, one aim of the launchings of Vikings 1 and 2 (1975-76). In general, Fletcher's leadership reflected his Mormon beliefs about nature and divinity. The idea of stewardship had its origins in what Launius calls the "zionitic/utopian ideals" of the early 1830s; and there is a complex connection in Mormon thought between life on other planets (other worlds) and the eternal progress of saved human beings toward godhood. Some of these ideas are part of LDS temple culture.<sup>39</sup>

Fletcher was one of a number of highly placed Mormons in public and corporate life since 1954 who constitute new and accepted voices in the chorus of public power. One could hope that such Saints have for the most part brought a higher than average degree of moral commitment to their callings, higher than the general run of bureaucrats and executives. Proctor reports that Mormons in Congress say they "are held to a much higher standard of conduct because they are Mormons."<sup>40</sup> This hope can be quashed, of course, by the mixed record of almost every Mormon politician. For example, the courageous conservative Utah senator Arthur V. Watkins (1947-59), while a man of personal integrity in withstanding McCarthyism, was heartless in carrying out the "Termination Policy" against the Southern Paiute Indians of Utah.<sup>41</sup> Still, not much

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<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*, 236, 232, 217-18.

<sup>40</sup>Proctor, "Mormons and the New Congress," 19.

<sup>41</sup>Carolyn Grattan-Aiello, "Senator Arthur V. Watkins and the Termination of Utah's Southern Paiute Indians," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 63 (Summer 1995): 282-83.

conscious corruption is found on the record, particularly in the popular areas of sex and money. At the state level, Utahns have enjoyed a long succession of honest and competent governors. Historical generalizations about the influence of group religious belief on politics are always tenuous. Still, one may surmise that many Fletchers in public service are doing some good inspired by their Mormon moral universe, and we may confidently conclude that only since the post-1945 Mormon accession to power could the question of performance even be raised.

### MORMONISM'S PRIVATE POWER

This discussion of Mormonism as an American icon and as a cultural, social, and political influence has thus far examined Mormon power from the outside. But equally important is the internal appeal of Mormonism: its attraction for converts and its hold on birthright Mormons. Why do people stay in the Church, and why do converts love it? Even excommunicated or inactive Mormons remain surprisingly loyal.

Although an analysis of the interior dynamics of Mormonism is very subjective, I would identify four aspects as particularly relevant: tradition, community, doctrinal authority, and the devotion of its women. Naturally, other sources are also important, for example, Mormonism's well-known missionary endeavors, psychologically powerful temple activities, and such cultural institutions as Scouting, family home evening, home and visiting teaching, the Young Women's association, special General Authority "firesides" broadcast via satellite to most U.S. locations, and others.

#### *Tradition*

Tradition is an aspect of Mormonism that few students would consider as a source of power because Mormonism is too new to have a long tradition. Both an outsider like Martin Marty and an insider like Louis Midgley would agree that, in the words of Midgley, "Mormonism, more than even Judaism, Islam, and Christianity . . . is story-grounded and history-conscious."<sup>42</sup> And Marty asserted that

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<sup>42</sup>Louis Midgley, Letter to Editor, *Sunstone* 16 (February 1992): 12. Midgley cited Marty, essay, *Westminster Tanner Lectures* 1 (Salt Lake City: Westminster

Latter-day Saints have “acted upon the basis of their history, their story. Mormons have not made much of doctrine, of theology: they especially live as chosen and covenanted people in part of a developing history. Much is at stake when the story is threatened, as it potentially could have been when forged documents concerning Mormon origins agitated the community and led to tragedy a few years ago.”<sup>43</sup> Marty’s muted words allude to the Church’s interest in controlling primary historical sources and to Mark Hofmann’s vicious murders in 1985 to protect his forged Mormon documents.

If, as Midgley says, “a story constitutes the core of Latter-day Saints’ faith,” then we may call this source of strength “tradition” in Jaroslav Pelikan’s sense of “the living faith of dead people.” Catholicism finds part of its authority in the precedent of ancient beliefs, which it calls tradition; Mormonism has redefined tradition as Mormon history. It does not seem possible to believe in Mormonism without also believing in Joseph Smith’s First Vision and in the coming forth of the Book of Mormon.

### *Community*

Some Mormons find group solidarity suffocating, but many converts find it appealing. Much of my scholarly work has argued the central importance of Mormon community from 1830 to the present. I find that many Mormon scholars agree. But fewer agree with me that the origin of Mormon community lies in the United Order of Enoch. The late President Ezra Taft Benson condemned historians who referred to “communalism,” “communitarianism,” or “economic experiment” in connection with any era of Mormon history.<sup>44</sup> Law professor Edwin B. Firmage writes: “The Mormon

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College, 1989): 8-10.

<sup>43</sup>As quoted in *ibid.*

<sup>44</sup>Reports of these speeches, given for the most part in stake conferences, circulated orally in the Mormon intellectual community. In 1977, he queried rhetorically at a BYU devotional, “Is the United Order a communal system? Emphatically not. It never has been and never will be. It is [quoting J. Reuben Clark] ‘intensely individualistic.’ It is a “misguided interpretation” of history to write of “early communal experiments.” Ezra Taft Benson, “A Vision and a Hope for the Youth of Zion,” 12 April 1977, 2; photocopy of typescript in my possession. Benson was a fervent anti-communist and an ardent supporter of the John Birch

people and the Mormon prophets sensed from the beginning that their religion would work only in community. Peculiar Mormon teachings did not simply demand their own institutions. Radical social innovations like polygamy and the United Order required a unique lifestyle and community. . . . The hallmark of Mormonism was, and is, this vital social cohesion."<sup>45</sup>

### *Doctrinal Authority*

A third source of Mormon power lies in its insistence on doctrinal authority. It may not be authoritative for outsiders or for Mormon dissenters, but it certainly attracts tens of thousands of converts. Mormonism stands for something definite and has high standards for behavior and belief. As early as 1972, sociologist of religion Deane Kelley identified demanding standards and clearly defined doctrines as characteristics of fast-growing churches.<sup>46</sup> I believe that Kelley's thesis was incontrovertible in explaining religious growth in America from the 1960s to the late 1980s.

Strict, principled, authoritative teaching is a great source of strength. It idealizes uncompromising resistance to the blandishments of the secular world, provides assurance in a turbulent world, allows members to feel that they have a special relationship with a caring God, and provides simultaneously high levels of community support and surveillance for Mormons, it provides ready-made "experts" for perplexing and complex problems by privileging the statements of a prophet who is in direct communication with God, of other General Authorities, and, by trickle-down effect, of local leaders as well. Obedience to the commandments in general (viewed

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Society.

<sup>45</sup>Edwin B. Firmage, "Restoring the Church: Zion in the Nineteenth and Twenty-first Centuries," *Sunstone* 13 (January 1989): 33, 34. See also Leonard J. Arrington, Feramorz Y. Fox, and Dean L. May, *Building the City of God: Community and Cooperation among the Mormons* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1976), especially 423-24; Lowry Nelson, *The Mormon Village: A Pattern and Technique of Land Settlement* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1952); Leonard J. Arrington and Davis Bitton, *The Mormon Experience: A History of the Latter-day Saints* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), 316-17; De Pillis, "The Development of Mormon Communitarianism, 1826-1846" (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1961).

<sup>46</sup>Deane Kelley, *Why the Conservative Churches Are Growing* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972).

as timeless) and the current prophet's counsel in particular (viewed as particularly relevant for our time) will bring safety and happiness. Mormonism is saved from being a religious dictatorship by its balancing belief in the right of individual members to seek and receive personal revelation for themselves and their families. It deals with the potentially difficult problem of an individual revelation that conflicts with the prophet's revelation by asserting that the two will always be in harmony. While reality is far more complex than this model, it seems to work well in a majority of the cases.

### *Women's Devotion*

Women occupy a paradoxical position in Mormonism: they are both seemingly oppressed and yet also independent wielders of power. It is easy to document a version of Mormon women as trapped in a suffocating domesticity and kept there by an uncomprehending patriarchy. In that view they are oppressed by the requirement for frequent childbirth and by the Church's insistence that they stick to their traditional roles: the fertile mother, the busy food-processor, the home decorator, the submissive wife, the cooperative and competent staffer of ward organizations, the dispenser of charity and casseroles. Clearly the Mormon patriarchy has so viewed its women right up to the present while simultaneously honoring their "contributions." As the feminist movement gained momentum in 1979, Ezra Taft Benson, then president of the Quorum of Twelve, told a gathering in Los Angeles that women have been "elected" by God to be mothers and homemakers and Church President Spencer W. Kimball stated categorically that a woman who asks for "authority to do everything that a man can do and change the order and go and do men's work instead of bearing children—she's just off her base."<sup>47</sup>

The position of the General Authorities has been unyielding in refusing Mormon women an institutional voice equal to that of priesthood quorums. As I have sampled Mormon lists on the internet, I hear both men and women reporting visiting General Authorities who recognize an exhaustive list of priesthood executives but make no mention of women officers. Others speak mov-

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<sup>47</sup>As quoted in news column, *Sunstone* 4 (July-August 1979): 6-7.

ingly about their own experience or that of other women who are humiliated by bishops—in interviews, as conditions for receiving welfare assistance, or for some perceived misbehavior. (Naturally, positive experiences with ecclesiastical leaders are also reported.) Although two women (members of the general presidencies of the Relief Society, Young Women, or Primary) are among the General Authorities who speak at general conferences each six months, these auxiliary presidents have no direct access, even by newsletter, to their organizations at the stake and ward level, cannot raise money, and do not write the lessons in their own manuals, where, at least in the case of the Relief Society, quotations by men outnumber those by women by at least five to one. The current Relief Society general president, Elaine L. Jack, does attend many council meetings of the General Authorities but whether as a mere presence or as a voting member is not clear. In their standard single-volume history of the Church (1979), Leonard J. Arrington and Davis Bitton inexplicably wrote that “women work within the church on a equal basis with men.”<sup>48</sup> It is neither their present understanding of Mormon history nor mine.

At the other end of the spectrum, an equally faithful member of the Church and leading feminist sociologist of women concluded that from an *institutional* point of view, “[Mormon] women’s contribution to the day-to-day activities of the church is fundamental to the vitality of Mormonism, but the hierarchical structure and emphasis on distinct gender roles restricts women’s contribution, assigns them to a particular sphere, and adds to their silence and invisibility.”<sup>49</sup> On a stake and ward level, the degree of participation by women depends almost completely on the sensitivity of individual stake presidents and bishops, who change office about every ten and five years respectively. In Church courts, women appear only as defendants or as witnesses; on the ward level, they face three male “judges”; at the stake level, fifteen. While men accused of wrongdoing appear in the same courts, one must ask whether men and

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<sup>48</sup>Arrington and Bitton, *The Mormon Experience*, 239.

<sup>49</sup>Marie Cornwall, “The Institutional Role of Mormon Women,” in Marie Cornwall, Tim B. Heaton, and Lawrence A. Young, eds., *Contemporary Mormonism: Social Science Perspectives* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 361-62.

women experience the situation in the same way, and I believe the answer has to be no.

While admitting the Church's strong patriarchal control of its women members, one may nevertheless also observe that LDS women exert a powerful influence in promoting the Church's primary goal—growth. This influence goes far beyond bearing and rearing children. Almost single-handedly, they manage the “Saint-making”<sup>50</sup> process from infancy through Primary teaching and Cub Scouts through the Young Women's program and the Relief Society. They prepare children of both genders for baptism, prepare sons to receive the priesthood at age twelve, do an enormous amount of the organization and support labor in the Church's extensive Boy Scout of America troops, also prepare sons to be endowed and to serve proselyting missions (usually at age nineteen), and, increasingly since the 1980s, daughters, at twenty-one. Women constitute most of the unpaid teachers who run the early-morning seminary programs. Women also, by virtue of their teaching of children and adults, establish and reinforce the goal of temple marriage. Although adult men teach priesthood quorum and Young Men classes, staff the Boy Scout executive positions, serve as Scoutmasters, and constitute a majority of paid full-time seminary teachers, it is not until adult life that Mormon fathers predominate, mainly by “presiding in the home” and by serving in the executive positions of bishop, counselors, and stake officers.

This mix of informal contributions and institutionalized duties has allowed Mormon women to exploit the well-known fact that women are better at peer relationships. In their church work Mormon women can find peer feminine companionship. The patriarchy has, since the time of Joseph Smith, tapped into this deep well of psychological energy, trying always to give it an institutional structure that could be controlled. For example, despite increasing concern among all women, including Mormons, about divorce, single parenthood, female and child poverty, battering, abuse, and sexual harassment, the conservative policies of the Relief Society do not permit institutional recognition of these problems nor direct

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<sup>50</sup>This phrase is from Jan Shippo, “Making Saints: In the Early Days and the Latter Days,” in Cornwall, Heaton, and Young, *Contemporary Mormonism*, chap. 4.



efforts to solve them. As a result, Mormon women's auxiliaries sustain power but have it not. Jill Mulvay Derr, Janath Russell Cannon, and Maureen Ursenbach Beecher in their history, *Women of Covenant: The Story of the Relief Society* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1992), see a more positive picture of how much can be accomplished through church institutions and emphasize "sisterhood" and networking, thus adding their own agenda to that of the institution.<sup>51</sup>

A useful contrast is the role of women in American Catholicism. Although masked by Hispanic immigration, Roman Catholicism has declined sharply in the United States, largely because of the dwindling of women's religious orders. That decline is more important than the more highly publicized shrinkage in the numbers of young Catholic men who attend seminaries and enter the priesthood. The Catholic women's orders sponsored elementary and high schools, ran dozens of hospitals, and staffed parishes, thus freeing priests to concentrate on administrative responsibilities.

While Mormon membership exploded between 1965 and 1990, the population of Catholic sisters in the United States shrank by 48.8 percent, from 209,000 to 102,000. Since 1990, erosion has accelerated through death and departures, with many orders closing down or being reduced to a dozen aged sisters in nursing homes. The Sisters of Saint Joseph formed the very backbone of the parochial school system, running hundreds of schools and numbering 17,061 in 1965. By 1990 they had closed all but a dozen of their schools and their total membership had slumped to 8,192. Between 1964 and 1990, 3,929 Catholic elementary schools closed, along with thirty-six of seventy-two sister-operated colleges. In 1990 the median age of all Catholic sisters in the United States was sixty-five.<sup>52</sup> All this, of course, was part of the larger process of decimation and enfeeblement in all the mainline churches as a result of the psycho-social

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<sup>51</sup>See the critical review by Peggy Pascoe, professor of history at the University of Utah, *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 27 (Summer 1994): 237-45.

<sup>52</sup>George C. Stewart, Jr., *Marvels of Charity: History of American Sisters and Nuns* (Huntington, Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor, Inc., 1994), 460-63. See also Patricia Wittberg, *The Rise and Fall of Catholic Religious Orders: A Social Movement Perspective* (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1994), 2.

revolution of the 1960s—a decade that included the deep change and tumult let loose by the Second Vatican Council.

But there were also influences specific to American Catholicism, most notably the influx of millions of Asian and Hispanic Catholic immigrants since the 1960s, who had neither a strong cadre of “secular” (not belonging to an order) priests nor the rich variety of orders that accompanied the Irish, German, Italian, and other European Catholic immigrants of the nineteenth century. The Mormons did not escape from larger historical forces—the Church has progressed since 1945 from a white American church to a multi-ethnic international church—but its institutional structure and the commitment of its adherents have remained strong.

In contrast, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints since 1960 has seen the greatest membership growth in its history. Mormon women have been indispensable in forming Mormon conscience, personality, and loyalty, usually with little recognition and only limited resources. They have borne the second largest number of children per family in the United States and nurtured them without servants or additional wives. Moreover, despite consistent discouragement from the pulpit, an increasing number of Mormon women also work outside the home in occupations ranging from blue-collar to professional.<sup>53</sup> I am unaware of any studies of the stresses created by these triple burdens, but they must be significant.

Scholarly attention to women’s status in Mormonism has largely focused on formal equality for women, mainly in Church organizations and family structures. Although such attention is important, I believe that it overlooks the even more important and even less visible noninstitutional contributions of Mormon women. Chief among these is their empowering of Mormon men, not only as

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<sup>53</sup>The number of Mormon wives who work outside the home is not known, but demographers suggest that it approaches the rate for non-Mormon married women. Strangely, the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* does not provide statistics on Mormon women in the labor force in its otherwise fine demographic articles but rather supplies figures on Mormon opposition to women working (higher than any other religious group). On the other hand, Mormon women are more likely to graduate from colleges and graduate schools than Catholic and Protestant women. Stephen J. Bahr, “Social Characteristics,” *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 4 vols. (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1991) 1373-75.

Church executives (there are no unmarried General Authorities, area authorities, stake presidents, or bishops except for the widowed) but also in their professions. I refer to the well-known fact that Mormon men have achieved more notably in the sciences and in all other scholarly fields (measured as a group) than non-Mormon men.<sup>54</sup> At least one cause, I hypothesize, is that wives release time for their husbands, who thus have more scope to flourish in their professions.

It is a cliché in the history of Christian religions that the majority of really active members are women. But Mormon women have been far more than active; they have been indispensable. They have been the basic builders of Mormon power. Joseph Smith's doctrinal revelations made women's role as creators of Mormon power possible. The crucial teachings came in his meeting with the Female Relief Society of Nauvoo in March and April 1842. On 30 March, Smith stated that he was "going to make of the [Relief] Society a kingdom of priests as in Enoch's day—as in Paul's day." On 28 April 1842, he announced that "the keys of the kingdom are about to be given to them that they may detect everything false, as well as to the Elders."<sup>55</sup> The possession of "keys" provided no power other than that manifested in the women's organizations (which is consid-

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<sup>54</sup>Kenneth R. Hardy, "Social Origins of American Scientists and Scholars," *Science* 185 (9 August 1974): 497-506. Among the fifty states, Utah ranks first in biological sciences and first in all fields combined. These statistics were gathered before large in-migrations of non-Mormons to the state diluted Mormon rankings. But Hardy's study is based on solid data for the positively identified religious affiliation of over 200 subjects. It is not an extrapolation from place of residence. See David H. Bailey, "Mediocrity, Materialism, and Mormonism," *Sunstone* 13 (October 1989): 9-11. Bailey cites the unpublished manuscript of H. Bruce Higley, "A Summary of Surveys Administered to BYU Freshmen through the Cooperative Institutional Research Program" (Office of Institutional Studies, BYU, June 1988), reporting that the number of BYU freshmen who chose "being very well off financially" above "developing a meaningful philosophy of life" doubled between 1971 and 1986.

<sup>55</sup>As quoted in D. Michael Quinn, "Mormon Women Have Had the Priesthood Since 1843," in *Women and Authority: Re-emerging Mormon Feminism* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992), 365-66. Quinn gives multiple locations for microfilms of these sensitive minutes (386, n. 4). See also Linda King Newell, "The Historical Relationship of Mormon Women and the Priesthood," *ibid.*, 23-27.

erable, despite its strict male supervision and limitation), until feminists of the 1970s began seeing in this history a source of personal empowerment, a direct connection with God. The patriarchal ethic of the Church does not currently recognize this source of women's status in the Church; and Elder Dallin H. Oaks summarily announced in the Relief Society's sesquicentennial year: "No priesthood keys were delivered to the Relief Society."<sup>56</sup>

Thus, to the male hierarchy, the claim of keys is seen as a threat rather than as an extension of Joseph Smith's injunction of women to fulfill themselves.<sup>57</sup> I do not wish to join the Mormons' historiographical battle about Mormon women and priesthood authority; but from my perspective, a moderate feminism will only cement the already firm loyalty of educated women to the Church, a loyalty that the Church can ill afford to lose.

Joseph Smith also sanctioned and encouraged Mormon women to seek education. A revelation to Emma Smith encouraged her to give her time "to writing, and to learning much" (D&C 25:8). The Mormon Church, unlike other churches, has benefited directly from the high proportion of college-educated women in child-rearing, Church music, art, service, and religious education. But one has the sense that many women with graduate degrees cannot fulfill the promise of those degrees: they are too busy "making saints."

True, the history of frontier living, polygamy, and nineteenth-century suffragism provides a backdrop, although frequently muted, of Mormon women who broke out of gender-role expectations to perform many traditionally male tasks. Between 1844 and about 1900, women in plural marriages often had to fend for themselves. Husbands frequently served missions and, at home, had to divide time and money among more than one wife, forcing wives toward economic self-sufficiency. This toil and responsibility was in addition to familial and religious duties. Mormon women became politically active early, spearheaded the suffrage movement in the West, and

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<sup>56</sup>Dallin H. Oaks, "The Relief Society and the Church," *Ensign*, May 1992, 36.

<sup>57</sup>Quinn cites the growing fear, even misogyny, of the male priesthood officers after the early 1880s as a motive for denying full authority to women. Quinn, "Mormon Women Have Had the Priesthood," 379-80.

were among the first to run for a state legislative seat (Martha Hughes Cannon, M.D., in 1895).<sup>58</sup> Educated Mormons are only beginning to recognize the extension of Mormon consciousness in the work of best-selling writers like Terry Tempest Williams, of distinguished academics like Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, and the outstanding work of many writers, editors, and journalists like Peggy Fletcher Stack, Emma Lou Thayne, Phyllis Barber, and others.<sup>59</sup> Mormon magazines, books, and encyclopedias have safely celebrated suffragettes like Eliza R. Snow and Emmeline B. Wells but not these later heroines.

It may be that the Mormon doctrine of an eternal family—husband, wife (or wives), and children together even after death—imposes structural limitations that mean the Church will never bestow the formal equality of priesthood ordination on its women. Jan Shipps, a leading historian of Mormonism, argues that insistence on rigid gender differentiation provides “a clear theological line of separation between Mormonism and traditional forms of Christianity. . . . Gender differentiation for time and eternity is a necessary prerequisite for celestial marriage, a concept crucial to LDS soteriology. Perhaps more than anything else, aside from the Book of Mormon and the Joseph Smith Story, this difference gives Mormonism its theological distinctiveness.”<sup>60</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The *Church News* trumpets each new landmark of growth as the rolling stone of Daniel’s vision. Typical is a recent headline announcing that Brazil is the second foreign country to achieve more one

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<sup>58</sup>Arrington and Bitton, *The Mormon Experience*, 230.

<sup>59</sup>Terry Tempest Williams, *Refuge: An Unnatural History of Family and Place* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1991); Ulrich won the Bancroft Prize, the Joan Kelly and John H. Dunning Prizes of the American Historical Association, the Pulitzer Prize for History, and the MacArthur Award for her brilliant and imaginative study, *A Midwife’s Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard, Based on Her Diary, 1785-1812* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1990). The first Mormon woman ever to become a full professor at Harvard University (1995), she was banned from participating in the BYU Women’s Conference in 1993.

<sup>60</sup>Shipps, “Making Saints,” 78.

hundred stakes.<sup>61</sup> But Mormon power lies not in its numbers, whether of members, missions, temples, or chapels. Rather it lies in society's construction of Mormonism as an icon that embodies still-cherished social myths and in Mormonism's ability to create shared ideas and institutions in the minds and hearts of its members. Although many join the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints for social, economic, familial, and other reasons, and although many who enter leave (the Church does not disclose current activity rates), for those who stay, surely the role of personal spirituality confirming the rightness of their choice and strengthening their institutional commitment is an important—perhaps the most important—factor. Any sociological, anthropological, or historical analysis that does not recognize the essentially *religious* nature of Mormonism's appeal—conversion, commitment, belief, renewal, and devotion—is surely deficient.

My study of Mormonism and my fascination with its appeal lie in my deep nostalgia for my lost world of belief in Catholicism and in my sorrow for the American public's loss of commitment to formal, organized religion. The social consequences of that loss of commitment are a loss of moral power, a weakening of family coherence, an increase in vandalism and the abuse of women, a disrespect for persons of great virtue in our history, and the disappearance of heroes and heroines whom young people can emulate. Of course, some things have gotten better, most notably the status of women and African Americans. But inequalities of class and wealth have gotten worse.

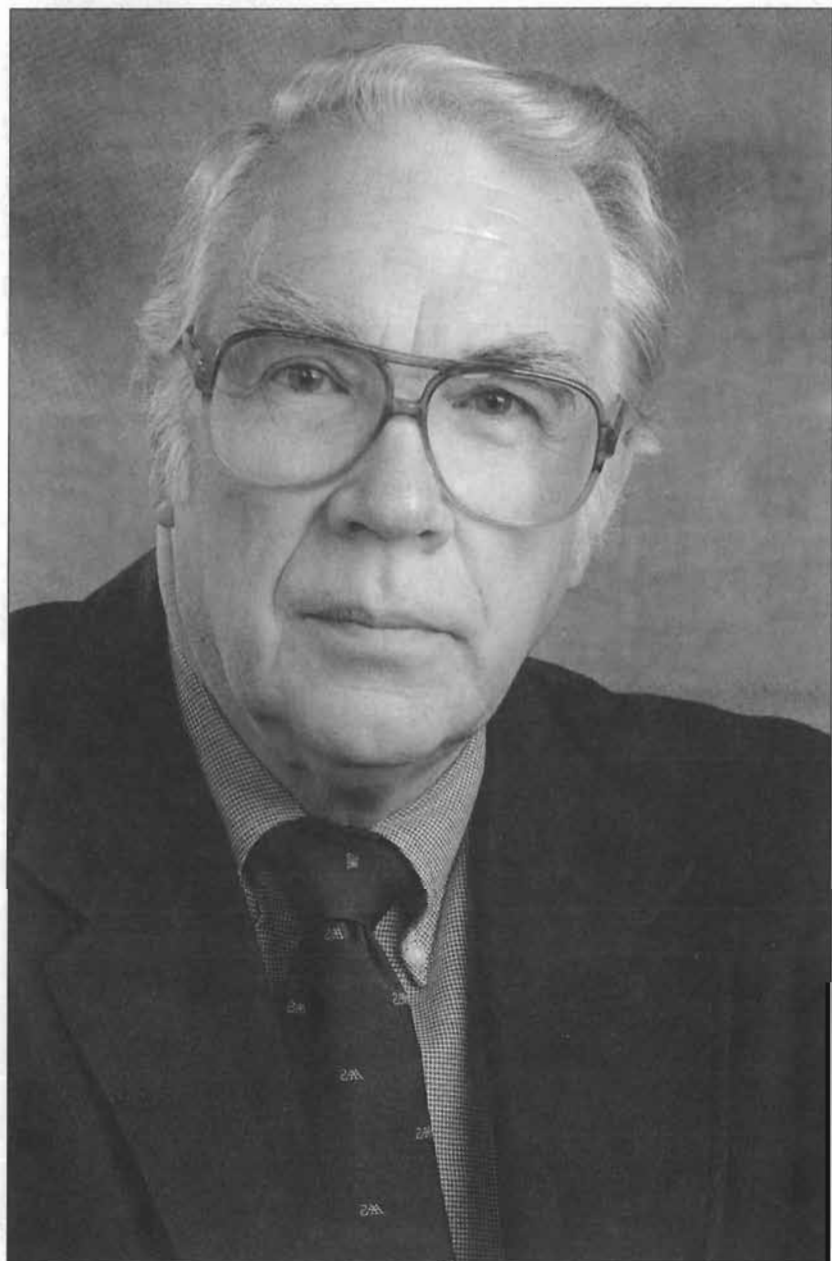
In this social, economic, and moral morass, Mormonism has emerged as a shining success, while other Christian religions, including my own, have faltered. Mormonism seems to have gotten something right. But while I admire Mormon success, I cannot believe in the rightness of some doctrines and practices which seem to be a permanent part of Mormonism.

Who shall define America? It will not be Mormonism alone. But the remarkable history of the Latter-day Saints since 1945 tells me that their voices will be significant in answering that question.

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<sup>61</sup>"Brazil Is Third Country to Have 100 Stakes," *Church News*, 19 February 1994, 3. At that point, the U.S. had 1,171 stakes, Mexico 126, and Brazil 104.





*D. W. Meinig*



# The Mormon Nation and the American Empire

*D. W. Meinig*

## Introduction

I remember Obert Tanner from my years in Utah, and it is gratifying to partake of one of his many philanthropies. Despite the obvious honor conferred, however, I responded to the invitation to give the Tanner Lecture with considerable hesitation. I can hardly presume to inform this expert audience much about Mormons and Mormonism. Thirty years ago, as an historical geographer specializing on the American West, and drawing upon my years of experience in Utah, I set forth my view of the creation and the character of a very prominent and distinctive Mormon Culture Region.<sup>1</sup> I think I may

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<sup>1</sup>D. W. Meinig, "The Mormon Culture Region: Strategies and Patterns in

fairly claim that my essay did fix that region upon the map of American human geography, but I have little to add directly to that topic—being content to leave emendations and updating to such meticulous scholars as my good friend Lowell “Ben” Bennion.<sup>2</sup>

For the last fifteen years I have been attempting to apply a geographical perspective to the whole course of Euro-American history, from Columbus onward to our own times.<sup>3</sup> No one, of course, can be comprehensive in such a task, and I have explicitly limited my range of topics. A central theme of that work is that the United States has been, always and at once, an empire, a nation, a federation, and a set of regional societies. Such terms refer to elusive formations and conceptions continually under construction and alteration; none of these are fixed entities and they are interlocked in countless ways. I hope that by looking at the Mormon experience within that kind of framework I can perhaps offer something useful to your well-informed views of Mormon history. You will recognize how dependent I am on the good work of Mormon scholars.

### AMERICAN IMPERIALISM

When I speak of the United States as an empire—an imperial power—I am not engaging in a polemic or an attack. I use *empire* and *imperialism* in a generic geopolitical sense to refer to the aggressive encroachment of one people and power upon the territory of another and the subjugation of that territory and people to some degree of control by the stronger power. Imperialism in that sense is as old as history; it has been a basic activity of all strong powers; it is one of the great processes that has formed our world.<sup>4</sup> In such

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the Geography of the American West, 1847–1964,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 55 (June 1965): 191–200.

<sup>2</sup>Lowell C. “Ben” Bennion, “Meinig’s ‘Mormon Culture Region’ Revisited,” *Historical Geography* 24, nos. 1 and 2, (1995): 22–33.

<sup>3</sup>D. W. Meinig, *The Shaping of America: A Geographical Perspective on 500 Years of History*. Volume 1, *Atlantic America, 1492–1800* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986); Volume 2, *Continental America, 1800–1867* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).

<sup>4</sup>The following remarks on the nature of geography and imperialism are amplified in D. W. Meinig, “Geographical Analysis of Imperial Expansion,” in *Period and Place: Research Methods in Historical Geography*, edited by Alan R. H.

terms the United States has been a huge, expansive imperial power since its formation. Half the territory then claimed as its sovereign realm was unconquered Indian country that it clearly intended to subdue and incorporate into the body of the Republic, and it wasted no time in getting underway with that task. As many of you know, this view is becoming more common, an overdue corrective to the long-standing interpretation that an imperial America emerged only at the end of the nineteenth century with the annexation of the Philippines and Puerto Rico—*overseas* colonies—as if the subjugation of “other” peoples and their territories were something new to the American experience. By that date, however, we already had a great array of conquered, captive peoples within our national bounds.

Native American groups were at first legally defined as “resident foreign nations.” Shoved aside from areas most desired by the whites, their early reserves were types of *protectorates*, a simple form of imperial relationship wherein the subordination of the weaker people is formalized by treaty but they are left largely to themselves so long as they pose no threat to the interests of the empire. The term refers to the promise of protection from external enemies in return for recognition of the exclusive supremacy of the imperial power. But relentless American expansionism brought changes in status and relationships. By the 1830s Native Americans were redefined as “domestic dependent nations” and found themselves increasingly marginalized and manipulated. A policy of *reduction and dependence* increasingly transformed reservations into areas of confinement administered by federal agents, with tribal members sustained by rations of goods from an imperial bureaucracy. The Cherokees of the southern Appalachians made a bold attempt to escape such pressures, undertaking their own systematic program of cultural change so as to qualify for statehood. Such an entity would have been a type of *indigenous state*, that is, a formal territory under “native” rulers, living under some degree of customary law and limited oversight by imperial authority.

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Baker and Mark Billinge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 71-78; and D. W. Meinig, “Territorial Strategies Applied to Captive Peoples,” in *Ideology and Landscape in Historical Perspective*, edited by Alan R. H. Baker and Gideon Biger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 125-36.

As we know, no such “ethnic” state was created and the hapless Cherokees were forced to take part in a new radical imperial program conceived on a grand scale: the removal of virtually all Native Americans from the eastern states to a large new Indian Territory on the margins of the Great Plains. Therein each tribe was assigned a reserve, with a federal agent and a set of specialists for technical assistance (farmers, millers, blacksmiths, etc.) and cultural change (teachers and missionaries). The geopolitical future of this large entity was controversial. Initial congressional proposals included a capital town, a general Indian council, delegates to Congress, and eventual statehood, the tribal areas becoming mere counties. The removal was carried out quite ruthlessly during the 1830s and 1840s, affecting some 100,000 Native Americans and with much loss of life. But the rest of the program was compromised, and American settler expansion soon overwhelmed the reserved area, reducing it to a remnant in what is now eastern Oklahoma. An attempt to create a predominantly Native American state out of that remainder (State of Sequoyah) was rejected in 1906.

The American intolerance of ethnic identity in territorial terms reached a peak in 1887 (a date Mormons well know) with the Dawes Act, which forced Native Americans to accept individual parcels of private property, allow the remainder of their lands to be taken by whites, and submit to a comprehensive program of cultural change involving the removal of children from their parents to federal boarding schools and systematic suppression of Native American languages, religious ceremonies, and marriage practices. For nearly fifty years thereafter, Native American reservations were regarded as “schools for ‘civilization’” aiming to destroy “tribalism” and convert Native Americans into individual American citizens conforming to the national norm.

It is still uncommon for historians to give much attention to the fact that with the acquisition of Louisiana we not only doubled our sovereign territory but we also purchased a large set of peoples. Typical of imperial powers, no one in Paris or Washington gave much thought to the feelings of the French, who occupied the key area Jefferson had set out to acquire by whatever means. Typically, they were subjected immediately to *direct rule*: that is, placed under an American governor, with the imposition of language, laws, courts, and other U.S. institutions. The confident expectation was

that this new French-American minority would be easily assimilated into the encompassing Anglo-American nation. But these French had other ideas. They naturally resented a governor who could neither speak nor read French, rejected American laws so at variance with their own esteemed code, and resisted interference with the patterns of their social relations (such as the status of slaves and of black Creoles). Moreover, French refugees from Cuba and Haiti soon enhanced their numbers and leadership.

Jefferson's geopolitical response was *minoration*, a favored technique of imperial management. It involved flooding the annexed area with Anglo-Americans to reduce the captive French to a minority in their own homeland without direct diminution or deportations. Thus, he defined a Territory of Orleans with ample room for Anglo colonizations and this, together with the annexation of parishes from West Florida, soon made this Louisiana a more balanced bicultural territory. When admitted as a state, the French civil code, the use of the French language in certain proceedings, and the need for Anglo-French cooperation in government had been recognized. New Orleans, with new, quite sharply distinct ethnic districts, became a typical "colonial city," a common imperial type.

New Mexico was a clear case of a captive territory and several peoples under direct military rule, with garrisons in the main towns. The first civilian Anglo governor was assassinated by rebellious Taoseños. The treaty of annexation of 1848 declared that New Mexico would be admitted as a state "at the proper time"—that is, when Congress might agree to do so; an 1850 New Mexican initiative toward statehood failed. Unlike Louisiana, New Mexico was a long way from the Anglo-American settlement frontier and had no discernible resources at the time to lure large numbers of American colonists. The Pueblo Indians, a settled, reclusive agricultural population, were quickly confirmed in their village lands, following Mexican practice—a simple kind of protectorate (and they were later excused from the Dawes Plan). It was immediately clear, however, that Americans did not regard the much larger captive Hispanic population as fit to become full-fledged citizens. In the vivid newspaper language of the day, New Mexicans were a "mongrel population . . . unfit for statehood" until they had been "Americanized." Imperial agents periodically reported on such progress. As a terri-

torial attorney (and later acting governor) reported in 1857:

There is a decided improvement in the style of dress and mode of living; they wear a greater quantity of American goods, and tea, coffee, and sugar are becoming more common in use among the peasantry. Many are dispensing with the *serape* (blanket) as an every-day garment . . . buckskin is giving way to woolen and cotton goods, and moccasins to leather shoes. There is also an improvement in the mode of building.<sup>5</sup>

This last sentence referred to the diminished use of adobe. In a parting shot to the New Mexicans in 1880, General William Tecumseh Sherman said: "I hope ten years hence there won't be an adobe house in the Territory. I want to see you learn to make them of brick, with slanting roofs. Yankees don't like flat roofs, nor roofs of dirt."<sup>6</sup> Such were the relentless pressures of American imperialism. Captive peoples must be made over into proper progressive Americans, not just in allegiance, laws, and language but in dress and diet, in tools and trade ("You must get rid of your burros and goats," said Sherman), and in habits and habitations, if they were ever to become "respectable citizens." It would take sixty-four years, the influx of many Americans following the arrival of the railroad (which created a whole string of classic imperial bicultural old town–new town, Hispano-Anglo pairs as at Albuquerque), and Anglo control of most of the resources, before statehood was achieved. Even then, the imperial power was forced to recognize the basic integrity of this Hispanic population with specified safeguards of language, religion, and schools; a working relationship between Hispano and Anglo has characterized local politics ever since. New Mexico, therefore, began as a kind of quasi-indigenous state.

I trust I have demonstrated this view of the United States as an empire. I have noted half a dozen classic types of imperial territories and policies for the geopolitical management of captive peoples: protectorates, indigenous states, direct rule, minoration, reduction and dependency, relocation and programmed accultura-

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<sup>5</sup>W. W. H. David, *El Gringo; or, New Mexico and Her People* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1857), 255, 431-32.

<sup>6</sup>Quoted in Thomas E. Chavez, *An Illustrated History of New Mexico* (Niwot: University Press of Colorado, 1992), 125.

tion. It would take too long to trace further responses to imperial pressures. Suffice it to say that all of these peoples have resisted assimilation and have made various adaptations to survive today as distinct ethnic groups. The greatest policy change was that affecting the Native Americans, whereby the formal program for cultural conformity and assimilation was ended in the 1930s and increases in tribal autonomy granted. Clinging tenaciously to their bit of tribal ground and to their status as peoples with treaty relations with the United States, Native Americans have won much greater recognition and respect. Reservations are no longer regarded as anomalies on the geopolitical map of America. Some of them, like the Navajo reservation, which is the homeland of 200,000 people, have become virtually "indigenous states," with their own local governments, police forces, law courts, school systems, and much more.

### NATION-BUILDING

Before considering how the imperial power dealt with the Mormon nation, we may consider the pertinence of and some processes associated with the term *nation*. I define a nation to be a body of persons who see themselves as a distinct people, bound together by a common heritage, set apart by their own special character, and laying claim to a particular homeland. Nationalism can, of course, be contrived out of whatever characteristics and experiences lie at hand; that sense of common heritage need not be deep rooted nor anchored firmly on the facts of history. And, of course, the strength of national feelings may wax and wane under changing circumstances. In many cases, however, we can see the emergence of nationalism as a more or less common process, involving the role of leaders fostering an emotive self-awareness, a collective sense of grievance, a struggle for greater independence, and phases of organization, purification, and contention with internal and external "others."

Nation-building is necessarily a geographic phenomenon; it arises out of particular localities, generates fields of activity that tend to focus and crystallize in some area of special advantage, and forms the basic nucleus of the nation from which expansion extends outward toward the aspired bounds of the idealized homeland.<sup>7</sup> Within the national area, spatial systems of communication

are elaborated, serving ever-more effectively as the means of integrating various regional parts with the nuclear area and the capital city.

As a religious movement, Mormonism offered a clear identity and distinction to its followers, and its combination of centralized leadership and lay priesthood provided strong cohesion. But the really unusual and critical feature of Mormonism—from the perspective employed here—is its basic concern for place, for a homeland, its declaration of the special role and favor of North America in its essential heritage, and its search for a specific geographic nucleus for the kingdom of God on earth. Mormonism was more than a holy scripture and a set of beliefs; it was work to be done *together*, as a society gathered to a special place. Thus we can see Kirtland, Independence, Far West, and Nauvoo as successive attempts to bring vigorous fields of activity into focus on a particular ground, to form the nucleus of a Mormon homeland.

And it was the special Mormon concept of that homeland—of Zion—that generated conflict with other peoples. The fundamental issue was geopolitical: the control of territory and of the character of society therein. Although Missourians disparaged Mormons as a “singular set of pretended Christians,” their aggressive response to the Mormons was not simply an expression of endemic religious bigotry.<sup>8</sup> If to the Mormons the concept of *Zion* resonated with the heady prospect of building the kingdom of God on earth, for others in the area it seemed to sound the death knell of American society as they knew it. As Mormons arrived in rapidly increasing numbers and not only bought all the land they could but proclaimed themselves a chosen people who were destined to “possess the country” for their New Jerusalem, the Missourians countered with the declaration that “every consideration of self-preservation, good society, public morals, and the fair prospects . . . that await this young and beautiful country” required their expulsion.

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<sup>7</sup>See, for example, Meinig, “Generalizations: Nation-Building,” in *Atlantic America*, 395-407.

<sup>8</sup>This quotation and those below are taken from 1833 accounts reprinted in William Mulder and A. Russell Mortensen, eds., *Among the Mormons: Historic Accounts by Contemporary Observers* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1958), 82, 79.



Add to this vital contest over turf some of the well-known social tendencies of these particular contestants: the moralistic, self-righteous Yankee fervent for his uncompromising views and the fiercely independent upland Southern frontiersman ready to run roughshod over anyone who stood in his way; add, further, the militant response of beleaguered Mormon "warrior-saints,"<sup>9</sup> quite as willing as their opponents to take the law into their own hands to protect family and property; and still further, add on the larger state, regional, and national politics of this collision—the politics and emotions of slavery and of party and sectional interests—and the bitterness and fervor of this civil strife become understandable. But, again, the fundamental issue was *geopolitical*. The assertion of a divine right to all Palestine by militant Zionist settlers on the West Bank today is more than just an apt modern analogy; it is the modern expression of the original concept that the Mormons had adopted, transferring it from the Old World to the New.

We have already noted that, despite the reality of an American empire, there was always resolute opposition to the creation or formal recognition of any kind of ethnic territorial unit. It is hardly a surprise that ordinary Americans demonstrated that they would not tolerate a militant, gathered, expansionist subnation claiming absolute control over its members and proclaiming itself as the nucleus and vanguard of a theocratic empire.

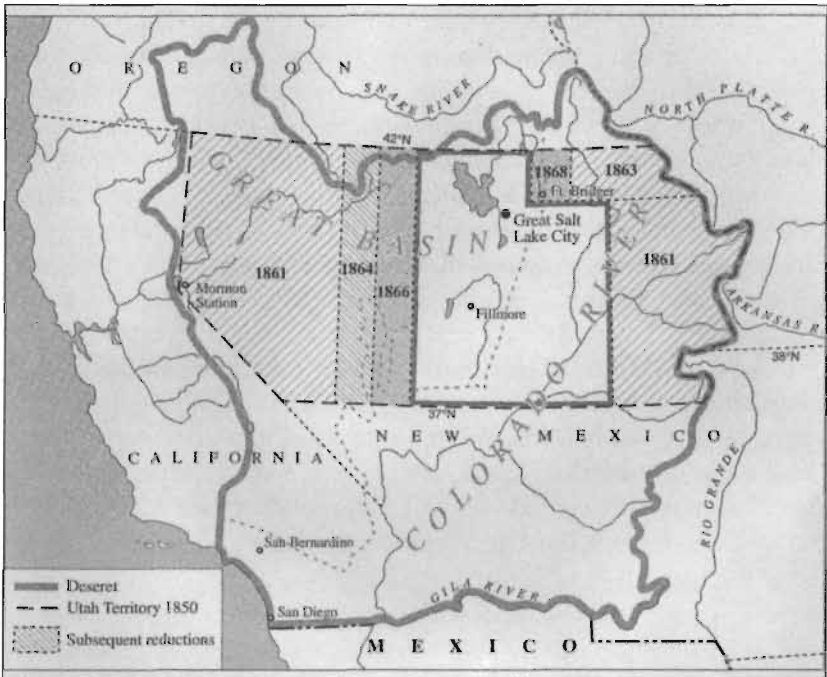
For the Mormons, there followed from this encounter the very kinds of experiences and reactions best calculated to form a cohesive nation: defeat, displacement, martyrdom, and alienation; a testing, a winnowing, and an emergence of new charismatic leadership; a shared history, a sense of grievance, a people apart, and a determination to transform exile into nationhood.

### CREATING THE MORMON NATION

I need not review with this audience these well-known lamentations, exodus, and eventual triumph in a Promised Land except to summarize the peculiar conditions, principles, and processes of this

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<sup>9</sup>Nathan O. Hatch, "Mormon and Methodist: Popular Religion in the Crucible of the Free Market," *Journal of Mormon History* 20 (Spring 1994): 42.



*Map 1. State of Deseret, 1848, and subsequent reductions, 1850-68. Syracuse University Cartographic Laboratory.*

geographic creation. In broadest terms, this implantation in the Far West was peculiar in that the Mormons gained access to a huge area without competition from other American settlers and with little hindrance from local Native Americans. They were thus able to apply an orderly system of colonization under centralized Church authority essentially unrestrained by United States laws and, in a word, initiate a nation-state essentially on their own terms.

The first task was to establish the nucleus along the Wasatch Front, overlooking the New World version of the Galilee-River Jordan-Dead Sea. Brigham Young placed this New Jerusalem within the frame of a vast American Israel. His Deseret encompassed the Great Basin, the Colorado River Basin, and a corridor to the Pacific; and he sought to control the key portals and passageways: Fort Bridger, San Bernardino, and Mormon Station in Carson Valley. (See Map 1.) Assiduous attention to the practicalities of the gather-

ing, bringing in thousands of members every year, sustained a program of contiguous expansion outward from the Wasatch oasis, filling in every habitable, irrigable spot to create an ever-enlarging, thoroughly Mormon region. Within that region specialized projects were initiated to supply the Mormon nation with such essential goods as iron, coal, lead, cotton, and sugar. In addition, the Church sponsored or approved the development of basic facilities and services, such as a bank, newspaper, the ZCMI system, roads, railroads, and telegraph lines. Furthermore, the life of the Church generated great periodic pulsations of messages and movements of persons throbbing through a hierarchical network of places anchored on Temple Square. President Young's great seasonal processions through the northern settlements and then through the southern were only the most famous of these; the routine movements of many lesser agents were equally important in binding this motley lot of mountain Saints together as a united people—the very essence of nation-building

Over a span of forty years, the Mormons had created a distinctive region, a landscape imprinted with their own designs, a society knit together by their own spatial systems, which stretched more than six hundred miles from the lower Virgin Valley on the south to the upper Snake River on the north and which contained some 170,000 Mormons. (See Map 2.) There were, as well, Mormon settlements beyond these bounds, especially southward, a thin sprinkling in northern, central, and southern Arizona. But this proved to be a sector of Deseret that could not be dominated, at least for the time being; and it resulted in tiny enclaves within Gentile ranching, farming, and mining country: outposts in Babylon rather than frontiers of Zion.

Whereas most Americans sat lightly upon the land, ready to sell out and move on at the slightest opportunity or disappointment—as the many streams of migrants filling up all the other regions of the West well displayed—the Mormons had taken firm root; for them it was the end of a search, a culmination; and the date of their entry into the Promised Land became their principal holiday and commemorative celebration. Thus the Mormon region took on a human geographic quality unlike anything in surrounding areas. It was a homeland in a much more profound sense, with a homogeneity, unity, order, and self-consciousness unequalled in any other



North American region and rivaled only by that other peculiar self-conscious captive nation of North America along the lower St. Lawrence.

### IMPERIAL PRESSURES

From initial colonization through every annual intake from eastern America and northwestern Europe, the creation of this great refugee commonwealth represented a continuous process of withdrawal from an outer world. But of course that withdrawal was never actually complete, and the Mormon nation was never actually independent, however much it may have aspired or prepared to be. The great geographical irony of Mormon history was the fact that hardly had the Mormons begun the creation of their new homeland in the remote wilderness when they found themselves astride the transcontinental thoroughfare, thronged with the very people they had fled and enclosed within the imperial bounds of the republic that had failed to accommodate and protect them.

With the rejection of Deseret and the formation in its place of the Territory of Utah, the Mormons were a captive people and province, and imperial pressures were soon asserted. Even though Brigham Young was the first governor (and Deseret did in fact function for two years), federal officials sent out from Washington, seeing themselves up against a monolithic Mormonism, soon generated a stream of accusations. You are more familiar than I am with much of the subsequent history, but a review of a sequence of imperial attempts to force subservience and conformity upon a recalcitrant people might prove helpful.

The dispatch of an army to put down a reported rebellion elicited in response a remarkable display of cohesion of the threatened people in their open harassment of that invading force, and, more astounding, in their massive evacuation of their capital and richest settlement area, and in the threat of scorched-earth tactics, the extreme nationalism of the rhetoric of that crisis making the modern reader think of an impending Mormon Masada!<sup>10</sup> In the

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<sup>10</sup>See for example, Richard D. Poll and William P. MacKinnon, "Causes of the Utah War Reconsidered," *Journal of Mormon History* 20 (Spring 1994): 42.

compromise that followed, the imperial power imposed its governor and its garrison; but the former could assert little power over the people, and the latter was marginalized, fifty miles from the capital.

A few years later came the reassertion of imperial coercion under Colonel Patrick E. Connor: the establishment of Fort Douglas overlooking the “native” capital and the colonel’s assiduous fostering of opposition to this stubborn people in various forms, most effectively in his encouragement of prospectors to comb the area for gold and silver. His favored solution to this problem of imperial management was exactly the same as Jefferson’s for Louisiana: “My policy in this Territory,” Connor wrote, “has been to invite a large Gentile and loyal population sufficient by peaceful means and through the ballot-box to overwhelm the Mormons by mere force of numbers, and thus wrest from the church—disloyal and traitorous to the core—the absolute and tyrannical control of temporal and civic affairs, or at least a population numerous enough to put a check on Mormon affairs.”<sup>11</sup>

But such a policy of minoration could not easily be applied as the Mormons were rapidly taking possession of all the suitable lands. Whereas Jefferson had created an enlarged territory in Louisiana to accommodate a large Anglo-American influx, Congress, responding to pleas of non-Mormon residents in bordering areas, repeatedly reduced the broad bounds of Utah Territory. (See Map 1.) Such excisions did not impinge seriously upon the body of contiguous Mormon settlements, but there were attempts to do so. In 1861 a bill in Congress proposed an extinction of Utah, splitting it in half and giving the pieces to Nevada and a proposed Jeffersonia (later Colorado). In 1869 the chairman of the Committee on Territories stated his wish “to blot out the [Utah] Territory” as a step toward disposing of the Mormon question, and his committee produced a bill drastically reducing Utah so “that they shall not have territorial area enough left to make a state.”<sup>12</sup> These further reductions were not enacted, but they display the kind of territorial punishment that

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<sup>11</sup>Quoted in Howard Roberts Lamar, *The Far Southwest 1846–1912: A Territorial History* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1970), 361.

<sup>12</sup>Committee on Territories, *Congressional Globe*, 40th Congress, 3rd Session, 14 January 1869, 364.

imperial powers are prepared to inflict.

More effective and fundamental, of course, was the influx of Gentiles, not just as imperial agents but as residents, workers, and businessmen, with their families. They created their own settlements with the railroad towns and mining camps scattered over the Mormon region, most heavily in the mountainous fringes of the Mormon core area. These smoking, volatile, ramshackle camps injected into the bucolic Mormon scene an unprecedented and unassimilable variety of creeds, tongues, and ethnic backgrounds. Furthermore, this influx transformed the two largest Mormon settlements, Salt Lake City and Ogden, into bicultural cities, for they became the primary commercial centers for the entire Intermountain West. Aside from Mormon temples or an occasional Lion House palace, there was little difference in architectures. The result, therefore, was not so vivid in the landscape as in the old town—new town pairs in New Mexico, but a Mormon-Gentile duality apparent to residents and visitors alike. “The railroad traveller gets a very wrong impression of Ogden,” noted one reporter. “He sees nothing but the Gentile part of town, the stations of the U.P. and C.P. railroads, their offices and engine houses, and a dozen or two shanties occupied as restaurants, grog shops, and gambling houses.”<sup>13</sup> Actually more important were the banks, mercantile buildings, wholesaling houses, hospitals, churches, and residences, all discernibly clustered in some degree. The continuing growth of the Gentile population and facilities during the railroad era meant a continuing erosion of Mormon homogeneity and dominance in the very core of their homeland. Ogden was the first Utah city to elect a Gentile mayor.

The culmination of imperial pressures, of course, came with the Edmunds-Tucker Act of 1887, characterized by historian Howard Lamar as “one of the most far-reaching pieces of federal legislation ever passed in peacetime history.”<sup>14</sup> (In view of our general imperial context, a Native American historian might well refer to the Dawes Act of that fateful, dreadful year in the same terms.)

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<sup>13</sup>An 1874 traveler quoted in Richard C. Roberts, “Railroad Depots in Ogden: Microcosm of a Community,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 53 (Winter 1985): 76.

<sup>14</sup>Lamar, *The Far Southwest*, 398.

Setting federal marshals in pursuit of the polygamous Mormon leadership and dissolving the LDS Church as a corporate entity, the act was a display of imperial legislative power against members of the Union equaled only by some of the proposals and laws applied to the South twenty years earlier. Reconstruction applied to the South was, of course, an imperial process and, not surprisingly, Southern congressmen tended to strongly oppose this coercion of the Mormons.

The long-standing refusal to admit Utah to statehood, the assault upon social nonconformity and theocratic political power, reconfirmed the basic United States refusal to accept geopolitical territories defined essentially in ethnic or religious terms. Throughout this period Native American reservations were regarded as a necessary anomaly, a temporary measure grudgingly sustained until tribal cultures could be dissolved and Native Americans transformed into individual citizens. To many Americans, Mormonism's centralized authority and bloc-voting represented a species of "tribal culture" that similarly had to be broken up.

### FROM "PECULIAR" TO "MAINSTREAM"

With the Church's capitulation in 1890 to this imperial assault began the process of calculated adaptation to the encompassing geopolitical reality. The Mormon nation could be no more than a subnation, and even that status posed difficult adjustments. This great crisis coincided with essentially an end to expansion, for the Mormons were running out of land as well as time. Hemmed in by vigorous colonizations by other peoples on all sides, they simply found no more lands suitable for settlement nor would there be any until federal irrigation projects began to make big deserts "blossom as the rose" during the twentieth century. Although Mormons continued to have large families and missionary efforts went on unabated, the number of converts lessened significantly and the summons to Zion, heretofore virtually a command, was much subdued.<sup>15</sup> "Respecting the gathering," commented a *Millennial Star*

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<sup>15</sup>J. Matthew Shumway, "Membership Growth by States and Countries," *Historical Atlas of Mormonism*, edited by S. Kent Brown, Donald Q. Cannon, and Richard H. Jackson (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), 122, observes that the



editorial in 1891, “the elders should explain the principle when occasion arises; but acting upon it should be left entirely to the individual.”<sup>16</sup> As Bill Mulder notes, this statement marked “a startling transition from the days when the clarion call was to redeem the faithful and bring them singing to Zion.”

On the other hand, the Utah economy was expanding in other ways under the initiatives of both peoples. In the early 1880s the Church had abandoned its boycott of Gentile merchants; and the formation in 1887 of a Chamber of Commerce and Board of Trade that included both Mormons and Gentiles marked an “important indication of change in the character of the leadership in Salt Lake City.”<sup>17</sup> Mormon entrepreneurs and workers fanned out over the West to compete for jobs in construction, mining, forestry, and transport; the Church itself fostered new businesses.

Mormonism remained militant about its own strength and cohesion, giving special attention to training and teaching the faithful, founding Church academies to counter increasingly secularized state school systems. Eventually, of course, came the alternative to the gathering, with Church resources organized to serve the faithful wherever they might reside. Of special interest to a geographer is the belated decision in mid-century to imprint the landscape—not just in their mountain homeland but wherever a cluster of Mormons resided—with distinctive, standardized meetinghouse architecture. As Jan Shipps notes in the final entry in the new *Historical Atlas of Mormonism*, this was “a brilliant decision” with respect to Mormon identity in the world and for themselves: “The very fact that these clearly identifiable LDS structures could be found in town after town, and suburb after suburb cultivated among the Saints what might be called a Zion sense, making the very LDS meetinghouses themselves agents of assimilation and signals that wherever the Saints gather, there Zion is.”<sup>18</sup>

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annual growth rate between 1900 and 1950 was “2.2 percent, approximately one-half of the 4-percent growth rate during the previous half century.”

<sup>16</sup>William Mulder, *Homeward to Zion: The Mormon Migration from Scandinavia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1957), 30.

<sup>17</sup>Thomas G. Alexander and James B. Allen, *Mormons & Gentiles: A History of Salt Lake City* (Boulder, Colo.: Pruett Publishing, 1984), 105.

But as we all know, the really remarkable response was the gradual but unrelenting shift in image with respect to the larger society. Mormons changed themselves from a peculiar people into model Americans with resounding success. As Nathan O. Hatch, Tanner Lecturer two years ago, said: "Mormon life today is a bastion of respectability, of staid family values, and of rock-ribbed Republican conservatism." He was, as you know, emphasizing the stark contrast with early Mormonism. ". . . As a people, Latter-day Saints are overwhelmingly patriotic and hard-working, the very embodiment of middle-class values, the Protestant work ethic, and the American way of life. No religious group in America today seems more in harmony with the spirit of free-enterprise capitalism."<sup>19</sup> For a geographer's confirmation of this assessment, I recommend John B. Wright's book-length comparison of Utah and Colorado in his recent, prize-winning *Rocky Mountain Divide*.<sup>20</sup> It is not quite as simple as that, of course, and the tensions between "the angel and the beehive" are never quite stable, but that is beyond my explorations.<sup>21</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Thus Mormon nationalism has passed through several phases. For years it was openly separatist, seeking isolation and cultural integrity with the least possible affiliation with the United States and welcoming independence should that fragile federal union fail, as Brigham Young's annual convening of the so-called "ghost legislature of Deseret,"<sup>22</sup> initiated in 1862 and terminating in 1870, at-

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<sup>18</sup>Jan Shippo, "Emergence of Mormonism on the American Landscape," in *Historical Atlas of Mormonism*, edited by S. Kent Brown, Donald Q. Cannon, and Richard H. Jackson (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994), 152.

<sup>19</sup>Hatch, "Mormon and Methodist," 37.

<sup>20</sup>John B. Wright, *Rocky Mountain Divide: Selling and Saving the West* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993).

<sup>21</sup>Armand L. Mauss, *The Angel and the Beehive: The Mormon Struggle with Assimilation* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994).

<sup>22</sup>Klaus J. Hansen, *Quest for Empire: The Political Kingdom of God and the Council of Fifty in Mormon History* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1967), 167.

tested. When that possibility ended, Mormon petitions for statehood were regarded, as before, as a means of maximizing local autonomy: Mormons desired "to join the United States in order to be free from it," as Leonard Arrington put it, referring to Brigham Young's forthright statement shortly before his death: "All we care about is for them to let us alone, to keep away their trash and officers so far as possible, to give us our admission into the Union just as we are, just as we have applied for it as near as may be to let us take care of ourselves, and they can keep their money, their lands and in fact everything which they can."<sup>23</sup>

In our imperial terms, the Mormons sought to be an *indigenous state*; and early on, under Young as governor, they were essentially that, a "native state" left largely to govern itself. But such a nation-state so at variance with the national norms in its marriage practices and its theocratic operations was increasingly regarded as dangerous to the larger society, and so the empire insisted on *direct rule* and eventually on a coerced conformity.

The twentieth-century response of the Church shows that it has not only extracted itself from the American empire with Utah becoming a common member of the American federation, but it has also remade and repositioned itself to be an exemplary regional society of national significance. The geopolitical way for them to do so was opened long ago when, after being driven from Missouri, Joseph Smith had proclaimed "the whole of America is Zion itself."<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Leonard J. Arrington, *Brigham Young: American Moses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), 238.

<sup>24</sup>Quoted in Robert Bruce Flanders, *Nauvoo: Kingdom on the Mississippi* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1965), 298.

# Labor and the Construction of the Logan Temple, 1877-1884

*Noel A. Carmack*

*With cheerful hearts and willing hands,  
We'll labour for the just demands,  
Our God now makes on Europe's lands,  
His Temple for to rear.*<sup>1</sup>

On 22 December 1877, Ralph Smith, Logan Temple quarry foreman, recorded the completion of his duties for the season. Now he could attend to his responsibilities in the fields and as counselor in the bishopric. All of his duties as supervisor of quarry operations, foundation excavation, road maintenance, and lime vat installations were temporarily postponed, "having taken all times of those employed on the Block and rendered them to the Temple Clerk James A L[e]ishman at the Tithing office."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>M. A. Morton, "With cheerful Hearts, &c," in *Sacred Hymns and Spiritual Songs, for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (London and Liverpool: LDS Booksellers Depot, 1856), #308.

<sup>2</sup>Ralph Smith, Journal, 22 December 1877, 25, holograph, Special Collections and Archives, Merrill Library, Utah State University, Logan, Utah.

Of the relatively few labor records of nineteenth-century Utah, none are more amply preserved than those of the Logan Temple construction. They consist of 127 small time books containing the number and names of laborers, their places of residence, wages, type of work, and the number of days worked. These various titled notebooks include: Franklin Quarry (4 books); Green Canyon Quarry (11 books); Hyde Park Quarry (3 books); Lime Kiln (6 books); Saw Mill (24 books); Wood Camp (9 books); Temple block (63 books); and John Parry's Stone Cutters on the Temple Block (7 books). Other contributions in-kind were listed in various accounts contained in the temple ledger books, consisting of five volumes covering the years 1877-86.<sup>3</sup>

They provide a remarkable source for the study of the Mormon labor force prior to widespread mechanization. The time books list task-oriented wages, such as rock and sand hauling at 80 cents per ton, lime hauling at 8 cents per bushel, and wood hauling at \$2.50 per cord, thus indicating the importance of individual output. Hence, the time books are an invaluable source for the measurement of labor and the laboring classes in a Mormon community during economic transition.

Approximately 25,000 individuals participated in the building of the Logan Temple during its seven years of construction, with between 60 and 125 laborers working at a time. At the start of construction, localized skilled labor, including masons, carpenters, and sawyers, was supported primarily with food and board by wards and stakes. In the ensuing years, however, compensatory

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<sup>3</sup>Melvin A. Larkin, "The History of the L.D.S. Temple in Logan, Utah," (M.S. thesis, Utah State University, 1954), 178. At the time of Larkin's thesis research in 1953, he had full access to the official records of the Logan Temple and its construction. Since that time, temple records held at the Historical Department Archives of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter LDS Church Archives), including the Logan Temple time books, are no longer accessible to scholars. The three time books used in this study were given to the Special Collections, Merrill Library, Utah State University, by a private donor in 1991. They include: Logan Temple Block, Book 6, 6 October-24 November 1877; Logan Temple [Green Canyon] Quarry Camp, Book 6, 12 May-28 December 1878; "Names of Persons who have helped cleaning and Sewing &c in Logan Temple," 14 March-24 May 1884, in "Time Book 1884 and Rock Hauling a/c." These three time books have been added to the sum of Larkin's inventory.

wages in the form of goods and services had to be balanced with a cash incentive when skilled labor was needed. For example, Melvin Larkin has estimated that over 50 percent of the 1880 work force was paid monetary wages. Over time, the proportion of hired labor to donated labor expanded to attract more competent laborers from the labor market. Near the end of construction in 1883 and 1884, the percentage of wage earners increased to as high as 60 percent. By offering competitive market wages, district representatives could lure into employment the most experienced and skilled hands available for the temple-building effort.<sup>4</sup>

Their achievement was the Logan Temple, still the finest architectural creation in northern Utah. An unusual blend of castellated Gothic Revival and French Renaissance styles, the temple was designed by inspiration of Brigham Young and the pen of Truman O. Angell, temple architect. Long before the first soil was turned, a northern Utah temple district had been organized under Young's direction, comprised of Cache, Box Elder, and Rich counties. The nine-acre temple site was chosen by President Young and dedicated by the prayer of Orson Pratt on 17 May 1877. Charles Ora Card, a well-respected sawmill operator, was appointed superintendent of construction on 21 May 1877. The walls and masonry were supported by twenty-eight buttresses to strengthen the building throughout. The dark-colored, siliceous limestone used in the bulk of masonry work was taken from the Hyde Park and Green Canyon quarries. Light buff sandstone for water tables and tower caps was obtained from Franklin Quarry farther to the north. Lumber for the temple was felled and cut in nearby Logan Canyon at the specially established Temple Fork Sawmill. After a seven-year labor effort, the temple was dedicated on 17 May 1884 by President John Taylor. At completion, the temple measured 171 feet long, 95 feet wide, and 86 feet high at the square. The east tower, measuring 170 feet in height, stood above the west tower of 165 feet and four minor octagonal towers crowned with battlements at 100 feet.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Larkin, "History of the Temple in Logan," 32-33.

<sup>5</sup>"The Logan Temple," *Utah Journal* [supplement], 17 May 1884; Leonard J. Arrington and Melvin A. Larkin, "The Logan Tabernacle and Temple," *Utah*



*The squarely built but handsomely ornamented Logan Tabernacle with, to the left, the Logan Temple under construction, ca. August 1880. Courtesy of Special Collections and Archives, Merrill Library, Utah State University; original in possession of the Daughters of Utah Pioneers Museum, Logan.*

Since dedication, the temple has experienced several changes and renovations. The most extensive period of renovation took

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Historical Quarterly 41 (Summer 1973): 305-10. See also Nolan P. Olsen, *Logan Temple: The First 100 Years* (Logan, Utah: Nolan P. Olsen, 1978).

place from 1976 to 1979, when the interior was gutted and restructured to expand its original 59,130 square footage to 115,507 square feet. It was rededicated on 13 March 1979 by President Spencer W. Kimball. In more than 110 years of operation, the Logan Temple has served thousands of patrons in their sacred work.<sup>6</sup>

In Mormon theology, temples occupied a central position as the literal "house of the Lord" where revelation could be received and where members, through a system of covenants, could be endowed with "power from on high." It was the literal creation of sacred space within the community. Each individual could become part of building the kingdom on earth. Individual stewardship, consecration of time, talent, and means, and cooperative efforts could redeem fallen humankind, build the City of Zion, and prepare the earth for Christ's second coming.<sup>7</sup> The temple, then, epitomized a culmination of ingenuity, hard work, spiritual and temporal oneness, and a common ideal. As Laurel B. Andrew has written, "The people who built the Utah temples optimistically anticipated the perpetual improvement of mankind throughout eternity, abolition of inequalities, just rewards, and sharing of wealth."<sup>8</sup>

### THE CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC CONTEXT

Constructing the temple required Cache Valley farmers to divide their time between farming and contributing labor at the temple block. This division of compressed labor time between

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<sup>6</sup>See Olsen, *Logan Temple*, 216-61; Logan Temple Presidency, *The Logan Temple, 1884* (Logan, Utah: Logan Temple Presidency, 1976); S. George Ellsworth and Craig Law, *The Logan Temple* [commemorative booklet] (Logan, Utah: Logan Temple Commemoration Committee; The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1984).

<sup>7</sup>Klaus Hansen, *Quest for Empire: The Political Kingdom of God and the Council of Fifty in Mormon History* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1967); J. Keith Melville, "Brigham Young's Ideal Society: The Kingdom of God," *BYU Studies* 5 (Autumn 1962): 3-18; Timothy L. Taggart, "The Kingdom of God in Early Cache Valley," in *Cache Valley: Essays on Her Past and People*, edited by Douglas D. Alder (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1976), 13-27.

<sup>8</sup>Laurel B. Andrew, *The Early Temples of the Mormons: The Architecture of the Millennial Kingdom in the American West* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1978), 196.



agriculture and industry often accompanied “the rapid growth of traditionally organized but market-oriented, principally rural industry” that characterized proto-industrialization, the first phase of industrialization.<sup>9</sup> As social historian E. P. Thompson has written, the time and circumstances of the transitional period are set by “the whole culture,” which “includes the systems of power, property-relations, religious institutions, etc., inattention to which merely flattens phenomenon and trivializes analysis.”<sup>10</sup>

Many cultural factors motivated the Mormon economy to expand into the national market between 1869 and 1880. They included not only systems of power, property relations, and religion, but also the influx of immigrants and the rise of rural economy.<sup>11</sup> It is within this “whole culture” that Logan Temple labor must be examined.

From the time Brigham Young announced the organization of a northern Utah temple district in 1876, the Saints in Logan made remarkable contributions of time and resources for the construction of the temple. The year following the announcement, local Church authorities collected initial pledges of \$2,200 in cash, \$1,600 in merchandise, \$8,200 in produce, and \$25,000 in labor. Every year for the next seven years, Cache Valley residents contributed about \$70,000 in eggs, honey, wheat, vegetables, books, bed coverings, and many other items. Additional contributions came from Saints in England, Switzerland, New Zealand, and other Mormon settlements in the United States. The total cost of the temple at its completion was estimated at \$607,000. Of that amount, \$380,000, or 63 percent, was in labor.<sup>12</sup> According to Mendon pioneer Isaac Sorensen, the

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<sup>9</sup>Franklin F. Mendels, “Proto-industrialization: The First Phase of the Industrialization Process,” *Journal of Economic History* 32 (March 1972): 241. See also Eric Jones, “The Agricultural Origins of Industry,” *Past and Present* 40 (July 1968): 58-71.

<sup>10</sup>E. P. Thompson, *Customs in Common: Studies in Traditional Popular Culture* (New York: New Press, 1993), 382.

<sup>11</sup>See Leonard J. Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom: An Economic History of the Latter-day Saints* (1958; reprinted Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press/Tanner Trust Fund, 1993), esp. chaps. 7 and 8.

<sup>12</sup>Melvin A. Larkin, “Financing the Building of the Logan Temple,” *Proceedings and Papers of the Cache Valley Historical Society*, Vol. 3, 1953-54, [10 April

laborers “took much pleasure in all this work.” They esteemed donating supplies and working in person as “the principle business outside the usual labor.”<sup>13</sup>

Cache Valley in the 1870s was well irrigated and fertile, a moderately settled network of farms and villages. In 1873 and 1875, Logan, Wellsville, Benson, and Clarkston produced high yields of grain, corn, vegetables, and sorghum as well as large quantities of dairy products, which they shipped as far as San Francisco and Montana to be sold in the mining districts.<sup>14</sup> Until the completion of the Utah and Northern Railroad in 1881, the Montana freight route traversed Cache Valley, providing employment, commercial trade for farmers, and a ready outlet.<sup>15</sup>

Like much of the rest of Utah, Cache Valley’s population included a large percentage of converts from England, Scotland, and Scandinavia. In both 1870 and 1880, Cache Valley’s population was about 37 percent foreign-born. Charles Hatch’s recent examination of Cache County population pyramids reveals that the foreign-born population contained mostly older, adult-age groups.<sup>16</sup> For example,

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1954], 59-86, typescript, Special Collections, Merrill Library; Arrington and Larkin, “The Logan Tabernacle and Temple,” 308-9.

<sup>13</sup>Isaac Sorensen, “History of Isaac Sorensen” 1880, [1903], 82, photocopy of holograph, Special Collections, Merrill Library; and Isaac Sorensen, *Isaac Sorensen’s History of Mendon: A Pioneer Chronicle of a Mormon Settlement*, edited by Doran J. Baker, Charles S. Peterson, and Gene A. Ware (Logan: Cache County Historical Preservation Commission, 1988), 86-87.

<sup>14</sup>Leonard J. Arrington and Linda Wilcox, “From Subsistence to Golden Age: Cache Valley Agriculture, 1859-1900,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 57 (Fall 1989): 340-69; Joel E. Ricks and Everett L. Cooley, eds., *The History of a Valley, Utah-Idaho* (Logan: Cache Valley Centennial Commission, 1956), 140-55.

<sup>15</sup>William Peterson, “History of Roads and Freightling in Cache Valley,” *Proceedings and Papers of the Cache Valley Historical Society*, Volume 3, 1953-54, [25 November 1953], typescript, Special Collections, Merrill Library; Betty M. Madsen and Brigham D. Madsen, *North to Montana: Jehus, Bullwhackers, and Mule Skinners on the Montana Trail* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1980); Brigham D. Madsen, “The Diamond R Rolls Out,” *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 21 (Spring 1971): 2-17; Henry Pickering Walker, *The Wagonmasters: High Plains Freightling from the Earliest Days of the Santa Fe Trail to 1880* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1966), 218-26; Donald N. Wells and Merle W. Wells, “The Oneida Toll Road Controversy, 1864-1880,” *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 58 (June 1957): 113-25.

in 1870, out of 1,185 heads of household, 497 (30.7 percent) were English. Their median age was 38.7. By 1880, the number of English-native heads of households had risen to 598 (26.6 percent) out of 2,249, with median age of 44.8. Danish heads of household numbered 232 (14.4 percent) in 1870, with a median age of 40.0, and rose to 351 (15.6 percent) in 1880 with a median age of 45.6.<sup>17</sup> These numbers are consistent with the larger pattern of Utah's foreign-born population.<sup>18</sup> On the basis of these proportions, it is reasonable to assume that a majority of the adult labor force was foreign-born.

Household wealth depended significantly on when the head of household immigrated and how long he had participated in the economy. Such would have been the case for Cache Valley, considering it sustained a sizable foreign population, as did the rest of Utah's settlement regions. Analysis of 1850 and 1870 census data indicate that twenty years proved sufficient for the distribution of wealth to converge with the conventional pattern of inequality.<sup>19</sup> Evidently, Utah followed a typical pattern of prosperity and poverty as prime land was brought into production first while the value of

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<sup>16</sup>Charles M. Hatch, "Creating Ethnicity in the Hydraulic Village of the Mormon West" (M.S. thesis, Utah State University, 1991), 30-68, esp. Table 1, p. 44.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid. See also Dean L. May, "A Demographic Portrait of the Mormons, 1830-1980," in *After 150 Years: The Latter-day Saints in Sesquicentennial Perspective*, edited by Thomas G. Alexander and Jessie L. Embry, Charles Redd Monographs in Western History, No. 13 (Provo, Utah: Charles Redd Center for Western Studies, Brigham Young University, 1983), 59-64, esp. Graphs 4 and 5, pp. 62-63. A revised version of this article without the graphs and tables is in D. Michael Quinn, ed., *The New Mormon History: Revisionist Essays on the Past* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992), 121-35.

<sup>18</sup>Lee L. Bean, Geraldine P. Mimeau, and Douglas L. Anderson, *Fertility Change on the American Frontier: Adaption and Innovation*, Studies in Demography, No. 5 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 143-44, esp. Table 21, p. 143.

<sup>19</sup>J. R. Kearl, Clayne L. Pope, and Larry T. Wimmer, "Household Wealth in a Settlement Economy: Utah, 1850-1870," *Journal of Economic History* 40 (September 1980): 477-96; Lee Soltow and Dean L. May, "The Distribution of Mormon Wealth and Income in 1857," *Explorations in Economic History* 16 (1979): 151-62.

marginal lands diminished. As improved land appreciated and information was accumulated, early settlers increased their individual resource value, thus tipping the scale of wealth.<sup>20</sup>

Despite this pattern of inequality, Utah managed to avoid the staggering Long Depression between 1873 and 1879. Because Utah institutions did not rely on financing from eastern banks it was partially shielded from this economic downturn.<sup>21</sup> Leonard Arrington also hypothesizes that “regional church programs and policies” may have mitigated the depression’s effects.<sup>22</sup>

Although labor unions were active during the 1870s nationally, organized labor in Utah before the coming of the railroad in 1869 was largely confined to a visibly active printer’s union, known as the Typographical Association of Deseret, Local No. 115, chartered on 3 August 1868. An 1874 assembly of craftsmen and mechanics, headed by Mormons, non-Mormons, and Godbeites, drew up resolutions against a wage-cutting policy that Brigham Young proposed,

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<sup>20</sup>Kearl, Pope, and Wimmer, “Household Wealth,” 479-80.

<sup>21</sup>See Samuel Bernstein, “American Labor in the Long Depression, 1873-1878,” *Science and Society* 20 (Winter 1956): 59-83; Samuel Resneck, “Distress, Relief, and Discontent in the United States During the Depression of 1873-1878,” *Journal of Political Economy* 58 (December 1950): 494-512; Rendigs Fels, “American Business Cycles, 1865-79,” *American Economic Review* 41 (June 1951): 325-49. Levi Savage, a young sawmill worker at a mill east of Kamas, Summit County, in 1873, gives a poignant vignette of how the depression could affect Utahns. His diary for 30 September 1873 reports that “Bro John Taylor . . . reports a great financial crisis, and breaking of banks and other branches of business, through the eastern states. It has reached Utah. His debtors fail to pay him as they formerly agreed and seeing his condition he came to let us know that he could not keep us employed any longer.” He offered the mill on shares to the workmen, but they, having “some cash engagements which they wish to fill,” rejected the offer in hopes of finding jobs elsewhere. Charles S. Peterson, ed., “Book A—Levi Mathers Savage: The Look of Utah in 1873,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 41 (Winter 1973): 20. See also Leonard J. Arrington, Feramorz Y. Fox, and Dean L. May, *Building the City of God: Community and Cooperation Among the Mormons*, 2nd ed. rev. (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 136-37.

<sup>22</sup>Leonard J. Arrington, “The Mormon Tithing House: A Frontier Business Institution,” *Business History Review* 28 (March 1954): 32. See also Thomas R. Wessel, “Agricultural Depression and the West, 1870-1900,” in *The American West: As Seen by Europeans and Americans*, edited by Rob Kroes, European Contributions to American Studies, No. 16 (Amsterdam: Free University Press, 1989), 72-80.

but loyalty to the faith on the part of the Mormons and apathy on the part of others made the effort short-lived. A few Utah trade groups had banners or slogans that made reference to a "union" or "united" organization, but they seem to have been drawn primarily from religious, rather than political ideas.<sup>23</sup>

By 1879 the Church had introduced an experimental system of commerce called Zion's Central Board of Trade. Instituted by John Taylor, successor to Brigham Young, the board was intended to supplant the failed United Orders by regulating interactions with the national economy. Moses Thatcher, apostle and manager of the Logan Cooperative Mercantile Institution, had instituted a Cache Valley Board of Trade as early as 1872. Article 9 of the Central Board's preamble stated that among its purposes was "to foster capital and protect labor, uniting them as friends rather than dividing them as enemies." Arrington has argued, however, that "labor, as such, was given no representation on Zion's Board of Trade," saying, "Utah was not yet sufficiently industrialized to have a laboring class."<sup>24</sup> Cache Valley laborers, however, made at least two efforts at what must be considered organized labor. An attempt to organize a union in connection with a newly organized Logan Mining District was initiated in April 1871 but soon failed because the miners, the majority of whom were non-Mormons, determined to be self-governing, independent of Church intervention, and abandoned an effort at arbitration to avoid a prolonged dispute.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>On labor in the United States and Utah, see David R. Roediger and Philip S. Foner, *Our Own Time: A History of American Labor and the Working Day*, Contributions in Labor Studies, No. 3 (New York: Greenwood Press, 1989), 119; J. Kenneth Davies, "The Secularization of the Utah Labor Movement," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 45 (Spring 1977): 117-20; and J. Kenneth Davies, "Utah Labor before Statehood," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 34 (Summer 1966): 202-17. The Godbeites were a spiritualist group with a liberal social and political agenda organized in 1870, made up of primarily Mormon dissenters and headed by William Godbe.

<sup>24</sup>Leonard J. Arrington, "Zion's Board of Trade: A Third United Order," *Western Humanities Review* 5 (Winter 1950-51): 1-20. See also Arrington, Fox, and May, *Building the City of God*, 212-13.

<sup>25</sup>"Logan," *Deseret News*, 5 April 1871, 105; "Mining Matters in Cache Valley," *Salt Lake Daily Tribune*, 19 April 1871, 2. Until the time of Brigham Young's reorganization of the Aaronic priesthood in 1877, labor disagreements were

In 1878, when the rest of the nation was taken up with the improvement of wages and working conditions, Cache Valley laborers expressed a similar concern for an equitable working environment. On 21 April 1878, Thomas K. Smith stood before the high priests quorum of the Cache Valley Stake and “made remarks upon the principle of equality and the regulation of labour and the employment of the young and able so that they may earn a living for themselves and their Parents and those they should help to sustain.” George Farrell, quorum president, agreed, adding his own “remarks upon the working class with instructions upon the same.”<sup>26</sup> According to Moses Thatcher, when the Utah Northern Railroad proposed an extension to Montana that year, Cache Valley laborers “worked in union” and chose an “Agent” to represent them in negotiating contracts for grading.<sup>27</sup> The agent in this case was Marriner W. Merrill who was later called as the first Logan Temple president after serving as counselor to Cache Stake president William B. Preston from the time of the stake reorganization in 1879. As the “Agent” or “moderator” between Cache Valley laborers and the railroad company, Merrill negotiated fair wages for the workers while receiving a modest compensation for his services. The balance of contract profits went “to aid the building of the Temple.”<sup>28</sup>

In the case of the temple construction, laborers viewed the project as religious—part of “building up Zion”—and demonstrated

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moderated by the ward teachers quorum of each ward. William G. Hartley, “Ordained and Acting Teachers in the Lesser Priesthood, 1851-1883,” *BYU Studies* 16 (Spring 1976): 375-98, esp. 381-83. See also D. D. Lum, *Social Problems of Today; or, the Mormon Question in Its Economic Aspects: A Study of Co-operation and Arbitration in Mormondom, from the Standpoint of a Wage-worker* (Port Jervis, N.Y.: D. D. Lum and Co., 1886), 28-33.

<sup>26</sup>Minute Book, Cache Valley Stake High Priests Quorum, 1859-83, 21 April 1878, holograph, Samuel Roskelley Collection, Special Collections, Merrill Library.

<sup>27</sup>Moses Thatcher, Journal, 29 December 1878, 27, photocopy of holograph, Special Collections, Merrill Library.

<sup>28</sup>Charles W. Nibley, Letter to editor, 14 July 1879, “Abstract of Correspondence,” *Millennial Star* 41 (4 August 1879): 491-92; Melvin Clarence Merrill, *Utah Pioneer and Apostle: Marriner Wood Merrill and His Family* (Washington, D.C.: Melvin Clarence Merrill, 1937), 65-66; Andrew Jenson, *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia*, 4 vols. (Salt Lake City: Andrew Jenson History Company, 1901), 1:159-60.

little concern about wages. Not surprisingly, there is no evidence that organized labor played any part in determining wages or working conditions in the construction of the Logan Temple. This attitude is captured by John Widmer, a young Swiss immigrant who worked at the temple sawmill where lumber was cut, dried, and hauled to the temple block for use in construction. He revered the idea of a temple, treated his work as sacred, and could not understand the apparent "lack of sympathy" of some fellow workers:

When he was performing menial tasks around the camp and stables he ever treasured in his heart the fact that he was helping to build a temple. At one time when he was in town he bought a lithograph of an artist's conception of what the Logan Temple was to look like when finished. He took the picture with him to the canyon and showed it to some of the men who had scoffed at his broken English and his love of religion. They seemed to take a small share in his aspirations from that time forth.<sup>29</sup>

On another occasion, Charles O. Card, temple construction superintendent, addressed the workers during one of his daily visits to the temple quarry "upon the necessity of schooling themselves in the principles of the Gospel by passing their spare moments in reading the scriptures ancient and modern and obtaining testimony of the truth of the Gospel."<sup>30</sup> The temple project transcended what would ordinarily be the secular work of the stonemason or carpenter; faithfulness and reverence meant that the worker would be "blessed" and "protected" during his labors.<sup>31</sup>

Extraordinary escapes from injury or death were often associated with otherworldly intervention. For example, on 31 September 1879, Hugh McKay of Willard survived a forty-eight-foot fall from scaffolding while engaged in masonry work on the southeast corner of the temple. His brush with death and rapid recovery were reported by the *Logan Leader* which reasoned that "how he escaped

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<sup>29</sup>Marion Everton, "History of Logan Temple Is Retold," *Herald Journal* (Logan), 26 May 1934, 4. Everton serialized a history of the Logan Temple in the *Herald Journal* between 5 August 1933 and 27 November 1937.

<sup>30</sup>Charles O. Card, Diary, 10 January 1878, microfilm, Special Collections, Merrill Library.

<sup>31</sup>Orson Pratt, "Prayer," 18 May 1877, *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (London and Liverpool: LDS Booksellers Depot, 1855-86), 19:30-33; George Q. Cannon, 8 May 1871, *ibid.*, 14:122-29.

being dashed to pieces, except through the direct interposition of providence, is certainly unaccountable.”<sup>32</sup> In 1882 John G. Parker of Liberty was hauling logs for the temple mill in Logan Canyon when he was knocked off the front of his heavy load. Dragged between his oxen and sled for nearly twenty-five yards in the snow, he managed to call the cattle to a stop. With a fractured arm and multiple bruises, Parker then made his way to the mill where he found a team and traveled to Logan for help. “It is impossible to tell why Parker was not killed,” the *Journal* reported. “How he got under the sled without being crushed is very strange.”<sup>33</sup> Two other men escaped serious injury and death in 1883 when a scaffold which had been erected in the northwest tower gave way. Plasterers John W. Knowles of Logan and Julius Smith of Brigham City tumbled through forty-five to fifty-three feet of crashing timbers and planks before completing the fall of some eighty feet to the ground. According to the published account, the relatively slight cuts and bruises they sustained were “remarkable.” “Thus was answered again,” Marion Everton later wrote, “the prayer of Orson Pratt that workmen on the temple should be protected from fatal accident.”<sup>34</sup>

Unfortunately, such protection was not universal. The temple construction reports tell of workers who never fully recovered from mishaps and a few who perished in their temple labor efforts. Innumerable accidents occurred as a result of adverse weather and working conditions. The sawmill, wood camp, and three rock quarries remained in operation throughout the winter despite storms and freezing, as the combination of numbed hands and edged tools created dangerous hazards.<sup>35</sup> Card reported once seeing “a small snowslide moving down the mountain” on his way home from the temple mill.<sup>36</sup> During the early thaw of 1879, seven men were buried under an avalanche while clearing the canyon road, and only five

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<sup>32</sup>*Logan Leader*, 2 October 1879, as quoted by Marion Everton, in “Miraculous Escape,” *Herald Journal*, 20 October 1934, 4.

<sup>33</sup>“Remarkable Escape,” *Utah Journal*, 22 December 1882, 3.

<sup>34</sup>“Accident at the Temple,” *Utah Journal*, 15 August 1883, 3; Marion Everton, “Near Tragedy,” *Herald Journal*, 8 August 1936, 6.

<sup>35</sup>“The Temple,” *Logan Leader*, 20 November 1879, 3.

<sup>36</sup>Card, *Diary*, 18 February 1880.



were rescued alive.<sup>37</sup> The following January, Bishop Henry Ballard's diary reveals his apprehension during a dangerous trip for lumber by the level of relief expressed after it was over: "We all reached home safe, and found our families and friends and the community at large had been very anxious watching and praying for our safe return, we all felt very thankfull together that our Lord had so mercialously preserved us from the many dangers that we had been exposed to both seen and unseen."<sup>38</sup> Besides the two snowslide deaths of 1879, one other fatality occurred on the temple block when John Hicks, a thirteen-year-old boy, was crushed in a hay bailer on 12 September 1881.<sup>39</sup>

### LABOR PATTERNS FROM THE TEMPLE BOOKS

The management of temple labor was administered by a well-organized system of committees, consisting of apostles, stake representatives, and ward officers. Each ward within the temple district appointed a committee, usually chaired by the bishop, which was given the responsibility of organizing materials and labor when needed. Leaders appointed from the three stakes in the temple district were given charge over these committees. The Cache Valley Stake leadership was made up of the stake presidency: Moses Thatcher, William B. Preston, and Milton D. Hammond. The Bear Lake Stake was represented by William Budge, James E. Hart, and George Osmond. Bishop Alvin Nichols of Brigham City was appointed to administer the temple activities of the Box Elder Stake. At the top of the administrative structure was the First Presidency, having presiding authority over the Church's temple building projects. The First Presidency appointed three apostles on 11 October 1877 to act as a general temple building committee for the supervi-

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<sup>37</sup>"The Fatal Avalanche," *Logan Leader*, 5 March 1880, 3; Card, Diary, 27 February-2 March 1880; Alfred E. Crookston, "The Temple Saw Mill," typescript (n.p., n.d.), LDS Church Archives.

<sup>38</sup>Henry Ballard, Diary, 13 January 1880, typescript, Special Collections, Merrill Library.

<sup>39</sup>"How It Happened," *Deseret Evening News*, 16 September 1881, 3; Marion Everton, "Hay Bailer," *Herald Journal*, 24 November 1934, 5, and "Boy Loses Life," *Herald Journal*, 14 September 1935, 7.



*Carpenters who made the Logan Temple's bannisters. Front left: Ludwig Ernstrom, Christian Hans Monson, and his son, Joseph Monson. The two men standing are unidentified. Courtesy Calvin Cornia*

sion of all Logan Temple matters. The three apostles who made up this committee were Franklin D. Richards from Ogden, Charles C. Rich of Bear Lake Valley, and Lorenzo Snow of Brigham City.

The temple district and its respective stake representatives provided a means by which needed building materials could be obtained. The district temple building committee would decide upon such matters as the establishment of temple industries, the

amount of capital needed, the quantities of supplies, and the number of laborers as requested by Superintendent Card and various foremen. The general building committee approved all major requests for capital funds and cash to pay wages.<sup>40</sup>

The number of workers employed on the temple project varied, depending on weather and available funds. During mid-August 1877, Card reported that there were "over a hundred workmen engaged in connection with the building, in the various departments, quarrying rock, making roads to timber, getting out timber, burning lime, besides mechanics who are actually at work on the structure."<sup>41</sup> In January 1878, the *Deseret Evening News* reported that "there are at present 80 men and 30 teams engaged upon the work of the Logan Temple, and hands are increasing weekly," while four months later "the apportionment of labor for the Cache Valley Stake . . . is 81 men and 27 teams; for Bear Lake Stake, 28 men and 6 teams; for Boxelder Stake 35 men and 12 teams, making a total of 144 men and 45 teams. In this number are included, masons, carpenters, quarrymen, tenders, teamsters, and lumbermen."<sup>42</sup>

The need most workers had to maintain a farm meant that scheduling was complicated and subject to many outside influences. For example, in May 1877, Ralph Smith's bishop issued him an ecclesiastical calling as foreman of quarry and foundation operations. Smith, however, was "buisey putting on the rafters on my barn" and was concerned about leaving the project half-finished, but Bishop Ballard promised that "if it was needful for me to stay long on the Temple works he would get it covered in, which he had done in good time for my crops to go in."<sup>43</sup> Smith was still hard at work in late November 1877 when Ballard released him as first assistant Sunday School Superintendent in the Logan Second Ward "on account of being his counselor [in the bishopric] and having so

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<sup>40</sup>Larkin, "History of the Temple in Logan," 28-29.

<sup>41</sup>"Logan," *Deseret Evening News*, 23 August 1877, 3.

<sup>42</sup>James A. Leishman, Letter to editors, 23 January 1878, 4; and Letter to editors, 20 May 1878; both in *Deseret Evening News*.

<sup>43</sup>Smith, Journal, 24 May 1877, 22-23; Larkin, "History of the Temple in Logan," 71.

many dutys to attend too." However, only a month later, Smith was released from his temple calling to resume his farming responsibilities and promptly built an addition to his barn.<sup>44</sup>

Samuel Roskelley, a Logan farmer and businessman who was later appointed temple recorder, also found himself juggling time between planting his crop and supervising the temple finish work. After several days of irregular farming, Roskelley enlisted the aid of his three teenage sons, James (nineteen), William (eighteen), and Joseph (sixteen). "I had been requested to fix up the Logan Temple for work," he told them, "and I may never have another opportunity of the kind in my life time and if they would put in the crop to the best of their ability I would attend to the Temple matter and they should be blessed in their labors." At the temple dedication, Roskelley noted that "altho I was almost wore out with working in fixing and preparing the building both for the dedicatory as also for the uses designed when fully completed, I rejoiced much under the influence that prevailed in the building during the exercises."<sup>45</sup>

Wellsville farmer William Poppleton worked at the Green Canyon quarry, and his wife, Annie Hayes Poppleton, cooked for the work crew. His diary records the erratic schedule he maintained for June and July 1877:

Commenced Working in Grean Cannon Quarring Rock for the temple James Perks Poppleton hauled the seckond load of Rock on the temple ground to bild the temple with, Annie Poppleton cooking for the men Stade 2 weeks and then returned to wellsville Stade over Sunday and went back on Monday On Tuesday 19 whent to Logen for A cow. Whent up the canion for ax andles fel and hert my heel Worked all the balance of the week stade in Camp on Sunday James came up on sunday went home again that night whe went home on the 3 of July Came up on the 5 stayed till the 23 went down took sister Worseldine and sister Harres home Spent the 24 in Wellsville Came back on the 25 Left sister Worseldine and sister Haras at the stayton [station]. returned to camp at [?] stayed till 11 of August, went home.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>44</sup>Smith, Journal, 25 November and 24 December 1877, 25, 26.

<sup>45</sup>Samuel Roskelley, Diary, 30 March 1884, holograph, Special Collections, Merrill Library.

<sup>46</sup>William Poppleton, Diary, holograph, 4 June-25 July 1877; original in the possession of Kathyne Poppleton Furhiman, Providence, Utah; Anna Rae Allen

**TABLE 1**  
**AVERAGE DAYS WORKED DURING**  
**6-13 OCTOBER 1877 BY FIFTY LABORERS**

<i>Days worked</i>	<i>Number of Laborers</i>	<i>Percent of Laborers</i>
0-2	9	18
2-3	5	10
3-4	6	12
4-5	7	14
5-6	21	42
6-7	2	4

*Source:* Time Book, Logan Temple Block, Book 6, 1877, Special Collections, Merrill Library.

Table 1, which analyzes the work patterns during one week in October 1877 of fifty temple laborers chosen at random from the full tally of seventy-seven, shows that 18 percent worked two or fewer days, 36 percent worked three or four days, and 46 percent worked between five and seven days.

The problem these farmers were trying to solve was not just the universally familiar problem of trying to be in two places at the same time. The scales of value attached to the two activities were different. First, their farming was "secular" while work on the temple was "sacred." Thus, working on the temple automatically had a higher spiritual value than farming. However, in survival terms, the temple was optional, while farming was not. Second, farming was task-measured while temple work was time-measured. In other words, temple construction required the workers to shift from the

Poppleton, *Ancestral Histories and Pedigrees of Joseph W. Poppleton and Flora Christena Squires* (Wellsville, Utah: Author, 1992), 73.



*Workers who created the oxen for the Logan Temple baptistry and iron railings, ca. 1884. Left: John T. Roberts, Al Jones, John Wilson, John H. Wilson (boy in front), Karl Hendrick Lundberg, his brother Christian Lundberg, Peter Afflect, William Rozy (in rear with hat), John J. Roberts (boy), Gustave Thompson, Rozell Hopkins, Charley Sorenson, Mr. Evanson, George Wagner, and John Carlyle. Courtesy LDS Church Archives*

agrarian model of measuring work time according to the weather, the season, and the amount of work to the careful measurement of time in hourly units. As Thompson has noted, the debate between time- and task-measured work in a changing economy was “largely resolved in favor of weekly wage-labor, supplemented by task-work as occasion arose.”<sup>47</sup> The shifting scales can be seen in the fact that sand and gravel haulers at the temple quarry were typically paid 80 cents per ton, suggesting the task-measured importance of individual output, while parts of a workday were recorded in tenths, indicating that Cache Valley was following the 1880 nationwide

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<sup>47</sup>Thompson, *Customs in Common*, 381; see also Gary Cross, ed., *Worktime and Industrialization: An International History*, Labor and Social Change Series (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988).

average workday of 10.3 hours.<sup>49</sup> To farmers who were used to working from sun-up to sun-down or until a task was finished, the transition to supervised work measured by hours may have been difficult. In contrast, European immigrants from factory towns may have been all too familiar with the hands of a literal clock.

The problem of wages, like that of time, was simultaneously both a spiritual and an economic problem. Brigham Young had announced firmly in 1877 that wages were “out of the question.”<sup>50</sup> However, such a policy was not possible unless the time of construction were left indefinitely open-ended, a solution that Brigham Young also rejected.<sup>51</sup> Since currency was scarce, even during the years of temple construction, Church leaders instituted a board and barter system as an auxiliary exchange.

Temple employment brought relief to individuals struggling to bring home provisions and meet living expenses, even for Christian Jacobsen, a single young schoolteacher from Lewiston. Jacobsen, who was often found doing odd jobs and menial tasks between school terms, found work on the temple block mixing mortar for food and board during his summer break from teaching in 1877. Before the fall school term began on 29 October, Jacobsen slept in the boarding house, at the home of an uncle, and sometimes on the dirt floor of the temple supply shed where the flies often disturbed his sleep. During this difficult time, Jacobsen’s only source of food was the credit he was given from temple construction work or an extra plate at the table of a kind Logan family. On one occasion, he went without. After a couple of sleepless nights without supper, Jacobson obtained a credit voucher for food and was able to return to work on the temple block reinvigorated by a full stomach.<sup>52</sup> But the desperate case of

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<sup>48</sup>Time Book 6, Logan Temple Block, 13 October-24 November 1877, holograph, Special Collections, Merrill Library; Roediger and Foner, *Our Own Time*, x, 123.

<sup>49</sup>Brigham Young, 18 May 1877, *Journal of Discourses*, 19:33.

<sup>50</sup>*Ibid.*, 33-34.

<sup>51</sup>Christian Jacobsen, Diary, 8-12 September 1877, typescript, Special Collections, Merrill Library. According to Charles Peterson, “Jacobsen seemed to belong to no one, nor to any place. He was turned down by a succession of local examining boards—probably with good reason, canvassed the entire Wasatch Front

Christian Jacobsen is one of many that serve to illustrate the importance of labor capital in Cache Valley's early economy. Phil Robinson, an eastern traveler who visited Logan in 1883, observed an indebted English immigrant:

The man before me was in exactly the same position as every other man in Logan. He had been brought out from England at the expense of the Perpetual Emigration Fund (which is maintained partly by the "tithings," chiefly by voluntary donations), and though by his labour he had been able to pay for a lot of ground and to build himself a house, to plant fruit trees, buy a cow, and bring his lot under cultivation, he had not been able to pay off any of the loan of the Church. It stood, therefore, against him at the original sum. But his delinquency distressed him, and "having things comfortable about him," as he said, and time to spare, he came of his own accord to his "Bishop," to ask if he could work off part of his debt. He could not see his way, he said to any real money, but he was anxious to repay the loan, and he came, therefore, to offer all he had—his labour.<sup>53</sup>

Similarly, Isaac Sorensen found himself dependent on Logan Temple work for his immediate temporal welfare after returning from his mission in Denmark. In 1881 he wrote: "I labored much in the Canyon this fall of 81 as I could make 3-4 Dollars a day. I owed a few debts incurred on the mission I paid it with wood there was nothing else to pay it with."<sup>54</sup> Cynthia Elnora Nielson Wight, a pregnant nineteen-year-old housewife from Hyrum whose husband, Joseph M. Wight, worked as sawmill foreman in 1879, also relied on her temple wages for basic domestic needs. After working as a cook at the temple sawmill, she wrote: "I had earned \$70.00 which I spent in buying things to keep house with after paying my tithing."<sup>55</sup>

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on foot as a sewing machine salesman, slept for warmth on the pumis piles of village molasses mills, bathed in streams on Saturdays, did farm work as the opportunity provided, and in near despair, spent lonely profitless winters trapping in a snow camp high in Cache Valley's Porcupine Canyon before he finally located a relatively stable teaching position at the sprawling and raw farming district that became northern Utah's Lewiston." Charles S. Peterson, "The Limits of Learning in Pioneer Utah," *Journal of Mormon History* 10 (1983): 68.

<sup>52</sup>Phil Robinson, *Sinners and Saints* (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1883), 138.

<sup>53</sup>Sorensen, "History of Isaac Sorensen," 90.

<sup>54</sup>Cynthia Elnora Nielson Wight, Journal, 1 September 1879, as quoted in Maxine I. Wight, Letter to Nolan Porter Olsen, 2 June 1979, typescript, Nolan P.



Although Brigham Young's policy of labor as a good-will offering represents a high level of religious idealism, dependance on a cash and commodity base necessitated a more realistic approach. Wages became an essential factor in continuing the building effort. The building committee and superintendent made a list of jobs and skilled tasks, determined the number of men required to work periodically, then apportioned the tasks and worker quotas among the stakes within the temple district stakes "according to their population and distance from the places of labor."<sup>56</sup> The wage scale was determined by the current tithing rate index.<sup>57</sup> At the recommendation of the superintendent, the general temple committee periodically established a cash value for the type of tasks performed or the amount of work output. For example, in March 1880, Card sent the committee a list of sixteen positions, with wages running from \$3.00 to \$1.50 per day.<sup>58</sup> At the top of the pay scale (\$3.00 a day) were foremen, masons, "rough corner dressers," "cut rock settlers," sawyers, and engineers. Carpenters commanded \$2.75 per day. Scaffolders, "wheelers on top," "wheelers on ground" (those who transported rock by wheelbarrow), mortar carriers, stone hoisters, kiln hands, and quarry hands earned \$2.00 a day. Mortar mixers were at the bottom of this pay scale at \$1.50; but of course, this list did not include all of the jobs that needed to be done.

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Olsen Collection, LDS Church Archives.

<sup>55</sup>Larkin, "History of the Temple in Logan," 31. Distance was still a factor in wage and produce rates even until the late nineteenth century when freight was costly for the remote Utah farmer. See Charles B. Spahr, *America's Working People* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1900), 217-18.

<sup>56</sup>Larkin, "History of the Temple in Logan," 33-34. The "tithing rate index" was the indicator of current cash values placed on tithing contributions of labor or gifts in-kind. This little-studied aspect of Church finance raises questions that have not yet been fully addressed. Presumably, the Presiding Bishop periodically determined the values for this index. If so, by what standards were the values determined—by national market rates or by the going rates in the territory? These issues were raised briefly in Lowell C. "Ben" Bennion, "The High Cost of Tithing in Kind and the Campaign to Increase Tithes," paper delivered at the Mormon History Association annual meeting, 21 May 1994, Park City, Utah. See Arrington, "Mormon Tithing House," 37-38, n. 22.

<sup>57</sup>Charles O. Card, Letter to Logan Temple Committee, 5 March 1880, holograph, LDS Church Archives. See also Olsen, *Logan Temple*, 51-53.

Other factors influencing the wage scale included age, sex, and skill, or occupational status of the worker. Based on entries in the time books, women were paid an average of \$1.40 per work day, while children and young people were paid from 50 cents to \$1.00 a day. Teamsters were typically paid \$4.00 a day, even though Card does not even list them. Prior to the increased percentage of monetary wage employment, labor was paid one-third in cash and three-fourths of the balance in commodities; the rest was donated labor. Those who were paid in commodities were furnished board in groceries, meat, and dry goods by their local ward, a system that required complex bookkeeping or constant negotiations about what was fair between a worker and his or her bishop.<sup>59</sup> At the end of the pay period, the worker was given a voucher with which he or she could obtain goods from the bishop's storehouse.

The differential in wages raises the social question of status. Did some individuals acquire more social status on the basis of economic standing? Such a question can be answered by examining the work force in terms of economic structure. The question of variance in using twentieth-century systems of stratification to measure nineteenth-century occupational prestige has led to some ambivalence toward the validity of such comparative approaches. It is therefore traditional to make valuations of occupational prestige based on ratings from census data created by nineteenth-century social historians. However, a more recent study that loaded values of nineteenth- and twentieth-century occupational ratings concludes that historical differences in occupational class hierarchies may be insignificant.<sup>60</sup> Hence, I classified temple laborers in five economic

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<sup>58</sup>Larkin, "History of the Temple in Logan," 33-34; Arrington, "Mormon Tithing House," 34.

<sup>59</sup>Robert M. Hauser, "Occupational Status in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries," *Historical Methods* 15 (Summer 1982): 111-26. Donald Treiman has been considered the leading proponent of comparison in the measurement of occupational prestige. See Donald Treiman, "A Standard Occupational Prestige Scale for Use with Historical Data," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 7 (1976): 283-304, and his *Occupational Prestige in Comparative Perspective* (New York: Academic Press, 1977). A five-group occupational ranking, like the one used in this study and based on a composite rating system, is discussed in Theodore

ranks, using data from the 1870 and 1880 Cache County censuses and nineteenth-century occupational wealth indexes, a system based on work done by Michael Katz. Census information provided the occupation of all enumerated residents of Cache County. Since the time books list the name and place of residence for each temple laborer, occupations could be obtained from the information provided by the censuses. I searched the occupation for each sampled temple laborer and ranked it by classification.<sup>61</sup> The five classes are: professional, white collar, skilled labor, and unskilled labor, with a fifth class of women, youth, and unidentified laborers. In the first category, I included farmers, judges, city mayors, and bishops. White-collar workers included clerks, bookkeepers, and teachers. Individuals classified as skilled labor included carpenters, coopers, railroad workers, millers, stone masons, harness makers, lumbermen, and plasterers. The majority of the fourth classification, unskilled labor, was made up of individuals who reported their occupation simply as "laborer." Women, youths, and unenumerated workers (laborers who could not be found listed in the censuses consulted) made up the fifth classification.

To measure the economic distribution of temple labor, I cross-tabulated these classifications by five groupings of total wealth (real plus personal property), with the first group being the most affluent. I used the Cache Valley tax assessment rolls for 1878 and 1880 to determine the wealth of each individual listed in the sample. Table 2 shows the distribution and derived totals. Although workers of higher economic status comprised but a small portion of the temple labor, more than half of the sample was among the four lower ranks. This distribution is not inconsistent with the composition of occupational percentages in Utah to 1870 and 1880.<sup>62</sup>

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Hershberg et al., "Occupation and Ethnicity in Five Nineteenth-Century Cities: A Collaborative Inquiry," *Historical Methods Newsletter* 7 (1974): 174-216.

<sup>60</sup>This system is indebted to the work of Michael B. Katz, "Occupational Classification in History," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 3 (Summer 1972): 63-88, and to Kearl, Pope, and Wimmer, "Household Wealth in a Settlement Economy."

<sup>61</sup>Leonard J. Arrington, *The Changing Structure of the Mountain West, 1850-1950*, Monograph Series, Vol. 10, No. 3 (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1963), Tables 3 and 4, 30-31, and 2A and 4A, 41-42. See also Kearl, Pope, and Wimmer, "Household Wealth," 487, Table 3.

**TABLE 2**  
**SOCIOECONOMIC CLASSES INVOLVED IN THE CONSTRUCTION**  
**OF THE LOGAN TEMPLE, 1877-78, RANKED BY WEALTH**  
**(GREEN CANYON QUARRY AND TEMPLE BLOCK)**  
**N = 163\***

<i>Occupation</i>	<i>\$5,800</i> <i>-1,065</i>	<i>\$1,064</i> <i>-650</i>	<i>\$649-</i> <i>472</i>	<i>\$471-</i> <i>205</i>	<i>\$204-</i> <i>0</i>
Professional n = 48	12	12	11	6	7
White collar n = 4	1		1	2	
Skilled labor n = 17	3	3	2	4	5
Unskilled labor n = 39	1	2	5	8	20
Women, youth, and unenumerated workers n = 58		1	3	3	51
Totals	17	18	22	23	83

*Sources:* Time Book 6, Logan Temple Quarry, 1878; Time Book 6, Logan Temple Block, 1877; Cache County Censuses, 1870 and 1880; Cache County Tax Assessment Rolls, 1878 and 1880.

\*Includes only laborers residing in Cache County.

Work provided by women was also crucial to the completion of the temple. Mormon women had employed their homemaking skills as early as 1836 to make cushions, upholster furniture, and lay carpet in the Kirtland Temple.<sup>63</sup> In 1869 Brigham Young encouraged women to establish home industries like straw-braiding, silk

<sup>62</sup>Carol Cornwall Madsen, "Mormon Women and the Temple: Toward a New Understanding," in *Sisters in Spirit: Mormon Women in Historical Perspective*, edited by Maureen Ursenbach Beecher and Lavina Fielding Anderson (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 83.

culture, spinning, weaving, and sewing to keep capital within the territory. Though the women were not paid for temple labor, the skills they devoted to furnishing temples and providing support services were extensions of such domestic and religious duties.<sup>64</sup>

After some consultation with the superintendent and temple architect, Samuel Roskelley made a number of suggestions to the district temple committee about seating, carpet, and decoration. After the ordinance rooms were measured and fitted for floor coverings, Roskelley requested that the women living within the temple district be given the responsibility of furnishing homemade carpet.<sup>65</sup> The balance would be manufactured in Salt Lake. The home of Margaret McNeil Ballard, president of the Logan Second Ward Relief Society, became a meeting place for women living on the west side of town. Nolan P. Olsen wrote:

Rag tearing sessions were held in her home almost every day as the women gathered, bringing their rags, tearing them into strips and then throwing them in heaping piles. When the pile was large enough, the women would come again, sit in a circle, carefully select the right colors, sew the rags together and roll them into balls. Then the balls were taken to the weaving machine, and the completed product came off the loom in large rolls that took two men to lift.<sup>66</sup>

To square the sides and insure uniformity in length and color, the sections of carpet were hung on doorknobs opposite each other and sewn together by hand in the middle.<sup>67</sup>

On 17 March 1884, superintendent Card asked Elizabeth Benson, president of the Cache Valley Stake Relief Society, to muster a group of women from the Relief Society and the Young Ladies Mutual Improvement Association to cut the carpet to fit the

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<sup>63</sup>Leonard Arrington, "The Economic Role of Pioneer Mormon Women," *Western Humanities Review* 9 (Spring 1955): 145-64; Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, "Women's Work on the Mormon Frontier," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 49 (Summer 1981): 276-90; "Starting from Scraps: The Mormon Village Relief Society," typescript (n.p., n.d.), Special Collections, Merrill Library; Sonya O. Rose, "Proto-Industry, Women's Work and the Household Economy in the Transition to Industrial Capitalism," *Journal of Family History* 13 (April 1988): 181-93.

<sup>64</sup>Samuel Roskelley, *Diary*, 11-13 March 1884.

<sup>65</sup>Olsen, *Logan Temple*, 129.

<sup>66</sup>*Ibid.*, 130.

floor area, sew the pieces together, and install it as well as sewing curtains for the windows. Between 14 March and 22 May, 361 women, ranging from age fourteen to eighty-five, worked on the project, 84 percent (303) of them from Logan wards. Clearly distance was the most important factor in their service. Nine women came from Providence and from Millville, with eight from Benson, all in Cache Valley. Hyde Park contributed six, four came from Salt Lake City, and the communities of Farmington, Hyrum, Richmond, Smithfield, and Wellsville contributed two each. A single woman came from each of the communities of Coleville, Ephraim, Franklin, Garden City, Grantsville, Mendon, Newton, Paradise, Provo, St. George, and Weston.<sup>68</sup> Cynthia Elnora Nielsen Wight wrote that she and her sister, Rebecca Christina Nielson, stayed “one week helping clean the temple and put carpets down.”<sup>69</sup>

Unfortunately, none of the Logan Relief Society minutes record any personal views involved in this work; but Roskelley commended the women for their achievements “of which . . . we feel proud.”<sup>70</sup> Near the end of the carpet installation, when ordinance rooms were being prepared for dedication, Roskelley wrote that the women were “doing heavy days work and keeping me very buisey preparing materiel for them.”<sup>71</sup> One morning Roskelley arrived early at the temple only to find that “a number of the sisters had been waiting on me for more work, which I soon gave them.”<sup>72</sup>

## CONCLUSION

This paper examined the labor schedules and occupational status of those who worked on the Logan Temple in 1877-78 and 1884. An analysis of selected time books reveals several attributes of an economy making the transition from agrarian to proto-industrial. First, the task-measured work of farmers and unskilled laborers was

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<sup>67</sup>Daily Roster, “Names of People Who Have Helped Cleaning and Sewing &c. in Logan Temple,” 14 March-26 April 1884, holograph, Special Collections, Merrill Library; Roskelley, *Diary*, 14 March-24 May 1884.

<sup>68</sup>Cynthia Elnora Nielson Wight, *Journal*, 5 May 1884.

<sup>69</sup>Roskelley, *Diary*, 15 March 1884.

<sup>70</sup>*Ibid.*, 25 March 1884.

<sup>71</sup>*Ibid.*, 31 March 1884.

replaced by time-measured work, signaling a transition toward more organized, market-based agricultural industries. Journals and the time books also reveal the struggle of individuals to manage temple work and farm work productively.

Second, although temple labor seems to have been distributed proportionately among the five identified occupational classes, the need to pay wages superseded the initial volunteerism that Brigham Young ordered. As Cache Valley moved, with the larger regional economy, toward privatized land and interaction with outside economies, free labor, however ideal from a religious perspective, could not sustain itself. The rewards of temple labor became economically, as well as spiritually, important.

Third, women played an important role in local industry. Domestic, labor-intensive skills provided by women foreshadowed mechanized, factory-based industries. The success of women's combined labor in temple industries, such as Logan Temple finish work, reveals the value of domestic skills in generating capital for a transitional economy. The women's industriousness and skill in temple finish work, although not rewarded by wages, were reflected in traits of profit-bearing cottage industries already operational in Utah, such as silk spinning, sewing, and the manufacturing of textiles.

# From Men to Boys: LDS Aaronic Priesthood Offices, 1829-1996

*William G. Hartley*

During Fast Sunday in a typical contemporary LDS ward, male deacons, ages twelve and thirteen, fan out through the ward's population, distributing and collecting blue fast-offering envelopes. At the chapel, ordained male teachers, ages fourteen and fifteen, put white or clear sacrament cups into thirty-six-holed trays, place them with empty bread trays and slices of unbroken bread on the sacrament table, and cover all with a fine white cloth. During the sacrament meeting, other teachers are posted at chapel doors as ushers, though they escort no one to seats. Priests, ages sixteen, seventeen, and eighteen, break the bread and then bless the bread and the water, reading the prayer from a printed card. Deacons

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carry first the bread trays, then the water trays, among the congregation according to a predetermined order. After the meeting, the teachers clear off the sacrament table, clean the trays, and put trays and table clothes away. During the next four weeks, many of those same teachers and priests accompany adult men to the homes of members as junior companion home teachers.<sup>1</sup>

In the LDS Church today, teenage boys are ordained to the Aaronic Priesthood offices of deacon, teacher, and priest according to their ages. Adults holding these offices are either newly active after “stopping out” in one of these stages during adolescence or are newly baptized members. In contrast, nineteenth-century presiding authorities called adult males to the Aaronic Priesthood, allowing these offices to only a small number of youths.

To document when, why, and how the three Aaronic Priesthood offices shifted from men to boys, gradually and sometimes informally, requires a detailed and somewhat complex analysis.<sup>2</sup> Bishops, although Aaronic Priesthood officers, are not included since they preside by Melchizedek Priesthood authority.

General Authorities directed the transformation; but none cited publicly (and available records do not record) any specific revelation or divine inspiration that prompted or confirmed the changes. Rather, the policy evolved gradually, punctuated by sudden spurts, in response to practical needs. Elder Bruce R. McConkie acknowledged that youths now receive priesthood because of “needs of the present day ministry,” a practice that has been “confirmed by the inspiration of the Spirit” to those holding “the keys of the

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<sup>1</sup>In addition to these duties, deacons may also carry messages for the bishops during meetings; priests may perform baptisms and help ordain teachers and deacons. Since 1986, women have been ordained to priesthood offices in the RLDS faith but never in the Utah-based church; all references to priesthood holders in this article therefore refer to males.

<sup>2</sup>Joseph Fielding Smith’s superficial discussion uses a few nineteenth-century examples that illustrate the shift without explaining it in his *Answers to Gospel Questions* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1958), 2:8-14. Fundamental but dated overviews of the Aaronic Priesthood since 1829 are Lee A. Palmer, *Aaronic Priesthood Through the Ages* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1964); Joseph B. Keeler, *The Lesser Priesthood and Notes on Church Government*. . . (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1904); and John A. Widtsoe, *Priesthood and Church Government*, rev. ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1965).

kingdom.”<sup>3</sup> Still, the transitions were not always smooth nor free from ambiguities for leaders and members.

Without understanding these shifts in Aaronic Priesthood work, LDS leaders and historians cannot accurately interpret many early Church records, teachings, and events.<sup>4</sup> Historical awareness of priesthood offices and quorums is vital to understanding the role of the LDS male throughout history; priesthood callings and quorum membership have been men’s primary participatory involvement and connection with Mormonism. Although all Mormon women currently “belong” to Relief Society, and all members belong, at various points, to Primary, Young Men’s Mutual Improvement Association or Young Women, Scouts (if male), or Sunday School classes, such involvements are not comparable to “holding” the priesthood. Priesthood is something the recipient has. It is a permanent and lifelong possession which exists even when the bearer lives where there are no wards or other Church units. Women do not “have” or “hold” the Relief Society.

To assess what it has meant to be a Mormon male in the sweep of LDS history and how the religion has defined and redefined masculinity will require examination of more than priesthood involvement. What participation and expectations, for instance, are or have been built into Primary, MIA, Religion Class, Scouting, and Sunday School, seminary, Institute, and missions over the years? This paper explores, but is not the definitive treatment of, the Aaronic Priesthood or its relation to and management by General Authorities, stake leaders, or Melchizedek Priesthood quorums. Nor does space allow us to explore deeply the gender and masculinity issues these priesthood developments reflect or influence.<sup>5</sup> Rather,

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<sup>3</sup>Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, 1966), 183.

<sup>4</sup>See also William G. Hartley, “Ordained and Acting Teachers in the Lesser Priesthood, 1851-1883,” *BYU Studies* 16 (Spring 1976): 375-98; “The 1877 Priesthood Reorganization: Brigham Young’s Last Achievement,” *BYU Studies* 20 (Fall 1970): 3-36, and “The Priesthood Reform Movement: 1908-1922,” *BYU Studies* 13 (Winter 1972): 137-56.

<sup>5</sup>A good introduction to male gender development in this country is E. Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1993).

I focus on the historical development of the offices of deacon, teacher, and priest as they have related to male maturity levels, and on how and why such functions have been altered and adapted over time.

The transformation of Aaronic Priesthood occurred in six stages, identifiable in hindsight but probably not fully understood by their participants:

1. *1829-46.* Adult males were called to Aaronic Priesthood offices as Church needs required.

2. *1847-77.* Men holding the Melchizedek Priesthood became “acting” deacons, teachers, and priests. Their primary work was that assigned by revelation to priests and teachers: to teach the Saints righteous principles in their homes and to administer the sacrament.

3. *1877-1908.* Every youth between twelve and twenty was expected to receive at least one Aaronic Priesthood office, usually that of deacon, but Melchizedek Priesthood holders continued to “act” as home teachers<sup>6</sup> and to administer the sacrament.

4. *1908-22.* Aaronic Priesthood work was redesigned for youth with offices linked to age, with routinized advancement of the worthy and active, with new duties designed for youth, including handling the sacrament, and with teachers and priests involved in ward teaching.

5. *1920s-50s.* These new age-linked Aaronic Priesthood functions became firmly institutionalized.

6. *1960s-90s.* As part of the Priesthood Correlation program, ward teaching became home teaching, a Melchizedek Priesthood quorum responsibility, with Aaronic Priesthood males assisting as junior companions.

Accompanying these six periods of priesthood realignment were five interrelated developments that influenced the transfer of Aaronic Priesthood offices from men to youths:

1. Introduction of the temple endowment for missionaries or bridegrooms where proximity to a temple permitted; since the

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<sup>6</sup>“Home teacher” is the contemporary term used for paired male representatives of the bishop who visit ward members in their homes. Earlier names are “block teacher” and “ward teacher,” each explained below.

endowment required ordination to the Melchizedek Priesthood, these men were unavailable for Aaronic Priesthood offices.

2. Concerns for young men unprepared for missions and other adult responsibilities in the Church.

3. Tracking all teenage boys through all three Aaronic Priesthood offices instead of selectively using some in only one or two offices.

4. Redefining priesthood family visits and watchcare as Melchizedek rather than Aaronic Priesthood responsibilities.

5. Providing youthful deacons, teachers, and priests with useful priesthood assignments fitted to their ability levels—tasks that in many cases require no priesthood authority to perform.

#### **1829-46: AARONIC PRIESTHOOD FOR MATURE MALES**

In May 1829, John the Baptist bestowed the Aaronic Priesthood on Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, then both in their early twenties.<sup>7</sup> Compared to the Melchizedek or higher priesthood, this was the lesser priesthood. An 1830 revelation (D&C 20) assigns several weighty duties to priests, teachers, and deacons. Granted the “keys of the ministering of angels,” Aaronic Priesthood bearers are to preach, teach, expound, exhort, baptize, and administer the sacrament; to visit members in their homes and exhort them to pray vocally and secretly and to fulfill family duties; to ordain other officers, and to conduct meetings whenever higher officers are absent. Ordained teachers are to watch over the Church constantly; strengthen members; eliminate iniquity, hard feelings, lying, backbiting, and evil speaking; insure that the Church holds regular meetings, and assure that members perform their duties. Ordained deacons are to assist the teachers, but no specific assignments are spelled out. Only mature persons can adequately perform most of

<sup>7</sup>See Smith’s account in Joseph Smith, Jr., et al., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, edited by B. H. Roberts (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1902-12; 6 vols., a seventh volume was published in 1932; reprinted by Deseret Book Company, 1976, and reissued in paperback in 1978): 1:39-42; Cowdery’s account is in *Messenger and Advocate* 1 (1 October 1834): 15. LDS Doctrine and Covenants (hereafter D&C) section 13 contains a revelation related to this ordination. See also D&C 20, 68, 84, and 107.

these responsibilities; and Mormonism's first generation clearly recognized that mature males should take on the duties of being "standing ministers unto the church" (D&C 84:111).

The earliest mention of ordained deacons is in the *Painesville Telegraph* on 25 October 1831. The first priests were fifty-nine-year-old Joseph Smith, Sr., forty-seven-year-old Martin Harris, and two thirty-year-olds, Hyrum Smith and Newell Knight. Among the first teachers were forty-nine-year-old Hezekiah Peck, thirty-two-year-old Christian Whitmer, thirty-year-old Hiram Page, and twenty-year-old William Smith. Titus Billings, one of the first deacons, was thirty-eight. During the Church's first decade, Aaronic Priesthood offices were conferred on a few selected youths including William F. Cahoon, ordained a priest at seventeen, Don Carlos Smith, ordained to "the priesthood at 14," and Erastus and James Snow, teachers at fifteen and seventeen respectively.<sup>8</sup> Such cases are few.

William F. Cahoon's youthful experience as a teacher visiting the Joseph Smith family is fairly well known, although some retellings place it in Nauvoo instead of in Kirtland where it occurred about 1831. Cahoon, born in 1813, visited the Smiths as an eighteen-year-old priest:

Being young, only about seventeen years [eighteen] of age, I felt my weakness in visiting the Prophet and his family in the capacity of teacher. I almost felt like shrinking from duty. Finally I went to his door and knocked, and in a minute the Prophet came to the door. I stood there trembling, and said to him, "Brother Joseph, I have come to visit you in the capacity of a teacher, if it is convenient for you."

He said, "Brother William, come right in, I am glad to see you; sit down in that chair there and I will go and call my family in." They soon came in and took seats. He then said, "Brother William, I submit myself and family into your hands," and then took his seat.

"Now Brother William," said he, "ask all the questions you feel like."

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<sup>8</sup>Gregory A. Prince, *Power from on High: Development of Mormon Priesthood* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1995), 26. Three deacons were ordained before this date. Palmer, *Aaronic Priesthood Through the Ages*, 373, 387; Andrew Jenson, *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia*, 4 vols. (Salt Lake City: Andrew Jenson History Co., 1901-37; reprint. Salt Lake City: Western Epics, 1971), 1:103, 795; William G. Hartley, "Snow on Fire," *New Era* 14 (January 1984): 38-41 (Erastus Snow as a teenager); *History of the Church* 4:393.

By this time all my fears and trembling had ceased, and I said, "Brother Joseph, are you trying to live your religion?"

He answered, "Yes."

I then said, "Do you pray in your family?"

He said "yes."

"Do you teach your family the principles of the gospel?"

He replied, "Yes, I am trying to do it."

"Do you ask a blessing on your food?"

He answered, "Yes."

"Are you trying to live in peace and harmony with all your family?"

He said that he was.

I then turned to Sister Emma, his wife, and said, "Sister Emma, are you trying to live your religion? Do you teach your children to obey their parents? Do you try to teach them to pray?" To all these questions she answered, "Yes, I am trying to do so."

I then turned to Joseph and said, "I am now through with my questions as a teacher; and now if you have any instructions to give, I shall be happy to receive them."

He said, "God bless you, Brother William; and if you are humble and faithful, you shall have power to settle all difficulties that may come before you in the capacity of a teacher."

I then left my parting blessing upon him and his family, as a teacher, and took my departure.

### *Kirtland and Missouri Stakes, 1834-38*

The Church's first two stakes, at Kirtland and in Missouri, had elders, high priests, and, after 1835, seventies—men holding what became termed the Melchizedek Priesthood.<sup>10</sup> But priests, teachers,

<sup>9</sup>"Recollections of the Prophet Joseph Smith: Elder William Farrington Cahoon," *Juvenile Instructor* 27 (August 15, 1892): 492-93. William was born 7 November 1813, baptized on 10 October 1830, ordained a priest by Oliver Cowdery on 28 October 1831, and spent the next year visiting the churches around Kirtland, exhorting the Saints to faithfulness and obedience. He visited the Smiths between 28 October 1831 and 19 November 1832. William Farrington Cahoon, Autobiography, microfilm of holograph, Historical Department Archives of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (hereafter cited as LDS Church Archives); see also Jenson, *LDS Biographical Encyclopedia* 1:687.

<sup>10</sup>Fundamental to understanding priesthood developments during the 1830s is understanding what "high priesthood," "higher priesthood," and "Melchizedek Priesthood" meant to contemporaries. See Robert J. Woodford, "The Historical Development of the Doctrine and Covenants," 3 vols., (Ph.D. diss., Brigham Young University, 1974); Gregory A. Prince, *Power from on High: The Development of Mormon Priesthood* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1995); Richard L. Bushman, *Joseph*

and deacons handled congregational matters. (Wards did not exist until the Nauvoo period.<sup>11</sup>) In the mid-1830s, Joseph Smith sent word to Church officers in Missouri that “the Teachers and Deacons are the standing ministers of the Church, and in the absence of other officers, they will have great things required at their hands. They must strengthen the members; persuade such as are out of the way, to repent and meekly urge and persuade everyone to forgive each other all their trespasses, offences and sins.”<sup>12</sup>

In 1834 and 1835, the Missouri teachers quorum tackled a variety of tasks that required adult abilities: two labored with a brother having a tobacco problem, one worked with a couple having domestic difficulties, two tried to settle a dispute about steers, one labored with a person “for lying and extortion,” and one took a deacon along to “settle a quarrel” among three “housewives.”<sup>13</sup>

In 1838 the Missouri stake’s priesthood passed a resolution that “the teachers, assisted by the deacons, be considered the standing ministry to preside each over his respective branch.” A contemporary analogy said elders “quarried the stone” and sent it to Zion, where Aaronic Priesthood bearers “polished” it. In February 1838 the Missouri high council recommended that each neighborhood “choose for themselves a teacher, who is skilled in the work of God,

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Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984); William G. Hartley, “Upon You My Fellow Servants’: Restoration of the Priesthood,” in *The Prophet Joseph: Essays on the Life and Mission of Joseph Smith*, edited by Susan Easton Black and Larry C. Porter (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1988): 49-72; D. Michael Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1994), chaps. 1 and 2; Larry C. Porter, “The Restoration of the Priesthood,” *Religious Studies Center Newsletter* 9 (May 1995), 1-12; and James N. Baumgarten, “The Role and Function of the Seventies in Latter-day Saint Church History” (M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1960).

<sup>11</sup>William G. Hartley, “Nauvoo Stake, Priesthood Quorums, and the Church’s First Wards,” *BYU Studies* 32 (Winter and Spring 1991): 57-80.

<sup>12</sup>Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, William W. Phelps, and John Whitmer to John M. Burk [and officers and members in Liberty, Missouri], Journal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (chronology of typed entries and newspaper clippings, 1830-present), 1 June 1835, 3, LDS Church Archives.

<sup>13</sup>Minutes of Teachers Quorum at Kirtland, Ohio; Far West, Missouri, Nauvoo, Illinois, 25 December 1834 and 31 January, 28 February, 29 March, and 30 May 1835, LDS Church Archives.

faithful in his ministry, full of the Holy Ghost, and a friend to Joseph Smith . . . to take the watch-care over them and preside . . . who shall be assisted by the other teachers and deacons in the branch.”<sup>14</sup>

Adult deacons assisted the priests and teachers and took care of places of worship, a traditional responsibility for deacons in Christian churches.<sup>15</sup> For example, Henry Norman, an LDS deacon in England, probably in the 1850s, “had not only to seat the people in the house, but Make the wine for the sacrament, from the grape, & had my house licensed for preaching.”<sup>16</sup>

Outside stake jurisdictions, priests and teachers presided in some branches. When missionaries converted clusters of people, they usually ordained one or more to conduct local church affairs. In April 1840 England had thirty-five elders, fifty-five priests, thirty-seven teachers, and ten deacons. In both stakes and missions, Church staffing needs determined how many priests, teachers, or deacons were ordained.<sup>17</sup> Stakes sometimes called presidencies for Aaronic Priesthood quorums; but except for Missouri’s teachers quorum, before 1839 no full quorums of forty-eight priests, twenty-four teachers, and twelve deacons existed as described scripturally (D&C 107).

Plans drawn in 1833 for temples in Missouri and Kirtland reserved four rows for the presidencies of the “Aaronic Priesthood,” meaning a bishopric, and of the priests, teachers, and deacons quorums.<sup>18</sup> Such honors were certainly intended for men, not boys.

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<sup>14</sup>Donald Q. Cannon and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *Far West Record: Minutes of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1830-1844* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1983), 24 February and 6 July 1838.

<sup>15</sup>According to William Smith, *Smith’s Bible Dictionary* (Old Tappan, N.J.: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1975): 139, it is commonly believed that deacons in first-century Christianity prepared the rooms in which disciples met.

<sup>16</sup>Salt Lake Stake Deacons Quorum Minutes, 1873-77, 26 May 1877, LDS Church Archives (hereafter cited as Salt Lake Deacons Minutes).

<sup>17</sup>Robert L. Marrott, “History and Functions of the Aaronic Priesthood and the Offices of Priest, Teacher, and Deacon . . . 1829-1844” (M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1970); Heber C. Kimball, “From England,” *Times and Seasons* 1 (June 1840): 120-21; Roger Launius, “A Survey of Priesthood Ordinations, 1830-1844,” *Restoration Trail Forum* 9 (May 1983): 3-4, 6.

<sup>18</sup>Lauritz G. Petersen, “The Kirtland Temple,” *BYU Studies* 12 (Summer 1972): 400-9.



*Aaronic Priesthood Matters at Nauvoo, 1839-46*

In Nauvoo, stake (but not ward) Aaronic Priesthood quorums were organized and reorganized between 1841 and 1846.<sup>19</sup> Priests and teachers sporadically made home visits. From January to June 1845, the priests, teachers, and some deacons met at least monthly to coordinate such visits. The twenty-one priests averaged twenty-nine in age, although four were teenagers between seventeen and nineteen. Two-thirds were newly ordained; their average age at ordination was twenty-eight, eight were English, and the average length of time in the Church was four years. None had held higher office.

In short, Aaronic Priesthood practices in Nauvoo differed little from 1830s practices in Kirtland and Missouri: adults and selected older teens received Melchizedek and Aaronic Priesthood offices according to Church staffing needs. This pattern endured in general outline for the founders of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, organized in 1860 among Joseph Smith's followers who disaffiliated from the Twelve.

But two seeds were planted at Nauvoo that influenced future Aaronic Priesthood functioning in the LDS Church: the introduction of the temple endowment, for which Melchizedek Priesthood was a prerequisite, and the development of wards. Within forty years, these local units would eliminate stake Aaronic Priesthood quorums and make numerical quotas irrelevant except for deacons. At Nauvoo, Church officials created wards as local governing units headed by a bishop. In Utah, each new settlement area was considered a potential stake and was given a stake/branch/settlement president. Next, each settlement received one bishop, then more as growth caused the creation of additional wards. A high council, then a patriarch, completed the stake's organization. Because wards were the local unit of governance after the 1840s, priests and teachers did not preside except in missions or in emergencies.

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<sup>19</sup>"Report of the First Presidency," *Times and Seasons* 2 (15 April 1841): 385; *History of the Church*, 4:312, 5:169; Nauvoo Aaronic Priesthood Minutes and Biographical Sketches, 13 January 1844 to 15 June 1845, microfilm, LDS Church Archives.

## 1846-77: MELCHIZEDEK PRIESTHOOD HOLDERS FILL AARONIC PRIESTHOOD OFFICES

During the Saints' exodus from Nauvoo, Aaronic Priesthood quorums dissolved. At Winter Quarters, the Twelve created twenty-two wards and assigned a bishop for each, continuing the Nauvoo model. In camps and on the trail west, here and there leaders called men temporarily to serve as acting teachers to handle the needs of the moment. Salt Lake Stake was created on 3 October 1847, nine weeks after the Saints' arrival in Salt Lake Valley. On 14 February 1849, nineteen wards were created for Great Salt Lake City. Simultaneously, Presiding Bishop Newel K. Whitney started organizing stake-wide quorums for priests, teachers, and deacons for the already ordained.<sup>20</sup>

### *Wards, Bishops, and a Corps of Teachers*

By the early 1850s, wards were considered the main local unit and bishops were the chief local officers, a norm that has continued to the present,<sup>21</sup> yet most revelations relating to priesthood were given prior to this time. As a result, general or Presiding Bishops were designated as the presidency of the Aaronic Priesthood (D&C 107:87-88, 68:16-17). During the Brigham Young period, presiding bishops Newel K. Whitney and his successor, Edward Hunter, exercised that presidency primarily by directing bishops in ward meetings, tithing, ward properties, and charity.

Ward bishops called men and some youths to enter the stake-level deacons, teachers, and priests quorums, but their duties were carried out in the wards. Bishops Whitney and Hunter held regular bi-weekly bishops meetings to coordinate public works, tithes, resources, immigration and immigrants, the needy, and the Aaronic Priesthood.

During the pioneer era, home visits assumed a more standard form. The bishop assigned men to do priests' and teachers' duties:

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<sup>20</sup>Roberts, *Comprehensive History*, 3:302-3; Brigham Young Manuscript History, 16 February 1849, LDS Church Archives.

<sup>21</sup>"The ward is the ultimate unit of the Church," asserted John A. Widtsoe, LDS apostle and administrative expert, in his *Progress of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1941), 149.

to visit ward members, check on spiritual well-being, canvass for contributions, settle disputes, and help the needy. Some teachers heard charges of wrongdoing and decided guilt or innocence; but bishops handled most of these cases. The teachers quorum, in other words, was usually viewed as a ready source of manpower for such responsibilities as administering the sacrament, helping the needy, or, most urgently, conducting the home visits. (Visits varied from weekly to quarterly—or were simply sporadic.) Stake quorum leaders and the Presiding Bishopric periodically spearheaded drives to “fill up the quorums.”<sup>22</sup> The primary goal was to supply necessary workers, not to see that all worthy males held priesthood office.

### *Endowments and Recruiting among the Aaronic Priesthood*

It was generally the order to confer the lesser priesthood on those who had not received the higher priesthood. The number of those eligible thus was not large because, by the 1850s, the Church required missionaries from Utah and men marrying in the temple or Endowment House to be Melchizedek Priesthood holders.

The endowment was selectively introduced by 1843 in Nauvoo, made widely available to worthy men and women in 1845-46, and performed on a massive scale just before the exodus.<sup>23</sup> When the Endowment House was completed in Salt Lake City in May 1855, the First Presidency strongly encouraged Saints to keep the house busy.<sup>24</sup> For example, in May 1856, Dry Creek (Lehi), American Fork,

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<sup>22</sup>Hartley, “Ordained and Acting Teachers,” and Hartley, “Edward Hunter, Pioneer Presiding Bishop,” in *Supporting Saints*, edited by Donald Cannon and David Whittaker (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1985), 275-304. Main sources for the Brigham Young period, all at the LDS Church Archives, are the Bishops Meetings with the Presiding Bishopric, Minutes, 4 vols., 1849-84 (hereafter cited as Bishops Minutes); Salt Lake Stake Deacons; and Presiding Bishop’s Office, Aaronic Priesthood Meeting Minutes, 1857-77 (hereafter cited as General Aaronic Minutes).

<sup>23</sup>On 10 December 1845 in Nauvoo, the full endowment was administered. By 7 February 1846, more than 5,600 tithe-paying adults received their endowments. An estimated 15,000 to 20,000 Saints, including children, lived in and around Nauvoo. Thus one-third to one-fourth of all Mormons and perhaps 80 to 90 percent of LDS adults were endowed. James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints*, 2d ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992), 224.

<sup>24</sup>Andrew Jenson, “Endowment House,” *Encyclopedic History of the Church of*

Pleasant Grove, and Provo were assigned to send twenty people each for endowments and Springville to send forty. In issuing these quotas, Heber C. Kimball, Endowment House director and counselor in the First Presidency, encouraged bishops to send “many of the young and sprightly persons, who are strict to obey their parents.”<sup>25</sup>

Records of the Kaysville elders quorum for 1865 show that thirty-six of its first members were ordained elders as teenagers, most in the Endowment House. Fourteen-year-old Ephraim P. Ellison, for example, was endowed on 24 March 1865.<sup>26</sup> A sampling of Endowment House and St. George Temple endowment records for the 1870s shows that the average age for male endowments was twenty-two, the most popular age was twenty-three, and that several were endowed at fourteen.<sup>27</sup> Thus, the endowment made it nearly impossible to find capable and active men in wards near temples who did not already hold Melchizedek Priesthood. “We have many times tried to fill up these quorums by those who have not received Melchizedek Priesthood,” Presiding Bishop Edward Hunter complained, “but [they] have been almost immediately called out to receive their endowment, leaving vacancies.”<sup>28</sup>

In reaction, beginning in the 1860s, some leaders worried that the endowment was being bestowed too freely. Thirteen years before the first Utah temple opened at St. George in 1877, Brigham Young commented that perhaps men should “receive the [endowment] ordinances pertaining to the Aaronic order of the Priesthood” before missions but “do something that will prove whether you will honor that Priesthood before you receive” the Melchizedek Priest-

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Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Publishing Company, 1941), 230.

<sup>25</sup>Heber C. Kimball, Letter to the Bishops of Utah, 19 May 1856, *Journal History*.

<sup>26</sup>Kaysville Elders Quorum Minutes, 1865, microfilm, LDS Church Archives; Ephraim P. Ellison, Daybook, 5 May 1929, photocopy in my possession.

<sup>27</sup>Endowment House Record, Endowments, 1870-72, 1878-79, and St. George Temple, Endowments, 1877-78, both on microfilm, LDS Family History Library, Salt Lake City.

<sup>28</sup>Bishop Edward Hunter, Letter to Elder Orson Hyde, General Tithing Store Letterbooks, 17 October 1873, LDS Church Archives.

hood."<sup>29</sup> Had splitting the endowment been implemented, Aaronic Priesthood quorums could then have included returned missionaries. However, it was apparently more a warning to be worthy than a serious proposal.

Another source of depletion was invitations from Melchizedek Priesthood quorums to join their units. No permission for ordination was required from bishops, stake presidents, or the quorums to which the men already belonged, and the higher status made such ordinations desirable. This recruiting also drained Aaronic Priesthood quorums.<sup>30</sup> Higher quorums also recruited the unordained, since Aaronic Priesthood was not a prerequisite.<sup>31</sup>

Edward Hunter as Presiding Bishop (and hence Aaronic Priesthood president) criticized "lesser priesthood men rushing to be ordained High Priests or Seventies," Brigham Young and his counselors echoed in 1877: "It has been a difficult thing to keep young men in the elders quorum or in any of the quorums of the lesser

<sup>29</sup>Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, 11 June 1864, 27 vols. (London and Liverpool: LDS Booksellers Depot, 1855-86), 10:309. George Q. Cannon, who served as a counselor to Brigham Young and was still in the First Presidency, made the same proposal in a sermon at Provo, Utah, on 14 January 1894; George Q. Cannon, "Blessings Not Appreciated," *Deseret Weekly*, 10 March 1894, 349.

<sup>30</sup>Seventies then were Melchizedek Priesthood officers, seventy to a quorum, directed by the seven-man First Council of the Seventy. Thirty-three quorums were organized in Nauvoo, and eventually there were hundreds. Most nineteenth-century missionaries were ordained Seventies, then joined Seventies quorum when they returned home. Naturally, moving about fragmented these quorums and they were reorganized as stake entities beginning in 1883. The First Quorum of the Seventy, reconstituted in 1976, consisted of General Authorities and replaced the Assistants to the Twelve. A Second Quorum, also of General Authorities but called for five-year terms, was instituted in 1989. Neither quorum has seventy members. Stake seventies quorums were phased out in October 1986. For histories of stake-level quorums, see Baumgarten, "The Role and Function of the Seventies," and S. Dilworth Young, "The Seventies: A Historical Perspective," *Ensign* 6 (July 1976): 14-21.

<sup>31</sup>In 1838 the Kirtland elders' quorum heard but disregarded an objection to ordaining three "because of their not passing through the Lesser Priesthood." (A fourth candidate was disallowed, not because of priesthood status but for unchristian conduct.) Lyndon W. Cook and Milton V. Backman, Jr., eds., *Kirtland Elders' Quorum Record 1836-41* (Provo, Utah: Grandin Book Company, 1985), 46-47.

priesthood.”<sup>32</sup> However, with no policy against it, future apostles Francis M. Lyman and Rudger Clawson were ordained elders at sixteen, and Clarence Merrill was ordained a seventy in 1857 at the same age.<sup>33</sup> In short, Melchizedek Priesthood quorums absorbed capable LDS adult manpower like a sponge, leaving few to receive Aaronic Priesthood ordinations.

*Early Solution: Acting Priests, Teachers, and Deacons*

In 1849 as the Salt Lake wards were organized, Brigham Young articulated three principles of Aaronic Priesthood work to then-Presiding Bishop Newel K. Whitney. These principles shaped Aaronic Priesthood duties for the next three decades and beyond. First, priesthood home visits and watchcare were the Aaronic Priesthood’s primary duty. Second, choose “the best High Priests, the most substantial men” to be acting teachers, he instructed, so that wards could be “perfectly visited.” Melchizedek Priesthood includes and encompasses the Aaronic Priesthood, so Melchizedek Priesthood bearers have inherent authority to perform all Aaronic Priesthood duties, ordinances, and functions (D&C 107:10-12). Third, they should “take young men with them, that they might also have experience in teaching,” thereby implementing the apprenticeship system already suggested (D&C 84:106-107).<sup>34</sup> No age guidelines were included.

Because those holding the Melchizedek Priesthood can act in all the offices of the Aaronic Priesthood if called upon, bishops and stake Aaronic priesthood quorum presidencies called and set them apart as *acting* priests, teachers, and deacons.<sup>35</sup> As early as 1852,

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<sup>32</sup>Bishops Minutes, 17 January 1854; Circular of the First Presidency, 11 July 1877, in *Messages of the First Presidency*, edited by James R. Clark, 6 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965), 2:286.

<sup>33</sup>David S. Hoopes and LeRoy Hoopes, *The Making of a Mormon Apostle: The Story of Rudger Clawson* (New York: Madison Books, 1990), 42; Joseph B. Keeler, *First Steps in Church Government* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1906), vii-viii; Kate B. Carter, comp., *Our Pioneer Heritage* 9 (1966): 319-29.

<sup>34</sup>Journal History, 16 February 1849.

<sup>35</sup>Bishops Minutes, 7 December 1882. Bishop Adam Spiers labeled it a “provision made” to allow the higher priesthood to officiate in the lesser; see Salt Lake City Tenth Ward, Ward Teachers Report Meeting, 1874-80, 6 November



*This rare photograph of a sacrament meeting in Ephraim, Utah's, tabernacle in the early 1870s shows three mature men officiating at the sacrament table. The "acting priest" blessing the sacrament is doing so with uplifted hands. Courtesy LDS Church Archives*

Whitney was telling bishops, "If there be no members of the lesser priesthood in the Wards to act as teachers, take High Priests or Seventies or any other wise man."<sup>36</sup> Similarly, First Presidency counselor Jedediah M. Grant told Fort Ephraim Saints that "it is a good plan for the Bishop to have plenty of Lesser priesthood, that is, the High Priests & Seventies ordained [set apart] to act in the office of teacher & visit at least every family once a week."<sup>37</sup> Here and there, some bishops ordained a few mature youths as teachers so that ordained teachers and priests served with acting teachers and priests.

1874, LDS Church Archives.

<sup>36</sup>Bishops Minutes, 30 November 1851.

<sup>37</sup>Meeting at Fort Ephraim, 13 May 1855, in Minutes of Meetings, Miscellaneous Conference Minutes, typescript, LDS Church Archives.

Whitney's successor, Edward Hunter, often preached, "Select the best men for teachers" to his bishops.<sup>38</sup> Acting teachers or acting priests consequently became ward officers second in importance only to bishoprics in terms of practical ward work and were sustained as ward officers. Most bishops met regularly with their quorum of acting teachers to hear reports about members and to transmit announcements, policy changes, and appeals for labor or contributions. "There was more depending upon the lesser priesthood than the High Priests or Seventies or Elders," Bishop Hunter said.<sup>39</sup> He called the lesser priesthood the "regulars," not the reserves.<sup>40</sup> They were "the laborers," the "acting priesthood," the doers in the wards. "The greatest engine in the Church is the teachers," President Jedediah M. Grant asserted. "It was very seldom we were called to exercise the Higher Priesthood," another leader observed.<sup>41</sup> Ordained teachers and priests, Bishop Hunter taught, were the Lord's authorized "watchmen to guard against all manner of iniquity" ranging from intoxication to Sabbath breaking and parental neglect.

Throughout Brigham Young's presidency, Melchizedek Priesthood men handled almost all Aaronic Priesthood work in Utah, doing double duty by "acting in both priesthoods."<sup>42</sup> One elderly man was a seventy who served as an acting teacher in two wards, an acting priest in one, and in the presidency of the stake's deacons quorum.<sup>43</sup> Another man, an elder, was both an acting deacon and acting teacher.<sup>44</sup> Bishop Hunter often exhorted priesthood men to "magnify both priesthoods," and Apostle Matthias Cowley's statement, "I was an elder before I was a deacon" was easily understood during the pioneer period.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>38</sup>Bishops Minutes, 6 September 1866, 18 August 1870, 20 April 1880.

<sup>39</sup>General Aaronic Minutes, 7 January 1860.

<sup>40</sup>Bishops Minutes, 29 July 1877.

<sup>41</sup>Meeting at Fort Ephraim, 13 May 1855; General Aaronic Minutes, 6 March 1875.

<sup>42</sup>Bishops Minutes, May 26, 1861.

<sup>43</sup>John Picknell, Salt Lake Deacons Minutes, 14 December 1875. When he died in 1878, he was considered "an old citizen of Utah." "Passing," *Journal History*, 7 July 1878.

<sup>44</sup>Salt Lake Deacons Minutes, 27 January 1877.



Each ward's corp of acting teachers or block teachers was small, sometimes but a dozen men. In Salt Lake City's Thirteenth Ward, home to many General Authorities, "the bishopric and block teachers, about twenty men, shouldered the ward's leadership and performed its labors."<sup>46</sup>

The most important duty of acting teachers was home visits. A survey of minutes during the pioneer era shows that these teachers visited eight to twenty families monthly, quarterly, or randomly. Because many wards assigned two men per block, by the 1850s, the appellation of block teachers developed.

By ordination and revelation, priests and teachers were peacemakers. "There was a power to settle difficulties vouchsafed to the lesser priesthood," Bishop Hunter taught, "that no other officer or member of the Kingdom can accomplish." Courts could decide cases, but only priests and teachers could reconcile the embittered parties: "The order of the church is to call in the labors of the teachers & if they cannot reconcile the parties it cannot be done," he taught.<sup>47</sup> In many wards, the teachers not only monitored the members' behavior but heard charges of sinful behavior, investigated allegations, and determined whether repentance was satisfactory or whether disfellowshipment or excommunication should be imposed. In Manti, "the right way was to bring a case first before the teachers meeting."<sup>48</sup> A Kanab bishop in the 1870s instructed that "it was the teachers' right to investigate a case and decide upon it, & if it did not give satisfaction, they had the right to appeal."<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>45</sup>General Aaronic Minutes, 5 January 1861; Salt Lake Deacons Minutes, 26 May 1877.

<sup>46</sup>Ronald W. Walker, "'Going to Meeting' in Salt Lake City's Thirteenth Ward, 1849-1881: A Microanalysis," in *New Views of Mormon History: A Collection of Essays in Honor of Leonard J. Arrington*, edited by Davis Bitton and Maureen Ursenbach Beecher (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1987), 150.

<sup>47</sup>General Aaronic Minutes, 2 June 1877, 6 April 1867; Bishops Minutes, 6 April 1867, and 2 June 1877; see also minutes for 28 May 1868, and 4 January 1873.

<sup>48</sup>Sanpete Stake, Aaronic Priesthood Minute Book, 1873-77, 26 January 1875, LDS Church Archives. Also see the New Orleans Branch Minutes, 1849-50 entries, LDS Church Archives.

Acting teachers not only performed the revealed duties of priests and teachers (home visits, watchcare, and dispute resolution), but also collected fast offerings,<sup>50</sup> assisted the poor, and administered the sacrament. In addition to ward sacrament meetings, a general valleywide sacrament meeting was held Sunday afternoons at the tabernacle from 1849 until 1894.<sup>51</sup> During the 1850s, Bishop Hunter assigned wards to bring the bread, have water ready, and then administer the sacrament. Ward bishops delegated acting teachers to handle these jobs, since they, and not ordained priests, were already assigned this task in local wards.<sup>52</sup>

In short, Melchizedek Priesthood holders acting in Aaronic Priesthood offices during Brigham Young's presidency were a trusted and hard-working ward elite. But what was the impact of this policy on young men and boys?

### *Slight Use of Young Men and Boys, 1849-73*

Ward and stake records for the early 1850s indicate that a small number of "young men" and "boys" continued to receive priesthood callings while the system of acting officials was growing up. In 1852 a Brother Fielding asked at a bishops' meeting, "Should we ordain

<sup>49</sup>Kanab Ward Teachers Report Minutes, 1872-81, 6 May 1877, LDS Church Archives.

<sup>50</sup>Salt Lake City Eighth Ward Historical Record Book B, 1856-75, 7 January 1857, LDS Church Archives.

<sup>51</sup>Tabernacle Sunday services continued into the mid-twentieth century, but the last time the sacrament was regularly administered was 1 April 1894. Clerk's commentary, *Journal History*, 1 April 1894 and "At the Tabernacle," *Journal History*, 16 April 1894, records that Charles W. Penrose, in the tabernacle service that day, announced that henceforth the sacrament would be provided only in ward sacrament meetings. The *Journal History* also records that, beginning on 1 July 1932, the six stakes in the Salt Lake Valley began to conduct the afternoon Tabernacle services in turn; on 25 March 1938, this duty was assigned to the Temple Square Mission.

<sup>52</sup>Bishops Minutes, 11 February 1852, 10 November 1859, and 30 July 1863; Salt Lake City Sixth Ward Record Book, 1869-80, entries for 1877-78, LDS Church Archives. Adam Speirs, acting bishop of Salt Lake City Tenth Ward, assigned his acting teachers to carry out the assignment at the tabernacle and sent his ward's ordained (not acting) deacons to go in the morning to supply the water. Salt Lake City Tenth Ward, Ward Teachers Report Meeting 1874-80, 22 May 1874.

young men and boys who are wild?" Apostle Erastus Snow "presumed Bishop Hunter would be guided by the spirit, and the ordination may make them the best of men."<sup>53</sup> Perhaps the youngest boys ever given LDS priesthood were George J. Hunt, ordained a priest at age nine in 1861, and Solomon W. Harris, baptized and ordained a deacon at age eight.<sup>54</sup> It was not unusual for men in their twenties to be called "boys," especially if they were single.<sup>55</sup> "Ordain our boys to the lesser priesthood," bishops heard in 1852, "that they may commence in the harness," while 1854 minutes recorded approval of "the youth being ordained to the lesser priesthood; they were now doing quite a good work." One ward reported that "the principle portion of the young men had been ordained to the lesser priesthood."<sup>56</sup>

In the nineteenth century, "there was no sequence of events that marked the progress of boys from childhood to manhood," historian Anthony Rotundo reported, "and there were no key ages at which all youngsters reached important milestones." "The . . . transition from boyhood to manhood began in a boy's teens and lasted until his twenties or even thirties." When it had any name at all, this period "was called youth."<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>53</sup>Bishops Minutes, 31 January 1854.

<sup>54</sup>Smithfield (Utah) Ward, Record of Members, LDS Church Archives.

<sup>55</sup>Salt Lake Stake Deacons Minutes refers to younger deacons as "boys," "young brethren," "little boys," and "the young." The 4 February 1877 entry quotes a Brother Andrews as stating that "the boys as well as myself belong to the Elders' quorum." Mormon Battalion veterans were called the "Mormon Battalion boys," regardless of age, just as, two hundred years earlier, Ethan Allen had led his Green Mountain "boys" against Fort Ticonderoga. The custom of referring to groups of mature men as boys (as in "a night out with the boys") and groups of mature women as girls ("going to lunch with the girls") persisted until the Civil Rights and women's liberation movements of the 1960s and 1970s drew attention to some demeaning aspects of this cultural custom.

<sup>56</sup>Bishops Minutes, 31 January 1854.

<sup>57</sup>Rotundo, *American Manhood*, 53, 56. Nineteenth-century children moved through dependency, semi-dependency (longer than adolescence), and independence. These stages were marked by experiences and abilities, not age. See Joseph F. Kett, *Rite of Passage: Adolescence in America, 1790 to the Present* (New York: Basic Books, 1977), and Elliott West, *Growing Up with the Country: Childhood on the Far Western Frontier* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1989).

However, by the mid-1850s, Church leaders expressed caution about ordaining unmarried men. In October 1856 general conference, President Young expressed disapproval of ordaining inexperienced “young men” as deacons:

When you have got your Bishop, he needs assistants, and he ordains Counsellors, Priests, Teachers, and Deacons, and calls them to help him; and he wishes men of his own heart and hand to do this. Says he, “I dare not even call a man to be a Deacon, to assist me in my calling, unless he has a family.” It is not the business of an ignorant young man, of no experience in family matters, to inquire into the circumstances of families, and know the wants of every person. Some may want medicine and nourishment, and be looked after, and it is not the business of boys to do this, but select a man who has got a family to be a Deacon.<sup>58</sup>

Even allowing for Young’s typical hyperbole, overstated to make a point, he was apparently not denouncing younger apprentices but rather insisting that senior teachers and priests be mature and capable. What Aaronic Priesthood ordinations Young’s sons received, if any, are not known, but at least ten of his seventeen sons who survived childhood received Melchizedek Priesthood ordinations and endowments between the ages of eleven and seventeen, on average at 16.9 years.<sup>59</sup> Apostle Wilford Woodruff, when called to a mission in 1849, ordained nine-year-old Wilford, Jr., a priest “so he could act in his father’s absence to administer the Lord’s supper to the family.” He reordained this son at age thirteen, for an unknown reason. At sixteen, young Wilford was ordained to the Melchizedek Priesthood and endowed.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup>Brigham Young, 6 October 1854, *Journal of Discourses*, 2:89.

<sup>59</sup>These sons, with endowment year and age in parentheses are Joseph Angell (1852, 17), John Willard (1855, 11), Brigham Heber (1862, 16), Oscar Brigham (1862, 16), Ernest Irving (1868, 17), Willard (1868, 16), Hyrum Smith (1868, 17), Arte de Christa (1869, 14), Joseph Don Carlos (1869, 14), and Feramorz Little (1874, 15). Young family groups sheets, LDS Family History Library; *Journal History*, 28 December 1868. Brigham Young ordained John Willard an apostle on 22 November 1855, according to Dean C. Jessee, *Letters of Brigham Young to His Sons* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1974), 92, the date at which he was endowed, according to family group records, or on 4 February 1864, according to Lynn M. Hilton, *The Story of Salt Lake Stake* (Salt Lake City: Salt Lake Printing Co., 1972), 117.

*Priesthood as Part of Youth Improvement Efforts*

Eliza R. Snow admitted that “no thought was bestowed upon [the] spiritual culture” of Zion’s first generation of children until parents realized that “the spirit of the world had crept in among our young people.” As a result, children “often manifested but little regard for religious exercises,” and “young men generally sent on a mission were extremely ignorant of the first principles of the Gospel.”<sup>61</sup> Children’s shortcomings stemmed in part from the fact that most adults and almost all youth did not regularly attend sacrament meetings, in good part because of tiny chapels. Sunday Schools flourished for children in the 1870s, but the smallness of meetinghouses meant they were not expected to attend sacrament meetings.<sup>62</sup> Salt Lake City’s Ninth Ward reported in 1870 that only 31 of its 181 families regularly attended Sunday services and that 97 (50 percent) were “perfectly indifferent.”<sup>63</sup> Hardly churched and often barely schooled, many young people had limited religious experience and understanding. And unquestionably, some behaved badly.

Forty-four percent of Utah’s population by 1880 were fourteen or under—and Zion had its share of misbehavers.<sup>64</sup> Complaints from Salt Lake City, Provo, and St. George included generalizations (“the growth of wickedness among our young people,”<sup>65</sup> “rowdyism is rampant”) and specifics: “crowds of uncouth boys loitering around

<sup>60</sup>Thomas G. Alexander, *Things in Heaven and Earth: The Life and Times of Wilford Woodruff, a Mormon Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1991), 178.

<sup>61</sup>Eliza R. Snow, as quoted in L. D. Alder, “R.S. Reports,” *Woman’s Exponent* 6 (15 February 1878): 138; “Sunday School Meeting at Logan City,” *Juvenile Instructor* 7 (28 September 1872): 155; “Mutual Improvement,” *Contributor* 1 (October 1879): 13; Sunday School Board Minutes, 1 July 1872, LDS Church Archives.

<sup>62</sup>An 1877 First Presidency message encouraged the attendance of children at sacrament meetings “where there are Meeting Houses sufficiently spacious to admit of children.” Circular of the First Presidency, 11 July 1877, in *Messages of the First Presidency*, 2:289.

<sup>63</sup>Bishops Minutes, 1 September 1870.

<sup>64</sup>Davis Bitton, “Zion’s Rowdies: Growing up on the Mormon Frontier,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 50 (Spring 1982): 182-95. The 1880 census statement is on p. 184.

<sup>65</sup>Bishops Minutes, 28 June 1877.

the stores halloing in the streets, and breaking horses on the Sabbath,” country boys with “uncouth and ill manners in refusing one half the road on meeting teams”; boys’ “efforts to destroy the benches and dirty all they could with their feet, using pencils on the walls and nails on the rails of the bannisters,” roughs harassing a mentally handicapped Swiss boy and “strip[ping] off his clothes,” swearing (a leader told some deacons to stop saying “by hell”), youths coming home at all hours of the night “intoxicated and using the vilest language,” deacons going outside to smoke as soon as their meeting was dismissed, and boys considering that “when they can smoke a pipe or cigar, or chew tobacco it is a sign of manliness,” or drinking whiskey for the same reason, “a gang” spitting “tobacco juice on the floor” at lectures and choir practices, forming gangs (“Provo roughs and Salt Lake roughs”), and boys throwing stones to break windows or “each others heads.”<sup>66</sup> Noting such misbehaviors, leaders, who valued these youth, felt the Church could do more to help them.<sup>67</sup>

The auxiliary organizations were created to prevent boys and girls from growing up unindoctrinated, untrained, and unappreciative of their religion—Sunday Schools in the 1860s, Mutual Improvement Associations for young women in 1869 and for young men in 1875, and children’s Primaries in 1878.<sup>68</sup> Leaders also began a

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<sup>66</sup>“Sunday School Meeting at Logan City,” 155; Salt Lake Deacons Minutes, 14 April 1874; Bishops Minutes, 20 December 1860, and 15 January 1874; St. George Stake Lesser Priesthood Minutes, 27 January 1877, LDS Church Archives; Salt Lake Stake Deacons Quorum Minutes, 7 March, 13 April, and 14 September 1875; Kanab Ward Teachers Report Minutes, 1872-81, 16 February 1873, LDS Church Archives; Provo Bishops Meetings, 17 August 1869, 7 June 1870, and 28 February 1871, LDS Church Archives; General Aaronic Minutes, 5 February 1876, and 2 November 1867.

<sup>67</sup>Examples of girls’ misbehavior include complaints that they missed meetings, “retailed scandal,” drank tea, liked new dances, read forbidden novels, wouldn’t carry out class assignments, and dated Gentiles. Salt Lake City Seventeenth Ward Young Ladies Cooperative Retrenchment Society Minutes, 1870s, LDS Church Archives; St. George Stake Lesser Priesthood Minutes, 6 February 1879.

<sup>68</sup>See the following entries from *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 4 vols. (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1991): Naomi M. Shumway, “Primary,” 3:1146; B. Lloyd Poelman, “Sunday School,” 3:1424-27; Charles E. Mitchner and

modest effort to call boys into priesthood activities during the mid-1870s. Salt Lake Stake President Angus M. Cannon wanted bishops “to draw the young men into positions in the Priesthood and thus an excellent experience, and, at the same time, preserve them from evil associations.” He reported a “marked improvement” in his own sons after they were ordained.<sup>69</sup> Priesthood service, proponents argued, like involvement in the auxiliaries, would help keep boys from evil practices while inculcating skills to qualify them for adult church service.

However, a primary reason for ordaining the youth was that adult men were reluctant to serve in the Aaronic Priesthood offices. Brigham Young instructed Edward Hunter in the fall of 1873 that each stake should have “a full quorum of Priests, Teachers, and Deacons properly organized.”<sup>70</sup> A few months later, Hunter lamented that “he had tried to have the quorums of the lesser priesthood filled up for over 15 years past” but that the goal was “not quite accomplished yet.”<sup>71</sup> “Nobody wanted to be a Deacon” and some declined to “condescend” to be ordained to these lesser offices.<sup>72</sup> “It is a difficult task,” one bishop lamented, “to find a sufficient quantity of efficient teachers. I have thought of calling upon some of the boys.”<sup>73</sup> “It is very hard to get the

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Mark E. Hurst, “Young Men,” 4:1613-14; Elaine Anderson Cannon, “Young Women” 4:1616-17. See also *Jubilee History of Latter-day Saints Sunday Schools, 1849-99* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Sunday School Union, 1900); Susa Young Gates, *History of the Young Ladies' Mutual Improvement Association*. . . (Salt Lake City: YLMIA General Board, 1911); Clarissa A. Beesley, “The Young Women’s Mutual Improvement Association,” *Improvement Era* 38 (April 1935): 243, 264-65, 271; and Carol Cornwall Madsen and Susan Staker Oman, *Sisters and Little Saints: One Hundred Years of Primary* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1979).

<sup>69</sup>Salt Lake Stake Historical Record, 3 November 1877, LDS Church Archives.

<sup>70</sup>Edward Hunter, Letter to Joseph A. Young, 18 September 1873, General Tithing Store Letterbooks, 1872-75, LDS Church Archives; Bishops Minutes, 13 January 1874. Although quorums were stake entities, deacons, teachers, and priests acted in wards under the bishop’s directions.

<sup>71</sup>Bishops Minutes, January 15, 1874.

<sup>72</sup>General Aaronic Minutes, 3 February 1877 and 4 September 1875; Salt Lake Stake, High Priests Quorum Minutes, 28 July 1877.

<sup>73</sup>Salt Lake Deacons Minutes, 27 January 1875.

older men to act as Teachers," another noted, "but the young men come forward and are willing to take their parts and therefore we have to appoint young men where older ones should be."<sup>74</sup> A third recruited boys as deacons but wanted "a man selected as President of the Chorum the same to have general charge of this meeting House."<sup>75</sup>

Some bishops, naturally, resisted the new trend. Samuel G. Ladd, president of Salt Lake Stake's priests quorum, asked bishops to fill his quorum with "good responsible men and not boys." Priests, he said, should be "experienced men."<sup>76</sup> Similarly, Ephraim's bishop, Canute Peterson, told his ward priesthood holders in 1874: "We might think that these quorums should be filled with young men, but the Kingdom of God had increased and there was evils and iniquities in the church, and it is the duty of the lesser priesthood to look after these things, and for this reason men of experience was called."<sup>77</sup>

Despite reluctance, however, the reversal of a twenty-five year trend had begun, and bishops handpicked young men to be ordained deacons in the ward or at stake deacons meetings. In 1874, "many of our young men were being ordained to the offices of the Lesser Priesthood" in Provo.<sup>78</sup> A small number of "boys" or "young brethren" in Salt Lake City began attending deacons meetings with the older, acting deacons.<sup>79</sup> Most of these young deacons were fourteen or older, although James Leach, president of Salt Lake Stake's deacons quorum and acting bishop of Salt Lake Second Ward, enthusiastically suggested: "Boys from 10 years of age and upwards should come and be ordained deacons; they can assist to clean up the house."<sup>80</sup> Two years later, he reported that in Salt Lake

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., 27 January 1877; General Aaronic Minutes, 6 November 1875.

<sup>75</sup>Salt Lake City Tenth Ward, Teachers Report Meeting, 1874-80, 28 August 1874.

<sup>76</sup>General Aaronic Minutes, 2 January 1875, and 1 January 1876.

<sup>77</sup>Sanpete Stake, Aaronic Priesthood Minute Book, 1873-77, 2 February 1874, LDS Church Archives.

<sup>78</sup>General Aaronic Minutes, 6 February 6, 1875.

<sup>79</sup>Salt Lake Deacons Minutes, 10 March and 9 June 1874.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid., 5 August 1873, and 10 March 1874.



Valley some hundred “boys” recently had been ordained as deacons.<sup>81</sup>

In the mid-1870s, deacons prepared meetinghouses for meetings, ushered, hauled food, fuel, and goods to the needy, and helped with the sacrament—tasks not beyond a youth’s ability to handle. At monthly meetings of the Salt Lake Stake deacons quorum, the young newly ordained deacons received much seasoned advice: clean the meetinghouse, dust the seats, polish the stove, carry in coal, light the fires, have the sacrament trays, table, and clothes clean and neat, usher people to their seats, help keep order during church services, and even clean the “back-houses”—apparently the outhouses.<sup>82</sup>

But young ordained deacons did not replace acting deacons. In 1877, the year Brigham Young died, Elder Matthias Cowley queried, “If we were all to stay away (from Aaronic Priesthood quorum meetings) because we are Elders or Seventies, where would the teachers and deacons quorums be?”<sup>83</sup> In Salt Lake Stake “the teachers quorum was made up mostly of elders who owed their allegiance to the Higher Quorums,” while its priests quorum “was mostly made up of men having higher ordinations.”<sup>84</sup> In mid-year, the First Presidency matter-of-factly noted that “when deacons, teachers and priests have been wanted it has generally been the case that seventies and high priests have had to be taken to act in those offices.”<sup>85</sup> Although Brigham Young died in August, he and his counselors had already taken the position that all boys needed at least some priesthood experience.

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<sup>81</sup>Bishops Minutes, 10 August 1876.

<sup>82</sup>One ward, complaining of the “difficulty of getting deacons to officiate in their callings . . . had to hire men” as custodians. General Aaronic Minutes, 2 September 1865. For a time, Salt Lake Thirteenth Ward deacons were “not in active service” as a family living in the meetinghouse cleaned it. Bishops Minutes, 22 December 1881.

<sup>83</sup>Salt Lake Deacons Minutes, 26 May 1877.

<sup>84</sup>General Aaronic Minutes, 6 May 1876 and 1 July 1876.

<sup>85</sup>Circular of the First Presidency [Brigham Young, John Willard Young, and George Q. Cannon], 11 July 1877, in Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency* 2:283.

**1877-1908: ALL BOYS TO RECEIVE SOME PRIESTHOOD***The Priesthood Reorganization of 1877*

Five months before Brigham Young's death in August 1877, he dedicated the Church's first fully functioning temple (St. George) in April. The temple connected the Church's priesthood operations with the heavenly priesthood, and that connection inspired the First Presidency and Twelve to thoroughly restructure and revitalize Utah's stakes, wards, and quorums. In the three decades of Church growth in Utah, a number of makeshift arrangements had developed—apostles serving as stake presidents, unordained bishops, nonfunctioning quorums, too-large stakes, aging local leaders, and too few wards.

On 11 July 1877, the First Presidency issued a momentous circular letter which became the Church government handbook of its day.<sup>86</sup> None of the Aaronic Priesthood policies were new: home visits were an Aaronic Priesthood responsibility, qualified adults should do it, and young men should assist. High priests, seventies, and elders, when called upon by bishops, "should be willing to act in the offices of the lesser priesthood until priests, teachers, and deacons of the necessary experience are found." Other instructions to the bishops reiterated that "all . . . grievances and disputes" should be "settled by the Lesser Priesthood." Consequently, the policy continued to be to call "good faithful men" who are "exemplary in their moral conduct to act as teachers."<sup>87</sup>

The 1877 epistle clearly assumed that Aaronic Priesthood holders would be adults when it warned that "if teachers, priests and bishops, or other officers, suffer iniquity to exist in the church . . . without taking action against it, they become partakers of other men's sins and they are unworthy of their positions." In dependent branches too small to be wards, "the bishop, to whose ward it belongs, should appoint a priest to preside, if there is one; if there is not, a teacher can be appointed" or a high

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<sup>86</sup>Hartley, "Priesthood Reorganization of 1877"; Circular of the First Presidency, 11 July 1877, in Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency* 2:283-95.

<sup>87</sup>Form Letter from Presiding Bishopric to New Bishops, copied into Bishops Minutes, 10 July 1877; *ibid.*, 21 December 1882.

priest or seventy could “act for the time being in the capacity of a priest.”<sup>88</sup>

What *was* new for the Aaronic Priesthood, however, was the First Presidency’s restructuring of quorum affiliation by ward instead of by stake. In organizing quorums of forty-eight priests, twenty-four teachers, and twelve deacons, the First Presidency circular said, “If there should not be a sufficient number for a quorum in one Ward, then they should be taken from others contiguous to it and most convenient for communication and meetings.” Stake Aaronic Priesthood quorums ceased to exist.<sup>89</sup>

But perhaps the most far-reaching new policy was this: “It would be excellent training for the young men if they had the opportunity of acting in the offices of the lesser priesthood” as an apprentice “companion” to an “experienced priest or teacher.” Not only would they thereby obtain “very valuable experience” but they “would be likely to place a higher value upon” Melchizedek Priesthood in the future. This policy affirmed the idea then current that *every* boy should receive *some* priesthood office.

Alexander McRae, bishop of a Salt Lake City ward, had told a general deacons meeting that “all boys in this church should learn the duties of a deacon,” while a stake priests quorum officer believed that “it is the right of every boy born in the priesthood as a legal heir to have a portion as soon as he is able to magnify it.”<sup>90</sup>

### *Increased Ordination of Youths*

Within a year, hundreds received the Aaronic Priesthood, usually becoming deacons, and the practice of ordaining boys became well established. A Cache Valley bishop in late 1877 felt pleased that “a source of strength had been opened up through the organization of the Aaronic Priesthood, the young men acquit-

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<sup>88</sup>When Tooele Stake was reorganized in 1877, two new dependent branches, each presided over by a priest who was obviously an adult, were created. Tooele Stake Historical Record and Manuscript History, 1887, LDS Church Archives.

<sup>89</sup>Sanpete Stake’s Aaronic Priesthood Minute Book ends in 1877 as do the General Aaronic Minutes and Salt Lake Deacons Minutes.

<sup>90</sup>Salt Lake Deacons Minutes, 27 January 1877.

ting themselves creditably.”<sup>91</sup> But ordination was not linked to any particular age. In Hooper and West Weber Wards, leaders ordained “all the boys above fourteen years.”<sup>92</sup> “The duties of a deacon are so easy,” a Tooele leader noted in 1881, “that a boy of 12 or 14 years can do the duties.”<sup>93</sup> Nineteenth Ward in Salt Lake City, during the 1870s and 1880s, ordained boys as young as nine and as old as nineteen.<sup>94</sup> In 1887, Apostle Francis M. Lyman told *Contributor* readers that “all our young men of fifteen years and upward receive some degree of the Priesthood.”<sup>95</sup> In 1888 when Grantsville Ward organized its Aaronic Priesthood, it ordained eighteen priests ages fifteen to twenty.<sup>96</sup> In 1896, Salt Lake Sixth Ward ordained four deacons who were twelve, thirteen, fourteen, and sixteen.<sup>97</sup>

But some bishops, adhering to quorum maximums in the Doctrine and Covenants, allowed only twelve deacons at a time, and many adolescent boys reached adulthood during the 1880s and 1890s without Aaronic Priesthood callings.<sup>98</sup> For example, Anson B. Call was ordained an elder in 1884 without ever holding an Aaronic Priesthood office because his brother, the bishop of their Bountiful ward, “did not know that they could have more than one quorum in a ward at a time.” Call felt “very badly when I was not chosen as one of the twelve for the Deacons.” In contrast, Tooele Ward in 1883 had six deacons quorums so that all the local boys could be ordained.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>91</sup>Bishop Robert Daines of Hyde Park Ward in “Minutes of the Quarterly Conference of the Cache Valley Stake of Zion,” *Journal History*, 4 November 1877.

<sup>92</sup>Weber Stake, Hooper and West Weber Wards, Minutes, 23 September 1877, LDS Church Archives.

<sup>93</sup>Tooele Lesser Priesthood Book 2, 25 February 1881, LDS Church Archives.

<sup>94</sup>Palmer, *Aaronic Priesthood Through the Centuries*, 392.

<sup>95</sup>Francis M. Lyman, “Comments of the Day,” *Contributor* 8 (July 1887): 356.

<sup>96</sup>Grantsville Lesser Priesthood Record, 1874-88, 23 October 1888, LDS Church Archives.

<sup>97</sup>Salt Lake City Nineteenth Ward, Lesser Priesthood Minutes, 1880-1906, 16 October 1896, LDS Church Archives.

<sup>98</sup>Keeler, *First Steps in Church Government*, i.

<sup>99</sup>“Life Story of Anson B. Call,” 1954, typescript copy, 1, photocopy in my

Tooele leaders also believed that “it was just as necessary for the young men to be ordained Deacons, Teachers, and Priests, as it is for school children to study in the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd, readers, for we must start at the lower round of the ladder and work up step by step.”<sup>100</sup> Such stepwise advancement through the ranks was not universally implemented. James E. Talmage was ordained a deacon, a teacher, and an elder, but not a priest.<sup>101</sup>

### *Deacons' Callings and Duties*

Because the revelation assigned no specific duties to deacons, bishops assigned young deacons ordained after 1877 a wide variety of tasks. In 1879 the Salt Lake City Sixth Ward deacons were collecting fast offerings, supervised by the acting teachers.<sup>102</sup> Deacons cut firewood for the poor, delivered food, and continued to act as meetinghouse custodians. Henry W. Hawley, a deacon during the 1880s, complained that too much work was involved in cleaning and heating the meetinghouse, so he resigned not just from the assignment but from being a deacon!<sup>103</sup> In 1896 Apostle Joseph F. Smith observed: “It is in our day very necessary at times to select wise, judicious, experienced and sober men to fill the office of deacon,” meaning in part men capable of maintaining the larger chapels.<sup>104</sup> Many wards, however, began hiring custodians during the 1890s, and the practice was widespread after 1900.

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possession; Tooele Lesser Priesthood Book 2, 5 February 1883.

<sup>100</sup>Ibid., 28 January 1884. Tooele Stake President Francis M. Lyman also used the ladder analogy. Ibid., 9 March 1878.

<sup>101</sup>*Priesthood Restoration Commemoration* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1977): 10.

<sup>102</sup>Salt Lake City Sixth Ward Council Meeting Minutes, 3 February 1879, and 24 August 1896, LDS Church Archives.

<sup>103</sup>Henry W. Hawley, *The Life Story of Henry W. Hawley* (N.p., n.d), 17; copy in LDS Historical Department Library; General Aaronic Minutes, 5 February 1870. Payson Utah Priests Quorum Minute Book, 1876-85, November 1876, LDS Church Archives, reports assignments to deacons to gather firewood and buy lantern oil for meetings. Salt Lake City Sixth Ward, Record Book October 1869 to April 1880, 9 March 1877, LDS Church Archives, reports that the deacons cleaned, lit, and warmed the building.

<sup>104</sup>Joseph F. Smith, “Important Questions Answered,” *Contributor* 17 (May 1896): 472.

During the 1870s and 1880s, a few wards started letting deacons pass the sacrament. In 1873 in Kanab Ward, the acting teachers blessed the sacrament and the deacons “pass[ed] it to the people.” When a ward member objected, citing the Doctrine and Covenants requirement that priests “administer” the sacrament, Bishop Levi Stewart told him that Brigham Young said passing the sacrament was not administering it, so it would be “perfectly right” for deacons to pass the sacrament.<sup>105</sup> St. George deacons in 1877, and Fourteenth Ward deacons in Salt Lake City in 1883 were passing the sacrament.<sup>106</sup> At the general bishops’ meetings in 1883, in response to a question about whether deacons had the right to “carry around the sacrament,” Bishop William L. N. Allen advised the group that the stake high council had recently decided yes.<sup>107</sup> In 1886 Kanab Stake leaders allowed deacons to pass the sacrament vessels but only if they were “sedate, responsible persons.”<sup>108</sup>

Churchwide, however, few deacons or priests administered the sacrament. Elders acting as priests, rather than the ordained priests, administered the sacrament in most wards because people believed that young men could not give proper dignity to the ordinance.<sup>109</sup>

### *Young Teachers and Priests*

Although youthful deacons became fairly common, young teachers and priests did not. Teachers quorums continued to be filled primarily by adults, although some missions called on youths to make up manpower shortages.<sup>110</sup> An 1881 report from Payson,

<sup>105</sup>Kanab Ward Teachers Minutes, 15 December 1873, and 14 January 1874.

<sup>106</sup>Southern Utah Mission, St. George Stake 1869-86, Lesser Priesthood Record Book A, 24 February 1877, LDS Church Archives; Salt Lake City Fourteenth Ward, First Quorum of Deacons Minutes, 1878-1908, LDS Church Archives, see 1883 and 1884 meetings.

<sup>107</sup>Bishops Minutes, 6 December 1883.

<sup>108</sup>Kanab Stake Historical Record, 8 December 1886, LDS Church Archives.

<sup>109</sup>“The Duties of a Priest,” *Juvenile Instructor* 32 (15 November 1897): 690.

<sup>110</sup>Gary L. Phelps, “Home Teaching: Attempts by the Latter-day Saints to Establish an Effective Program During the Nineteenth Century” (Master’s thesis, Brigham Young University, 1975), 95, and “Teachers and Their Duties,” *Millennial Star* 42 (March 1880): 136.

Utah, noted that “aged men were selected to act as Priests, and the best men they could get for Teachers.” Such priest-teacher pairs “usually visited the ward.”<sup>111</sup> In 1902 Apostle Ruder Clawson noted that ordained teachers were youths between fourteen to twenty—“not . . . quite qualified to go out and teach the families of the Saints” unaccompanied by older men; however, he noted, some wards had called priests as companions to the ward teachers.<sup>112</sup> LeGrand Richards, later Presiding Bishop, was a youthful ward teacher in Tooele, Utah, just after the turn of a century. He and his senior companion prayed before making their visits, both gave messages in the homes, and they offered to pray before leaving. One woman told him they were the first ward teachers who offered to pray with her and her children since she came to Zion.<sup>113</sup> Priests, teachers, and deacons continued to be considered ward officers, sustained in ward conferences, through the early twentieth century.<sup>114</sup>

The natural confusion between ordained and acting teachers resulted in an official explanation in the *Improvement Era* in 1902:

There are in every ward a number of brethren selected to be acting teachers, under the direction of the Bishopric. These are usually men holding the Melchizedek Priesthood, but called to act in the lesser or Aaronic Priesthood for visiting and teaching purposes. They are appointed as aids to the Bishop, and he or one of his counselors presides at their meetings.

The teachers' quorum . . . is another body entirely. It consists of twenty-four ordained teachers presided over by three of their own

<sup>111</sup>Bishops Minutes, 26 November 1881.

<sup>112</sup>Ruder Clawson, Sermon, *Report of the Semi-Annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 5 October 1902 (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, semi-annual) (hereafter cited as *Conference Report*), 50.

<sup>113</sup>Lucile C. Tate, *LeGrand Richards, Beloved Apostle* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982), 22.

<sup>114</sup>Logan Fourth Ward, Cache Stake, Historical Record, 13 December 1896, LDS Church Archives; see Salt Lake City Sixth Ward, Council Meeting Minutes, 30 December 1880. Union Ward in Salt Lake County had twenty-four acting teachers for nine hundred members; they were sustained immediately after the bishopric in ward conferences. Gordon Irving, “Patterns of Religious Participation in Union Ward, 1877-1920 (Case Study: Sacrament Meeting Participation, 1910),” typescript, 1985, 10, photocopy in my possession.

number. They do not hold the higher or Melchizedek Priesthood. They act in the capacity of teachers in the ward to which they belong when called to do so under the direction of the Bishopric.

But the two bodies of teachers should not be confounded. The acting teachers selected by the bishopric as their aids do not form a quorum at all. They have no fixed number, or distinct ordination as teachers.<sup>115</sup>

Lowry Nelson was a junior ward teacher about 1906 in rural Ferron, Utah. "On horseback," they visited "families living on farms outside the village," usually monthly to find out if anyone was in need or ill. In these pre-telephone days, "a monthly checkup served a purpose."<sup>116</sup>

### 1908-22: DESIGNING A YOUTH-LEVEL PRIESTHOOD

For three decades after the 1877 reorganization, Aaronic Priesthood work was characterized by the dual recognition that it was a good thing to introduce boys early to quorum activity but that most of the ward's real work required adult men's involvement. Presiding Bishop William B. Preston succeeded Edward Hunter in 1884 but gave virtually no new instructions regarding Aaronic Priesthood work and stopped holding the general bishops meetings. They had become unnecessary because the monthly stake priesthood meetings implemented by the 1877 reorganization gave bishops regular contact with stake presidents through whom General Authorities funneled most instructions for the wards.<sup>117</sup>

<sup>115</sup>"Three Questions Answered," editorial, *Deseret News*, 20 November 1902; copy in *Journal History*.

<sup>116</sup>Lowry Nelson, *In the Direction of His Dreams: Memoirs* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1985), 116.

<sup>117</sup>The Presiding Bishopric merits more studies but its records are not open to researchers. Available studies include Orson F. Whitney's sketches of Presiding Bishops Edward Partridge, Newel K. Whitney, Edward Hunter, and William B. Preston in "The Aaronic Priesthood," *Contributor* 6 (October/September 1884 to Sept. 1885); Donald Gene Pace, "The LDS Presiding Bishopric, 1851-1888: An Administrative Study," (M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1978); D. Brent Collette, "In Search of Zion: A Description of Early Mormon Millennial Utopianism as Revealed Through the Life of Edward Partridge" (M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1977); Larry N. Poulsen, "The Life and Contributions of Newell Kimball Whitney," (M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1966); Tate, *LeGrand Richards*; and Hartley, "Edward Hunter, Pioneer Presiding Bishop." I have an essay-length



Charles W. Nibley, who succeeded Preston in 1907, strongly advocated youthful ordination and systematic Aaronic Priesthood work as important training for future Melchizedek Priesthood holders. He was a key promoter of such during his bishopric service to 1925.

Two factors influenced a reappraisal of Aaronic Priesthood work: missionary demographics and a greater interest in youth that was sweeping the nation as part of the Progressive Movement. During most of the nineteenth century, Mormon missionaries were typically married men. In 1886-90, 18 percent of missionaries were single; however, by 1895-1900, the figure was 51 percent.<sup>118</sup> A major reason was economic: a growing number of married men were salaried employees with larger mortgages. Sunday Schools and the Young Men's Mutual Improvement Association (YMMIA), but not priesthood quorums, provided training in public speaking and gospel study. In 1912 Nibley argued that better training of priests would silence "the present complaint which we sometimes hear that young boys are sent upon missions who are not prepared, and even, sometimes, not worthy of the authority of the higher priesthood."<sup>119</sup>

Second, throughout America, "Progressivism" generated a climate of concern for the mental and moral health of youth, for preventing juvenile delinquency, and for providing recreational facilities and opportunities. Coupled with a second emphasis of Progressivism on reforming government, schools, and business, the time was ripe for upgrading and reorganizing Aaronic Priesthood work. Efficiency experts armed with scientific studies and psychological insights were showing organizations how they could more effectively budget, manage, monitor reports, communicate, and

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study of Preston in process.

<sup>118</sup>William E. Hughes, "A Profile of the Missionaries of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1849-1900," (M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1986), 56, 161.

<sup>119</sup>See General Priesthood Committee, on Outlines, Minutes, 1908-22, 6 August 1912, LDS Church Archives (hereafter cited as General Priesthood Committee). Only four months earlier, B. H. Roberts of the First Council of the Seventy urged a reversal of "the custom of sending mainly young men into the mission field" and advocated that "at least sufficient older men be in the field to add dignity to the work." *Ibid.*, 2 April 1912.

produce measurable results. In the spirit of the times, Church auxiliaries were adopting new teaching methods and activity programs that appealed to the youth and to adults, age-grouping their classes, and providing centralized direction.<sup>120</sup>

Recognizing that priesthood quorum work “had been neglected,” that “a great many young men” were not involved, and that Sunday Schools and Mutuals “had been actually doing the work that the quorums should do,” such as teaching and developing speaking skills, General Authorities decided in 1908 to try to upgrade priesthood work throughout the Church.<sup>121</sup>

In early 1908 a General Priesthood Committee on Outlines was called to generate lesson manuals for local priesthood quorums and to evaluate ward-level priesthood activity.<sup>122</sup> Rather than producing a manual or two and disbanding, the committee found itself involved in a broad range of priesthood policy matters and remained active until 1922. At first the committee consisted of two apostles and the Presiding Bishopric but grew to nearly twenty, including members of the Sunday School, YMMIA, and Religion Class general boards. President Joseph F. Smith had requested at April 1908 general conference that boys be given “something to do that will make them interested in the work of the Lord.” Responding with enthusiasm and creativity, the committee proposed the major reforms known as the “Priesthood Movement.”<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>120</sup>Thomas G. Alexander, deals with both the “priesthood movement” and “administrative modernization,” during this period in his *Mormonism in Transition: A History of the Latter-day Saints, 1890-1930* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 93-115. See also James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, *Story of the Latter-day Saints*, 2d ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1992), 461-67.

<sup>121</sup>General Priesthood Committee, 16 and 23 June 1908.

<sup>122</sup>Hartley, “The Priesthood Reform Movement, 1908-1922.” The name was changed in late 1909 to the First Presidency and Twelve’s Standing Committee on Priesthood Work and, after 1915, the General Committee on Courses of Study for the Priesthood. For simplicity, I call all three the General Priesthood Committee.

<sup>123</sup>Joseph F. Smith, *Conference Report*, 4 April 1908, 6; General Priesthood Committee, 15 October 1908, 16 May and 9 December 1910, and 7 November 1911.

*Elements of Priesthood Reform*

A major development was the committee's recommendation that each boy move systematically through the Aaronic Priesthood callings. They suggested fixed age groupings: deacons should be ordained at twelve, teachers at fifteen, priests at eighteen, and elders at twenty-one.<sup>124</sup> These groupings let the committee write age-specific lessons and gave quorums a social function.

Second, the General Priesthood Committee, struggling with the assignment of producing lesson materials for teachers, dealt with the problem that ordained (young) teachers were seldom assigned to be acting teachers.<sup>125</sup> The debate was a stimulating one. Committee member B. H. Roberts argued that ordained teachers and priests bore the scriptural responsibility for home visits and that others should not do it. Another member, Joseph B. Keeler, who was also president of Utah Stake, disagreed, asserting that "until teachers and priests are qualified to do this work, it will be necessary to call in the elders, seventies, and high priests to do the teaching." Roberts responded: "When will the quorums ever do the work required of them if they are put aside and others appointed for their work?" Keeler answered that "even the brightest of young men lack experience and it would always be necessary to have older men go with them to assist them in this work."<sup>126</sup>

The committee's solution was to rename these visits "ward teaching" and to redefine the program according to two principles: (1) elders have a scriptural obligation to "watch over the church" much like Aaronic Priesthood mandates (D&C 20:42), and (2) ward teaching was a bishop-supervised task independent of a specific office. By 1912 the committee created and implemented a standardized, structured churchwide ward teaching system and published a series of monthly messages in the Church's magazine for adults, the *Improvement Era*.<sup>127</sup> One message explained: "Ward teaching is

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<sup>124</sup>General Priesthood Committee, 5 June 1908.

<sup>125</sup>"Report of the Committee on Priesthood Outlines," *Improvement Era* 16 (May 1913): 735.

<sup>126</sup>General Priesthood Committee, 7 July 1908, and 9 May 1909.

<sup>127</sup>Hartley, "Ordained and Acting Teachers," 395-98; and Rex A. Andersen,

**TABLE 1**  
**CHANGES IN AGE OF ORDINATION, 1908-70**

<i>Year</i>	<i>Deacon</i>	<i>Teacher</i>	<i>Priest</i>	<i>Elder</i>
1908	12	15	18	21
1925	12	15	17	20
1934	12	15	17	19
1953	12	15	17	20
1954	12	14	16	20
1960	12	14	16	19
1970	12	14	16	18

a calling, just as missionary work abroad is a calling," and "no quorum is solely responsible for it."<sup>128</sup>

Apostle David O. McKay explained the new ward teaching program at general conference in October 1912. His twelve suggestions became a blueprint for at least the next three decades. Most dealt with stake and ward supervision and reports. He acknowledged the Church's traditional practice by observing, "Ward teaching requires the most experienced men in the ward. High priests, seventies and elders should look upon it as one of the most important duties of their calling." However, he added, this ideal "does not prevent younger men, who hold the Aaronic Priesthood, from being employed also." Another suggestion, reaffirming the apprenticeship principle, was that "every young man holding the office of priest" should be "properly trained" by working with an older and experienced man.<sup>129</sup>

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"A Documentary History of the Lord's Way of Watching Over the Church by the Priesthood Through the Ages" (M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1974).

<sup>128</sup>"Ward Teaching," *Improvement Era* 16 (November 1912): 79-80.

<sup>129</sup>*Ibid.*, 79-83. In a major conference address on the same topic four years later, McKay stressed: "There is no more important work in the Church [than ward teaching]." His talk circulated in pamphlet form for years. David O. McKay, Sermon, *Conference Report*, October 1916, 57-61; reprinted as McKay, "Ward Teaching—An Important Calling," *Improvement Era* 55 (May 1952): 356.

This new program worked well; percentages rose steadily during the next decade, from 31 percent in 1912 to 54 percent in 1914 and 64 percent in 1920. At an Aaronic Priesthood convention held in Salt Lake City on 2 October 1921, Salt Lake Stake reported that, of its 718 ward teachers, 280 priests and teachers had done ward teaching the month before.<sup>130</sup>

### *New Duties for Aaronic Priesthood Bearers*

The October 1911 general conference heard a report that the deacons were in fair condition but that teachers and priests quorum were not functioning: "The local authorities generally fail to grasp the dignity and importance of the calling of the teacher and priest, and the boys cannot help but feel, as far as quorum work is concerned, that the organization has broken down and that they are being held on a kind of waiting list until they are old enough to be ordained elders."<sup>131</sup> The report continued with revealing Church-wide statistics: "There are 9,300 Teachers, 20,255 Deacons. In sixty-seven wards not one ordained Teacher and in twenty-one not one Priest. In slightly over one-third of the wards there is only one-half of a quorum of teachers, and in only fifty wards is there half of a priests quorum or more. . . . We have failed to live up to the Lord's plan."

The committee saw that one solution would be new assignments geared to the age abilities of boys. About a year later, Bishop Nibley sent a circular letter to bishops outlining numerous tasks the priests could do.<sup>132</sup> The reaction was enthusiastic. By the fall of 1913, some 500 out of 715 wards had priests classes, and 258 wards had quorums of at least twenty-five priests.<sup>133</sup>

<sup>130</sup>Presiding Bishop's Office, Annual Reports, 1915, 1920, LDS Church Archives; *Minutes of the Aaronic Priesthood Convention Held in the Assembly Hall, Friday, October 2, 1921* (n.p., n.d.), LDS Church Archives. Vernon L. Israelsen, "Changes in the Numbers and the Priesthood Affiliation of the Men Used as Ward Teachers in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1920 to 1935" (M.A. thesis, BYU, 1937), 25, described it as a "substantial increase."

<sup>131</sup>"Address to the Priesthood," *Improvement Era* 15 (May 1912): 657.

<sup>132</sup>General Priesthood Committee, 6 August 1912, cited in "Report of the Committee on Priesthood Outlines," 734.

<sup>133</sup>General Priesthood Committee, 2 September 1913; "Report of the

To similarly invigorate teachers quorums, a 1913 *Improvement Era* article urged the bishops to make teachers “active and useful” and provided a list of suggested activities.<sup>134</sup> A master-list of youthful tasks in 1916 summarized what deacons, teachers, and priests were already doing in various wards:

*Deacons:* Collect fast offerings, carry messages for bishops, pass sacrament, prepare fuel for widows and elderly, care for the poor, pass out notices, pump organ at meetings, maintain church property, care for church cemeteries, keep order in meetinghouses, maintain meetinghouse grounds, assist in primary work, assist in Religion class work, usher, do Boy Scout work, attend the doors at meetings, distribute special notices.

*Teachers:* Assist in ward teaching, assist with sacrament, instruct Boy Scouts, take charge of meetings occasionally, speak and sing at meetings, collect ward funds, assist in renovating meetinghouses, cut wood for poor, sing in choir, be clerks in branches, serve as officers in the auxiliaries, notify priesthood quorums of meetings.

*Priests:* Administer the sacrament, pass the sacrament, assist in ward teaching, be Sunday School officers or teachers, be Mutual officers or teachers, baptize, be ward choristers, carry messages for bishopric, hold cottage meetings [preaching the gospel in homes], assist the elders, do missionary work in the ward, read scriptures at ward meetings, supervise fast offering collecting, help bishop care for tithes, help bishop with wayward boys, take part in meetings, haul gravel and make cement walks around meetinghouses, help with teams to level public squares, help supervise ward amusements.<sup>135</sup>

A relative few of these activities were scripturally assigned: priests and teachers assisting with ward teaching, priests administering the sacrament, and priests baptizing. However, most of the other jobs on the long list are tasks that can be done by anyone in a ward, male or female, assigned to do them. (See “Assigned Duties Not Needing Priesthood” below).

Although most of the pieces of the priesthood movement were

Committee on Priesthood Outlines,” *Improvement Era* 16 (May 1913): 734-39; “The Ordained Teacher,” *ibid.*, 16 (April 1913): 647-48.

<sup>134</sup>H. H. Blood, “The Ordained Teacher,” *Improvement Era* (April 1913): 642-48. Other suggestions followed in “Ward Teaching and Class Efficiency,” *Improvement Era* 17 (November 1914): 36-37.

<sup>135</sup>General Priesthood Committee, 1 June 1916; “Practical Duties for Members of the Lesser Priesthood,” *Improvement Era* 19 (July 1916): 845.



*The deacons of Richmond Ward in Utah in 1915 show that efforts to recruit more young men to priesthood ranks were successful. **Improvement Era**, 18 (July 1915): 838.*

in place by 1916, the General Priesthood Committee continued to add refinements and encouragement for another five years before it was released, the First Presidency deciding that the next adjustments would be made by “existing quorums” and auxiliary leaders.<sup>136</sup>

One young man who advanced through Aaronic Priesthood ranks during this period was Harold B. Lee, later Church President. His ordinations show that the announced ordination ages of twelve, fifteen, eighteen, and twenty were only recommendations: Lee became a deacon just before he turned eleven, a teacher the month before he turned fourteen, a priest two months before he became sixteen, and an elder four months before age nineteen.<sup>137</sup>

<sup>136</sup>General Priesthood Committee, 8 and 13 December 1922.

<sup>137</sup>Brent L. Goates, *Harold B. Lee: Prophet and Seer* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1985), 45.

In mission areas, because of the lack of temples, adult men were sometimes ordained to only the Aaronic Priesthood. The 1878 and 1891 statistical reports for Europe show that close to 20 percent of LDS men held some priesthood office, roughly the same figure as in U.S. stakes. But in the United States, about 25 percent of all priesthood holders had Aaronic Priesthood, compared to 40-44 percent in Europe. In 1891, European priests outnumbered deacons by about two to one, the reverse of the stakes' 1:2 ratio. Melchizedek Priesthood bearers outnumbered Aaronic Priesthood bearers 3:1 in the stakes but only 3:2 in Europe. The Australia Mission had a policy from 1896 to 1928 that men did not receive the Melchizedek Priesthood until they had immigrated to Zion and were ready to make temple covenants. Branch officers presided by Aaronic Priesthood authority. When local members protested, demanding the Melchizedek Priesthood for branch leaders, the mission replaced them with missionaries. British Saints learned of the general priesthood reforms in 1908; but in early 1909, when European Mission President Charles W. Penrose discussed the duties of priests, teachers, and deacons, he obviously assumed that men held those offices. However, by the year's end, he instructed that Church ward teaching regulations be carried out among Saints "everywhere," provided that Melchizedek Priesthood holders "may be called to officiate in the duties" of the lesser priesthood, "and they can take with them either priests, teachers, or deacons if necessary or expedient."<sup>138</sup>

### 1920s-50s: INSTITUTIONALIZING THE YOUTH PRIESTHOOD

The next three decades were a time of implementation as old ways gave way slowly to the new. It took a generation of labor for

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<sup>138</sup>Statistical Report of the European Mission to Dec. 31, 1878," *Millennial Star* 41 (17 February 1879): 110-11; "Statistical Report of the European Mission, for the Year Ending December 31, 1891, 86-87"; 1878 membership statistical chart for stakes in Hartley, "The Priesthood Reorganization of 1877," 27; Marjorie Newton, *Southern Cross Saints: The Mormons in Australia* (Laie, Hawaii: Institute for Polynesian Studies, 1991), 180-84; "Minutes of the Newcastle Conference," *Millennial Star* 71 (24 March 1909): 179-80; "Profitable Work for the Priesthood," *ibid.*, 16 December 1909, 792-93.



the priesthood reforms to be widely accepted and in reasonable working order.

### *Leader Reluctance*

A major obstacle was the reservations some leaders had about giving youth serious priesthood labors. In pre-1920s statements, President Joseph F. Smith criticized “a disposition in the church to hurry boys in the priesthood” or to advance those who were not performing in the offices they held.<sup>139</sup> E. H. Anderson of the General Priesthood Committee advocated ordination no earlier than fifteen because “boys were too young at the age of twelve.”<sup>140</sup> Bishop Nibley proposed that young men serve missions as priests, rather than as elders or seventies; a successful mission would prove competency and worthiness for Melchizedek Priesthood and the temple endowment. Nothing came of his idea; endowment as a prerequisite for preaching to the world and the need for Melchizedek Priesthood to confirm and to bless the sick were well accepted.<sup>141</sup>

In many wards, members accustomed to seeing dignified older men handle the sacrament felt uncomfortable when boys took over. In 1909 and 1910, after the reforms had begun, one committeeman canvassed many wards to discover that older men still most frequently administered the sacrament, a second reported widespread reluctance to let priests bless the sacrament, and an *Improvement Era* article on sacrament procedures talked about the *elder* passing the sacrament.<sup>142</sup> Salt Lake City’s Thirty-Third Ward found a compromise and assigned Joseph W. Damron, Jr., in his late sixties, to “preside” at the sacrament table during the 1920s to “add dignity and sacredness to the sacrament service” as administered by two young priests.<sup>143</sup>

There was similar reluctance to let boys be ward teachers.

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<sup>139</sup>General Priesthood Committee, 12 December 1911.

<sup>140</sup>*Ibid.*, 2 April 1912.

<sup>141</sup>*Ibid.*, 6 August 1912.

<sup>142</sup>*Ibid.*, 10 December 1909; “The Holy Sacrament,” *Improvement Era* 13 (April 1910): 570-71.

<sup>143</sup>Joseph Warren Damron, Jr., Journal, 1891-1945, vol. 8 (life summary section), LDS Church Archives. Damron was born in 1866.

In one of his last public addresses in 1919, President Joseph F. Smith referred to the home visits of acting priests and teachers.<sup>144</sup> In 1921 the Presiding Bishopric reported that boys were not being advanced beyond deacons in some wards because they “are not qualified to do the work” (home visiting) required by revelation.<sup>145</sup>

In 1922, Presiding Bishop Charles W. Nibley and his counselors spearheaded a “new effort” with “heartly” support from the First Presidency and Twelve to invigorate the “neglected” Aaronic Priesthood. The new program consisted of “advancement . . . for faithful service.” Before each ordination, boys were “given examinations” by bishops to determine their diligence. The ordained teacher “should be assigned districts in the ward where he will accompany and assist the visiting [ward] teachers” while priests “may be called upon to administer the sacrament.” Bishops were urged to use teachers and priests as “youthful ward teachers.” Hugh Cannon, president of Liberty Stake (Salt Lake City), early in the 1920s reported accompanying two boys not older than fourteen on home visits in the Third Ward. The boys gave prayers, led songs, and stuck strictly to the purpose of the visits, thus demonstrating to Cannon “what the Lord had in mind when he placed the responsibility upon the ordained teachers.” In 1927, Cannon visited six families with a young and inexperienced priest who, after his initial nervousness, took part in the home presentations and reported that he enjoyed it.<sup>146</sup>

Reluctance to depend on young teachers was, however, based on simple realities; and in some ways, the best evidence came during the late 1920s and early 1930s when some local leaders tried to apply

<sup>144</sup>*Conference Report*, October 1919, 144.

<sup>145</sup>Presiding Bishopric, Circular Letter, November 1921, LDS Church Archives.

<sup>146</sup>See *Improvement Era*: “Greater Activity Urged in the Priesthood Quorums,” 25 (December 1921): 174; “The Aaronic Priesthood to Receive Special Attention,” 175; “The Aaronic Priesthood: Preparation, Ordination, and the Training of Young Men,” (January 1922): 268-72 and (February 1922): 366-69; “Youthful Ward Teachers,” 28 (June 1925): 785-86; “Aaronic Priesthood Standards,” 29 (December 1925): 203; “A Message from the Presiding Bishopric,” 28 (March 1926): 506-7; “Ward Teaching,” 32 (June 1929): 692-93.

the revelations literally. "In many parts of the Church ordained teachers and priests are being encouraged to become ward teachers," the *Improvement Era* reported in 1932.<sup>147</sup> Two years later, it described how in Cache Stake, "members of the Melchizedek Priesthood quorums are called to assist only when there are no available teachers or priests," and encouraged similar efforts as scripturally correct.<sup>148</sup>

The Presiding Bishopric instructed; "We may think that [a teacher] cannot do much by way of [ward] teaching. He can at least learn how to teach."<sup>149</sup> David A. Smith, counselor in the Presiding Bishopric, urged that ordained teachers be assigned to ward teach active families.<sup>150</sup> However, in 1940, the Presiding Bishopric recognized that pairing boys as ward teachers was not very effective and that "people will feel better about it if an older and more experienced brother takes the lead."<sup>151</sup> The practice of calling "acting teachers" diminished and died during the 1940s, replaced by the successful boy/adult "ward teacher" team, even though the terminology lingered throughout the 1930s.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>147</sup>"An Ordained Teacher Functions in His Calling," *Improvement Era* 35 (March 1932): 302.

<sup>148</sup>"Melchizedek Priesthood Ward Teaching," *Improvement Era* 37 (June 1934): 364, and 37 (April 1934): 229; "Ward Teaching by Aaronic Priesthood," *Improvement Era* 37 (January 1934): 43.

<sup>149</sup>"The Aaronic Priesthood Correlation Plan in Operation," *Improvement Era* 35 (April 1932): 356.

<sup>150</sup>David A. Smith, "Ward Teaching by Ordained Teachers," *Improvement Era* 37 (January 1934): 42.

<sup>151</sup>"Ward Teaching," *Improvement Era* 43 (December 1940): 748.

<sup>152</sup>According to the *Priesthood Manual: A Handbook for the Quorums of the Melchizedek Priesthood* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1933): 17: "In many wards there are not enough men to fill up the quorums of the Lesser Priesthood, and members of the High Priesthood are frequently found officiating as teachers." John A. Widtsoe, *Priesthood and Church Government in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1939): 170 (unchanged in the 1954 revised edition, p. 170) stated: "There are a number of men selected in every ward to be acting Teachers . . . These usually hold the office of either Elder, Seventy or High Priest." In the mid-1930s, Apostle Joseph Fielding Smith, recognized as the Church's doctrinal expert, wrote to a master's candidate: "I know of no work more important than that which has been assigned to the Ward Teacher and Ward Priest. . . . We have throughout the Church quite generally combined these two

*The Aaronic Priesthood Correlation Plan*

On 4 June 1925, Sylvester Q. Cannon became the Presiding Bishop. His efforts in behalf of the Aaronic Priesthood reinforced auxiliary changes and peaking concerns about youthful inactivity and reluctance to serve. Surveys in 1931 showed "large numbers of boys" inactive in priesthood quorums, Sunday Schools, or YMMIA.<sup>153</sup> Apostle Ricard L. Lyman admitted that same year that "the boy problem . . . is tremendously difficult."<sup>154</sup> Proposed as early as 1928 was a plan designed to increase boys' Church activity through better coordination between auxiliaries and quorums.<sup>155</sup> This Aaronic Priesthood Correlation Plan coordinated the YLMIA, YMMIA, Scouting program, Sunday School, and seminary at general, stake, and ward committees with representation from all five groups.<sup>156</sup> Announced in connection with April 1931 general conference, this plan, the *Improvement Era* subsequently explained in enthusiastic terms, "marshalls a large proportion of the man-power of the Church behind a program of training for young men of the Church. It has been called 'the most important movement in connection with the Aaronic Priesthood since it was restored to the earth'"<sup>157</sup> The plan urged that boys fill quotas of assignments each year, with the result that quorums began keeping more detailed records.<sup>158</sup>

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offices and placed the responsibilities of the Teachers and Priests upon the brethren we call Ward Teachers." Joseph Fielding Smith to Vernon I. Israelsen, 14 July 1935, in Israelsen, "Changes in the Number," 22-23.

<sup>153</sup> "Church-wide Correlation Campaign in Youth Activity Starts on Oct. 22," *Church News*, 17 October 1931, 1.

<sup>154</sup> "Church-Wide Plan Announced for Correlation of Work Among Youth," *Church News*, 18 April 1931, 6, 8.

<sup>155</sup> Jerry "J" Rose, "The Correlation Program of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints During the Twentieth Century" (M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1973), chap. 4, "Aaronic Priesthood Correlation."

<sup>156</sup> Richard O. Cowan, "The Priesthood-Auxiliary Movement, 1928-1938," *BYU Studies* 19 (Fall 1978): 114.

<sup>157</sup> "Aaronic Priesthood Correlation Plan," *Improvement Era* 35 (February 1932): 232-33; Minutes of the Aaronic Priesthood Convention, 4 April 1931, 3, LDS Church Archives.

<sup>158</sup> "The New Priesthood Movement," *Improvement Era* 34 (June 1931): 479; "New Credit Plan Offered Boys in Priesthood Work," *Church News*, 17 October

*Bishop LeGrand Richards Energizes Aaronic Priesthood*

This plan was the predecessor of LeGrand Richards's thorough revitalization of Aaronic Priesthood work during the fourteen years (1938-52) he was Presiding Bishop. During his tenure, Aaronic Priesthood work focused enthusiastically on boys' activity and achievement. "The most important problem of the Church today is the training of members of the Aaronic Priesthood," the Presiding Bishopric pronounced in 1938. "What the leadership of the Melchizedek Priesthood will be in the future is determined by the training and development of the members of the Aaronic Priesthood today."<sup>159</sup> The Presiding Bishopric created an elaborate achievement program in which boy priesthood holders and their quorums earned awards based on activity, worthiness, and priesthood assignments filled.<sup>160</sup> They promoted Aaronic Priesthood outings, better ways to collect fast offerings, sensible sacrament systems, ward committees to keep boy and girl programs fired up, and efficient reporting systems for monitoring church attendance, ward teaching, and fast offering collection.

For five years they sent stake and ward priesthood workers a newsletter called *Progress of the Church*, which contained instructions about all facets of Aaronic Priesthood work, motivating examples of quorum successes, and statistical charts comparing wards and stakes' activity patterns. At stake conferences, they trained ward Aaronic Priesthood leaders; during general conferences, they trained bishops. Elder Milton R. Hunter praised "the work that has been done under the direction of the Presiding Bishopric of the Church with the boys of the Aaronic Priesthood," calling it an "outstanding achievement."<sup>161</sup> So successful was the Presiding Bishopric's program for boys that they were put in

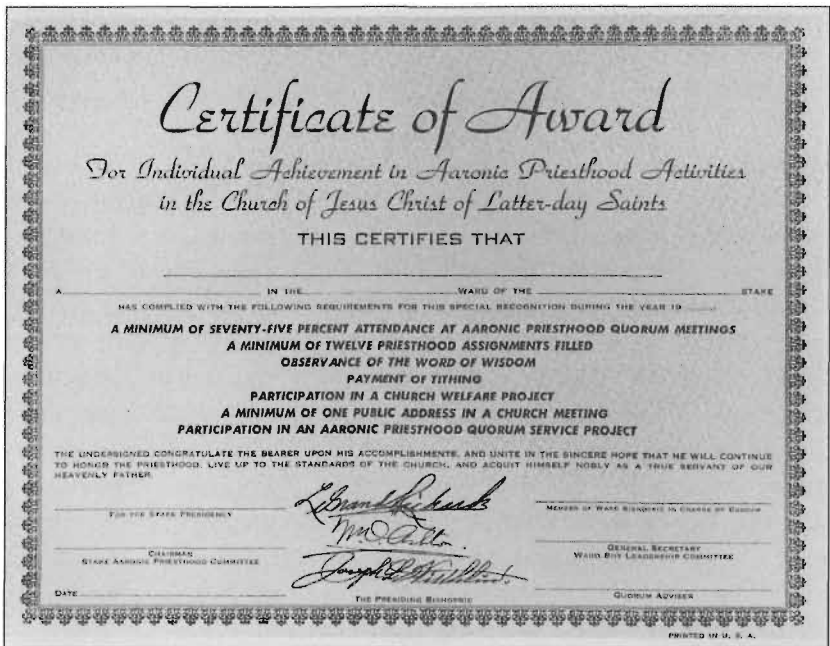
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1931, 3; "Assignments for Ordained Teachers," *Improvement Era* 36 (December 1933): 868; "Aaronic Priesthood Three-point Campaign to Start January 1," *Improvement Era* 37 (November 1934): 679.

<sup>159</sup>Presiding Bishopric, "Training of Youth Most Important," *Progress of the Church* 1 (July 1938): 1.

<sup>160</sup>"Aaronic Priesthood Extension Plan Expands Correlation Plan," *Progress of the Church* 1 (September 1938).

<sup>161</sup>Milton R. Hunter, "Unparalleled Growth Marks All Phases of Church Endeavor," *Church News*, 12 December 1951, 13.



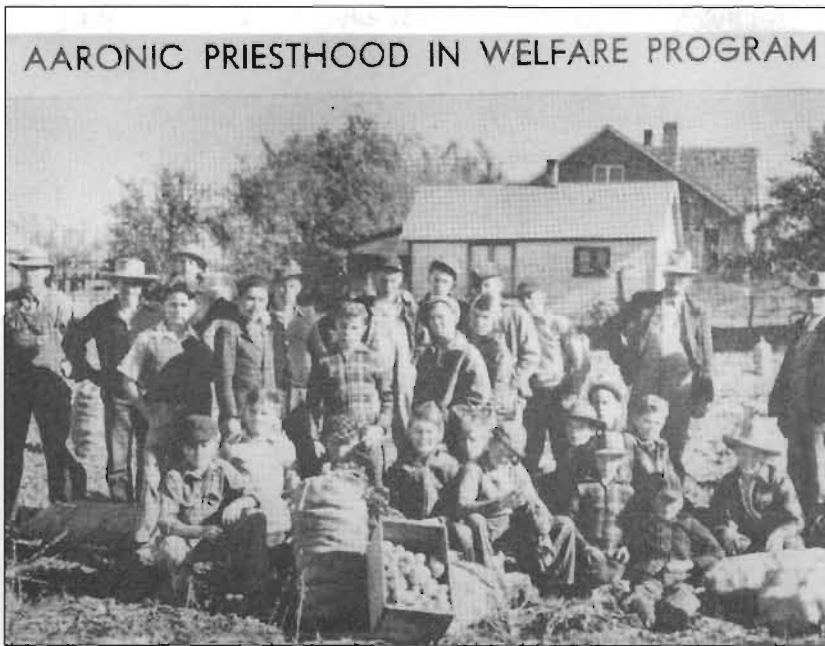
This award for individual boys, announced in the December 1942 *Improvement Era*, lists seven requirements: 75 percent attendance at meetings, twelve priesthood assignments, Word of Wisdom, tithing, at least one talk in a church meeting, and participation in a quorum service project.

charge of the girls' activity program from 1942 to 1950 and similarly pumped new life into it.<sup>162</sup>

During the 1940s and 1950s, the Church employed several new lesson manuals, activity programs, award systems, and leadership innovations to keep boys involved.<sup>163</sup> From this foundation, wards and stakes have continued to operate quorums for specific age

<sup>162</sup>Tate, *LeGrand Richards*, 210; Cannon, "Young Women," 4:1618; *Deseret News 1985 Church Almanac* 93, 96; "Bishop Richards Returns Girls' Program to MIA," *Church News*, 25 June 1950, 6. The Presiding Bishopric's monthly *Progress of the Church* newsletter ceased in August 1943 and was replaced by a Presiding Bishopric page in the *Church News*.

<sup>163</sup>For one example of the awards program, much refined from earlier ones, see "New Aaronic Priesthood Award Program Nearing the End of the First Year," *Improvement Era* 55 (October 1952): 756-57.



*The Aaronic Priesthood quorums, by now consisting of boys, of Roy Ward in Utah had a project of growing turnips for the welfare program in 1940 (6,200 pounds) and 1941 (12,200 pounds). **Progress of the Church**, June 1942, 22.*

groups and keep boys busy with clearly defined priesthood duties that have changed little since then.

### 1960s-90s: PRIESTHOOD CORRELATION

During the 1960s, Priesthood Correlation produced major restructurings of the Church's priesthood operations.<sup>164</sup> These changes impacted Aaronic Priesthood work in ways not relevant to this paper, except that the Presiding Bishopric's leadership re-

<sup>164</sup>Allen and Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints*, 596-98; Andersen, "A Documentary History of the Lord's Way of Watching Over the Church . . ."; Rose, "The Correlation Program of the Church"; and explanatory talks by Elders Harold B. Lee, Gordon B. Hinckley, Richard L. Evans, and Marion G. Romney in *Conference Report*, October 1962, 71-83.

sponsibilities for the Church's Aaronic Priesthood youth were transferred to the Young Men's general presidency.

Ward teaching was reorganized as "home teaching" and defined as "much more" than ward teaching. In the new program, which went into operation in 1964, Melchizedek Priesthood quorum leaders, rather than bishops, became responsible for calling, receiving reports from, and supervising the home teachers. Every Melchizedek Priesthood bearer "has this responsibility imposed upon him as an incident to his accepting the priesthood."<sup>165</sup> Home teachers, unlike ward teachers, were assigned by quorums, not by bishops.

Marion G. Romney of the First Presidency explained the evolution from acting teacher to home teacher: "By some it has been thought that some of the directions in the revelations referred only to ordained teachers. It would seem, however, that the responsibility has been placed upon every bearer of the Melchizedek Priesthood, and the priests as well as the teachers." It is the elders' calling to "watch over the Church," while priests and teachers help them.<sup>166</sup>

### "ADULT AARONICS" AFTER 1908

Although the age-linked quorum advancements solved many problems, they created a persistent problem when boys, who stopped out because of inactivity, tried to catch up. Deacons, not advanced because of inactivity, did not want to return to a quorum of much younger and smaller boys. Adult men who were still deacons, teachers, or priests were obvious misfits. In 1911, President Joseph F. Smith urged bishops not "to mix up the old men, with bad habits, with the young boys."<sup>167</sup> In 1917, the General Priesthood Committee recommended that adult Aaronic Priesthood bearers be grouped separately and have their own presiding officers, but little came of it.<sup>168</sup> In 1930, local leaders were in-

<sup>165</sup>Marion G. Romney, "What Is Home Teaching?" unpublished talk delivered at Mission Presidents Seminar (Salt Lake City, June 1968), LDS Church Archives.

<sup>166</sup>*Conference Report*, October 1962, 78-79.

<sup>167</sup>General Priesthood Committee, 12 December 1911.



structed to have adult Aaronic Priesthood members meet with the elders quorums.<sup>169</sup>

However, in 1932, a Salt Lake ward started separate adult Aaronic Priesthood classes, and the idea spread. The separate Aaronic Priesthood program for adults recommended in 1917 was formally introduced and promoted churchwide during the 1930s.<sup>170</sup> In subsequent years, the terminology has changed to Senior Aaronics, Aaronic Priesthood Over Twenty-one, Aaronic Priesthood Adults, Adult Members of the Aaronic Priesthood, and, most recently, Prospective Elders. For decades, special reactivation programs have periodically been implemented for them. Since the 1970s, these men have attended elders quorums and have been encouraged to take reactivation lessons and temple preparedness classes.<sup>171</sup>

#### ASSIGNMENTS NOT REQUIRING PRIESTHOOD AUTHORITY

Since 1908, Church leaders have identified and assigned Aaronic Priesthood youths a variety of “useful things to do.” Some assignments, like blessing the sacrament, baptizing, and helping with ward teaching, are scripturally mandated. However, many assignments now associated with deacons, teachers, and priests require no priesthood authority. Examples are ushering, playing the piano in church, or carrying messages.

Even passing sacrament trays among the congregation requires no priesthood authority. With or without priesthood, men, women, and children one by one pass the sacrament tray or cups to the next person down the row. Recognizing this reality, President Heber J. Grant wrote to a mission president in 1928 that

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<sup>168</sup>Ibid., 5 April and 1 November 1917.

<sup>169</sup>“Older Inactive Men Bearing the Aaronic Priesthood,” *Improvement Era* 33 (October 1930): 817. See also “Work with Older, Inactive Members of the Aaronic Priesthood,” *ibid.*, 34 (July 1931): 546.

<sup>170</sup>“Fifty Years Ago, Adult Aaronic Program Started,” *Church News*, 18 September 1982, 10, 14; *Deseret News Church Almanac 1985*, 93.

<sup>171</sup>“Designation ‘Adult Aaronic Priesthood’ Changed,” *Progress of the Church* 5 (September 1942): 36; The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *General Handbook of Instructions*, 1985, section 2, 4.

there was “no rule in the Church” that only priesthood bearers could carry the sacrament to the congregation after it was blessed. While it was “custom” for priesthood men or boys to pass around the bread and water, he said, “it would in no wise invalidate the ordinance” if some “worthy young brethren lacking priesthood performed it in the absence of ordained boys” and he had “no objection” if it were done.<sup>172</sup>

Women and custodians usually prepared the sacrament table, so it did not appear on a list of priesthood duties until 1933.<sup>173</sup> Metal sacrament trays needed to be polished, and fine white linen or lace tablecloths needed to be laundered, starched, and pressed, traditionally the work of women. Women also baked the sacrament bread in many wards. Kate Coreless of Salt Lake City’s Fourth Ward took care of the sacrament table for a quarter century after 1906. She crocheted the cloth, polished the silver trays, baked and sliced the bread, and set the sacrament table.<sup>174</sup>

As late as 1943, the Presiding Bishopric publicized for bishops the example of young women in one ward who “take care of washing and sterilizing the sacrament sets after each service.”<sup>175</sup> Annette Steeneck Huntington recalled that during the 1930s in Emigration Stake, the “young girls in MIA . . . filled the water cups in the kitchen and placed the bread on the trays. We then prepared the Sacrament table with the cloth and trays on it. It was a wonderful privilege I shall always remember.”<sup>176</sup> When

<sup>172</sup>Heber J. Grant, Letter to Henry H. Rolapp, 28 June 1928, Heber J. Grant Letterbook, microfilm, LDS Church Archives.

<sup>173</sup>“Assignments for Ordained Teachers,” *Improvement Era* 36 (December 1933): 868. Lists in 1908, 1925, and 1930 did not include sacrament preparation; see “Aaronic Priesthood Suggestions,” *Improvement Era* 33 (March 1930): 349; “Assignments for Ordained Teachers,” *Improvement Era* 36 (December 1933): 868; “Method of Administering the Sacrament,” *Improvement Era* 26 (August 1923): 938, describes how a custodian prepared the table and filled the cups immediately before the service.

<sup>174</sup>William G. Hartley, *Kindred Saints: The Mormon Immigrant Heritage of Alvin and Kathryne Christenson* (Salt Lake City: Eden Hill, 1982): 183.

<sup>175</sup>“Youth in the Sacrament Meeting,” *Progress of the Church* 6 (May 1943): 19.

<sup>176</sup>Lucile G. Williams, comp., *Historical Highlights of the Twenty-first and North Twenty-first Wards, Emigration Stake* (Salt Lake City: n.pub., 1971): 220.

paper cups replaced glass cups in sacrament trays during the 1940s,<sup>177</sup> “dishwashing” ceased and so did female involvement with sacrament vessels. Although women still launder and press the linen, beginning in 1950, the Presiding Bishopric assigned teachers to prepare the sacrament table, specifically requesting that this task not be delegated to LDS girls or their mothers. However, in 1955, the Presiding Bishopric told Church members that young women “where desired” could be assigned care of the table linens and trays following meetings.<sup>178</sup>

Although deacons have been assigned by bishops to collect fast offerings since the mid-nineteenth century, no priesthood ordination is necessary. A 1943 Aaronic Priesthood handbook recommended but did not require “that the gathering of fast offerings be assigned to the Deacons.”<sup>179</sup> When Bishop Oscar M. Oleson of Salt Lake’s Twenty-fourth Ward lacked deacons during World War II, he asked Beehive girls to canvass half of the ward. “During the past two years they did not once fail to cover their entire district,” he reported. The *Church News* ran a laudatory article and group photograph of the girls, adding, “Now with an increase of boys in the deacon’s quorum the girls are, rather reluctantly, turning this job back to the priesthood.”<sup>180</sup>

Since the 1950s, fast offering collection gradually became an official duty assigned to deacons. However, because a number of duties now assigned to deacons, teachers, and priests do not require ordination, leaders have the option at any time to add new assign-

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<sup>177</sup>The Presiding Bishopric urged: “Wards using glass cups are requested not to replace broken cups with glass, but instead to order the paper cups. It is our desire that as rapidly as possible paper cups shall be in use in all wards.” “Paper Cups for Sacrament Service,” *Progress of the Church* 3 (August 1940): 13.

<sup>178</sup>“Teachers to Prepare Sacrament Table,” *Church News*, 2 April 1950, 11; “Teachers Not to Assist Priests at Sacrament Table,” *Improvement Era* 53 (December 1950): 1,038; Presiding Bishopric, “Suggestions for Aaronic Priesthood Bearers Officiating in the Sacrament Service,” *Improvement Era* 58 (June 1955): 466.

<sup>179</sup>*Aaronic Priesthood Handbook* (Salt Lake City: Presiding Bishopric, 1 July 1943): 63.

<sup>180</sup>“Girls ‘Pinch-Hit’ for Deacons,” *Church News*, 21 April 1945, 5. Relief Society visiting teachers regularly collected items and money for charitable purposes from 1842 until 1944. “Collections by Relief Society Teachers Discontinued,” *Church News*, 19 August 1944, 3.



TEMPORARY COLLECTORS at Twenty-Fourth Ward fast offerings for the past two years were, left to right: FRONT ROW Irene Stone, Betty Tingey, Caroljean Clay, Belva Tingey, Norma Crompton. BACK ROW, Shirley Workman, Velva Twitchell, Rosemary Wood, Fern Nelson, Shirley Bosch.

## Girls "Pinch-Hit" For Deacons

Two years ago the man-power shortage reached down even into the deacon's quorum of the Aaronic Priesthood of the Twenty-Fourth (Salt Lake City) Ward and left them without enough boys to collect fast offerings.

Bishop Oscar M. Olson turned to a group of Bee-Hive Girls for assistance, and under the leadership of their Bee-Keeper, Naoma Sorenson, they have collected fast offerings in a district comprising one half of the ward. During the past two years they did not once fail to cover their entire district. Now with an increase of boys in the deacon's quorum the girls are, rather reluctantly, turning this job back to the priesthood.

Participating in this project were Irene Stone, Betty Tingey, Caroljean Clay, Belva Tingey, Norma Crompton, Shirley Workman, Velva Twitchell, Rosemary Wood, Fern Nelson, Shirley Bosch, Geraldine Smith, Faye Anaya, Joanne Thomas, Luana Huntsman.

*"Girls 'Pinch-Hit' for Deacons", Church News, 21 April 1945, 5.*

ments for each office to fill or to transfer or share existing ones with other groups.

### ASSESSMENT OF THE TRANSFORMATION

During the past hundred and sixty years, the Church has pragmatically adapted its priesthood offices to meet changing needs.<sup>181</sup> Practical experience suggests that 1830 instructions about deacon, teacher, and priest duties, including quorum sizes, were intended to serve the new Church in its early years. Modification was required as the Church developed stakes, wards, bishops, myriads of Melchizedek Priesthood quorums, and thousands of born-in-the-Church sons to train for adult service.

When did the Aaronic Priesthood become a boys' priesthood? A simplistic answer is: during the period between 1877 and 1908. However, both the question and the answer are misleading. If the question is about *offices*, the answer is correct, but wrong if it is about *function*. Functionally, the most important labor of the lesser priesthood labor has always been its home visits, performed primarily by men who were either ordained or acting teachers and priests. Church practice in 1877, as articulated by Apostle John Taylor, was that "Seventies, High Priests, etc. who were called to act as teachers, but were not ordained to this office, they already having all necessary authority, would remain for the present, but would be changed as soon as arrangements could be made and exclusive teachers would fill that quorum."<sup>182</sup> The hope of finding enough "exclusive teachers" was surrendered by 1912. When ward teaching was introduced

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<sup>181</sup>Redeployments of priesthood offices and functions include the reduced role of the presiding patriarch, the home-or-abroad work of the Quorum of the Twelve, the temporary "office" of Assistant to the Twelve, the use of ordained seventies in missionary work, the changing tasks performed by the First Council of the Seventy and the First and Second Quorums of the Seventy, the temporary use of traveling presiding bishops, the introduction of administrative offices between the general and the stake levels (regional representatives, area presidents, and now area authorities), shortened terms of service for stake presidents and ward bishops, and the assignment of many duties to high councils besides disciplinary councils.

<sup>182</sup>Salt Lake City Sixth Ward, Council Meeting Minutes, 12 June 1877, LDS Church Archives.

during the 1912 reforms, the primary responsibility for home visits was transferred, with scriptural justification, to Melchizedek Priesthood bearers, where it has remained ever since, although boy priests and teachers participate as junior companions.

More than a century ago, LDS boys were ordained to “learn how” to be deacons, teachers, and priests by working with experienced men. Today, the apprenticeship principle still operates.<sup>183</sup> That is, boys become apprentice deacons, teachers, and priests at ages twelve, fourteen, and sixteen. If they could reach their twenties and thirties without receiving Melchizedek Priesthood, then, as mature adults with years of priesthood experience behind them, they could capably execute all of the more demanding aspects of the work assigned them in Doctrine and Covenants 20. Instead, youths tackle those duties as apprentices and by adulthood receive the Melchizedek Priesthood and added (but not replacement) responsibilities.

After 1908, but particularly since the 1930s, the Aaronic Priesthood has been fully operational as a training, teaching, and service arm in which boys receive at least six years of training in speaking, home teaching, quorum brotherhood, instruction about priesthood theory and gospel teachings, service, loyalty to Church leadership, handling the sacrament, baptizing, ushering, home teaching, and collecting fast offerings. Bringing youths into priesthood service has benefited both them and local church operations. Bishop Hunter’s era was characterized by hard-to-fill Aaronic Priesthood quorums when few youths received priesthood; in contrast, virtually every ward today has quorums to which almost all active teenage boys belong. Thousands of Aaronic Priesthood quorums, multitudes of junior home teachers, routine weekly administrations of the sacrament, and regular monthly collections of fast offerings are surface indicators that the Aaronic Priesthood program is working rather well.

But what are the surface indicators *not* measuring? After 166 years in operation in the Church, how effective have the Aaronic

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<sup>183</sup>“Aaronic Priesthood Messages,” *Improvement Era* 32 (October 1929): 1,041; “Training of Young Men Insures Effective Ward Teaching Corps,” *Church News*, 25 November 1961, 10.

Priesthood operations proven to be for the Church and for priesthood bearers themselves? How well has the preparatory, apprenticeship principle worked in practice? Is the priesthood accomplishing what generations of leaders have pushed hard to have it do? This paper has identified the changing course of Aaronic Priesthood history since 1829 and provided only overview assessments of cause and effect. However, in-depth evaluations of effectiveness of the various Aaronic Priesthood programs require further study. If and when such thorough assessments are made, my historical overviews suggest several basic research questions.

For example, have the massive numbers of quorum meetings, ordinations, the calling and training of leaders, assignments executed, lesson manuals, handbooks, and activity programs produced the expected numbers of well-trained, firmly converted adult priesthood bearers? What are the retention realities? How many deacons, for example, become priests, elders, missionaries, and church-active adults? If significant dropout patterns are occurring, what priesthood program revisions are needed? Are present age-groupings, drawn from U.S. school grades, still the best clusterings for the United States and the myriad of cultures around the world? How involved are eighteen-to-twenty-one-year-olds in elders quorums? Would such young men benefit more from raising the deacon age to fourteen, teachers to sixteen, and priests to eighteen? As gender concerns increase, what are the gains and drawbacks for young men and young women caused by assigning priesthood bearers tasks (preparing and passing the sacrament, collecting fast offerings, and ushering) that require no priesthood authority but from which women are excluded because they lack priesthood? Do elders who have gone through Aaronic Priesthood programs show markedly superior gospel knowledge and presentation skills to those of sister missionaries who have no priesthood training? Or are seminaries and institutes preparing youths better for missionary service than priesthood quorums do? Does a larger percentage of priesthood-trained male returned missionaries stay active in the Church compared to female returned missionaries? How well is home teaching being done, churchwide? Does the apprenticeship under senior companions produce effective home teachers when junior companions become adults? Are young men receiving meaningful apprenticeship training in terms of the revealed responsibilities to preach,

teach, expound, exhort, settle disagreements, teach prayer, and challenge iniquity among members? Further study is needed to assess these matters meaningfully.

Because General Authorities have restructured Aaronic Priesthood work every twenty to thirty years (1849, 1877, 1908, 1928, and the 1960s) to meet changing realities and as inspiration dictates, we can expect further adjustments. International growth, new social demands, and new generations of young people no doubt will cause additional pragmatic reshapings of priesthood practices to better bless both the Church and those ordained to Aaronic Priesthood offices.



# Ernest L. Wilkinson and the Office of Church Commissioner of Education

*Gary James Bergera*

By the time he left a successful Washington, D.C., law practice to preside over Mormon Church-owned Brigham Young University in early 1951, Ernest LeRoy Wilkinson had acquired the heady kind of self-made fame most Americans only dreamed of. He was born in 1899 into circumstances that would have destined most other young men to obscurity. He had climbed tooth-and-nail out of the notorious two-bit streets of Ogden, Utah, to graduate from BYU in 1921, from George Washington University in 1926 with a Bachelor of Law degree (*summa cum laude*), and from Harvard in 1927 with a Doctor of Juridical Science degree. He had taught law at the New Jersey Law School from 1927 to 1933, had been admitted to the bars in Washington, D.C., Utah, and New York, and had practiced with Hughes, Schurman & Dwight in New York City and with Moyle & Wilkinson in Washington, D.C. He founded his own firm in 1940 in Washington, D.C., represented the Ute Indians in their claims

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against the United States, and helped to obtain the largest judgment ever against the federal government: a staggering \$32 million. For men who valued status and achievement, the fifty-one-year-old street-rowdy<sup>1</sup>-cum-millionaire represented a level of success few Mormons had attained.

Since arriving in Utah Valley, the feisty Wilkinson had almost single-handedly molded the lackluster Provo school into a nationally recognized showplace of Mormon educational values. Now, after more than ten years at BYU's helm, the sixty-four-year-old educator had also emerged in the popular Utah mind as an impassioned champion of his first love: conservative Republican politics.<sup>2</sup> In fact, by late 1963 he had concluded that much of his mission at BYU had been accomplished and that the likelihood of his success in running for public office would never be greater than in the coming national election. Privately, he also feared that continuing support for his expansive educational agenda would not survive the death of David O. McKay, octogenarian president of the LDS Church and longtime Wilkinson supporter.<sup>3</sup>

Politically astute, McKay had encouraged Wilkinson's partisan ambitions and had already assured him that if he "wanted to run for the Senate in 1964 [McKay] would give [him] a year's leave of absence"<sup>4</sup> as both BYU president and chancellor of the Church's

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<sup>1</sup>This is Wilkinson's own characterization of himself. See "[Auto]biography of Ernest L. Wilkinson for High Priests Quorum in 17th Ward of Salt Lake Stake," 27 November 1977, privately circulated.

<sup>2</sup>For Wilkinson's political career before 1964, see my "A Strange Phenomena': Ernest L. Wilkinson, the LDS Church, and Utah Politics," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 26 (Summer 1993): 89-115.

<sup>3</sup>For the specifics of Wilkinson's election, see my "A Sad and Expensive Experience': Ernest L. Wilkinson's 1964 Bid for the U.S. Senate," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 61 (Fall 1993): 304-24.

<sup>4</sup>Wilkinson, Memorandum of a conference with McKay, 7 March 1962, Ernest L. Wilkinson Papers, Archives and Manuscripts, Harold B. Lee Library, Provo, Utah; see also Wilkinson, Diary, 2 March 1963, original in Wilkinson Papers, photocopy in Ernest L. Wilkinson Collection, Special Collections, Marriott Library, University of Utah, Salt Lake City; Wilkinson, Memorandum of a conference with McKay, 17 October 1963, Wilkinson Papers; compare Wilkinson, Diary, 9 April 1958. In fact, McKay felt at first that "President Wilkinson should remain as president of the Brigham Young University while he is seeking the nomination,

worldwide educational system, positions he had jointly held for a decade. Thus after months of agonizing indecision, the would-be politician decided in late November 1963 that he could be of greater service to his country as a U.S. senator than as a university president and prepared to tender his resignation. This essay focuses, not on his campaign or politics, but on his return to BYU after the unsuccessful race. Contrary to the expectations of some, he was reappointed as both president and chancellor, resuming the two powerful offices that he had intimately shaped; the essay then traces in more detail the process whereby Church officials decided to separate the two offices—first temporarily, then permanently. After McKay's death, Wilkinson resigned, but traces of his influence on the office of the Church Commissioner of Education remain.

### CREATION OF THE CHURCH COMMISSIONER/CHANCELLOR'S OFFICE

Prior to Wilkinson's appointment as administrator of all Church schools in 1953, a president had governed BYU and reported directly to the university's board of trustees, while a commissioner of education had administered the rest of the Church school system and reported to the Church Board of Education; this latter board's membership was the same as BYU's Board of Education and included members of the First Presidency and Quorum of the

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and if he gets the nomination then we can consider finding a successor. If he is not elected, then he should continue at the school." David O. McKay, Diary, 21 November 1963, McKay Papers, Archives, Historical Department, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah; typescript excerpt in my possession. Photocopies of virtually all documents from the Wilkinson Papers cited in this essay are in private possession, which is my source for them. Additionally, many are referenced in Ernest L. Wilkinson, ed., *Brigham Young University: The First One Hundred Years*, Vol. 2 (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1975), 497-723; Ernest L. Wilkinson and Leonard J. Arrington, eds., *Brigham Young University: The First One Hundred Years*, Vol. 3 (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1976), 3-789; Ernest L. Wilkinson and W. Cleon Skousen, *Brigham Young University: A School of Destiny* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1976), 429-759; and Woodruff J. Deem and Glenn V. Bird, *Ernest L. Wilkinson: Indian Advocate and University President* (Salt Lake City: Alice L. Wilkinson, August 1978).

Twelve.<sup>5</sup> In the early 1940s Franklin L. West, LDS Commissioner of Education since 1936, had pushed for the appointment of a commissioner who would supervise the Church's entire educational program. West's plan would have brought BYU under his control and was approved in principle; but BYU presidents Franklin S. Harris and Howard S. McDonald feared that such an arrangement would deprive them of direct access to the General Authorities. In response to their pressure, the plan was tabled. Following McDonald's resignation in 1949, some Church authorities resurrected the idea of a general administrator.<sup>6</sup> From the beginning, Wilkinson endorsed unifying the Church's educational program under one administrator responsible to the Church Board of Education.<sup>7</sup> He knew that he was the logical choice for such an appointment, lobbied for it, and would probably have resigned from BYU had another man been named to the post.

By the late 1940s, some Church leaders had reportedly become uneasy over West's administration as commissioner, particularly what they felt was his "liberal approach" to the miracles of the Old Testament.<sup>8</sup> Under West's sponsorship, several Mormon educators

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<sup>5</sup>In 1962 membership in the boards expanded to include representatives from the First Council of the Seventy, assistants to the Twelve, and the Presiding Bishopric. Wilkinson, Letter to Clyde D. Sandgren and John Bernhard, 22 May 1962, Wilkinson Papers; McKay, Diary, 13 September 1962. Six years later, Belle S. Spafford, general president of the Relief Society, was appointed to the boards, the first time in thirty years that a woman had served as a trustee.

<sup>6</sup>Ezra Taft Benson, Letter to Ernest L. Wilkinson, 3 October 1949, Wilkinson Papers.

<sup>7</sup>Wilkinson, Letter to Adam S. Bennion, 15 November 1952, Wilkinson Papers.

<sup>8</sup>Wilkinson, Diary, 10 June 1955. Wilkinson's voluminous personal diaries, like any first-person narrative, are their author's own best advocate and consequently should be consulted with some caution, especially when they are used as the primary and/or only reference for comments and motivations attributed to others. Aside from this, they are valuable and generally reliable resources for documenting Wilkinson's life and thought, as well as his interaction with others and their relationships with him. Unfortunately, the diaries and personal papers of many of Wilkinson's contemporaries, particularly those of members of the LDS Board of Education, are not currently available to researchers for verification or clarification. Harold B. Lee's perspective, which would be particularly valuable, is underrepresented because of the unavailability of his

had authored texts reflecting contemporary scriptural scholarship. He had also apparently contemplated a graduate religion program at BYU in which less conservative professors like Heber C. Snell and Sterling McMurrin would teach comparative religious philosophy.<sup>9</sup> Despite the misgivings of some board members—as well as an earlier First Presidency<sup>10</sup>—that unification would result in the rest of the Church’s educational program taking a back seat to BYU, David O. McKay’s new First Presidency decided to confer the combined offices on Wilkinson following West’s forced retirement from Church employ in 1953.<sup>11</sup> Seven years later Wilkinson’s title was changed from “administrator” to “chancellor” because, McKay explained, “administrator is a title given to educators on a lower status than that of the president of a university, and . . . where one is head of several universities he usually has the title of chancellor.”<sup>12</sup>

### WILKINSON’S FIRST RESIGNATION

Following a combined meeting of BYU’s Board of Trustees and the Church’s Board of Education on 4 December 1963, Wilkinson told the group that this would be his last meeting with them. His diary relates that Hugh B. Brown, McKay’s eighty-year-old first counselor, asked, “You mean the last meeting this year?” “No,” Wilkinson answered emotionally, “the last meeting, period.” Brown, whose Democratic and liberal views had often placed him at odds with Wilkinson, then praised the president’s accomplishments and asked him to meet privately in his office with N. Eldon Tanner, Brown’s sixty-five-year-old nephew and second counselor in the First Presidency. In that meeting, Brown, obviously annoyed, wanted to know “what was all this about and if I had cleared it with President McKay.” The usually stoic Wilkinson then broke down and wept.<sup>13</sup>

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papers.

<sup>9</sup>Snell, Letter to McMurrin, 27 June 1943, McMurrin Papers, Special Collections, Marriott Library.

<sup>10</sup>First Presidency, Letter to Executive Committee, BYU Board of Trustees, 21 February 1945, Brigham Young University Archives, Lee Library (hereafter BYU Archives).

<sup>11</sup>Church Board of Education, Minutes, 26 June 1953.

<sup>12</sup>Wilkinson, Diary, 28 April 1960.

Wilkinson officially announced his resignation to the board's executive committee less than two weeks later on 18 December. By this time he had concluded that a public leave of absence would be a public relations liability to his senate bid and was unnecessary, given McKay's private support. He also notified them of McKay's and his decision to temporarily separate the positions of president and chancellor between veteran BYU administrators Earl C. Crockett and Harvey L. Taylor.<sup>14</sup>

Less than a month later, on 8 January 1964, Wilkinson informed the entire board of his resignation and the *de facto* appointments of Crockett and Taylor. (That Crockett and Taylor were acting replacements no doubt put board members on notice that if Wilkinson lost his bid for public office he would be invited back to BYU.) He closed by bearing "his testimony as to the divinity of the Church and also stated his conviction that the Church schools will produce greater dividends than any other investment made by the Church." Board members unanimously expressed their "deep, sincere and heartfelt appreciation for the tremendous service [Wilkinson] has rendered as President of the University, with assurance of the faith and prayers of the Board in whatever Brother Wilkinson undertakes to do in promulgation of truth and righteousness."<sup>15</sup>

That afternoon Wilkinson sent a confidential memorandum to his *pro tem* replacements, suggesting what their relationship to each other should be. Taylor was to assume responsibility for all "matters pertaining to Ricks College [in Rexburg, Idaho], the junior colleges, institute and seminaries, Juarez Academy, and the [other] Church schools in Mexico, and other general matters pertaining to the Unified Church School System." Crockett's assignment lay in all "matters pertaining to the Brigham Young University." "I suggest that on all matters of the Church School System outside the Brigham Young University," Wilkinson advised, "that Brother Taylor preside, and that on all matters pertaining to Brigham Young University that

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 4 December 1963.

<sup>14</sup>Executive Committee, BYU Board of Trustees, Minutes, 18 December 1963. As early as 1959 Wilkinson had been urged to separate the two offices. Wilkinson, Diary, 6 October 1959.

<sup>15</sup>BYU Board of Trustees, Minutes, 8 January 1964.

Brother Crockett preside.” He promised to “continue to advise with [you] and to coordinate [your] activities . . . To the extent my time permits.”<sup>16</sup> It is clear from these instructions that Wilkinson wanted to keep the two positions co-equal and that chancellor in no way outranked president; thus, if he returned and was reappointed to only one position, he would still report directly to the General Authorities.

Not all trustees were satisfied. Hugh B. Brown and sixty-four-year-old Harold B. Lee, a strong-willed and increasingly powerful member of the Twelve, were particularly concerned, since they disliked Wilkinson’s heavy-handed administrative style, confrontational personality, and penchant for politicizing the campus. Lee in particular had sparred with Wilkinson over a number of policy issues. Despite Wilkinson’s resignation, they suspected, he would continue to influence Church educational policy.<sup>17</sup> These two apostles convened the executive committee nine days later to clarify the relationship between Taylor and Crockett and discuss Wilkinson’s covert involvement in BYU’s administration. As a result, the committee reversed Wilkinson’s instruction, gave Taylor explicit authority “for the overall direction of Brigham Young University . . . and any other facilities,” made “the executives of these various institutions” (including the acting president of BYU) subordinate to Taylor “until such time as a Chancellor of the Unified Church School System is appointed and a President of Brigham Young University is named,” and, finally, officially “relieved [Wilkinson] of all responsibility in connection with these former offices.” An additional

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<sup>16</sup>Wilkinson, Letter to Harvey L. Taylor, Earl C. Crockett, William E. Berrett, and Clyde D. Sandgren, 8 January 1964, attached to *ibid.*

<sup>17</sup>After only four years as president, Wilkinson had resolved to “take fewer things to the Board of Trustees, use my best judgment in making many decisions myself, knowing that . . . unless I make some serious mistake, the entire board would generally support me in my decision.” Wilkinson, *Diary*, 4 March 1955. Even earlier he had become impatient with the “conflicting viewpoints” among trustees and their interest in “moral questions” rather than with “technical problems of education.” *Ibid.*, 18 December 1953, 21 May 1959. Facilitating his independence from the board was his “special relationship” with McKay, which gave him privileged access. “If Wilkinson wanted something and was turned down by the board,” explained BYU treasurer Keifer Sauls, “he’d . . . go straight to David O. McKay.” Sauls, *Oral History*, 1979, 20-22, BYU Archives.

sentence spelled out their intent clearly: "The Committee did not feel it was desirable that President Wilkinson pursue that course [of "advising" and "consulting with" Taylor and Crockett] while he is engaged in his campaign work because that would seem to negate what his resignation implies."<sup>18</sup> As McKay's diary summarized Brown's report to the First Presidency, the executive committee felt "it should be clearly understood that the Chancellor of the Unified Church School System, Brother Taylor, should have jurisdiction such as the title indicates, that he is the Chancellor of the whole system, including the Brigham Young University."<sup>19</sup>

The executive committee, driven by Brown's and Lee's concerns, thus set the stage for the creation of an organizational buffer between the president of BYU and the Church Board of Education while dividing the heavy responsibilities of managing the Church's entire educational program between two men. Eventually, trustees would redefine the relationship between BYU president and chancellor of Church education by unifying the entire Church education system under one administrator—a Commissioner of Education. Presumably, this individual would have no preexisting loyalties to BYU or any other single educational institution, would supervise and coordinate all aspects of the Church's school system fairly, and would ease, though not entirely eliminate, the conviction of many that BYU was receiving preferential treatment from the Church.<sup>20</sup>

During the early months of Wilkinson's rocky senate campaign, a small group of BYU faculty privately asked Brown if there were some way to have a less reactionary school president perma-

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<sup>18</sup>Executive Committee, BYU Board of Trustees, Minutes, 17 January 1964; First Presidency to Ernest L. Wilkinson, 31 January 1964, in Executive Committee, BYU Board of Trustees, Minutes, 13 February 1964. Despite his technical subordination to Taylor, Crockett enjoyed *de facto* autonomy during his presidency, representing the university at all board meetings and meeting with General Authorities on occasion.

<sup>19</sup>McKay, Diary, 24 January 1964.

<sup>20</sup>See, for example, Boyd K. Packer's criticism that the Church's salary policy "showed favoritism toward personnel outside of the Institute and Seminary area." Executive Committee, BYU Board of Trustees, Minutes, 18 July 1963; Desmond L. Anderson, Letter to David O. McKay, 14 December 1959, typed excerpt in my possession, original in Harold B. Lee Papers, LDS Church Archives.



nently appointed. Brown was sympathetic; but when word of the meeting reached McKay, he was furious. Evidently, in front of Wilkinson, he gave Brown “the worst calling down the President ever gave anyone.” Brown denied that such a meeting had occurred. According to Wilkinson, McKay harbored no doubt about what had happened but accepted Brown’s explanation because he “didn’t want to be too hard on Pres. Brown.”<sup>21</sup>

Sometime afterwards, Wilkinson’s Washington, D.C., law firm invited him—apparently at his request—to return to private practice should he be defeated. Wilkinson was obviously preparing a back-up option in case McKay’s age, his precarious health, and the obvious though muted resistance to his presidency combined to prevent McKay from reappointing him as both BYU president and Chancellor of Education. Two days after his stunning rejection by the electorate, Wilkinson announced publicly, “I resigned this position [as president of BYU] and it is a thing of the past”; he stated that he fully intended to return to his law practice.<sup>22</sup>

When McKay read these statements, he summoned Wilkinson to his office. During a meeting on 30 November 1964, the two “had a long talk” about the two positions. In no uncertain terms McKay told him “to resume his work” at BYU and “forget about going back to [his] law office.”<sup>23</sup> Wilkinson pointed out that McKay “might not want to reappoint someone” who was sixty-five. McKay rejoined, “I was 78 when I became President of the Church. You’re just a kid. I want you back and I want you to be President of BYU as long as I am President of the Church. You have had a greater vision for that school and done more for it than any other President.”<sup>24</sup>

Such a personal vote of confidence must have been gratifying, but Wilkinson still cautiously consolidated his options. Wilkinson

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<sup>21</sup>“Minutes of meeting, June 29, 1973,” attached to Wilkinson, Letter to Klea Lundgreen, 3 July 1973, Wilkinson Papers.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.; *Deseret News*, 5 November 1964.

<sup>23</sup>McKay, Diary, 30 November 1964; “Minutes of meeting, June 29, 1973,” attached to Wilkinson, Letter to Lundgreen.

<sup>24</sup>Quoted in Wilkinson, “Confidential Memorandum of Conference I had with President McKay on July 25, 1969, from 11:30 a.m. to 12:05 p.m.,” Wilkinson Papers.

would accept the dual appointment provided that McKay “presented the matter to the Board of Education and the Board of Trustees and they made it plain that they wanted me back. I did not want to go back unless I had a vote of confidence of these two Boards.” McKay insisted that “he wanted me back and stated that he had surely intended to present the matter, personally, to both Boards.” On this condition Wilkinson “said that he would be very happy to take up the reins again.”<sup>25</sup>

When the combined boards of BYU and the Church Educational System met two days later without Wilkinson, McKay, true to his word,

informed the Board that he had encouraged Ernest L. Wilkinson to become a candidate for election to the United States Senate; that, accordingly, Brother Wilkinson had resigned as Chancellor of the Church School System and as President of Brigham Young University; that, while said resignation was unconditional and did not constitute a leave of absence, he had been informed by President McKay that the latter would want to reappoint him to both positions if he were not elected; that shortly after Brother Wilkinson’s political defeat, he was invited to President McKay’s office and asked to return to his prior positions; that, after weighing the matter very carefully, Brother Wilkinson had consented to the desired reappointment; and that no one had ever displayed such vigorous leadership in directing the Church Schools as had Brother Wilkinson.

McKay then “strongly recommended that the [boards] reappoint Ernest L. Wilkinson as Chancellor of the Unified Church School System and as President of said University, respectively, both of said appointments to be immediately effective.” McKay’s motion passed unanimously. He next reminded trustees that Wilkinson had refused a salary during the years he had served as president and chancellor and recommended that they arrange “suitable compensation for his future services.” Again his motion carried unanimously. Finally, McKay “suggested,” and the trustees agreed, that “prompt publicity be given to the reappointments of Brother Wilkinson.”<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>Wilkinson, Diary, 30 November 1964; McKay, Diary, 30 November 1964.

<sup>26</sup>BYU Board of Trustees, Minutes, 2 December 1964. Wilkinson had personally financed most of his \$320,000 campaign; thus, the question of salary

Just before the meeting closed, Harold B. Lee reported that “for some time” members of the executive committees of the two boards had “felt that it might be advisable to separate the two positions” of BYU president and chancellor of Church schools. McKay announced that “he shared the same feeling but that such a change could be effected after the reappointments of Brother Wilkinson.” McKay hoped that by reappointing Wilkinson to the two positions before dividing them he would fulfill the letter of his commitment to Wilkinson while saving Wilkinson any humiliation from not automatically resuming both offices.<sup>27</sup> Lee then asked if the executive committees “might review this matter and present to President McKay their recommendations.” McKay agreed.

News of Wilkinson’s reappointments was released within hours after the meeting of the combined boards on 2 December 1964.<sup>28</sup> “I am grateful for the confidence placed in me by the Board of Trustees,” Wilkinson told the press and promised to solicit suggestions from board members and faculty. “The real test of a university in this country now,” he continued, the memory of the failed campaign fresh in his mind, “is to teach students the time-tested principles that will preserve our republican form of government rather than create a welfare state government. I hope BYU will attain a national reputation for teaching students the fundamentals of individual responsibility, self-reliance, and the American way of life.”<sup>29</sup> Later he told a campus reporter: “Universities can do more for the country’s future by teaching correct principles than can the present politicians in Washington. In that sense this position is a

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was relevant. However, BYU’s comptroller later reflected, some trustees “felt like they’d have a little more control on him if he was salaried.” Joseph T. Bentley, Oral History, 16 November 1983, 27, BYU Archives. The board subsequently settled on an annual salary of \$20,000 for Wilkinson; Taylor and Crockett continued to receive \$18,000 each.

<sup>27</sup>BYU Board of Trustees, Minutes, 2 December 1964.

<sup>28</sup>See announcement in *Deseret News*, 2 December 1964.

<sup>29</sup>Quoted in “Ernest L. Wilkinson Returns to BYU,” *Daily Universe*, 3 December 1964, and *Salt Lake Tribune*, 3 December 1964. By “the American way of life,” Wilkinson meant the twin linchpins of a conservative political philosophy: minimal federal government and free market capitalism.

greater challenge than to have been a member of a frustrated minority in the Senate.”<sup>30</sup>

Utah’s two major daily newspapers effusively lauded the reappointments. “During his 12 years as the unsalaried head of BYU,” the *Deseret News* editorialized, “Ernest Wilkinson demonstrated a capacity for work, an attention to detail, and a vision so broad and far-reaching that the institution was literally rebuilt under his direction. We have no doubt that those same qualities will be thrown, with renewed vigor, into the effort to build an even more impressive future.”<sup>31</sup> “Dr. Wilkinson’s tremendous store of energy was well demonstrated in his strenuous campaigning for the Senate the past year,” the *Salt Lake Tribune* echoed. “He has much yet to offer in service to his Church and his state. We congratulate him on his reappointment and on the resumption of what has been a notable career in education.”<sup>32</sup>

Before the month ended, however, Wilkinson’s triumph turned sour. During a temple meeting of the First Presidency and Twelve on 9 December, Harold B. Lee again proposed to McKay that the two offices be divided. This time McKay evidently agreed and suggested that the executive committees meet with Wilkinson to discuss the details of the transition.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup>Quoted in “President Faces New Year,” *Daily Universe*, 4 January 1965; compare Wilkinson’s comments in Deem and Bird, *Ernest L. Wilkinson*, 631. Joseph Fielding Smith, president of the Quorum of Twelve, agreed: “The honor that has been given to him, and is extended to him, in this institution, in my judgement, is worth far more than a six-year term in the Senate of the United States.” Smith, Remarks preceding the dedication of the Ernest L. Wilkinson Center, 3 April 1965, BYU Archives.

<sup>31</sup>Editorial, *Deseret News*, 3 December 1964.

<sup>32</sup>Editorial, *Salt Lake Tribune*, 4 December 1964. Not all Utah newspapers were as enthusiastic. A *Daily Universe* editorial opined: “The news of the return of Ernest L. Wilkinson as president of Brigham Young University . . . was met with mixed emotions. It was thought by many at the university that President Wilkinson would carry out his statement to the press in which he indicated his plans to return to his law practice in the East. Apparently his plans have changed. . . . It appears that President Wilkinson’s aspirations were first the U.S. Senate, then law, and then Brigham Young University.” “Former President Returns,” *Daily Universe*, 3 December 1964.

<sup>33</sup>Wilkinson, *Diary*, 5 January 1965.

Wilkinson was chagrined. However, he simultaneously learned that “the Executive Committee was critical of me because I was making ‘end runs to President McKay.’” He responded with what could be considered an end-run. On 3 January 1965 he told McKay that “the reason Brother [Harold B.] Lee had not supported me over the last few years was because I had often reported to President McKay.” McKay replied that “that was a deplorable situation; that he, President McKay[,] had a right to know, that he wanted me to keep reporting to him, that Brother Lee was taking altogether too much for granted and that he might not yet be President of the Church.”<sup>34</sup> Wilkinson then asked if Lee had already submitted the executive committee’s recommendation to the full board. McKay said that Lee had not. Wilkinson asked to confer with McKay as soon as Lee met with him.<sup>35</sup> The aging McKay had forgotten that he had already authorized the executive committee to discuss the change with Wilkinson.

Early in the morning two days later, Wilkinson learned that the executive committees were holding a special meeting that morning to which he had not been invited. Wilkinson immediately drove to Salt Lake City where he went to Joseph Fielding Smith, ninety years old and frail, who chaired both committees. Wilkinson “got the impression” that Smith “was against” the proposed division, but realized “that [Smith] was not mentally functioning too well because he spent most of the time insisting that there was no meeting . . . when I knew there was.”<sup>36</sup>

When the combined executive committees met at 9:00 A.M., the secretary was “immediately” dismissed, meaning that there would be no official minutes. Lee then “pretty much took charge of the meeting, with, of course, the consent of President Smith who slept most of the meeting.” Beginning with a “lengthy statement stating that the Executive Committee felt for sometime there should be a division,” Lee said that “they wanted [Wilkinson] to remain as

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<sup>34</sup>Lee became Church president seven years later, served for seventeen months, and died in late 1973.

<sup>35</sup>Wilkinson, Confidential memorandum of conference with McKay, 3 January 1965, Wilkinson Papers.

<sup>36</sup>Wilkinson, Diary, 5 January 1965.

President of Brigham Young University at a salary which would be higher than the salary of the person in charge of other segments of the school system who would be named not Chancellor but Administrator.”<sup>37</sup> Though the committee had not yet made a final decision about Wilkinson’s successor as administrator, “they thought Harvey Taylor should be [re]appointed as interim administrator with the distinct understanding, however, that while the nature of his appointment would be permanent, it would be temporary and might even extend only the balance of this school year.”<sup>38</sup>

When asked his opinion, Wilkinson agreed that “I knew that some day the positions would have to be divided because of the burden of the two jobs.” He stressed, however, that “certain problems . . . needed attention and . . . I hoped to clean them up before any division took place.” Specifically, Wilkinson wanted to redress his perceived favoritism of BYU through greater “uniformity” of religion classes, of salaries, and of “teaching loads throughout the Church School System”—by which he meant primarily the Institutes of Religion and possibly seminaries. He also had additional plans in mind for BYU: more emphasis “on sound principles of Americanism as opposed to Statism” and assurances that “in the modern tendency to do research, we do not neglect teaching.” “The very recitation of these problems,” Lee countered, “showed the size of the job and the need for relief of some of the burdens [Wilkinson] was carrying.” Wilkinson repeated that he “would not object to a division of responsibility” but wanted to “get things in tip top shape before such occurred.” He also said he wanted “to think about the matter over tonight” before the committee presented it to the board the next day.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup>The title change from “chancellor” back to “administrator” probably reflected some trustees’ concern that “chancellor” referred primarily to a university post while “administrator” could be more broadly applied to an entire educational system composed of universities, junior colleges, high schools, Institutes of Religion, and seminaries.

<sup>38</sup>Wilkinson, Diary, 5 January 1965. Ironically, Wilkinson felt that Taylor had not been as supportive of some of his educational programs during Wilkinson’s absence as he should have been. Wilkinson, Confidential memorandum of conference with McKay, 3 January 1965.

<sup>39</sup>Wilkinson, Diary, 5 January 1965.

To his diary, Wilkinson confided mixed feelings. He fumed that “this was Harold B. Lee’s idea . . . [and] because he was the ‘crown prince’ only one or two dared oppose him.”<sup>40</sup> On the other hand, Wilkinson gradually “warmed up to the proposal somewhat, knowing of the tremendous burdens that have been upon me.” Still, he did not believe that BYU should stand alone and “conceived the idea that Ricks College should be made a branch of the B.Y.U.” Over the telephone he proposed the idea to Elder Marion G. Romney “and thought I got a favorable response from him.” He then met with N. Eldon Tanner, second counselor in the First Presidency, who “was very favorable” and referred Wilkinson to Lee. Elder Delbert L. Stapley, whom Wilkinson chanced to meet while waiting for Lee, also concurred. When Wilkinson was finally ushered into Lee’s office, the meeting was “probably the warmest . . . I have had with him for a long time.” Lee was “pretty enthusiastic about the idea and even mentioned that under my leadership he thought that John Clarke who I think has been President of Ricks for 22 years, should be released and a new dynamic leader put it.” Excited at the turn of events, Wilkinson “got to thinking that B.Y.U. had more to offer in helping the Church College of Hawaii than other segments of the School System so I proposed that.” Lee suggested that he make both proposals at the board meeting the next day.<sup>41</sup>

When he arrived home that evening, Wilkinson discussed the matter with Alice Ludlow Wilkinson, his wife of forty-one years, “who because of the burdens of the office had been suggesting for some time that there be a division.” She had hoped, however, that Wilkinson would remain as chancellor rather than BYU president so that they would live in Salt Lake City “where she goes several days a week [to perform her duties as a member of the General Board of the Relief Society] . . . and which she enjoys very much.”<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup>Ibid. By “crown prince,” Wilkinson referred to Lee’s probable succession to the presidency of the Church. Both Wilkinson and Lee could be irascible and dictatorial, with tempers which they did not always control. They had clashed in the past; and Wilkinson knew that Lee resisted Wilkinson’s expansive—and expensive—vision of worldwide Church education.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid.

The next morning before the board met, Wilkinson told "President Tanner that Brother Lee was favorable to my suggestions of the night before." He also attempted to meet briefly again with Marion Romney "but found that he was closeted with Brother Lee." As Wilkinson then entered the board room, Lee "said that he had been thinking of my suggestions the night before and he had grave doubt[s] whether they should be adopted." Shocked, Wilkinson asked if Lee had any objection to his presenting them to the board. Lee responded, "Of course, you have the right to present anything you want." "A very gruff consent," Wilkinson afterwards thought, "and I knew that I was in for trouble in presenting it."<sup>43</sup>

During the meeting, Lee formally presented both executive committees' recommendation that the positions of BYU president and chancellor of education, rechristened "administrator," be separated. The president of BYU would report directly to the BYU Board of Trustees, and the administrator would be responsible for all other Church schools and report to the Church Board of Education. The committees knew that to recommend otherwise would incur the wrath of both Wilkinson and McKay and emphasized that "the Administrator would have no supervision over or responsibility with respect to Brigham Young University." Wilkinson would continue as president of BYU, while Harvey Taylor would be "appointed to served on a temporary basis as Administrator." Both men would meet together with both boards, and "no publicity [would] be given to these matters until all necessary details have been agreed upon."<sup>44</sup>

Wilkinson yielded somewhat on his insistence that the two positions remain united until certain problems could be resolved. He did urge "that the benefits of unification should be preserved," "that there should be no unnecessary duplication of existing facilities or personnel," "that BYU be considered a service center for all the Church schools," "that the President and the Administrator feel

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid., 6 January 1965.

<sup>44</sup>BYU Board of Trustees, Minutes, 6 January 1965. At one point Lee reportedly "went so far as to say that maybe the President of B.Y.U. should be a director of the Board of Education and that the Administrator of the other units should be a Trustee of the B.Y.U. so that both could know what was going on and give suggestions." Wilkinson, Diary, 6 January 1965.



free to make suggestions as to the other's areas of responsibility," and finally "that Ricks College and the Church College of Hawaii become branches of BYU."<sup>45</sup>

Apostle Marion Romney, hearing the last proposal, observed that "he was afraid this would re-open old sores."<sup>46</sup> "It was apparent to me," Wilkinson commented to his diary, "he was operating under orders from Brother Lee because this seemed contrary to his views the day before." Lee added that he was opposed to making the Church College of Hawaii a branch of BYU. Finally the board made five unanimous decisions: to divide the two positions, to appoint Wilkinson president of BYU, to appoint Harvey Taylor interim administrator of the Church school system, to ask the executive committees to examine Wilkinson's recommendations and "come up with a definite plan," and to refer "the whole matter . . . to President McKay for his approval." They emphasized that their decision was not final and that "nothing of any kind should be said to anyone or to the newspapers." Wilkinson, "looking sharply at Brother Lee," said, "If anything gets out to the newspapers it will not come from us at the B.Y.U. but from other members of the Board." Lee quipped, "Well, the newspaper people are pretty adept at getting things out of members of the Board."<sup>47</sup>

By the next week, however, McKay, whose health was steadily deteriorating, had either forgotten about his earlier decision or had changed his mind about separating the positions of BYU president and Church administrator. In a meeting with his counselors, Brown and Tanner, he told them that to separate the two offices permanently "would not be fair to Dr. Wilkinson and I [am] not in favor of it."<sup>48</sup> He subsequently "categorically promised" Wilkinson that before final action would be taken regarding a permanent division, McKay "would see [him] on it." Tanner too reportedly informed

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<sup>45</sup>BYU Board of Trustees, Minutes, 6 January 1965.

<sup>46</sup>During the late 1950s, Wilkinson tried to move Ricks College from Rexburg to Idaho Falls. After five reversals of board policy and a great deal of acrimony, McKay finally decided that Ricks would remain in Rexburg.

<sup>47</sup>BYU Board of Trustees, Minutes, 6 January 1965; Wilkinson, Diary, 6 January 1965.

<sup>48</sup>McKay, Diary, 13 January 1965.

Wilkinson that McKay “had told him that before he took any action he would see me.”<sup>49</sup>

When the combined boards next met in early February, Hugh B. Brown presided. He said he had met McKay the previous day at Laguna Beach, California, where the Church president was convalescing. McKay “had approved the division of responsibility proposed by the Executive Committee, namely, that [Wilkinson] would be President of Brigham Young University and that the other parts of the Church School System would be under an administrator, Harvey L. Taylor to be the Acting Administrator. Although he would not be designated as Acting but this would be clearly understood.” In addition, neither Ricks nor the Church College of Hawaii would become branches of BYU. The board dutifully approved Brown’s recommendations.<sup>50</sup>

Shocked at McKay’s apparent reversal or at Brown’s blatant maneuvering, Wilkinson was no doubt pleased when

President Tanner thereupon showed his candor and mettle by stating that he wanted the Board to know that he himself informed President McKay that he thought this division was untimely because [Wilkinson] had been promised that [he] would be returned to both positions and that for the change to be made a few days after [he] was appointed hardly seemed good faith. Second, that he felt it would be much more desirable to put B.Y.U., Ricks College, and the Church College [of Hawaii] together.<sup>51</sup>

“However,” Wilkinson realized, “since we know that the President is quite forgetful these days, the sad aspect of the situation is that it was presented at Laguna Beach by President Brown alone without President Tanner being present and there is every indication

<sup>49</sup>Wilkinson, *Diary*, 3 February 1965.

<sup>50</sup>*Ibid.*; BYU Board of Trustees, *Minutes*, 3 February 1965. Although Ricks would never be affiliated with BYU, the Church College of Hawaii did become an extension of the Provo school in April 1974, less than four months after Harold B. Lee’s death.

<sup>51</sup>BYU Board of Trustees, *Minutes*, 3 February 1965, record that Tanner had raised two questions with McKay: “(1) Whether due to President Wilkinson’s recent reappointment, it would be desirable to defer the announcement and effective date of the new organization for a time, and (2) whether Ricks College and the Church College of Hawaii should be in the same educational unit as BYU. He [Tanner] expressed the opinion that they should be.”

that President Brown would like the change.” Wilkinson was convinced Brown’s motives were personal: “He is smarting that President McKay has taken my side against him in several disputes and in fact in one seriously rebuked him so much so that President Brown almost threatened to resign.”<sup>52</sup>

After the meeting Tanner reportedly confided to Wilkinson that he and Brown had met before the board meeting and the topic of division had not come up. Tanner “was as much surprised as I,” Wilkinson wrote, “and he still hoped the time would come during my tenure when the three colleges would be put together. He said he knew it was right.” Although McKay had clearly “violated his agreement,” Wilkinson thought he “ought [not] to be bitter—I rather think he just forgot it.” Wilkinson was actually more annoyed at his own laxness. “Had I relied on the statement of President Tanner that [McKay] was going to see me,” he noted, “I would have seen him instead, the purpose being to acquaint him with all the facets of the situation, which I know he has not been acquainted with.”<sup>53</sup>

Knowing that he would hereafter be restricted to governing the affairs of BYU only, Wilkinson tried to resign himself to the inevitable. “As far as I am personally concerned,” he recorded, “it will probably be a much more tranquil life for me to be just President of the B.Y.U. . . . than to have added to these responsibilities the supervision of all of the other Church schools. I will be able to really concentrate on B.Y.U. affairs and to do them, I am sure, much more effectively than has been the case. This might be a Godsend to me.”<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup>Wilkinson, Diary, 3 February 1965; see also BYU Board of Trustees, Minutes, 3 February 1965.

<sup>53</sup>Wilkinson, Diary, 3 February 1965.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid. In fact, Wilkinson now had time to combat the “so-called ‘liberal elements’” that he saw as having taken over “the economic and political things of the university” during his absence. Wilkinson, Diary, 30 November 1970. “We are facing a great crisis in this country,” he would explain to McKay, “and many of our political science and economics teachers are teaching false doctrine.” Letter to McKay, 1 July 1965, Wilkinson Papers. “The problems that I will face,” he confided to his diary, “are much larger than those I faced when I first came in as president of the B.Y.U. Whether I will have the energy and the fortitude and patience to solve some of them remains to be seen.” But he promised, “I am going to do what I can to reverse [this] trend.” Wilkinson, Diary, 2 January, 7 April 1965. As the ensuing years made clear, Wilkinson had been politicized by his rejection

Within days of the board meeting—perhaps as soon as the day after—Hugh B. Brown telephoned Harvey Taylor, who had not yet been apprised of the impending division. “Hello, Brother Taylor,” Brown reportedly began, “how are you this morning? I have been instructed by the First Presidency to tell you that you’ve been appointed Administrator of all Church schools except BYU. Good-bye and God bless you,” Taylor recalled. Nearly fourteen years later, Taylor added:

I never got a written letter or instructions of any kind. That was it. Of course, much of the work was new, but much of it I had carried as part of my assignment under Ernest. I didn’t know how long I’d serve. I was getting near retirement age at that time. I was sixty-five. So I didn’t know how long they would keep me in this new position. I went to a Board meeting and met the brethren but still I got no instructions. Finally, I went to Brother [Harold B.] Lee and I said, “Brother Lee, isn’t there somebody up here that will tell me what you want me to do?” He replied, “Just go ahead and do what you’ve been doing.” So that’s what I did.<sup>55</sup>

Immediately after Brown’s telephone call, the Church released news of the reorganization, even though the specifics of the transition had not been entirely worked out.<sup>56</sup> Brown, Lee, and others reasoned that keeping Taylor in as interim administrator would pacify McKay’s concerns that a permanent appointment would be unfair to Wilkinson while still separating the two offices. “In the administration of his duties,” Wilkinson promised in a convoluted statement to the press, “Dr. Harvey Taylor will have my full support and cooperation. It is contemplated that in the administration of the other Church schools the unification that has already been obtained will continue, and the facilities of the Brigham Young University will be availed of to assist in the working out of the

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and, when he returned to BYU, showed himself increasingly fearful of dissent and preoccupied to the point of distraction with rumors of faculty disloyalty. See Gary J. Bergera and Ronald L. Priddis, *Brigham Young University: A House of Faith* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1985), 198-219.

<sup>55</sup>Harvey L. Taylor, Oral History, 12 February 1979, 13, BYU Archives.

<sup>56</sup>“Church School System Reorganized: Wilkinson, Taylor Assume Top Posts,” *Daily Universe*, 8 February 1965. For an indication that not all “details of the new organization” had yet been resolved, see Executive Committee, BYU Board of Trustees, Minutes of special meeting, 9 February 1965.

entire educational program.”<sup>57</sup> For the next five years, Wilkinson served as BYU president and Taylor as acting administrator, each autonomously responsible to the Church for his own area of concern.<sup>58</sup>

### FINAL RESIGNATION

At least four times during the decade preceding David O. McKay's death in early 1970, Wilkinson had confronted rumors—some innocent, some not—about his possible retirement from Church employ.<sup>59</sup> He had always rebuffed such suggestions, stressing that he did not believe in retirement at a predetermined age. By 1969 the rumors (which Wilkinson believed originated with Hugh B. Brown) had even specified his replacement: Neal A. Maxwell, forty-three-year-old executive vice-president of the University of Utah, regional representative for the Church, and protégé of Harold B. Lee.<sup>60</sup> Despite his failing health, McKay had loyally supported Wilkinson over the growing objections of his colleagues, dismissing such rumors out of hand. “We have been very close over the years,” he reassured a nervous Wilkinson in mid-1969, “and I think we are now as close as we have ever been and I think you better continue as you are and not let rumors disturb you. . . . You never heard me suggest you drop out—you stay, go back to Provo and get ready for the next year.”<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>57</sup>Quoted in “Church School System Reorganized.”

<sup>58</sup>The following month, the trustees, no doubt in an effort to soften the double impact of Wilkinson's failed senate bid and the lost chancellorship, and to acknowledge his contributions to BYU, named the newly constructed student union building the Ernest L. Wilkinson Center. BYU Board of Trustees, Minutes, 3 March 1965.

<sup>59</sup>Wilkinson, Memo of a conference with the First Presidency, 9 February 1960; Wilkinson, Memo of a conference with David O. McKay, 22 May 1961; Wilkinson, Diary, 20 February 1968; Wilkinson, “Memorandum Re: Report That Neil [sic] Maxwell Is To Be President of BYU,” 20 February 1968; and Wilkinson, “Confidential Memorandum of Conference I Had with President McKay on July 25, 1969”; all in Wilkinson Papers.

<sup>60</sup>Wilkinson, “Confidential Memorandum . . . July 25, 1969,” and Wilkinson, Letter to Joseph Fielding Smith, 28 January 1970, Wilkinson Papers.

<sup>61</sup>Wilkinson, “Confidential Memorandum . . . on July 25, 1969.” Wilkinson

Maxwell's name resurfaced just a few months later, when Lee and his supporters made plans to replace Harvey Taylor with a permanent Commissioner of Education responsible for the Church's entire school system, including BYU. Lee, whose general philosophy of governance was hierarchical and highly correlated, did not like either the concept or the conduct of two co-equal offices. Wilkinson learned of the move to replace Taylor and lobbied McKay in September 1969 to appoint an apostle as the new commissioner, a recommendation he felt certain would be supported by a majority of the Twelve.<sup>62</sup> With an apostle as commissioner, Wilkinson would still retain direct contact with the Twelve.

Following McKay's death on 18 January 1970, Wilkinson tried to be optimistic about his future, writing pointedly to Joseph Fielding Smith, the new president:

You will recall that some time ago when President Hugh B. Brown wanted me removed from President of Brigham Young University, for someone of his own liberal views to replace me, I consulted with you and you advised me to see President McKay about it, which I did. That resulted in President McKay promising me that as long as he was President of the Church I would remain as President of BYU . . . I reported that back to you and you replied that you also wanted me to stay as long as you had anything to do with the matter. I am, therefore, still at the BYU and with your support will continue.<sup>63</sup>

He also wrote to Harold B. Lee, who as first counselor to an increasingly enfeebled ninety-four-year-old Smith essentially controlled the First Presidency: "To the extent I may do so in my limited calling, I pledge the new Presidency my support just as I gave that support to President McKay and his Counselors (except President Brown, whom I knew himself was not giving support to the President and the Council of the Twelve.)"<sup>64</sup> Finally to N.

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felt so strongly about the rumors of his departure at this time that he had McKay personally read and approve his minutes of their meeting.

<sup>62</sup>Supplemental Memorandum of a Conference with President David O. McKay on May 21, 1967"; and Wilkinson, Diary, 9 September 1969.

<sup>63</sup>Wilkinson, Letter to Smith, 28 January 1970.

<sup>64</sup>Wilkinson, Letter to Lee, 28 January 1970, Wilkinson Papers. Despite open conflicts with Lee, Wilkinson felt that Brown was the least supportive of all

Eldon Tanner, newly appointed as Smith's second counselor, he confided,

I know that you are willing to listen and that you will base your decisions on the facts rather than on some snap judgment which may be based on hearsay or on an incomplete study of the subject represented. I am sure that you have difficult problems ahead but I am happy to know also that you will not hesitate to express kindly but firmly your views on those subjects, and I am sure that the First Presidency will benefit greatly from your wisdom.<sup>65</sup>

Still Wilkinson believed—correctly—that despite his overtures to the Church's new guard, the power he had enjoyed for the past twenty years was rapidly diminishing. Realistically, he knew that his domineering personality, his age (he would turn seventy-one in May), and his health could be used as arguments against his continuing to captain the university.<sup>66</sup>

Five months after McKay's death, Maxwell was named to the newly rechristened office of Church Commissioner of Education in June 1970.<sup>67</sup> Wilkinson, who expected the appointment, knew it heralded the end of his privileged relationship to the Church hierarchy. As Wilkinson's oldest daughter later confirmed: "[My father] knew that he would not be given a free rein under President Lee. President McKay had given him a lot of liberty. Presi-

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the General Authorities. He believed that Brown's Democratic political philosophy ran counter to the best interests of the Church and that Brown sometimes did not follow McKay's directives. However, Wilkinson underestimated the increasing suspicion in which he himself was held by an increasing number of other General Authorities.

<sup>65</sup>Wilkinson, Letter to Tanner, 28 January 1970, Wilkinson Papers. In fact, Wilkinson thought that Tanner's appointment to Smith's First Presidency was "the one bright ray in the entire reorganization." Wilkinson, "Memorandum of Conference with President Tanner on Saturday, January 24th," 26 January 1970, Wilkinson Papers.

<sup>66</sup>Even so, Wilkinson must have found it galling to realize that the Church was now being guided by a president twenty-two years his senior, a first counselor his own age, and a second counselor one year older than he.

<sup>67</sup>Only seven months before his death McKay had stressed to his counselors, "As I indicated previously I am in favor of finding and appointing a commissioner of education for the Church. I am not in favor of the release of Ernest L. Wilkinson as president of the Brigham Young University." McKay, Diary, 17 June 1969.

dent Lee would have been much more controlling.”<sup>68</sup> “Wilkinson sensed that the new Church administration might have a different perspective on the place and role of BYU in Church education,” Wilkinson’s own history of BYU agreed, “. . . and consequently would want to appoint a corps of new leaders.”<sup>69</sup> Reluctantly, but preferring resignation to being openly encouraged to retire, Wilkinson submitted to his Board of Trustees a handwritten letter on 19 June:

Dear Brethren:

In accordance with the order of the Church and because I believe that the new First Presidency and the Board of Trustees of Brigham Young University should have the right, with the greatest ease of action, to have whomsoever they desire as President of that University, I hereby tender my resignation as its President, effective at the end of next fiscal year, August 31, 1971. This will give you ample time to (1) deliberate upon the selection of a new president; (2) permit me to consummate certain matters now in process of being completed; and (3) permit the orderly closing of the financial affairs of the University as of the end of that financial period, so there will be no confusion as to the responsibility for expenditures during that year and the new administration can have a fresh start both financially and academically.

If, however, you desire my resignation to take effect before then, this letter may be construed as my resignation as of the desired time.

I am writing this in longhand so that not even my secretaries will know about it. I suggest that it be treated as confidential until the change is actually made; otherwise, it would be difficult for me to maintain the firmness necessary for the proper administration of the University in these days of constant pressures and tensions.

With appreciation for the opportunities the First Presidency and the Board of Trustees have given me, I remain,

Faithfully yours,  
[signed] Ernest L. Wilkinson<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup>Telephone interview with Marian Wilkinson Jensen, 23 February 1995, notes in my possession.

<sup>69</sup>Wilkinson and Arrington, *Brigham Young University*, 3:747; this statement was repeated verbatim, though without attribution, in Deem and Bird, *Ernest L. Wilkinson*, 502.

<sup>70</sup>Wilkinson, Letter to President Joseph Fielding Smith and Counselors and the Board of Trustees of Brigham Young University, 19 June 1970, reprinted in “Decades of Distinction, 1951-71,” in *BYU Speeches of the Year, 1970-71* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1971), 1-2. Wilkinson had previously discussed



The First Presidency elected not to act on Wilkinson's confidential letter of resignation immediately and apparently did not even inform the Board of Trustees of its existence. Less than two months later on 12 August 1970, Maxwell's nomination was officially approved at an executive session (to which Wilkinson had not been invited) of the Combined Church Board of Education and Brigham Young University Board of Trustees. Unlike the division of responsibilities in 1965 and just as Wilkinson had anticipated, the new commissioner was now explicitly charged with "supervision of Brigham Young University, the Church colleges, Church schools, and the institutes and seminaries—the whole Church education system."<sup>71</sup>

Later that day, Harold B. Lee wrote to Wilkinson, spelling out that the BYU president would not receive the same direct contact to the board:

With the appointment of a Commissioner for the Church's educational system, the Board will now expect him to bring items to Board Meetings as needed. Prior to Board Meetings, Brother Maxwell will prepare the agenda which will be reviewed with the Executive Committee and the Board and will invite you to present to the Committee and to the Board items that pertain to Brigham Young University. This important preliminary review by the Commissioner's office will permit some priorities to be assigned to items brought to the Board in the context of time and funds available. . . .

We know you will find Brother Maxwell to be cooperative in every way.<sup>72</sup>

The forty-four-year-old Maxwell was not Wilkinson's first choice as commissioner. "He's not a fighter," Wilkinson wrote dismissively in his diary less than a month after Maxwell's appointment, and "is going to make decisions on the basis of expediency and what he thinks President Lee would like."<sup>73</sup> Maxwell "is quite sensitive to anything that criticizes the University of Utah," Wilkin-

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the letter only with his wife. Marian Wilkinson Jensen, Letter to Gary J. Bergera, 26 April 1995.

<sup>71</sup>Combined Church Board of Education and Brigham Young University Board of Trustees, Minutes, 12 August 1970.

<sup>72</sup>Lee, Letter to Wilkinson, 12 August 1970, Wilkinson Papers.

<sup>73</sup>Wilkinson, Diary, 2 September 1970.

son added four months later, “and he is also hesitant to do anything that would accentuate the conservative posture that BYU has. Thus he resists any suggestion that we engage Max Rafferty [former California public school superintendent and a nationally prominent conservative] on our faculty. He couldn’t give me any specific reasons except that the image of BYU might be hurt by it.”<sup>74</sup> However, Wilkinson grudgingly acknowledged Maxwell’s administrative skills even as he strained to accommodate the new organizational structure: “I have to admit that he’s very much alert and on his toes as to problems of the Church School System, but my burden is very much increased by having so many conferences with him—both by telephone and otherwise.”<sup>75</sup>

During his remaining months, Wilkinson carefully negotiated the terms of his departure. In addition to confirming the full term until 31 August 1971, he worked for a commitment to be involved in establishing a law school at BYU. Wilkinson had guarded the news of his resignation so closely that not even his children knew; but when the details of transition were finally worked out, Wilkinson and the First Presidency decided to announce his resignation on Tuesday, 9 March 1971, first privately to the Board of Trustees then publicly during a campus-wide devotional later that morning.

On Monday, he recorded that journalists had been asking Maxwell if Wilkinson was resigning and if prominent Utah educator T. H. Bell was being named as his replacement. Maxwell “could truthfully say ‘no’ for only part of it was true,” Wilkinson wrote. As for himself, Wilkinson recorded proudly, he had also “had several calls asking if I were retiring. Because their questions were phrased wrong I was able to say ‘no’. It has been my experience over the years that newspaper reporters are not very adept in phrasing questions and the fact that they have not been adept has helped me very much in avoiding premature news releases during the years.”<sup>76</sup>

The next day, Tuesday, at 8:00 A.M., Joseph Fielding Smith presided over a special meeting of BYU’s trustees. Lee, who conducted, read Wilkinson’s eight-and-a-half-month-old letter of resig-

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<sup>74</sup>*Ibid.*, 4 January 1971.

<sup>75</sup>*Ibid.*, 1 March 1971; see also 2 March 1971.

<sup>76</sup>*Ibid.*, 8 March 1971.

nation and then moved that the board accept “Dr. Wilkinson’s submission of his resignation as President of Brigham Young University, to be effective during the summer or on August 31, 1971.”<sup>77</sup> Wilkinson was irate that Lee had presented the resignation as a *fait accompli* and complained privately that “the procedure . . . was hardly legal. He [Lee] read a resolution thanking me for my twenty years of services, which obliquely referred to an acceptance of my resignation. There should of course have been a separate motion to accept the resignation.” The final version of the minutes read that the trustees “approved” the proposal “that the letter of resignation be accepted.”<sup>78</sup> Various trustees voiced their appreciation of Wilkinson’s presidency. Finally, Wilkinson was invited to say a few words and opened with a mild complaint:

I thought I had an agreement yesterday with Neal [Maxwell] that I wouldn’t be called on for anything because I’m going to continue some time longer. Maybe at the end of the year when I have an opportunity to think things through a little more, I would like to say something.

I appreciate what’s been said here this morning and I will respond more formally at BYU this morning, but my wife has fortified me for this occasion this morning by very subtly telling me last night of a famous senator who, when he retired from the Senate, was given a great banquet by his political friends at which they praised him so much that he was practically walking on thin air. As they walked home hand in hand, he said to her, “I wonder how many great men there are in the world.” She said, “I don’t know, but there is one less than you think.” I’ve been, of course, appreciative of the opportunities I’ve had here.

You Brethren in his room know that we haven’t always agreed.<sup>79</sup> There have been some rather vigorous encounters—not nearly as big around this table, though, as some I’ve engaged in in court and that’s why maybe I think I’ve been able to endure them because I have the background of contest. I don’t think contest is the right name, but we’ve all had the same end. This Church has belonged to me as much as any of you. It still does. And therefore, I felt that I had a right to express my opinions, which I’ve done, which have not always been accepted; but

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<sup>77</sup>“Transcript of Special Board Meeting,” attached to Clyde D. Sandgren, Letter to Wilkinson, 17 March 1971, Wilkinson Papers.

<sup>78</sup>Wilkinson, Diary, 9 March 1971; BYU Board of Trustees Special Meeting, Minutes, 9 March 1971.

<sup>79</sup>“They all knew who it was—Brother Lee,” Wilkinson confided to his diary later that day.

when a decision has been made no one can accuse me of not following the decision. I won't say more at this time. I will hope later on that when I get my thoughts a little more coherent I can say something.

But I'll be here at least three or more months and I'll be working closely with respect to the formation of the college of law. That does tempt me, however, to say this in response to what President Lee has said. I hope that BYU College of Law—and that isn't the correct title—it will be the J. Reuben Clark, Jr., College of Law, will be just as distinctive and different from other colleges of law as the BYU, itself, is distinct and different from other universities. In fact, there's no purpose in creating it unless it is going to be distinctive and different and have as one of its cardinal principles the text of the Constitution of the United States. We've been told, of course, that the Prophet himself said that the Constitution would hang by a thread. I don't know of any means that we could employ for the Elders of Israel to save the Constitution more than by teaching correct doctrines of law school. And may I just say to you that the demand for entrance to law schools at the present time is tremendous. . . . We have, therefore, a great opportunity at BYU not only because of the demand, but also because of the correct principles which I think we can teach.

May I say that when I submitted my resignation last summer, the decision to have a law school had not been made—it was made subsequent to that time.<sup>80</sup> I had a number of alternatives which I was considering because as Brother [Ezra Taft] Benson said, "I don't believe in retiring." I'm never going to retire, and so when these people called me at 5 o'clock this morning asking if I was going to retire, I said "No. You can quote me." But when the First Presidency called me in and asked me if I would take a leading role in the development of the law school, that seemed to be an excellent opportunity and so I decided to stay on.

Thanks very much and I'll say more later.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>80</sup>Actually, Wilkinson had earlier suggested to Romney that a law school named for Clark be founded. Romney proposed the concept to Lec, who voiced his support, and Romney formally recommended creation of a BYU law school to the executive committee of BYU's Board of Trustees on 18 June 1970, the day before Wilkinson's letter of resignation. News of the school was officially released in conjunction with the public announcement of Wilkinson's resignation on 9 March 1971.

<sup>81</sup>"Transcript of Special Board Meeting." In the final minutes Wilkinson's comments were edited to read: "President Wilkinson indicated he would welcome the opportunity at a later date to respond to the Board with appropriate remarks, but felt that since he would be working with members of the Board for some period of time to come, the remarks would be more appropriate at a later date. He did say that he had always felt that he and members of the Board had always

An hour later Harold B. Lee announced Wilkinson's resignation to a standing-room-only crowd of 15,000 BYU students, faculty, and staff in the George Albert Smith Fieldhouse, site of Wilkinson's inauguration as president twenty years earlier. The first counselor lauded Wilkinson's achievements, among them keeping student demonstrations and protests to a minimum, creating campus wards and stakes, and implementing dress and grooming standards. Lee then announced the establishment of the J. Reuben Clark College of Law, scheduled to open in two years, and Wilkinson's "major role" in its "planning."<sup>82</sup> Next Maxwell explained that he and others would immediately begin looking for the new president "whom the Lord would have preside over this institution in the decade of the seventies."<sup>83</sup> Finally, Wilkinson took the podium. During his brief comments he again noted the difference between resigning and retiring, adding, "I am not yet ready, nor do I desire, to be taken up, for I now want to start a third career. And I hope that the good Lord will permit me to finish that third career." He graciously—if disingenuously—credited any successes he had accomplished at BYU to his Board of Trustees, his wife, and the students, and concluded with his testimony of the LDS Church. Alice, who had been urging her husband for several years to "slow down," gratefully closed the hour-long emotional meeting.<sup>84</sup>

Honors, tributes, and other accolades soon followed. "Don't slight the past two decades, Ernest," wrote Maxwell the following

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had the same ends in mind, and therefore, he had always felt he could express his feelings freely to the Board in an effort to aid in decisions necessary to achieve those ends.

"President Wilkinson expressed his pleasure at continuing to be working with the College of Law, his desire to make that college just as different from other colleges of law as BYU is different from other universities." BYU Board of Trustees Special Meeting, Minutes, 9 March 1971.

<sup>82</sup>"Decades of Distinction, 1951-71," 24.

<sup>83</sup>*Ibid.*, 5-6. Trustees eventually settled on University of Chicago law professor Dallin H. Oaks. Oaks had not been on Wilkinson's own list of possible replacements.

<sup>84</sup>Alice Wilkinson Anderson, "Reaction to E.L.W.'s Eventual Resignation from B.Y.U.," March 1995, in my possession; "Decades of Distinction, 1951-71," 7-11.

week. "That institution crossed a phase-line several years ago in which it did not lose its uniqueness, but when it began to be a university instead of a pleasant liberal arts college—also unique—but not a university."<sup>85</sup> "I read of your retirement," commented Norman Vincent Peale, a prominent motivational speaker. "Listen, my friend, you can no more retire than a fire engine can turn into a hearse. . . . You are one of the great natural-born leaders of our time."<sup>86</sup> Asahel Woodruff, dean of the University of Utah's College of Education and former dean of both BYU's graduate school and its College of Education, had left BYU at least partly over his battles with Wilkinson. Graciously, he wrote: "As you leave the University I want you to know that I assess your influence on the institution as of greater magnitude than any other person in its history. From many conversations I know that my assessment is almost universally shared."<sup>87</sup> "Seeing it all in long-term perspective," wrote nationally respected Mormon sociologist Nels Anderson,

I think I can understand what the angels had in mind. They were thinking of the future of the BYU, and of course, the future of Mormondom. They would put you through a vigorous training and apprenticeship among the Gentiles . . . after that bring you to the BYU, the Mormon university already in the doldrums, being tolerated more than promoted. That was the needed job, as you must now be aware, and as the record shows, you did it well. Perhaps you made enemies in the process, but the University stands there with a momentum to grow it did not have before. It may be that you have taken the BYU about as far as a denominational university can be taken at the time.<sup>88</sup>

Most importantly, N. Eldon Tanner wrote in early June, wondering if "you might have in your mind things that you would have liked to accomplish, things that should be done, and changes which you feel would help or improve conditions, and other suggestions which you might wish to make regarding the university. . . . I would like to suggest," he invited, "that you give us the benefit of your thinking."<sup>89</sup> Occupied with a hectic speaking schedule and the

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<sup>85</sup>Maxwell, Letter to Wilkinson, 16 March 1971, Wilkinson Papers.

<sup>86</sup>Peale, Letter to Wilkinson, 31 March 1971, Wilkinson Papers.

<sup>87</sup>Woodruff, Letter to Wilkinson, 7 April 1971, Wilkinson Papers.

<sup>88</sup>Anderson, Letter to Wilkinson, 24 April 1971, Wilkinson Papers.

pressures of finalizing his farewell,<sup>89</sup> Wilkinson responded to Tanner's invitation four months later while recuperating from open-heart surgery. BYU should not only maintain its distinctiveness, he advised in seven single-spaced pages, but celebrate it. "I have never felt," he explained, with typical bluntness, "even though some of my associates have, that we have to generally follow the reports of accrediting agencies." Rather than kowtow to the liberal fads of American higher education, he called for the continuing "repudiation" of prevailing views regarding birth control and abortion, regulation of the size of families, Right to Work legislation, going into debt, interracial marriage, socialism, minimum wage, Aid to Dependent Children, guaranteed annual wages, welfare programs, integration by busing, "race restrictions in covenants running with land," faculty tenure, federal aid to education, dress and grooming standards, and faculty governance—all of which he saw as too liberal. Up to the end he remained a recalcitrant conservative social reformer for whom his religion and his politics were synonymous. "I do not claim any infallibility in making these suggestions," he closed his lengthy epistle, "and you may not agree with them, but I am of course most anxious that the reputation of the Brigham Young University for increased scholarship, for greater religious devotion, and for orderly conduct, be constantly enhanced, and I have made these suggestions to that end."<sup>91</sup>

As the last days of his tenure neared, he and Maxwell ironed out the final details of his departure, including secretarial needs, salary requirements, and plans to vacate the President's House for remodeling.<sup>92</sup> On 27 July he dictated his valedictory memo to the faculty:

As I leave my present position, I have been asked many times if I had in mind, when I came, the campus that has now been created. The answer is that my appointment was so unexpected that I had no plans of any kind. Everything that has been done is the result of plans created and carried

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<sup>89</sup>Tanner, Letter to Wilkinson, 8 June 1971, Wilkinson Papers.

<sup>90</sup>For a list, see "Honors for President Wilkinson Following Resignation Announcement," Wilkinson Biographical File, BYU Archives.

<sup>91</sup>Wilkinson, Letter to Tanner, 5 October 1971, Wilkinson Papers.

<sup>92</sup>Maxwell, Letter to Wilkinson, 22 June 1971, Wilkinson Papers.

out after I came to the University. The progress that has been made has been the result of suggestions and efforts of a dedicated faculty and a responsive Board of Trustees. I am grateful to every member of the faculty for his part in that progress.

I leave as your President, knowing that there are many things yet to be accomplished—indeed, many things which I had hoped to accomplish but never had the time or energy for. The only virtue that I claim is that I have worked hard to make the BYU a “university of destiny.”<sup>93</sup>

Four days later, on Tuesday, 31 July 1971, after putting in his usual twelve hours at the office, he found himself waxing uncharacteristically nostalgic (perhaps prompted by several recent “This Is Your Life” programs held in his honor). “As I left the office at 7:00 P.M.,” he confessed to his diary, “I felt physically as vigorous as when I came 20 years ago, although I realize this was just a fleeting feeling because I know that over the last two or three years I have not had the energy that I had 20 years ago, and one of the reasons for my tendering my resignation thirteen months ago was that I knew I did not have the physical or mental stamina I had 20 years ago. I leave with mixed feelings,” he mused,

happy over what has been accomplished, but disappointed that I have not accomplished more. During the first few years of my administration, everything went my way—that was in large part due to the fact that the committee which nominated me for President then constituted the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees, namely, Joseph Fielding Smith, Stephen L. Richards, John A. Widtsoe, Albert E. Bowen, and Joseph F. Merrill. Later (and this was not many years after I became President), this committee changed, after which I did not have the freedom that I had previously. The occasion for the change of the Executive Committee was interesting. The Board of Trustees had authorized me to have the faculty of the BYU go to the various quarterly [stake] conferences of the Church to recruit for the BYU. I went to one in the Glendale Stake where Joseph F. Merrill was the General Authority. After I had given a short speech in the morning in favor of BYU, he in a later meeting (at which I was not present) urged the people to attend their local colleges instead of going to Provo. Being informed of this I was furious and the next morning saw President David O. McKay at about 6:00 A.M. and complained about what I considered the disloyalty of

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<sup>93</sup>Wilkinson, Letter to all members of the faculty, 27 July 1971, BYU Archives.



Brother Merrill. President McKay promised me that he would remove him from the Executive Committee. In doing so, however, he removed not only Brother Merrill but also Brothers Widsøe and Bowen, who were my ardent supporters.

After that change there were many rough spots in the road. The Brethren, which it is not always understood, are not always agreed, and while I always followed the advice of the Board as finally determined (with one big exception) I could not always satisfy the individual members. The sad part of it is that many of them did not have the courage to speak out in the Board of Trustees meetings, and if the decision went contrary to their views, they then saw me personally and put pressure on me to do as they desired.

The one great battle which I lost was a battle for the establishment of junior colleges in areas of large Mormon population.<sup>94</sup> President McKay supported me in this program and we purchased land in Portland, Idaho Falls, Fremont, just south of Oakland, two areas in Los Angeles, and one area in Phoenix for junior colleges. The Church still owns these campus sites. The Board resolved that we would build junior colleges there. Later, however, President McKay lost his physical and mental vigor and did not quite have the vigor to go ahead with this program. The one who opposed the program most was Harold B. Lee and when President Joseph Fielding Smith became President, President Smith relinquished the administrative and decision making duties largely to his first counselor, President Lee, and from then on the junior college program has gone down the drain. It may seem immodest, but I still think the abandonment of this program was a great mistake to the Church. I think

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<sup>94</sup>Throughout the 1950s and early 1960s, Wilkinson argued for a network of junior colleges from which students would transfer to BYU. He arranged for the purchase of about ten large tracts of land in the western United States. When some General Authorities suggested that LDS Institutes of Religion would more economically serve the religious education needs of young people, especially given the Church's constricted budget for chapels in the post-war building boom and Henry D. Moyle's deficit-spending policies, the First Presidency ruled that construction on junior colleges sites would not begin until Church reserves increased. During the delay, opposition to Wilkinson's program coalesced. Harold B. Lee and Boyd K. Packer, then assistant administrator of institutes and seminaries, called for a complete reexamination of the issue. A series of executive sessions of the Board of Trustees in early 1963, which excluded Wilkinson, decided not to "embark upon a program to build junior colleges at this time." Executive Committee, BYU Board of Trustees, Minutes, 3 July 1963. Wilkinson protested, but the project remained stalled. By the mid-1970s, most of the junior colleges properties had been sold at a substantial profit to the Church. Wilkinson and Arrington, *Brigham Young University*, 139-75.

I can demonstrate that the increased tithing that the Church in the future would have obtained from students who attended these junior colleges would have offset the cost of them. This is one point, however, on which I was never given time to really demonstrate the facts before the Board of Trustees.

This memorandum of my diary for this day now seems to be kind of a summary of my 20 years which I did not intend it to be, so I am cutting off at this point.

Obviously I have mixed feelings as I leave the Institution, but I do wish that I had been able to do more of the things which in my judgment would have been good for the school. I may, of course, have been wrong.<sup>95</sup>

For family members the change could not have been more welcomed. "We all felt, including him, that it was definitely time for him to *resign from BYU*," his daughter Marian remembered.

He had suffered one critical heart attack with its attendant open heart surgery [in 1956]. He was seventy years of age. Following his resignation he was to experience at least three more heart attacks [in 1971, 1976, and 1977] before he died. After his first heart attack, though he made an excellent recovery, he realized that he did not have quite the energy he had experienced previously. With his health history he would not have able to be as productive as he had been in his previous twenty years at the BYU. . . . He also realized that with the death of President McKay that he would not have as much support from the First Presidency and Board of Trustees as he received during President McKay's administration. In summary: It definitely was time for him to resign.<sup>96</sup>

"I believe it was during that change that he came as close to 'graciousness' as his abrupt style and single-minded personality would permit," younger daughter Alice added:

Even he sensed his time had come. While declining health, the death of David O. McKay, and the urging of our mother to slow the pace may have had persuasive influence in his decision, I believe that here was some subconscious prompting that while there was much more he would have liked to have done, he liked what he had done. He brought closure to many of his past dreams, and channelled disclosure of some of his future dreams.

In the end he had succeeded in building a university, and along the way, he succeeded in building a personal aura. He was very much a part

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<sup>95</sup>Wilkinson, Diary, 31 July 1971.

<sup>96</sup>Jensen, Letter to Bergera; emphasis in original.

of the power structure of the L.D.S. Church, neither contrived nor deliberate but a natural consequence of twenty years of mingling with, maneuvering, and gently manipulating the gentry of the Church, all in the name of [the] education of its youth. And as long as power is neither abused nor misused, is it not acceptable?<sup>97</sup>

In terms of sheer growth, Wilkinson's twenty years at BYU had indeed been phenomenal. During the space of two decades the student body had grown five-fold to more than 25,000, the number of full-time faculty had tripled to 932, the number of faculty holding Ph.D.s had jumped 900 percent to 500, faculty salaries had more than doubled to an average of nearly \$9,000 per year, the number of undergraduate colleges had nearly tripled, the number of academic departments had doubled, the first of some twenty doctoral programs had been authorized, library holdings had risen nearly 500 percent, use of the library had climbed ten fold, the physical size of the campus had more than doubled, the number of buildings had grown more than twenty fold, the amount of floor space had increased 500 percent (with a total of over \$143 million invested in land, permanent structures, and landscaping), and Church appropriations had risen twenty-one fold, from \$1 million to \$22 million annually, while university expenditures had soared thirty fold, from \$2 million to \$65 million annually. (More significantly, from the board's point of view, Church appropriations as a percentage of total income had actually decreased from nearly 70 percent to 33 percent.) However, Wilkinson counted as his greatest accomplishment the establishment of campus stakes and wards to service the religious and spiritual needs of students.

Personally, Wilkinson had represented Utah at the White House Conference on Education; had sat on U.S. Chamber of Commerce committees on Government Expenditures and National Defense; had served on the boards of Deseret News Publishing Company, Beneficial Life Insurance Company, KSL Incorporated, Ellison Ranching Company, and Rolling Hills Orchards; had been a fellow of the American Bar Foundation; had served as president of the American Association of Presidents of Independent Colleges and Universities; and had been a member of the National Accredi-

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<sup>97</sup>Anderson, "Reaction to E.L.W.'s Eventual Resignation from B.Y.U."

tation Commission for Business Schools, the National Speakers Bureau for the American Medical Association, and the International Platform Association. He had been twice awarded the George Washington Medal by the Freedoms Foundation, had been named a member of the Weber County Hall of Fame, and had received three honorary degrees.

Facing a future not absorbed by the daily administration of one of the largest private universities in the United States, Wilkinson at age seventy-two eagerly turned his full attention to establishment of the J. Reuben Clark Law School. As he would soon discover, however, Church and school officials were uneasy about encouraging a major commitment from the overbearing former president. (In fact, his involvement ceased with the appointment of Rex E. Lee as dean of the law school.) Instead, they would ask him—in a move daughter Alice described as “Solomon-like”<sup>98</sup>—to help edit BYU’s official centennial history, a relatively harmless task that they believed would keep him too busy to interfere with their business of running the university. “We all breathed a sigh of relief,” Alice added, “for what we hoped would be a temperate transition of power.”<sup>99</sup> Completed in 1976, the massive four-volume compilation, *Brigham Young University: The First One Hundred Years*, received mixed reviews and revealed as much about its editor as about the history of BYU. At the time of his death on 6 April 1978, just one month shy of his seventy-ninth birthday, an indefatigable Wilkinson was supervising the writing of his biography, *Ernest L. Wilkinson: Indian Advocate and University President*.<sup>100</sup>

### THE OFFICE OF CHURCH COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION

Following Wilkinson’s exit from the Abraham O. Smoot Administration Building, Neal Maxwell continued to serve as Commissioner of Education for another five years. He was replaced in 1976 by Jeffrey R. Holland who functioned until 1980 when he was

<sup>98</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>99</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>100</sup>Privately published by the Wilkinson family, the 690-page biography was never released generally. Inexplicably, by the early 1990s a few copies turned up in some Deseret Industries stores in Utah.

appointed president of BYU. Holland was followed by Henry B. Eyring, who served from 1980 to 1985 and then presided over Ricks College. J. Elliott Cameron, who had been BYU dean of students under both Wilkinson and his successor, Dallin H. Oaks, was commissioner from 1986 to 1989. In 1989, the Church Board of Education retired the commissionership because trustees reportedly felt it had become superfluous and decided to deal directly with the various presidents, directors, and administrators of the Church's universities, colleges, schools, Institutes, and seminaries. This experiment lasted for three years before Henry Eyring was again called as commissioner in 1992, a position he still holds as of December 1995, even though he was called as an apostle in April 1995.

The decision to divide the offices of BYU president and Church Commissioner of Education highlights the multi-faceted mechanism by which such high-level decisions are sometimes negotiated in the Mormon hierarchy. When such decision-making involves forceful personalities, strong opinions, and vested interests, as it did in this case, the process can be lengthy, convoluted, and even painful. In the collision of rational arguments, proponents can act on emotion, form unlikely alliances, reorder priorities, circumvent standard procedures, and misinterpret, if not misrepresent, the actions and statements of colleagues.

Certainly the advantages of an independent administrator, unencumbered by compromising loyalties to any particular educational institution, seem obvious: the freedom to formulate an overall vision and then to act in its best interests. But whatever the reasons for and benefits of separating the two positions, the process of arriving at each incremental decision leading to the ultimate course of action reveals the extent to which the human factor unavoidably figures into and determines both intermediary and final decisions.

# Fanny Alger Smith Custer Mormonism's First Plural Wife?

*Todd Compton*

In November 1836, a judge in Wayne County, Indiana, performed a marriage of considerable significance for historians of Mormon polygamy. The clerk recorded: "Dublin November 16th, 1836 This day married by me Levi Eastridge a Justice of the Peace for Wayne County and State of Indiana Mr Solomon Custer and Miss Fanny Alger both of this town."<sup>1</sup>

This marriage was noteworthy because Fanny Alger was one

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<sup>1</sup>Richard Van Wagoner found this record; photocopy in Marriott Library, University of Utah, Salt Lake City and cited in his *Mormon Polygamy* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1986), 10; see also Solomon Custer, Obituary, *Richmond Telegram*, 2 April 1885. Custer had been born in Montgomery County, Ohio, in 1816. See also 1850 Census, Dublin, Wayne County, Indiana, 11; 1880 Census, Indiana, 139.

of Joseph Smith's earliest plural wives, quite probably his first, but here she abandoned sacred marriage for a secular union with Solomon Custer, a non-Mormon. She left polygamy to embrace monogamy.

The details of Fanny's courtship with and marriage to Solomon are unknown, two of many puzzles in her mostly undocumented life. Yet Fanny Alger is important. First, she is the earliest plural wife of Joseph Smith for whom we have comparatively reliable documentation. Second, her marriage to Joseph in Kirtland established a pattern that was repeated in Nauvoo: Joseph secretly marries a teenaged servant/family friend living in his home, but Emma forces the young woman from the house when she discovers the relationship. And third, Fanny's marriage to Joseph set another pattern—that of strengthening a bond between Joseph and a male friend (in this case, Levi Hancock) but also of weakening a bond between Joseph and another friend (in this case, Oliver Cowdery).

We have no specific date for Fanny's marriage to Joseph or her death. We also know very little about her as a person except the comment of Benjamin F. Johnson, an early Mormon and close friend of Joseph Smith, that she was "varry nice & comly," a young woman to whom "every one Seemed *partial* for the ameability of her character."<sup>2</sup>

However, a neglected text, Mosiah Hancock's holograph "Autobiography,"<sup>3</sup> gives a valuable account of Fanny's marriage to Joseph and offers us a brief insight into the dynamics of Fanny's acceptance of patriarchal matrimony. This text, never before published or discussed in print, has significance for at least three

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<sup>2</sup>Benjamin F. Johnson, Letter to George S. Gibbs, [between April and October] 1903, LDS Church Archives; published in Dean R. Zimmerman, *I Knew the Prophets: An Analysis of the Letter of Benjamin F. Johnson to George F. Gibbs, Reporting Doctrinal Views of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young* (Bountiful, Utah: Horizon, 1976), 38; italics Johnson's.

<sup>3</sup>At least two published (mimeographed) versions are *The Mosiah Hancock Journal* (Salt Lake City: Pioneer Press, n.d.), 74 pp. (reprinted), and *The Levi Hancock Journal* (n.p., n.d.), 58 pp. Various typescript versions, all less complete than the holograph version, also exist. The Fanny Alger account is, as nearly as I can determine, only in the holograph version, Mosiah Hancock, Autobiography, MS 570, fd. 5, LDS Church Archives.

reasons: First, it has not been clear whether Fanny Alger's relationship with Joseph was a marriage or merely a liaison. The Mosiah Hancock text, if accepted, is conclusive that Fanny was married to Joseph in an actual, though nontraditional, wedding ceremony. Mosiah Hancock's account documents a pattern that became important in later plural marriages: Joseph Smith would often first approach a prospective plural wife through her male relatives. The marriage would create a bond between Joseph and the relative. The Mosiah Hancock account is also a textbook example of the anthropologically interesting phenomenon known as "exchange of women," which is closely related to the pattern of approaching the woman through a male relative. Third, Fanny Alger's marriage to Joseph also reveals the extent to which women were involved in negotiating and deciding plural marriages, as the consulting of her mother and Fanny herself will show. Fanny also exercises free choice in her later marriage to Solomon Custer, which involved her rejection of Joseph Smith, plural marriage, and possibly Mormonism in favor of a monogamous marriage to a non-Mormon.

### THE ALGER FAMILY

Fanny Alger Smith Custer's parents were Samuel Alger and Clarissa Hancock Alger.<sup>4</sup> Samuel, a thirty-year-old Massachusetts carpenter, had built a home for Heber C. Kimball's father in New York in 1810.<sup>5</sup> Clarissa, twenty-six, also from Massachusetts, was the older sister of Levi W. Hancock, who was ordained one of the first

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<sup>4</sup>Family Group Record, Films 1553906 and 5026565, and Ancestral File, Family History Library, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, branch near Los Angeles Temple; Samuel Alger, Sr., obituary, "Died," *Deseret Evening News*, 6 October 1874, 3. Samuel was born on 14 February 1786 in Uxbridge, Worcester, Massachusetts. Clarissa was born on 3 September 1790 in Old Springfield, Hampden, Massachusetts. They were married in 1808 and joined the Church in November 1830, were with the Mormons in Missouri from September 1837 to 1839, were in Illinois from February 1839 to May 1846, and reached Utah in September 1848. After seventeen years in Salt Lake City, they moved to Parowan, Iron County, where Samuel served as patriarch, and where Clarissa died. Samuel spent the last years of his life in St. George, Utah, with his son, John.

<sup>5</sup>Samuel Alger, Sr., obituary.



Seven Presidents of the Seventy in February 1835 and who served as chaplain of the Mormon Battalion.<sup>6</sup>

Fanny was the fourth of eleven children. The family lived in Rehoboth, Bristol County, Massachusetts, just east of Providence, Rhode Island, until the first five children were born: twins Eli Ward and Samuel, Saphony, Fanny herself, born 20 September 1816, and Amy Saphony, born in 1818 after the deaths of Samuel and Saphony.<sup>7</sup>

The Algers then moved to Lebanon Township, Ashtabula, Ohio, in the northeastern corner of the state, where John, Alva, and Samuel H. were born in 1820, 1822, and 1826.<sup>8</sup> The last two children, Thomas (1828) and Clarissa (1830), were born in the Cleveland-Kirtland area.<sup>9</sup>

That same year, in November 1830, when Fanny was nearly fourteen, her father converted to Mormonism in Mayfield, ten miles southwest of Kirtland.<sup>10</sup> Fanny's mother was evidently baptized at about the same time by Parley P. Pratt.<sup>11</sup> Thus Samuel and Clarissa

<sup>6</sup>Levi W. Hancock, Autobiography, MS 8174, Historical Department Archives, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter cited as LDS Church Archives); Andrew Jenson, *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia*, 4 vols. (Salt Lake City: Andrew Jenson, 1901-37), 1:188; Dennis A. Clegg, "Levi Ward Hancock: Pioneer, Soldier, Political and Religious Leader of Early Utah" (M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1966); Lyndon Cook, *The Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Provo, Utah: Seventies Bookstore, 1981), 76-77; D. Michael Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1994), 550.

<sup>7</sup>Samuel and Eli Ward were born on 11 March 1809. Eli married Sarah Billington. Saphony was born in 1813. Amy Saphony married John Wilson Overton.

<sup>8</sup>John, a stalwart Mormon and a polygamist, married Sarah Ann Pulsipher in 1842, Rachael Jones Michael in 1855, Rachel Hug in 1856, Jane Ann Burnett in 1861, and Sarah Ann Edwards, the widow of his brother Thomas, in 1867. John died in 1897 in St. George, Utah. Alva married Louisa Thornton, and Samuel H. married a Miss Ivey; apparently neither came to Utah. Jenson, *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia*, 1:798; Nauvoo Temple Endowment Register, FHL, 116.

<sup>9</sup>Thomas, born in Mayfield, Cuyahoga County, Ohio, married Sarah Ann Edwards in 1848, and died in Chillicothe, Livingston County, Missouri, in 1862. Clarissa, born in Chagrin, Cuyahoga, Ohio, married Francis Tuft Whitney in 1850 in Salt Lake City, and died in 1907 in Parowan, Iron County, Utah.

<sup>10</sup>Samuel Alger, Obituary.

<sup>11</sup>Levi Hancock, Autobiography, 71.

were among Mormonism's earliest converts. It is not known when other family members were baptized, except for John, Fanny's younger brother, who was baptized by Solomon Hancock, his maternal uncle, in Mayfield in March 1832.<sup>12</sup>

### EVIDENCE OF POLYGAMY BEFORE NAUVOO

Approximately a year later, in early 1833, Joseph Smith, Jr., was united to Fanny Alger in perhaps the first plural marriage in Mormon history. A number of sources, both contemporary and recollected, provide evidence that polygamy was developed and practiced in the New York and Kirtland period.

It has been widely noted that the Book of Mormon, translated from 1827 to 1829, deals with polygamy in Jacob 2:23-35.<sup>13</sup> This passage has been misinterpreted as a blanket denunciation of all polygamy. However, it condemns only unauthorized polygamy: "For if I will, saith the Lord of Hosts, raise up seed unto me, I will command my people; otherwise, they shall hearken unto these things" (2:30; text identical in 1830 [p. 127] and 1981 LDS editions. In the latter, a semi-colon replaces a colon after "people.") This early statement even supplies an important rationale for polygamy: to "raise up seed" to God.

Joseph Bates Noble, who in 1841 married Joseph to Louisa Beaman in the first Nauvoo plural marriage, said that the "doctrine of celestial marriage was revealed to him [Joseph Smith] while he was engaged in the work of translation of the Scriptures," i.e., Joseph's translation of the Bible.<sup>14</sup> Historian Danel Bachman suggests a date of February 1831.<sup>15</sup> Reading the stories of the patriarchs,

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<sup>12</sup>Early Church Information File, FHL, s.v. John Alger; Susan Easton Black, *Membership of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1830-1848* (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1989), s.v. John Alger.

<sup>13</sup>Tim Rathbone and John W. Welch, *A Translation of the Book of Mormon: Basic Historical Information*, FARMS Preliminary Report (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1986), 1, 33-37, suggest that Jacob was probably translated in 1829.

<sup>14</sup>"Plural Marriage," *Millennial Star* 45 (16 July 1883): 454.

<sup>15</sup>Danel W. Bachman, "A Study of the Mormon Practice of Plural Marriage before the Death of Joseph Smith," (M.A. thesis, Purdue University, 1975), 68; see also his "New Light on an Old Hypothesis: The Ohio Origins of the Revelation

especially given Joseph's interest in Abraham, was a likely reason for him to begin thinking about plural marriage, a valid Christian primitivist doctrine.<sup>16</sup> Perhaps it was inevitable that this Semitic custom be "restored" in a church that believed it was a restoration of all important ancient biblical revelations and practices; however, even though Joseph Smith and his contemporaries taught that plural marriage was necessary for the highest salvation, nowhere in the Old Testament are the two linked.<sup>17</sup>

Lyman Johnson, the brother of another of Joseph's plural wives, Marinda Johnson Hyde, told Orson Pratt that "Joseph had made known to him as early as 1831 that plural marriage was a correct principle" but "the time had not yet come to teach and practice it."<sup>18</sup> Joseph was living in the Johnson household while

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on Eternal Marriage," *Journal of Mormon History* 5 (1978): 19-32.

<sup>16</sup>For information on Mormon primitivism, see Marvin Hill, "The Shaping of the Mormon Mind in New England and New York," *BYU Studies* 9 (1969): 351-72; Marvin Hill, *Quest for Refuge: The Mormon Flight from American Pluralism* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989). For non-Mormon religious primitivism in America, see Richard Hughes, ed., *The American Quest for the Primitive Church* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1988); Richard Hughes and C. Leonard Allen, *Illusions of Innocence: Protestant Primitivism in America, 1630-1875* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988); and Thomas G. Alexander, *Things in Heaven and Earth* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1991), 16-17, 91, 341. The popularity of Old Testament names in early nineteenth-century America (Simeon Carter, Gideon Carter, Jared Carter, Aseneth Babcock, Abraham Lincoln, etc.) attests to the devotion accorded that book. See also Gordon Irving, "The Mormons and the Bible in the 1830s," *BYU Studies* 13 (Summer 1973): 473-88; and John Cairncross, *After Polygamy Was Made a Sin: The Social History of Christian Polygamy* (London: Routledge, 1974).

<sup>17</sup>William Clayton, affidavit, in Andrew Jenson, *Historical Record*, 9 vols. (Salt Lake City: Andrew Jenson, 1882-90) 6:226. "From him [Joseph Smith] I learned that the doctrine of plural and celestial marriage is the most holy and important doctrine ever revealed to man on the earth, and that without obedience to that principle no man can ever attain to the fulness of exaltation in celestial glory." See also LDS D&C 132:26; Orson Pratt, 7 October 1874, *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (London and Liverpool: LDS Booksellers Depot, 1855-86), 17:225-26; E. Carmon Hardy, *Solemn Covenant: The Mormon Polygamous Passage* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 14-19, 84-113.

<sup>18</sup>Orson Pratt, "Report of Elder Orson Pratt and Joseph F. Smith," *Millennial Star* 40 (16 December 1878): 788. See also Linda King Newell and Valeen Tippetts Avery, *Mormon Enigma: Emma Hale Smith* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday,

making his translation of the Old Testament, so Lyman is a valuable witness.

In 1861, W. W. Phelps recorded that Joseph received a revelation in Missouri on 17 July 1831 that directed Mormon men to intermarry with Lamanite (Native American) women. When Phelps later asked how the present group, mostly married men, could take Lamanite wives, Joseph immediately answered, "In the same manner that Abraham took Hagar and Keturah; that Jacob took Rachel, Bilhah, and Zilpah; by revelation—the saints of the Lord are always directed by revelations."<sup>19</sup> A letter by anti-Mormon Ezra Booth gives important contemporary support for the Phelps letter: "It had been made known by revelation" that it would be pleasing to the Lord if elders formed "a matrimonial alliance with the natives," and the Lord would bless such "abundantly." By this obedience, they would "gain a residence" in Indian lands, despite the Indian agent. "It has been made known to one who has left his wife in the State of New York that he is entirely free from his wife, and is at pleasure to take him a wife from among the Lamanites."<sup>20</sup>

Benjamin F. Johnson (no relation to Lyman and Marinda) wrote: "In 1835 at Kirtland I learned from my Sisters Husband Lyman R. Shirman, who was *close* to the Prophet and Recieved it from him. That the ancient order of plural marriage was again to be practiced by the Church."<sup>21</sup> In Nauvoo, when Johnson helped arrange the plural marriage of Joseph to his sister Almera, Joseph told him that the revelation to practice plural marriage had come to him in Kirtland.<sup>22</sup>

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1984), 65.

<sup>19</sup>W. W. Phelps, Letter to Brigham Young, 12 August 1861, Brigham Young Papers, LDS Church Archives. See also Lawrence Foster, *Religion and Sexuality* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 299; Newell and Avery, *Mormon Enigma*, 65.

<sup>20</sup>Booth, "Letter No. IX," *Ohio Star*, 8 December 1831, 1. See also E. D. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled* (Painesville, Ohio: E. D. Howe, 1834), 175-221; Bachman, "A Study of the Mormon Practice," 67, 71-72; Newell and Avery, *Mormon Enigma*, 64; Hardy, *Solemn Covenant*, 5.

<sup>21</sup>Johnson, Letter to Gibbs, 38, 41; italics his.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, 41.

Finally, in August 1835, W. W. Phelps, probably with the help of Oliver Cowdery, prepared an "Article on Marriage," in which he affirmed that the Mormons had been accused of practicing polygamy and flatly denied it, a typical Mormon response to public accusations of polygamy: "Inasmuch as this Church of Christ has been reproached with the crime of fornication, and polygamy, we declare that we believe that one man should have one wife, and one woman but one husband, except in case of death, when either is at liberty to marry again."<sup>23</sup> This statement is important contemporary evidence showing that Mormons were beginning to be accused of polygamy.<sup>24</sup> (See discussion below.)

In short, since Joseph Smith had developed a doctrine of restoration of Old Testament plural marriage at least by 1831, a marriage to Fanny Alger in late 1832 or early 1833 would have occurred in a consistent historical context.

### EVIDENCE FOR A SMITH/ALGER MARRIAGE

Brodie's 1946 biography of Joseph Smith presents Joseph

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<sup>23</sup>D&C (1835 ed.), section 101. See also Joseph Smith, et al., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, edited by B. H. Roberts, 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1902-32), 2:247-49; Cook, *Revelations*, 359-60. This statement was approved at a general conference session on 17 August 1835 and was included in every edition of the Doctrine and Covenants from 1835 until 1876 when it was replaced by the present section 132 (LDS ed.) on polygamy and exaltation. Joseph Smith also denied practicing polygamy in Nauvoo (*History of the Church*, 5:72, 6:411) and his successors denied the practice of post-Manifesto polygamy (Hardy, *Solemn Covenant*). To keep polygamy secret, Mormon authorities generally denied the practice, sometimes using language with double meanings. But such denials, which sent contradictory signals to followers and non-Mormons, were always made at a significant price. See Hardy, *Solemn Covenant*, 363-89. Joseph F. Smith in *Journal of Discourses*, 20:29, stated that this "Article on Marriage" is "indisputable evidence of the early existence of the knowledge of the principle of patriarchal marriage by the Prophet Joseph, and also by Oliver Cowdery." Thomas F. H. Stenhouse in *Rocky Mountain Saints* (London: Ward, Lock & Tyler, 1894), 193, claims that Oliver "teased" Joseph into allowing the Church to accept this document against his better judgment.

<sup>24</sup>Editorial, *Elder's Journal* 1 (July 1838): 43, indicates how widespread the rumors of Kirtland polygamy had become: "Do the Mormons believe in having more wives than one. Answer. No, not at the same time."

Smith's and Fanny Alger's as an affair, not as a plural marriage; and a number of other scholars have accepted this interpretation.<sup>25</sup> Such a view usually depends on the earliest contemporary reference to the Smith/Alger relationship, an 1838 letter from Oliver Cowdery, who was then estranged from Smith. He wrote with vehement hyperbole: "A dirty, nasty, filthy affair of his [Joseph Smith's] and Fanny Alger's was talked over in which I strictly declared that I had never deviated from the truth."<sup>26</sup>

Nineteenth-century Mormons in Utah looked at the Joseph Smith-Fanny Alger relationship as a plural marriage. Benjamin F. Johnson reports in his 1903 letter to George Gibbs that Heber C. Kimball introduced one member of the Alger family as the brother of Joseph Smith's first plural wife and affirmed: "Without doubt in my mind Fanny Alger was at Kirtland the Prophets first plural wife."<sup>27</sup> In 1890, Andrew Jenson listed her second on his tally of Joseph Smith's wives; he listed Louisa Beaman first, probably because her marriage date was solidly documented.<sup>28</sup> Brodie felt that

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<sup>25</sup>Brodie, *No Man Knows My History*, 182, 184-85, 301, appendix 458. Brodie spoke of "extreme informality" attending Joseph's early extramonogamous relationships with women; however, she hedges slightly on the issue at times. For Brodie's limitations as a biographer, see Newell Bringhurst, "Fawn M. Brodie, 'Mormondom's Lost Generation,' and *No Man Knows My History*," *Journal of Mormon History* 16 (1990): 16; Newell Bringhurst, "Fawn Brodie's Thomas Jefferson: The Making of a Popular and Controversial Biography," *Pacific Historical Review* 62 (1993): 433-54; Louis Midgley, "The Brodie Connection: Thomas Jefferson and Joseph Smith," *BYU Studies* 20 (1979): 59-67; and my "Fawn Brodie's Treatment of Joseph's Smith's Polygamy and Plural Wives: A Critical View," forthcoming. Despite making significant mistakes, however, Brodie was a pioneer in the study of Joseph Smith's polygamy. Among those who accept Brodie's interpretation of Alger are Foster, *Religion and Sexuality*, 301-2; Hardy, *Solemn Covenant*, 24, n. 29; Van Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy*, 12; and John L. Brooke, *The Refiner's Fire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 217, who, citing only secondary sources, refers to Joseph Smith's "first extramarital affair."

<sup>26</sup>Oliver Cowdery, Letterbook, 21 January 1838, Mormon File, Huntington Library.

<sup>27</sup>Both in Johnson, Letter to Gibbs, 44. However, Johnson says this incident occurred in the St. George Temple, and Kimball died before its completion. Either Kimball did not say it, or he said it elsewhere.

<sup>28</sup>Jenson, *The Historical Record*, 6:233. *The Historical Record* 5-8 [four vols. bound as one], index, 942.

these late references superimposed a fuller understanding of polygamy back on an early sexual liaison.<sup>29</sup> However, she never mentions that Chauncey Webb and his daughter, Ann Eliza Webb Young, Mormons in Kirtland but unsympathetic ex-Mormons by the time they made their record, referred to the relationship as a “sealing.” Ann Eliza reports that Fanny’s parents considered it “the highest honor” to be connected to the Prophet through their daughter.<sup>30</sup>

### THE MOSIAH HANCOCK AUTOBIOGRAPHY

The most conclusive evidence that a marriage ceremony occurred appears in the Mosiah Hancock holograph autobiography. Mosiah Hancock, born in 1834, was not even born at the time of the marriage; but while writing his autobiography, apparently in 1896, he reports the story as told to him by his father, Levi Hancock. Fanny was Levi’s niece and Mosiah’s first cousin, though seventeen years his senior. If the Hancock text is reliable, it provides conclusive evidence that the Smith/Alger relationship was a formal plural marriage very much in the tradition of Joseph Smith’s marriages in Nauvoo.

The text is a late reminiscence, so the question of reliability is important. Mosiah Hancock lived to be seventy-three, dying in 1907; he placed his autobiography in the Church Historical Department in 1896, the same year that he apparently wrote it.<sup>31</sup> He tells Fanny Alger’s story as a continuation of his father’s autobiography, which Levi had stopped, virtually in mid-sentence.<sup>32</sup> Thus, on the negative

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<sup>29</sup>Brodie, *No Man Knows My History*, 182, 184. “When in later years polygamy had become an accepted pattern in Mormon life, Joseph’s leading elders looked back to the Kirtland days and concluded that Fannie Alger had been the prophet’s first plural wife.”

<sup>30</sup>Ann Eliza [Webb] Young, *Wife No. 19* (Hartford, Conn.: Dustin, Gilman, 1876), 67.

<sup>31</sup>Mosiah Hancock, *Autobiography*, 61. See also before p. 53 on the outside of the notebook, “Deposited by By Mosiah Hancock June 6, 1896. UNIVERSITY NOTE BOOK.” On the inside of the cover: “L.D.S. HISTORIAN’S OFFICE, Salt Lake City, Utah Received June 6, 1896.”

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*, 61: “Farmington Davis Co Co 1896 I am Mosiah Lyman Reed Hancock the son of Levi Ward Hancock and Clarissa Reed Hancock - There being a Stop apparently in My Father’s History from the time he made the [trip] ‘So far

side, the document is late, and is one step removed from its source, Levi Hancock.

However, because of the secrecy surrounding early polygamy, autobiographical accounts are not infrequently more complete than contemporary diaries. For instance, Eliza R. Snow's diary contains only the most oblique of references to her wedding on 29 June 1842 to Joseph Smith. In her autobiography she dates that marriage and explains her conversion to polygamy.<sup>33</sup> Zina Diantha Huntington Jacobs Smith Young's Nauvoo diary never mentions her marriage to Joseph Smith; only her autobiography tells the story of the wedding.<sup>34</sup>

On the positive side, Mosiah's Autobiography has the credibility of access. Levi was close to the Alger family, was in Kirtland in 1832 and 1833, and was a friend of Joseph Smith. If the Hancock autobiography is reliable, Mosiah heard the story directly from the man who performed the wedding of Fanny and Joseph. Furthermore, Mosiah explains his motives as part of his obligation to "bear testimony":

Concerning the doctrine of celestial marriage the Prophet told my father in the days of Kirtland, that it was the will of the Lord for His servants who were faithful to step forth in that order. . . . My father made some

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in the Realms of Missouri'. . . ." Then Mosiah immediately begins the Fanny Alger narratives.

<sup>33</sup>Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, ed. "Eliza R. Snow's Nauvoo Journal," *BYU Studies* 15 (1975): 391-416; Beecher, ed., *The Personal Writings of Eliza Roxcy Snow* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1995); Eliza R. Snow, *Sketch of My Life*, Bancroft Library, Berkeley, partially published in Bryant S. Hinckley, ed. *Eliza R. Snow, an Immortal* (Salt Lake City: Nicholas Morgan Foundation, 1957), 1-53; excised portions on polygamy published in Spencer J. Palmer, "Eliza R. Snow's 'Sketch of My Life': Reminiscences of One of Joseph Smith's Plural Wives," *BYU Studies* 12 (1971): 125-30. For fuller documentation on Joseph Smith's other plural marriages, see Bachman, "A Study of the Mormon Practice"; Foster, *Religion and Sexuality*, 123-80; Van Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy*, 6-69.

<sup>34</sup>For quotations from the autobiography, see Martha Sonntag Bradley and Mary Brown Firmage Woodward, "Plurality, Patriarchy, and the Priestess: Zina D. H. Young's Nauvoo Marriages," *Journal of Mormon History* (Spring 1994): 84-118; see also Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, "'All Things Move in Order in the City': The Nauvoo Diary of Zina Diantha Huntington Jacobs," *BYU Studies* 19 (Spring 1979): 285-320.



things known to me concerning those days, and the part he took with the Prophet in trying to assist him to start the principle with a few chosen friends in those days. My father had required of me to bear testimony of these things at a proper time.<sup>35</sup>

Mosiah's first-hand reminiscences are subject to the strengths and weaknesses generally found in Mormon and other autobiographies: inaccuracies in dates, misremembered events, an easy willingness to accept the miraculous, and a tendency to overidealize oneself or a hero like Joseph Smith.<sup>36</sup> Mosiah's narrative is not immune from any of these faults; but I accept it as a generally reliable personal history that provides accurate information about his own life, his family's life, and Mormonism in Kirtland, Nauvoo, and Utah.

Many of the details in Mosiah's narrative can be corroborated from other sources, confirming its reliability. One such event is the first performance of Levi Hancock's song, "The Independence of the United States." On 4 July 1838, Mosiah writes, "We went up to Farwest to spend the fourth of July and early on the morning of the fourth Brother Joseph came along and said 'Brother Levi Can you make us a song to day and call it the Independence of the United States?' Yes said Father and by ten o clock he had it ready and He and Uncle Solomon stood on the corner Stone of the Temple and sung Solomon the air Father the Bass."<sup>37</sup> Mosiah was only four when this event occurred, so we may reasonably doubt that it is based exclusively on his memory. However, the details would have certainly been a family story, a cherished memory of the Prophet Joseph Smith, which is corroborated in the *History of the Church*. That history

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<sup>35</sup>Mosiah Hancock, "Letter to the Editor," *Deseret News Daily*, 21 February 1884, 4.

<sup>36</sup>Richard Howard, "The Need for Historical Perspective," *Saints' Herald*, February 1969, 47, criticizes Mosiah for including in his narrative an ex post facto prophecy attributed to Joseph Smith in 1844. However nonscientific from a historian's point of view, ex post facto prophecies attributed to Joseph Smith were a common element of Mormon reminiscences, and Mosiah was well within the norms of his society in including it. See the Autobiography of Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner, Mss. 162, Lee Library; Oliver Huntington, Journal, Lee Library, Books 13, 14, 15; 17:48, 18:101. See also Davis Bitton, "Joseph Smith in Mormon Folk Memory," *Restoration Studies* 1 (Independence: Temple School, 1980): 75-94, 81-83.

<sup>37</sup>Mosiah Hancock, Autobiography, 66-67.

states that the cornerstones of the temple at Far West were laid; Sidney Rigdon delivered an oration; there was a Hosanna shout; and then “a song, composed for the occasion by Levi W. Hancock, was sung by Solomon Hancock.”<sup>38</sup> Portions of sources for the *History of the Church* had been published before the *History* first appeared in 1902, but Mosiah’s account adds convincing anecdotal details not found in the *History of the Church*: Joseph asking Levi to write the song; Levi singing the bass to Solomon’s lead; and the two men standing on a cornerstone of the temple as they sang.

In an example from Missouri, Mosiah writes that when mobocracy was reigning, “Soon Joseph Holbrook was brought to our house cut to pieces and in a low state my Mother nursed him untill he was taken away.”<sup>39</sup> Mosiah was then four and a half, but Holbrook’s autobiography confirms that he was wounded in the Battle of Crooked River: “I was wounded in my left elbow with a sword after cutting through five thicknesses of cloth. [It] so fractured the bone that after the doctor had placed back the bones, it was very lame for some four months and so stiff that I could not feed myself with that hand.”<sup>40</sup> Nancy Tracy confirms that Holbrook underwent a long convalescence after the battle: “The brethren that were in the battle of Crooked River had all left for parts unknown except my husband and Brother Holbrook. Brother Holbrook had been wounded in the fight, but he played he was a sick woman in bed so nicely that he was not detected although the house was searched well.”<sup>41</sup>

Some details in Mosiah’s narrative are supported by Levi Hancock’s autobiography. Mosiah had access to this document, but his own record is far from a simple mirroring of its events. Mosiah wrote: “Clarissa Reed [Mosiah’s future mother] being in poor health Father takes her to his folks in Rome [Ohio, about twenty miles east of Kirtland] - The reason of mother’s poor health was this She worked hard at the Prophets.”<sup>42</sup> This event, which is written the page

<sup>38</sup>*History of the Church*, 3:42.

<sup>39</sup>Mosiah Hancock, *Autobiography*, 71.

<sup>40</sup>Joseph Holbrook, *Autobiography*, 43, Mss SC 486, Lee Library.

<sup>41</sup>Nancy Tracy, *Autobiography*, 20, Mss SC 918 Lee Library.

<sup>42</sup>Mosiah Hancock, *Autobiography*, 64.

after he recorded his father's account of the Smith/Alger marriage, is corroborated by Levi's autobiography: "About this time Joseph Called on me to go to Rome with a hired girl by the name of Clarrisa Reed who had been living with him I went and returned with her in two weeks."<sup>43</sup> Here we see that Clarissa had in fact been a live-in servant in the Smith household and that Levi took her to Rome. Levi does not give a reason for the trip, except for Joseph Smith's request, but Mosiah does.

Mosiah later recounts how his father was sent with the Mormon Battalion as its chaplain (which is widely documented), leaving the Hancock family in Winter Quarters near a Sister Sprague. "The two Mothers [Clarissa and Sister Sprague] and Grandmother Reed put their wits together and conclude to send Ellen Sprague and I to the Indian Mill on Big Musquitio Creek to see if our Mothers could get employment to teach the halfbreed children."<sup>44</sup> These geographical details are supported by the autobiography of Esaias Edwards, who wrote that he settled in Winter Quarters "on the Putawatomie lands near the Missouri River. . . . My location was on what was called Little Murketoe Creek, about 1 1/2 miles from the Indian Mill." "Murketoe" looks like a slight degeneration from "Musketoe," but "Indian Mill" is exact. Edwards confirms the Native American population in the area.<sup>45</sup>

Another example of Mosiah's historical reliability is his account of his mother's divorcing his father in Utah after Levi married a number of other wives. Mosiah found this event painful but described it convincingly: "Brother Brigham asked her wat [sic] charge She could bring against Brother Levi Nothing She said only she was deprived of his company."<sup>46</sup>

Finally, we can assess Mosiah's information about Fanny Alger on its own terms. If Mosiah's story were impossible and unparalleled in every detail, we would be justified in rejecting it. However, the account is closely paralleled in some details by Joseph's plural marriage practices in Nauvoo and also has unique elements. It is not

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<sup>43</sup>Levi Hancock, *Autobiography*, 133.

<sup>44</sup>Mosiah Hancock, *Autobiography*, 95.

<sup>45</sup>Esaias Edwards, *Autobiography*, 28, Mss 184, Lee Library.

<sup>46</sup>Mosiah Hancock, *Autobiography*, 7.

simply a projection of Utah or even Nauvoo polygamy back into Kirtland. Thus it has internal credibility.<sup>47</sup>

In brief, though we should regard Mosiah's narrative of Joseph Smith's plural marriage to Fanny Alger with the measure of caution that any historical document should receive, there is no reason to reject it wholesale. At the very least, it deserves serious consideration.

### THE MARRIAGE NARRATIVE

According to Mosiah, Joseph Smith introduced Levi Hancock to the doctrine of polygamy in the spring of 1832:

As early as Spring of 1832 Bro Joseph said "Brother Levi, the Lord has revealed to me that it is his will that righteous men shall take Righteous women even a plurality of Wives that a Righteous race may be sent forth upon the Earth preparatory to the ushering in of the Millennial Reign of our Redeemer - For the Lord has such a high respect for the nobles of his kingdom that he is not willing for them to come through the Loins of a Careles People - Therefore; it behoves those who embrace that Principle to pay strict attention to even the Least requirement of our Heavenly Father."<sup>48</sup>

Levi, who was twenty-nine years old, soon afterwards became engaged to Temperance Jane Miller and left on a mission but felt guilty that he had not reported the engagement to Joseph. Mosiah continues: "When My Father had started on his first mission to preach this Gospel He felt that perhaps he had done wrong in not telling the Prophet that he had made arrangements to marry Temperance Jane Miller of New Lyme - When Father returned from his mission he spoke to the Prophet concerning the matter The Prophet

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<sup>47</sup>Though Mosiah probably heard some stories of Joseph's Nauvoo polygamy practices, he would not have heard all the stories. Joseph's plural wives were remarkably reticent about their marriages to Joseph, often telling only their children and often only at the end of their lives, e.g., Sylvia Sessions Lyon Smith Kimball Clark and Helen Mar Kimball Smith Whitney. Some—e.g., Agnes Coolbrith Smith Smith Smith Pickett and Sarah Lawrence Smith Kimball Mount—did not tell the stories even to their close family members.

<sup>48</sup>Mosiah Hancock, *Autobiography*, 61-62. This passage has been "published" only in a mimeograph/hectograph version, to the best of my knowledge.

said. 'Never mind Brother Levi about that for the Lord has one prepared for you that will be a Blessing to you forever.'<sup>49</sup> Levi then apparently broke off his engagement to Temperance, which, with his feeling that Joseph should be informed about the engagement, shows the extent to which Joseph's counsel was important to him.

Meanwhile, seventeen-year-old Clarissa Reed, who had been a hired girl in Joseph Smith's home, "told the Prophet She loved brother Levi Hancock The Prophet had the highest respect for her feelings She had thought that perhaps she might be one of the Prophet's wives as herself and Sister Emma were on the best of terms. My Father and Mother understanding each other were inspired by the spirit of the Lord to respect His word, through the Prophet."<sup>50</sup>

The statement, "My Father and Mother understanding each other" apparently indicates that Levi developed warm feelings for Clarissa, who was already in love with him. Both felt that they should receive Joseph Smith's approval to the marriage. Consequently, Levi approached Joseph:

Therefore Brother Joseph said ["]Brother Levi I want to make a bargain with you - If you will get Fanny Alger for me for a wife you may have Clarissa Reed. I love Fanny" "I will" Said Father. "Go brother Levi and the Lord will prosper you" Said Joseph - Father goes to the Father Samuel Alger - his Father's Brother in Law and [said] "Samuel[,] the Prophet

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., 62-63.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., 63. Clarissa Reed Hancock, mother of Mosiah, should not be confused with Clarissa Hancock Alger, Fanny's mother and the sister of Levi. Although there are no other precedents in Kirtland of Joseph Smith choosing a man's wife for him, there are at least two examples in Nauvoo, both involving plural wives. Heber C. Kimball selected as plural wives two older sisters who were already friends of the family, whom he felt his wife, Vilate, would accept; he reluctantly obeyed when Joseph Smith instructed him to marry Sarah Peake Noon, a thirty-year-old English convert. Smith also "appointed" Parley P. Pratt's first plural wife, Elizabeth Brotherton. Helen Mar Whitney, "Scenes and Incidents in Nauvoo," *Woman's Exponent* 10 (15 October 1881): 74; 11 (15 July 1882): 26; Stanley Kimball, *Heber C. Kimball: Mormon Patriarch and Pioneer* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1986), 95; Vilate Kimball, Letter to Heber C. Kimball, 27 June 1843, Winslow Whitney Smith Papers, MS 6241, fd. 1, LDS Church Archives. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History*, 464, posits a union between Joseph and Clarissa; however, I am aware of no evidence for any such relationship.

Joseph loves your Daughter Fanny and wishes her for a wife what say you” - Uncle Sam Says - “Go and talk to the Old woman about it twill be as She says” Father goes to his Sister and said “Clarrissy, Brother Joseph the Prophet of the most high God loves Fanny and wishes her for a wife what say you” Said She “go and talk to Fanny it will be all right with me” - Father goes to Fanny and said “Fanny Brother Joseph the Prophet loves you and wishes you for a wife will you be his wife?” “I will Levi” Said She - Father takes Fanny to Joseph and said “Brother Joseph I have been successful in my mission” - Father gave her to Joseph repeating the Ceremony as Joseph repeated to him.<sup>51</sup>

This extraordinary passage contains many noteworthy details. Very prominent is the theme of exchange of women, which anthropologists have noted in many cultures. The proposal of polygamous marriage is indirect, a remarkable combination of the romantic and the nonromantic. “I love Fanny,” Joseph tells Levi. Yet he does not profess his love to Fanny face to face; he uses an intermediary, a male relative, to propose to her. Despite the indirection, this method is entirely consistent with Joseph’s later practices in Nauvoo. For instance, Joseph made his final proposal to Zina Huntington Jacobs through her brother Dimick and also proposed to Almera Johnson through her brother Benjamin. According to Knight family tradition, Joseph Smith himself brought a proposal from his brother Hyrum Smith to Martha McBride Knight Smith (then Joseph’s plural wife), for her seventeen-year-old daughter Almira.<sup>52</sup>

Samuel Alger, Levi’s brother-in-law and Fanny’s father, was the logical person to speak with in a patriarchal culture. But surprisingly, instead of giving or denying permission, Samuel referred Levi to his wife, Clarissa Hancock Alger, Levi’s sister. Clarissa Alger required Levi to ask Fanny herself, and Fanny agreed to marry Joseph. She was not forced into the marriage. It is not clear what Samuel and Clarissa actually thought of the proposal. They expressed neither approval nor disapproval in this account.

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<sup>51</sup>Ibid.

<sup>52</sup>For information on Zina Diantha Huntington Young, see “Joseph the Prophet,” *Salt Lake Herald, Church and Farm Supplement*, 12 January 1895, 212; and Bradley and Woodward, “Plurality, Patriarchy, and the Priestess,” 94-95. For information on Almera Johnson, see Johnson, Letter to Gibbs, 41. For information on Martha McBride Knight see Della Belnap, “Martha McBride Knight,” 2, photocopy of typescript in my possession.

Levi, having obtained his niece's consent for Joseph, escorted her to the Prophet. At this point, a marriage ceremony immediately took place. Mosiah's narrative thus negates interpretations of a liaison. Joseph recited the marriage vows to Levi, who repeated them. An exact parallel occurred in Nauvoo when Louisa Beaman married Joseph Smith in the first Nauvoo plural marriage, which Joseph Bates Noble, a brother-in-law of the bride, performed: "The Prophet gave the form of the ceremony, Elder Noble repeating the words after him."<sup>53</sup>

Levi Hancock received his reward. Joseph Smith sanctioned his marriage to Clarissa Reed, and they were married 29 March 1833. The Hancock/Reed marriage makes it possible to date the Smith/Alger marriage approximately. Mosiah's narrative suggests that the Smith/Alger marriage occurred first, but this is not necessarily so. Still, Joseph probably married Fanny Alger in March or April 1833, when she was sixteen and he was twenty-seven.<sup>54</sup>

Again, Nauvoo plural marriages show a similar pattern of "rewards" for men who helped solemnize Joseph's plural marriages. Joseph Bates Noble and Brigham Young were granted plural wives while Cornelius and Permelia Lott and Newell K. and Elizabeth Ann Whitney were sealed in eternal marriage. Obviously such relationships provided powerful stimuli to keep the secret; Joseph Bates Noble, by taking a plural wife after marrying Joseph to his sister-in-law, became part of polygamy's inner circle, committed to its goals but also vulnerable to the same consequences if it were discovered.

In addition, the promise of salvation, which was often linked to a plural marriage, was further motivation. It is significant that the Alger parents felt it a spiritual honor to have their daughter married to Joseph, just as the parents of Sarah Ann Whitney and Helen Mar Kimball later did. One of Helen's reasons for accepting Joseph's proposal was his promise to her: "If you will take this step, it will

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<sup>53</sup>Joseph Noble, Speech, 19 December 1880, in Andrew Larson and Katherine Miles Larson, eds., *Diary of Charles Lowell Walker*, 2 vols. (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1980), 2:515. See also Jenson, *Historical Record*, 6:233.

<sup>54</sup>For a useful, if preliminary, listing of Nauvoo plural marriages, see George D. Smith, "Nauvoo Roots of Mormon Polygamy, 1841-1846: A Preliminary Demographic Report," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 27 (1994): 1-72.

ensure your eternal salvation & exaltation and that of your father's household & all of your kindred. This promise was so great that I willingly gave myself to purchase so glorious a reward."<sup>55</sup> Fanny's marriage thus created a dynastic link not only between Joseph and Levi, but also between Joseph and Fanny's parents. Joseph may also have felt that a woman would be less likely to refuse polygamous teaching and a proposal if it came through a close relative (as in the cases of Zina Huntington Jacobs and Almera Johnson) rather than from the proposed polygamous husband himself.

### ANN ELIZA WEBB YOUNG'S ACCOUNT

Another view of the Smith/Alger marriage is given by Ann Eliza Webb Young, the woman who divorced Brigham Young then wrote an exposé of Young, polygamy, and Mormonism. Though Ann Eliza was antagonistic when she wrote this account, and it is comparatively late, she was nevertheless an eyewitness to the latter part of the Smith/Alger story, and her account seems to be written without excessive rancor. "Mrs. Smith had an adopted daughter, a very pretty, pleasing young girl, about seventeen years old. She was extremely fond of her; no own [sic] mother could be more devoted, and their affection for each other was a constant object of remark, so absorbing and genuine did it seem."<sup>56</sup> Although no other source mentions it, Fanny was probably living with the Smiths as a hired girl, or live-in maid.<sup>57</sup> Fanny would have turned eighteen in September 1834, and Joseph would have been twenty-eight.

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<sup>55</sup>Helen Mar Whitney, Autobiographical Sketch to her Children, MS 744, LDS Church Archives; Orson F. Whitney, "The Aaronic Priesthood," *Contributor* 6 (January 1885): 121-32.

<sup>56</sup>Young, *Wife No. 19*, 66-67. See also Parkin, *Conflict at Kirtland*, 174; Van Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy*, 10. Ann Eliza never mentions Fanny's name, but a letter Ann Eliza wrote to Mary Bond makes the identification explicit: "Fanny Algers had lived in Joseph's family several years and when she left there she came and lived with me a few weeks." Letter, 24 April 1876, Myron H. Bond Collection, P21, f11, Library-Archives of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Independence (hereafter cited as RLDS Church Archives). I am indebted to Michael Marquardt for sharing this source with me.

<sup>57</sup>For context on "hired girls," see Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood, "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835* (New Haven: Yale University Press,



Ann Eliza continues: "Consequently it was with a shocked surprise that the people heard that sister Emma had turned Fanny out of the house in the night. . . . It was felt that she [Emma Smith] certainly must have had some very good reason for her action. By degrees it became whispered about that Joseph's love for his adopted daughter was by no means a paternal affection, and his wife, discovering the fact, at once took measures to place the girl beyond his reach."<sup>58</sup> This same pattern was repeated when the Partridge sisters, friends and hired girls, secretly married Joseph in Nauvoo and then were expelled from his home; and Eliza R. Snow was also reportedly driven out suddenly by Emma when her marriage to Joseph was discovered.<sup>59</sup>

According to Ann Eliza, a fierce argument erupted between Emma and Joseph Smith, and he sent for Oliver Cowdery to help calm Emma. Ann Eliza reports that Oliver himself was practicing polygamy (she is probably incorrect on this point),<sup>60</sup> and therefore he and Joseph were worried that a public scandal would expose plural marriage. "The worthy couple—the Prophet and his scribe—were sorely perplexed what to do with the girl," wrote Ann Eliza, "since Emma refused decidedly to allow her to remain in her house; but after some consultation, my mother offered to take her until she could be sent to her relatives," probably still in Mayfield.<sup>61</sup>

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1977), 28-29, and Jack Larkin, *The Reshaping of Everyday Life, 1790-1840* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 13.

<sup>58</sup>Young, *Wife Number 19*, 66-67.

<sup>59</sup>Emily Dow Partridge Young, *Autobiography*, 4-6, Special Collections, Marriott Library; John R. Young, Letter to Vesta P. Crawford, as quoted in Raymond Bailey, "Emma Hale" (M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1952), 187.

<sup>60</sup>I agree with Van Wagoner that the evidence of a plural marriage for Cowdery in Kirtland is not persuasive. Van Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy*, 11, 14. He is answering Brigham Young, 26 July 1872, in Larson and Larson, eds., *Diary of Charles Lowell Walker*, 1:359; Joseph F. Smith, 7 July 1878, *Journal of Discourses* 20:29; [George Q. Cannon], "History of the Church," *Juvenile Instructor* 16 (15 September 1881): 206; Stenhouse, *Rocky Mountain Saints*, 193; Max Parkin, *Conflict at Kirtland: A Study of the Nature and Causes of External and Internal Conflict of the Mormons in Ohio between 1830 and 1838* (Salt Lake City: Parkin, 1966), 169-72, esp. 172, n. 100; Quinn, *Mormon Hierarchy*, 544.

<sup>61</sup>*ibid.*

Ann Eliza continues: "Although her parents were living, they considered it the highest honor to have their daughter adopted into the Prophet's family, and her mother has always claimed that she was sealed to Joseph at that time."<sup>62</sup> The use of "sealed" is anachronistic, but Ann Eliza's use of the term confirms that Fanny's parents, and, indeed, Ann Eliza herself, accepted the relationship as a marriage.

Ann Eliza's father, Chauncey Webb, gives another account of how Emma discovered the marriage: "He [Joseph Smith] was sealed there [in Kirtland] secretly to Fanny Alger. Emma was furious, and drove the girl, who was unable to conceal the consequences of her celestial relation with the prophet, out of her house."<sup>63</sup> Again, an unsympathetic voice refers to the relationship as a sealing. Although no other source mentions a pregnancy, Webb apparently accepts this first plural marriage as a fully sexual union. Since there is no record of Fanny's child, either it died young, it was raised under another name, or Webb was repeating a rumor without basis in fact. Without further documentation, there is no way of knowing.

In an 1872 letter to Joseph Smith III, William McLellin says: "I told her [Emma Smith] I heard that one night she missed Joseph and Fanny Alger. She went to the barn and saw him and Fanny in the barn together alone. She looked through a crack and saw the transaction!! She told me this story too was verily true."<sup>64</sup> This

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<sup>62</sup>Ibid.

<sup>63</sup>As quoted in Wilhelm Wyl, *Joseph Smith, the Prophet: His Family and Friends* Vol. 1 of *Mormon Portraits* (Salt Lake City: Tribune Printing and Publishing Co., 1886), 57. See also Bachman, "A Study of the Mormon Practice," 83.

<sup>64</sup>William McLellin, Letter to Joseph Smith III, July 1872, Library-Archives of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Independence (hereafter cited as RLDS Church Archives). John Hanson Beadle, who interviewed McLellin in 1875 and published the results in "Jackson County," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 6 October 1875, 4, reports: "McLellin also informed me of the spot where the first well authenticated case of polygamy took place, in which Joseph Smith was 'sealed' to the hired girl. The 'sealing' took place in a barn on the hay mow, and was witnessed by Mrs. Smith through a crack in the door! The Doctor was so distressed about this case, (it created some scandal at the time among the Saints) that long afterwards when he visited Mrs. Emma Smith at Nauvoo, he charged her as she hoped for salvation to tell him the truth about it. And she then and there declared on her honor that it was a fact—'saw it with her own eyes.'"

account cannot be accepted uncritically. It is possible that McLellin was entirely correct and Webb was wrong; it is also possible that Emma in other statements “lied” or was swayed by bias. But I see Webb’s and Emma’s statements as more primary and consistent than McLellin’s. Still all of the stories agree that Emma discovered the marriage and forbade Fanny the house. I think it is more probable that someone *did* see Joseph and Fanny together, but that it was not Emma. It seems inconsistent that Emma would have permitted Fanny to remain had she been eyewitness to such an event. However, it *does* seem consistent that Emma would have forbade Fanny the house when she discovered Joseph’s relationship to the young woman through the evidence of the pregnancy. As Fanny took temporary shelter in Webb’s home immediately after being expelled from Emma’s, his is the preferable evidence.

Benjamin Johnson is a third major witness to the Fanny Alger marriage. He reports that she was “a vary nice & Comly young woman about my own age . . . and it was whispered eaven then [1835] that Joseph *Loved her*.”<sup>65</sup> Like McLellin, he also reports that Joseph and Fanny were caught together, although Emma Smith does not appear in his version:

There was Some trouble with Oliver Cowdery. and *whisper* Said it was Relating to a girl then living in his [the Prophet’s] Family And I was afterwords told by Warren Parish, That he himself & Oliver Cowdery did know that Joseph had Fanny Alger as a wife for They were *Spied upon* & found together—And I Can now See that as at Nauvoo—So at Kirtland That the Suspician or Knowledge of the Prophets Plural Relation was one of the Causes of Apostacy & disruption at *Kirtland* altho at the time there was little Said publicly upon the Subject.<sup>66</sup>

In summary, Joseph apparently married Fanny in March or April 1833. From this point on, the dates become extremely fluid, the next firm event being the Alger family’s departure from Nauvoo in September 1836, three and a half years later. If we hypothesize that Fanny became pregnant, this event could have occurred at almost any point—to be discovered possibly within a few weeks, if

<sup>65</sup>Johnson, Letter to Gibbs, 38-39.

<sup>66</sup>*Ibid.* For polygamy as a cause of apostasy in Kirtland, see Parkin, *Conflict at Kirtland*, 164-74.

she were ill, or as much as four or even five months later. Emma required Fanny to leave the house. Joseph asked Oliver to help calm Emma; whatever his success, she remained firm on Fanny's expulsion. Fanny lived with the Webbs for a few weeks, probably at Joseph's request. Then Fanny returned to her parents' house, presumably still in Mayfield. Joseph's only mention of people leaving his home is on 17 October 1835 when he "called my family together arranged my domestic concerns and dismissed my boarders."<sup>67</sup>

However, Richard Van Wagoner presents an attractive scenario, which suggests an August 1835 departure date for Fanny.<sup>68</sup> He hypothesizes that Oliver suggested that Joseph leave Kirtland to reduce friction with Emma and defuse the growing rumors about Fanny. Joseph left for Michigan with Frederick Williams in August 1835.<sup>69</sup> On 17 August 1835, in Joseph's absence, the "Article on Marriage," denying polygamy, was presented to and accepted by the Church in a conference.<sup>70</sup> Clearly, this statement represents an

<sup>67</sup>Jesse, *Personal Writings*, 64.

<sup>68</sup>Richard Van Wagoner, Letter to Linda Newell, 20 September 1983, in Van Wagoner Collection, Marriott Library.

<sup>69</sup>*History of the Church*, 2:243, 246; Donna Hill, *Joseph Smith: The First Mormon* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1977), 189.

<sup>70</sup>Three documents claim that Joseph Smith had liaisons with women other than Fanny Alger in the Kirtland period. The earliest is an affidavit, dated 13 September 1842, by Fanny Brewer, a convert from Boston, who lived in Kirtland but then left Mormonism: "There was much excitement against the prophet on another account, an unlawful intercourse between himself and a young orphan girl residing in his family, and under his protection!" Quoted in John C. Bennett, *History of the Saints* (Boston: Leland and Whiting, 1842), 85-86. Ann Eliza Webb Young refers to Fanny as "adopted," possibly under the mistaken assumption that she was an orphan, so this reference may be an allusion to Fanny. In July 1872, the antagonistic William McLellin wrote to Joseph Smith III: "Dr. Frederick G. Williams practiced with me in Clay Co. Mo. during the latter part of 1838. And he told me that at your birth [6 November 1832] your father committed an act with a Miss Hill—a hired girl. Emma saw him and spoke to him. He desisted, but Mrs. Smith refused to be satisfied. He called in Dr. Williams, O. Cowdery, and S. Rigdon to reconcile Emma. But she told them just as the circumstances took place. He found he was caught. He confessed humbly, and begged forgiveness. Emma and all forgave him. She told me this story was true." McLellin, Letter to Joseph Smith III, July 1872. Because McLellin is reporting someone else's experience forty years after the event, I conclude, with Newell and Avery, *Mormon Enigma*, 65-66,

effort to counteract scandal relating to polygamy in general and perhaps to Fanny's marriage and expulsion and/or pregnancy. Joseph returned to Kirtland on 23 August.<sup>71</sup>

### FANNY IN THE TEMPLE

Mosiah Hancock reports a final episode involving Fanny Alger, Joseph Smith, and his father, Levi:

As time progressed, the Apostates thought they had a good hold on Joseph because of Fanny and some of the smart? ones Confined her in an upper room of the Temple determined that the Prophet should be settled, according to their notions.

Brother Joseph came to Father and said "Brother Levi what can be done?" - There being a wagon and a dry goods Box close by and Joseph being strong and Father active Father soon gained the window Sill and Fanny was soon on the ground Father mounts his horse with Fanny behind him and altho dark they were in New Lyme fortyfive miles distant - And when the worthies? sent Fannys dinner the next day they were astonished not to be able to find her - Father by that time had returned and his animal was in the Stable.<sup>72</sup>

Although Mosiah doubtless heard this story with its dashing details from his father, it is more enigmatic than his account of the

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that McLellin garbled the Hill story from a story about Fanny Alger, itself suspect. My hypothesis is that he may have heard different versions of one story, possibly at third or fourth hand, and then repeated them with Emma as his ratifying authority, although he carefully establishes that Emma was not the source for either. Martin Harris told a similar story to Anthony Metcalf of being asked to soothe Emma after an unnamed hired girl accused Joseph Smith in 1833 of making advances, which she refused. "Harris, supposing that Joe was innocent, told him to take no notice of the girl, that she was full of the devil, and wanted to destroy the prophet of God; but Joe Smith acknowledged that there was more truth than poetry in what the girl said. Harris then said he would have nothing to do in the matter, Smith could get out of the trouble the best way he knew how." Anthony Metcalf, *Ten Years Before the Mast* ([Malad City, Idaho]: n.pub., 1888), 72. Martin Harris was not in Kirtland. Although he reportedly told this story to Metcalf during the winter of 1875-76, it was not printed until 1888 when Harris was dead. In the aggregate, these stories establish only that three individuals were willing to publish their belief that Joseph Smith had been sexually involved with a woman other than his wife during the Kirtland period; but no one story is completely convincing.

<sup>71</sup>*History of the Church*, 2:253.

<sup>72</sup>Mosiah Hancock, *Autobiography*, 68.

marriage. The account can be roughly dated from external events. Fanny and her family left Kirtland for Missouri in September 1836. The second floor of the Kirtland Temple had been completed at least by July 1835, when the roof was covered. The building was dedicated on 27 March 1836 and thereafter was used as a meeting-house and school.<sup>73</sup> So this event must have occurred between summer 1835 and September 1836.

Probably the best context for this story is an ecclesiastical meeting in which leading Church members opposed to Joseph Smith (possibly Oliver Cowdery and Warren Parrish) intended to have Fanny testify concerning her relationship with him. She would have been brought in from Mayfield and asked to wait in the Kirtland Temple, where the meeting would occur. Joseph did not want her to testify but also did not want to be seen as preventing her from testifying, so he asked for Levi's help in removing her from the temple. Benjamin Winchester pinpoints a scandal involving Joseph Smith and two or three families, in which Joseph proclaimed in the Kirtland Temple that since he had been called to establish God's kingdom on earth, the members of the Church had no right to question what he did. As a result, a number of people left Mormonism during the summer of 1836, as Winchester dates it.<sup>74</sup>

In 1836, Joseph asked Levi Hancock to take Fanny to Missouri with his [Levi's] family. Levi wrote in his autobiography: "About this time I received a letter from Solomon [Hancock] he said he . . . was going to Misouri I saw Joseph Smith he told me to take fanny Alger and go . . . . We started the latter part of August for his [Solomon Hancock's] faterinLaw and got there about the first of Sept 1836."<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>73</sup>Roger Launius, *The Kirtland Temple: A Historical Narrative* (Independence: Herald Publishing House, 1986), 55; *History of the Church* 2:410, 474.

<sup>74</sup>"Primitive Mormonism, Personal Narrative by Mr. Benjamin Winchester," in "First Half Century of Mormonism," papers compiled by Charles L. Woodward, 1880, p. 195, New York Public Library, as summarized and cited in Hill, *Joseph Smith: The First Mormon*, 188. W. [sic], "To the Saints Abroad," *Messenger and Advocate* 2 (July 1836), 350 warned that those who gathered to Kirtland would not find a "moddel of perfection and harmony." George A. Smith, 10 January 1856, *Journal of Discourses* 7:114-15, dates the beginnings of the Kirtland apostasy after the dedication of the Kirtland Temple.

<sup>75</sup>Levi Hancock, *Autobiography*, 150.

Although Levi's autobiography sounds as though he obeyed these instructions, Fanny Alger started for Missouri with her own family. Benjamin Johnson, though misdating the Alger family's departure as 1837, says that they "left for the west and [stopped] in Indiana for a time."<sup>76</sup> Samuel Alger's obituary dates the family's departure from Kirtland as September 1836, clarifying the discrepancy in dates by adding that they stayed in Wayne County, Indiana, for a year because of bad roads, not starting for Missouri again until the following September.<sup>77</sup> Fanny, however, was "Soon Married to one of the Citizens ther [in Indiana] & altho she never left the State She did not turn from the Church nor from her friendship for the Prophet while She lived."<sup>78</sup>

Her marriage certificate, dated 16 November 1836, confirms Johnson's recollection; but it does not clarify why she took the step of marrying a non-Mormon, especially since the courtship could have been a matter of only weeks.<sup>79</sup> Perhaps she felt that Joseph had abandoned her after Emma ejected her from the household. Perhaps she did not want to go to Missouri for any number of reasons. And perhaps she simply fell in love with Solomon Custer, who was, unlike Joseph, her own age—nineteen.

### OLIVER COWDERY'S ESTRANGEMENT

Oliver Cowdery and Joseph Smith became increasingly estranged in 1837 and early 1838. Joseph's relationship with Fanny seems to have been a major issue in their conflict, which strengthens the hypothesis that Cowdery never practiced polygamy. According to Ann Eliza Webb Young, William McLellin, and Ben-

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<sup>76</sup>Johnson, Letter to Gibbs, 39.

<sup>77</sup>Samuel Alger, Obituary. The obituary specifies that they "reached Randolph County, Missouri," which is two or three counties east of Caldwell County.

<sup>78</sup>Johnson, Letter to Gibbs, 39.

<sup>79</sup>Hypothesizing twelve to fifteen miles a day by wagon, the two-hundred mile trip from Mayfield to Dublin would have taken between thirteen and sixteen days of straight traveling. Unfortunately, we do not know what day in September the family left Mayfield. They could have reached Dublin as early as mid-September or as late as mid-October.

jamin F. Johnson, Cowdery played a prominent role in trying to resolve the conflict between Joseph and Emma over Fanny; according to Johnson, Cowdery was a shocked eyewitness of Joseph's relations with Fanny. In summer 1837, Apostle David Patten asked Oliver "if he Joseph Smith jr had confessed to his wife that he was guilty of adultery with a certain girl, when Oliver Cowdery cocked up his eye very knowingly, and hesitated to answer the question, saying he did not know as he was bound to answer the question yet conveyed the idea that it was true."<sup>80</sup> Patten also testified that he asked Cowdery directly if "a certain story was true respecting J. Smith's committing adultery with a certain girl, when he turned on his heel and insinuated as though he was guilty; he then went on and gave a history of some circumstances respecting the adultery scrape stating that no doubt it was true. Also said that Joseph told him, he had confessed to Emma."<sup>81</sup> Though Cowdery had helped defuse the crisis through the "Article on Marriage" denying that the Church advocated "fornication, and polygamy," the circumstantial evidence is strong that Cowdery's respect for Joseph diminished after that point. This reaction would be reasonable if Cowdery knew nothing of polygamy until he was confronted with a double offense: Joseph's behavior with Fanny and his possible mishandling of the domestic crisis with Emma. In contrast, Levi Hancock, involved from the beginning of the relationship and a relative, would have a different perception of it.

If Cowdery allowed interpretations to circulate that Joseph had committed "adultery," Joseph's anger also becomes more understandable—especially if he viewed his relationship with Fanny as a marriage, sanctioned by God. The inevitable confrontation took place on 7 November 1837, in Far West.<sup>82</sup> Apostle Thomas Marsh in an affidavit-letter to Joseph Smith dated 15 February 1838, wrote: "I heard Oliver Cowdery say to Joseph Smith, Jr.,

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<sup>80</sup>Testimony of Thomas Marsh in excommunication trial of Cowdery, Donald Q. Cannon and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *Far West Record: Minutes of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1830-1844* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1983), 167-68.

<sup>81</sup>Testimony of David Patten, Cannon and Cook, *Far West Record*, 167. This testimony shows how far rumors of the relationship had circulated.

<sup>82</sup>*History of the Church* 2:521.



while at George W. Harris' house, in Far West, that he (Joseph) never confessed to him, (Oliver) that he was guilty of the crime alledged to him [adultery]. And O. Cowdery gave me to understand that Joseph Smith Jr. never acknowledged to him, that he [Joseph] ever confessed to any one, that he [Joseph] was guilty of the above crime." Harris, testifying at Cowdery's excommunication trial, reported that Cowdery "seemed to insinuate that Joseph Smith jr was guilty of adultery" in their conversation. But when asked directly if Joseph had ever "acknowledged to him [Cowdery] that he was guilty of such a thing," Cowdery answered "No."<sup>83</sup>

Although these sources were clearly on Joseph's side of the dispute, we see Oliver's perspective in a 21 January 1838 letter to his brother Warren. Oliver vehemently denied that he had ever lied or admitted lying about Fanny Alger. He describes a meeting with Joseph before witnesses (possibly the meeting at Far West), in which "in every instance I did not fail to affirm that what I had said was strictly true. A dirty, nasty, filthy affair of his and Fanny Alger's was talked over in which I strictly declared that I never deviated from the truth." The meeting ended with Joseph wanting "to drop every past thing, in which [there] had been a difficulty or difference." He "gave me his hand" in the presence of witnesses and announced his intention "to say nothing of former matters."<sup>84</sup>

The reconciliation did not endure. In less than four months, Oliver was excommunicated on six of nine charges. One was "seeking to destroy the character of President Joseph Smith, by falsely insinuating that he was guilty of adultery." Certainly, other factors were important, but the issue of adultery was crucial. Cowdery criticized the Church for "endeavoring to make it a rule of faith for said church to uphold a certain man or men right or wrong."<sup>85</sup> If

<sup>83</sup>Thomas Marsh, Affidavit, in Letter to Joseph Smith, 15 February 1838, *Elders' Journal* 1 (July 1838), 45; George W. Harris, Affidavit in the same letter; Cannon and Cook, *Far West Record*, 167.

<sup>84</sup>Oliver Cowdery, Letter to Warren Cowdery, 21 January 1838, Cowdery Letters, Huntington Library.

<sup>85</sup>Cannon and Cook, *Far West Record*, 167-68; *History of the Church* 3:16-18; Cowdery, as quoted in Hill, *Quest for Refuge*, 63.

Joseph had committed adultery, not only would it raise questions about his moral character but it would challenge the absoluteness of his authority.

Cowdery had been the scribe of the Book of Mormon, one of the Three Witnesses, and the recipient with Joseph of the Aaronic and Melchizedek priesthoods from angelic hands. His excommunication was a significant loss to the Church. According to Benjamin Johnson, “as at Nauvoo - So at Kirtland That the Suspicion or Knowledge of the Prophets Plural Relation was one of the Causes of Apostacy & disruption at Kirtland.” Johnson links Cowdery with Jared Carter and Warren Parrish in this context as men who became “a Law unto themselves” and “lost the Light of there callings.”<sup>86</sup> Parrish, formerly Joseph’s secretary, led a splinter group so powerful that it gained control of the Kirtland Temple and helped force Church leaders from Kirtland. Jared Carter was brought up in September 1835 on charges of “rebelling against the advice and counsel” of the First Presidency, and “erring in judgment”—apparently for wanting a plural wife for whom he had built a house. Joseph would not permit the marriage. Unlike the other two, Carter humbly confessed and was forgiven.<sup>87</sup>

Later, Nauvoo dissent over polygamy intensified until it became a major cause of the deaths of Joseph and Hyrum Smith. William Law and Austin Cowles, a member of the First Presidency and a counselor in the Nauvoo Stake presidency respectively, both left Mormonism to publish the *Nauvoo Expositor*, dedicated in large part to exposing Joseph Smith’s extramonogamous activities. Smith’s infallibility was also an important issue, and polygamy was seen as evidence against it. Even in this aspect, the marriage of Joseph Smith and Fanny Alger was a troubling precursor to the future.

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<sup>86</sup>Johnson, Letter to Gibbs, 38-39, 45.

<sup>87</sup>Hill, *Quest for Refuge*, 62. See also [Thomas Marsh], Editorial, *Elders’ Journal* 1 (August 1838), 57 describing Parrish as adulterous; George A. Smith, 10 January 1856, *Journal of Discourses*, 7:115; Parkin, “Conflict at Kirtland,” 309, 314-17; Launius, *The Kirtland Temple* 85-86, 81; Cook and Ehat, *Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 74; Johnson, Letter to Gibbs, 38.

### FANNY ALGER'S POST-KIRTLAND YEARS

The Alger family reached Missouri in September 1837 and settled in Randolph County. In February 1839, they came to Illinois with the rest of the exiled Mormons. They lived in Quincy for eight months, then moved to Bear Creek (Lima).<sup>88</sup> In the fall of 1845 they moved to Nauvoo and, in May 1846, left for the West where Samuel and Clarissa both died during the early 1870s.

The rest of Fanny's life can be reconstructed only in barest outline. According to Solomon's obituary, the couple had nine children; but the names of only five appear in census records. In approximately 1840, when she was twenty-three, her first child by Solomon, Mary A., was born, followed by Lewis A., approximately 1844; Sophrona Allis, approximately 1848; Benjamin Franklin, approximately 1849; and Lafayette, approximately 1854, when Fanny was thirty-seven.<sup>89</sup> Solomon Custer, identified as a "laborer" in the 1850 census, was a "grocer" in 1860, with real estate valued at \$600 and personal estate valued at \$500. Mary was not living at home, but sixteen-year-old Sarah Seamon did "House Work" and helped with the children, then ranging from sixteen-year-old Lewis to six-year-old Lafayette. Another source describes Solomon as a "Baker" in 1859, and as a "Merchant" in 1865.<sup>90</sup> An anecdote by one of Fanny's grandchildren shows what kind of merchant Solomon was: "Like other grocery men, Solomon had loafers around the stove. In those days people browned their coffee from green coffee beans. The beans came in large bags, which were used as seats by the loafers. Grandpa spied one of the loafers stealing coffee beans from a small hole torn in the bag, and when the culprit denied the act Grandpa bounced a chair off his noggin. That broke up the coffee stealing."<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>88</sup>Samuel Alger, Obituary.

<sup>89</sup>U.S. census records, Dublin, Wayne County, Indiana, for 1850, 11; 1860, 190. Mary later married a Mr. Vickers. 1880 census, Dublin, Wayne County, Indiana, 139. See also Van Wagoner, Letter to Newell. The 1850 census misidentifies Fanny as "Francis," age thirty-one, instead of thirty-three.

<sup>90</sup>*Directory and Soldier's Register of Wayne Co., Indiana* (Wayne Co., Indiana: n.pub. 1865), 58, locates his store at the southeast corner of Cumberland and Milton and his residence on the U.S. National Road, East Dublin. See also *Dublin, 1830-1980* (Dublin, Indiana: n.pub. 1980), 30, 34, 138.

The Custers do not appear in the 1870 census but were still in Dublin in 1880, both then sixty-three. Their five-year-old granddaughter Ethel Vickers, Mary's daughter, was living with them.<sup>92</sup> Solomon Custer died of "typhoid pneumonia" on 27 March 1885. Only three children survived him.<sup>93</sup> Our only clue to the family's religion is that the "funeral discourse [was] by Rev. Guthrie at the Universalist church, which was crowded to its utmost. . . . Being a Mason, his funeral rites were conducted by members from the lodges of Milton, Cambridge City and Dublin."<sup>94</sup>

The 1890 census was destroyed by fire, and Fanny Custer cannot be found in the 1900 census. She lived to at least age seventy-eight, but even Van Wagoner's exhaustive research in Indiana failed to determine her death date.<sup>95</sup>

Another fragmentary mention is that, when the LDS Lima Branch was organized on 23 October 1842 in Illinois, the Alger family and Fanny Custer were present.<sup>96</sup> She was probably visiting her family. Solomon Custer is not listed, and Benjamin Johnson says that Fanny lived in Indiana.<sup>97</sup> Johnson also records that, after Joseph Smith's death in 1844, one of Fanny's brothers questioned her about her relationship with the dead prophet. She replied, "That is all a matter of my - own. and I have nothing to Communicate."<sup>98</sup>

Thus, Fanny lived for more than forty years as a non-Mormon, raising a family of five with a secular, patriotic husband who named his sons after Benjamin Franklin and Lafayette. Despite her

<sup>91</sup>*Dublin, 1830-1980*, 138.

<sup>92</sup>1880 census, Dublin, Wayne County, Indiana, 139.

<sup>93</sup>Solomon Custer, Obituary.

<sup>94</sup>*Ibid.* See also Indiana Probate Records, 52282 F, Part 6, 28 April 1885.

<sup>95</sup>"I left no stone unturned, I even found descendants, but she had vanished into the past like a vapor." Richard Van Wagoner, Letter to Todd Compton, 26 March 1993.

<sup>96</sup>The full listing is as follows: "Samuel and Clarissa Alger; John, Alva, Samuel Jr., Thomas, Clarissa Jr. members. Fanny Custer." Written in the back of Emer Harris's Book of Patriarchal Blessings, No. 210, as cited in Van Wagoner, Letter to Newell.

<sup>97</sup>Johnson, Letter to Gibbs, 39.

<sup>98</sup>*Ibid.*, 45. Johnson does not cite the source of his information, but he likely talked with John Alger in southern Utah.

important role in initiating the era of Mormon polygamy, we do not know what meaning she gave either those three turbulent years in Kirtland or the decades of apparently quiet monogamy with her family.

### CONCLUSION

Though Mosiah Hancock's account of Fanny Alger's and Joseph Smith's marriage elevates their relationship from the status of a casual sexual liaison and affirms Joseph Smith's early absorption with a new order of marriage, it nevertheless raises problems of its own. Perhaps most troublesome from a modern perspective is its "exchange of women" theme.<sup>99</sup> Joseph offers Clarissa Reed to Levi in exchange for Fanny, commissioning Levi to obtain Fanny for him. Levi considers this assignment "a mission," delivers Fanny to Joseph, and is "given" Clarissa.

Feminist historian Gerda Lerner, citing structural anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss, writes that the "exchange of women," common in tribal societies, was "the leading cause of female subordination" in human history and makes theoretical reconstructions from prehistory.<sup>100</sup> Examples in anthropology are the abduction of women from other tribes, ritual rape in weddings, and commercial bride transactions in which the father is paid for his daughter. Women are indoctrinated from childhood to accept such marriages as beneficial to their family and tribe. Lévi-Strauss writes, "The total relationship of exchange which constitutes marriage is not established between a man and a woman . . . but between two groups of men, and the woman figures only as one of the objects in the exchange, not as one of the partners."<sup>101</sup> Even if the daughter is allowed to accept or reject the proposed marriage, she is not allowed

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<sup>99</sup>Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), 115, 134-35; Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Patriarchy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 46-48; and Gayle Rubin, "Traffic in Women," in *Towards an Anthropology of Women*, edited by Rayne Reiter (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975), 157-210.

<sup>100</sup>Lerner, *The Creation of Patriarchy*, 46.

<sup>101</sup>As quoted in *ibid.*, 46-48.

to suggest her own possible husband. In many cultures, the woman is not allowed to reject the husband her father has arranged for her.

Within this theme, the Joseph Smith/Fanny Alger story offers some striking points of comparison and contrast. Joseph Smith and Levi Hancock both act as “fathers”—Smith for Clarissa and Hancock for Fanny. Their mutual success strengthens the bond between them. Fanny’s parents consider themselves honored to be linked to their prophet. It is a good example of what Lerner calls the “commodification” of women in history.

Yet this story is not a simple patriarchal exchange of treaty “commodities.” Levi and Clarissa feel mutual affection, and Joseph’s “bestowal” of Clarissa on Levi is in accordance with her own wish. Furthermore, and most interestingly, when Levi approaches his brother-in-law, Samuel Alger, Samuel defers to his wife who, in turn, refers Levi to Fanny. The dual transaction thus hinges on Fanny’s choice.

The historical fact that Fanny accepted Joseph’s proposal leaves unanswered the question of why. Mosiah says that Joseph “loved” Fanny. One wonders how such a relation had developed. Did Fanny reciprocate his feelings and choose him freely or did she accept his proposal because, like Zina Diantha Huntington Jacobs in Nauvoo, she regarded him as a prophet and feared to disobey divine revelation?<sup>102</sup>

Historical documents also give no evidence about what *might* have happened if Fanny had rejected the proposal. Would Joseph, Levi, and Samuel and Clarissa Alger have pressured her to accept the proposal as Helen Mar Kimball and Lucy Walker were pressured in Nauvoo?<sup>103</sup> Would Joseph have forbidden the marriage of Levi and Clarissa Reed if Levi had failed in his “mission”? And despite Fanny’s acceptance, she later rejected Joseph, Mormonism, and the geographical Zion that was a central tenet of the faith, even though this choice involved separation from her family. Historical documents do not tell us why. Had she become disillusioned with the

<sup>102</sup>Bradley and Woodward, “Plurality, Patriarchy, and the Priestess,” 95-96.

<sup>103</sup>Whitney, Autobiographical Sketch, n.p.; Lucy Walker Smith Kimball, in Lyman O. Littlefield, ed. *Reminiscences of Latter-day Saints* (Logan: Utah Journal Co., 1888), 46-47.

doctrine of polygamous marriage? If she had once been in love with Joseph, was she now? What did the experience of being expelled from Joseph's home (and possibly being considered an unwed mother, if that tradition is true) do to her feelings? She made a choice, even though her motives remain obscure and social structures worked against her complete freedom.<sup>104</sup> Modern Mormons who are uncomfortable with polygamy may debate whether Fanny Alger's choice was right or wrong.

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<sup>104</sup>Feminist theory may interpret Fanny Alger's experience in at least two ways. First, she may be seen as a victim. See Marxist feminist John Faragher, *Women and Men on the Overland Trail* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1979), 187. Second, she may be seen as an individual who made her own choices, despite adversity and oppression. See Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), 17; and Julie Roy Jeffrey, *Frontier Women: The Trans-Mississippi West, 1840-1880* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1979), 203. Sandra L. Myres, *Westering Women and the Frontier Experience, 1800-1915* (Albuquerque: University of Mexico Press, 1982), 11, emphasizes the individuality and variety of western women, as preferable to typecastings as paragons of piety or as victims. Polygamy was, almost by definition, non-egalitarian; nevertheless, Mormon women were "not weak but strong," and sometimes "triumphed . . . heroically" (as pioneers, mothers, and leaders) despite confining social structures. Jeffrey, *Frontier Women*, 203.

## REVIEWS

James B. Allen, Jessie L. Embry, Kahlile B. Mehr. *Hearts Turned to the Fathers: A History of the Genealogical Society of Utah, 1894-1994*. Provo: BYU Studies, 1995; 392 pp.; photographs, appendices, indexes; cloth \$17.75, paperback \$10.95. ISBN cloth 0-8425-2327-8, ISSN paperback 0007-0106.

*Reviewed by Raymond S. Wright*

This book was originally commissioned in the mid-1970s by the then Genealogical Society of Utah as a privately published reference work and complete history, designed for staff use. By the early 1990s, it became apparent that the project could become part of a centennial celebration commemorating the Genealogical Society's founding in 1894. The book focuses on four topics: (1) the development of LDS Church doctrines and policies defining member responsibilities in temple and family history work; (2) the evolution of the Genealogical Society of Utah to its present state as the Family History Department of the Church;<sup>0</sup> (3) leaders in the Church's family history movement and their contributions to its activities and history; and (4) the contributions of the society that have had greatest impact on Mormons and on the non-Mormon world of genealogy and family history.

Except for chapters 6 and 8, the society's history is presented chronologically. Chapter 6 focuses on the microfilming program of the Church and Chapter 8 on the history and role of computers in the programs of the society. However, this arrangement is not totally successful. It takes the events in chapters 6 and 8 out of their historical context and makes them redundant because these developments were introduced in other chapters.

There are three appendices: two provide valuable facts about the scope and magnitude of the society's worldwide microfilming program, and one

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<sup>1</sup>The Family History Department of the LDS Church (its name since 1987) continues to do business as the Genealogical Society of Utah when its associates in the non-LDS world feel that this designation is more appropriate. I use "Genealogical Society" in this review except where there is a particular need to use the newer term.



summarizes important events in the history of the Genealogical Society. A bibliography by Daniel B. McKinlay describes books, articles, essays, speeches, and manuals dealing with LDS family history and genealogy. The book also has both a scripture index and a subject index.

The authors rely on correspondence, reports, minutes, and similar documents in the files of the Family History Department. These are supplemented with information from interviews with selected employees or former employees and officials of the Genealogical Society as well as memoirs from these people. The number of sources cited is staggering and the authors' skill in organizing this information into a readable history is impressive.

Of particular interest is the examination of how the Genealogical Society supported and even refined LDS doctrines about salvation for the dead. The society's efforts to make genealogists out of Church members and motivate them to discover ancestors and perform temple ordinances (baptisms, endowments, marriages) is a fascinating theme. Another interesting story is the 1922 creation of the Temple Index Bureau, part of efforts to reduce the duplication of temple work.

Many people helped establish the Temple Index Bureau, but most would agree that Harry Russell was both father and midwife in its birth. Russell's motivation came from the days he spent in the Salt Lake Temple performing temple ordinances for his Abbott ancestors only to learn that his cousins were duplicating his efforts in St. George. "He was so dismayed," this volume reports, "that, even though he continued to work as a temple officiator, he refused, at least for the time being, to perform endowments for his own progenitors." With "unyielding tenacity," he pressed "for the establishment of a clearinghouse that would index all names for which temple ordinances had been performed. . . . Several obstacles stood in his way, including some officers of the Society. . . . But Russell found support from other leaders, including Elder John A. Widtsoe and President Heber J. Grant" (pp. 98-99).

Another turning point was the 1938 advent of microfilming, which changed permanently the way both LDS and non-LDS would search for ancestors. The society's focus expanded again about 1962 to include the use of computers to keep track of ancestors. In 1976 the Twelve and First Presidency approved a new set of ten long-range goals for genealogy and temple work that have guided the Family History Department's activities to this day. Allen, Embry, and Mehr skillfully explain the developments from 1976 to 1980 that led to widespread confusion among staff at the society and Church members in general about what these goals really meant.

These goals focused on developing computer systems to track temple work, eliminate research duplication, and make massive name files available to Church members. Microfilming continued to gather vital records. Priesthood leaders and families became responsible for approving names for temple ordinances. There was no mention of Church members' duty to research ancestral lines and submit their names for temple ordinances, a

great frustration to genealogists at the society who had worked hard to persuade Latter-day Saints that they were duty-bound to trace their genealogies back as far as records permitted. Genealogists in the Church and at headquarters were further shocked by a new program that seemed to signal the end of member-generated names for ordinances: society administrators proposed extracting personal data on deceased persons from microfilm records—a solution to the steadily declining number of names submitted to temples from members. Instead, members would compile four generations of genealogy, beginning with themselves, write family histories, organize family reunions, and help with name extraction in their stakes but leave the rest to the new extraction program. The authors observe that this “startling new message” went too far in removing “the responsibility of Church members to seek after their own dead.” Four years later at general conference, President Spencer W. Kimball reaffirmed that research should “continue past four generations” and Elder A. Theodore Tuttle added, “Once you complete your four generations, you are not finished. Continue to search out all of your lines.’ The responsibility for extended research that the new program had lifted from the shoulders of the members was set gently back into place” (pp. 274-75).

The authors overlooked three important contributions from this period of confusion. In 1980, Elder Boyd K. Packer published *The Holy Temple* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1980), a simple guide to genealogy and temple work. Few recognize his impact in this area until they compare the principles taught in this book with the direction family history and temple work have taken in the Church since 1980. The second great contribution was the extraction program itself. Today volunteers working in extraction projects computerize such key records as the Scottish Old Parish Register Index, the British 1881 Census Index, the U.S. 1880 Census Index (forthcoming), and Ellis Island Passenger Lists Index (forthcoming) for easy access through FamilySearch® data bases. A third contribution was a renewed emphasis on making family history research and name submission simpler. It became clear during this period that Church members had breathed a collective sigh of relief in accepting the limited four-generation responsibility. They had felt guilty long enough and wanted easy guidelines to make their tasks simpler.

Since 1980, the efforts of Genealogical Society employees and volunteers have produced procedures, instructions, publications, computer programs, and data bases which make finding ancestors easier than ever before. The FamilySearch® data base provides access to personal data on over 200 million deceased persons. Over 300,000 persons used the Personal Ancestral File® computer program in 1994 to compile their genealogies and share them with relatives. Today, leaders at the Family History Department estimate that 80 percent of temple ordinances performed come from members who identified their own ancestors. Just seven years before (1897), only 20 percent of the names submitted came from members’ personal research.

The description of the microfilming program omits most of the 1966-76 developments which provided the foundation for the microfilming program today. When society leaders decided to stop performing research for paying clients, they reassigned the Research Department's thirty or forty genealogists to other areas, five or six to a new research department supervised by Frank Smith. These research specialists were assigned to identify records worldwide that Church members needed and negotiate for permission to microfilm. They obtained filming contracts with government leaders in Eastern Europe and in other countries in Europe, Asia, and the South Pacific. Once the contracts were signed, the projects came under the supervision of the Micrographics Division. By 1976, it was clear that exploration, negotiation, and filming required better internal coordination; and the entire acquisition process from filming through cataloging was combined in a new Library Services Division. By 1986, the microfilming program had grown so large it became a separate Acquisitions and Field Operations Division. Today more than 200 microfilming projects are underway around the world.

Perhaps the most visible part of the society is its library—the largest in the world with nearly 2 million rolls of microfilm and over 300,000 books. Unfortunately, the authors leave its role in the society's history largely unexplored. About 800,000 people visit the Salt Lake City center annually and more than a million use its 2,500 branch libraries (Family History Centers) in almost every country of the world. The 1894 Articles of Association of the Genealogy Society of Utah define one of its original purposes as “collecting, compiling, establishing, and maintaining a genealogical library . . . [and] in acquiring the records of deceased persons.” During its history, the library in Salt Lake City has become a mecca to genealogists from throughout the world, and the reputation of the library and its knowledgeable staff have opened many doors in further microfilming and book acquisitions. The library's catalogers were pioneers in amalgamating both library and archival cataloging procedures to produce a computer-generated catalog of the Genealogical Library's collections. Its reference consultants have written thousands of pages of guides and finding aids that are widely read by LDS and non-LDS researchers. In 1988, 13,488 library patrons attended 693 classes taught by the headquarter's library staff, and thousands continue to attend such classes every year. The library was also the laboratory for testing the Temple Index Bureau, Pedigree Referral Service, and computer databases like the International Genealogical Index, Personal Ancestral File®, and FamilySearch®.

Since the society's founding, volunteers have been a major part of nearly every aspect of its work. In 1981, “full-time Church service personnel” began working at headquarters. In 1990, both full- and part-time volunteers were called as family history missionaries, organized much like those serving proselyting missions. During 1993 an average of 800 family history missionaries (250-400 full-time) served at Church headquarters (p. 296). Hundreds more serve in stake Family History Centers, as microfilm photographers,

name extractors, and in other assignments. An entire chapter could have been devoted to the specific accomplishments of the society's volunteers.

This is the first published history of an LDS Church headquarters' department. It provides important insights about how the guidelines provided by the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve translate into policies, procedures, and instructional materials that promote the fulfillment of the mission of the Church. The authors have not glossed over differences of opinions or other difficulties endemic to every organization. They have provided an accurate description of activities within the Genealogical Society.

Latter-day Saints interested in family history as well as anyone who considers himself or herself a student of LDS history will want to read this important contribution. I hope that it will serve both as inspiration and model for future histories of other LDS Church headquarters' departments. It makes understandable the many changes and developments Latter-day Saints have seen in the programs of the Church which support family history and temple work.

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S. Kent Brown, Donald Q. Cannon, Richard H. Jackson, eds. *Historical Atlas of Mormonism*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994; xiii, 169 pp.; photograph, maps, appendix, index; \$37.50. ISBN 0-13-045147-9.

*Reviewed by Lowell C. "Ben" Bennion*

At last Mormonism has an atlas to illustrate and often illuminate its dynamic and expansive nature! The Academic Reference Division of Simon & Schuster initiated the idea, and a trio of BYU professors implemented it. The three editors and fifty other contributors have produced a collection of seventy-eight two-color maps—each placed opposite a one-page essay—in the remarkably short period of less than two years and at a reasonable price.

I would second historian Dennis Lythgoe's assessment of the atlas as "an indispensable reference work for the student of Mormonism"—one that belongs on every shelf of Mormon Americana. But after perusing it and participating in two sessions of the 1995 Mormon History Association

meeting that discussed it, I must dispute his judgment that the atlas "is an academic accomplishment of the first order and is likely to become a classic in its field" (*Deseret News*, 16 April 1995). The editors themselves seem to sense the atlas's shortcomings, some of which they could blame on the time and length constraints imposed by the publisher. They have asked readers (and reviewers?) to offer "suggestions for corrections or improvements" (p. vii). Since I share their implied hope for a second edition, I shall try to make my critique as constructive as possible.

Readers' reactions to the atlas as a whole and its individual maps will vary greatly, depending on their standards for comparison and their particular interests in Mormon studies. In my judgment this volume clearly surpasses the quality of the *Historical Atlas of the American West*, produced by Warren A. Beck and Ynez D. Haase (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989).<sup>1</sup> But it compares less favorably in design and balance with the best of many state atlases, including the *Atlas of Utah*, edited by Deon C. Greer et al. (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1981), which took considerably more time and money to produce.

Historians probably expect less of atlases and maps than geographers do in terms of both design and subject matter. Those looking mainly for orientation maps that show the location of the most important events, routes, sites, and people connected with Mormonism may find the new atlas satisfactory, unless they share my aversion to the teal blue color used on all maps, because it so closely resembles the blue hue that cartographers reserve for bodies of water.

Readers seeking maps that place key events and sites of Mormon history in an environmental or a spatial setting may find the atlas disappointing. Thematic maps depicting distributions that provide geographical context for historical happenings are infrequent and some portray their given phenomena inadequately. For instance, Map 23 shows the sites of Mormon-Gentile conflict in Northern Missouri but not the general settlement pattern of the two groups. No contributor prepared a comparable map for the Western Reserve of Ohio or the city-state of Nauvoo where similar kinds of conflict forced many Mormons to leave. Only three maps in the entire atlas use a topographic base, and one of them (Map 42) gives the Salt Lake Valley a much hillier look, thanks to a computer error. Map 65 divides the world into the areas used by LDS leaders to administer the Church; it also includes the distribution of the membership but does so simply by noting the number of members in each area. Such a method makes it difficult to visualize the highly uneven distribution of the worldwide Church. A separate map using graduated circles to display relative size or a cartogram

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<sup>1</sup>See my review of the atlas in the *Western Historical Quarterly* 21 (August 1990): 386-87.

making the size of countries proportional to their Mormon populations would have served the author's purpose much better.

Whether one prefers orientation maps, thematic maps, or a balanced mix of the two, all users of the *Historical Atlas of Mormonism* should applaud the large 9 x 11" format that has a commentary facing each map. Ideally, such a layout requires both authors and readers to think historically and geographically at the same time—no easy achievement. If a picture is worth at least a thousand words, then an informative map should rate even more. Some authors address their maps directly, interpreting the patterns they discern, while others write without referring to their own maps. The latter decision implies that either the graphic has little to say or the author thought it self-evident and wanted to give the essay a different emphasis.

The editors may have assumed that their rationale for the selection and sequence of the maps chosen for the atlas needed no elaboration. They have consequently provided no text, not even subheadings, to connect the seven eras into which they have grouped the map-essays. We should expect any collection of maps like this one to be rather eclectic, a reflection of the editors' (and authors') personal interests, as they readily admit (p. ix). But they still should have explained why half of their selections focus on Mormonism's first thirty years (1820-50), or why the entire twentieth century rates only a fifth of all the maps.

And if "The Church is no longer a Utah church nor an American one," as one contributor asserts (p. 130), why doesn't the atlas reflect that? Only a dozen maps feature the world as a whole; the others focus on North America and mainly the United States, perhaps because all the contributors are North Americans with half of them based at BYU. Only two authors are RLDS. In addition, the atlas makes Mormon women all but invisible. Only Eliza R. Snow, the Relief Society in 1884, and Joseph Smith's wife and maternal ancestors rate any mapping.

By eliminating the overlap found among certain maps, the editors could have lessened the imbalance by expanding the coverage of the later eras, non-U.S. areas, and neglected topics. They could have collapsed the four maps centered on the Palmyra area and Hill Cumorah (Maps 3-6) into two, combined Maps 26, 27, and 32, and also maps 28 and 29, to shorten the long Nauvoo section. Even with ten maps devoted to the Nauvoo era (1839-46), none delimits the full extent of the city's hinterland, especially on the Iowa (vs. Illinois) side of the Mississippi River.

The Nauvoo section does, however, begin with the type of overview map that each part of the atlas needs. Besides showing the entire area of the Midwest, "Nauvoo: Frontier City" (Map 25) depicts the rise of the town relative to St. Louis, Cincinnati, Chicago, and other cities on the U.S. urban frontier of the 1840s. Unlike many of the maps in the atlas, this one reminds us that Mormonism evolved in the context of American culture, not in a historical vacuum.

For all the value that individual maps and essays contain, what concerns me most about this pioneering atlas of Mormonism is what it fails to include.

I would have welcomed more new graphics like the dozen or so that show distributions never before mapped, for example: (1) about a hundred "Mormon Settlements in the Middle Missouri River Valley" (Map 37) briefly established while the Saints were crossing the plains, 1846-53; (2) the "Dispersion of Plural Marriage" (Map 58); (3) "Pioneer Property in Salt Lake City" compared with "LDS Church Property in 1992" (Map 60); (4) LDS "Membership Growth by States and Countries," which projects numbers (or percents) by region to the year 2020 (Map 61); (5) the several hundred "Ethnic . . . Branches and Wards in the United States and Canada" as of 1992 (Map 75).

Of the five just enumerated, "Polygamy" undoubtedly proved the most difficult to map, given the fragmentary nature of the data available for plotting the places where polygamists sought refuge. Perhaps because scholars have only begun to map the maze of tangled plural lives, they keep drawing conclusions that I must question on the basis of my own research. First, even among larger Utah towns, Ogden did *not* have "the lowest incidence of plural marriage" (p. 116)—as members of the Farley, Farr, Hammond, Richards, and many other families could attest—unless one calculated the percentage on the basis of the total population with its unusually large Gentile element. Second, after the 1890 Manifesto, polygamy persisted for a long while, not only in the most peripheral communities of Mormon Country, but also in several suburbs of Salt Lake and towns of nearby Davis County.

One final but glaring omission that might merit a section of its own in the atlas is the distinctive cultural landscape that Mormons have stamped upon much of the Intermountain West and, more ephemerally, elsewhere. We get mere hints of it in treatments of historic tourist sites (Maps 34 and 70) and the "Emergence of Mormonism on the American Landscape (1950-1965)" (Map 78). At the very least the editors might have added some photographs to highlight key features of predominantly Mormon places. (The atlas's lone photograph, p. 9, shows "Hill Cumorah c. 1900.") Then, even with less color, the atlas might have come closer to matching the aesthetic appeal of the *Atlas of Utah*. Only a revised and an expanded edition of this first atlas of the LDS faith will satisfy my desire for a much more balanced and comprehensive coverage of the myriad "geographic relationships associated with the history of the Mormons" (p. vii). While waiting for Brown, Cannon, and Jackson to proceed with a new version, we can look forward to seeing the publication in 1996 of a greatly improved edition of Gaustad's *Historical Atlas of Religion in America* (edited by Philip L. Barlow for Oxford University Press), which will use the Latter-day Saints as one of three major case studies. Maybe the two atlases together will make students of Mormonism much more aware of the value that mapping religion can have for revealing its mysteries. In the meantime perhaps someone is already working on an ultimate historical atlas of Mormonism for CD-ROM that will supersede and continually update all preceding efforts to map the faith.

LOWELL C. "BEN" BENNION is professor of geography at Humboldt State University, Arcata, California, and coauthor of *Sanpete Scenes* (Eureka, Utah: Basin/Plateau Press, 1987). He contributed one map-essay to the atlas by invitation at the last minute but agreed to review the rest of the atlas.

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Spencer J. Palmer and Shirley H. Palmer, comps. and eds. *The Korean Saints: Personal Stories of Trial and Triumph 1950-1980*. Provo, Utah: Religious Education, Brigham Young University, 1995. xi, 904 pp.; photographs, map, appendices, index; \$40. ISBN 0-87579-888-8.

*Reviewed by J. Michael Allen*

The large size and price of this book should not discourage either the casual reader or the scholar. Anyone interested in the international growth of the LDS Church will find value in a book containing primary accounts of first-generation Korean converts to the LDS Church. For scholars, this book provides numerous insights into social history, missiology, comparative cultures, and the process and meaning of religious conversion; others will discover sincere, frequently heart-warming, and sometimes inspiring stories of the lives of average members both before and after joining the LDS Church.

The compilers' experiences have been both broad and deep. Spencer Palmer has been a former U.S. Army chaplain in Korea, holder of a Ph.D. in Korean history from the University of California at Berkeley, former Seoul mission president and Seoul temple president. His wife, Shirley, also has an extensive record of service in Korea and has unique insights into Korean sensibilities. This book is a companion volume to a similar collection compiled by the Palmers and published in Korean: *Han'guk ùi ch'ogi maril sŏngdo: kaein yŏksa sŏnjip* [*Early Korean Saints: An Anthology of Personal Histories*] (1992). The English-language publication contains translations from the Korean-published book with an addition of about twenty stories.

The organization is chronological, with three major sections: conversions from the 1950s, from the 1960s, and from the 1970s and beyond. The arrangement is alphabetical by romanized surname. (It is Korean custom for a woman to retain her family name after marriage, though the children take the name of the father. Where a husband and wife are treated together, their stories are included under the husband's name.)

The "Gallery of Photographs" provides a pleasing forty-three-page graphic record of Church growth in South Korea, from a 1953 view of Seoul's main intersection—a striking contrast for those who have been there recently—to a photograph of the Seoul Temple, dedicated in 1985. In between are photos of members, missionaries, General Authorities, and branch and mission activities. Especially appealing is a photograph of five members in the southern port city of Pusan, taken in the early



1950s when Korea was still suffering from the terrible devastation of the Korean War (1950-53). Though the background looks like any wartime scene, their expressions are supremely happy. Included in the group are two of the true pioneers of the LDS Church in Korea: Kim Ho Jik, who converted to Mormonism at Cornell University and became an important education official in the government of Syngman Rhee; and Kim Do Pil, an extraordinary woman baptized by an American serviceman, who put great effort into the development of the Relief Society for LDS women in Korea and also did extensive research on the Book of Mormon.

Both versions contain useful appendices, though those in the English version are somewhat more extensive. They include birthplaces of early Korean members (more converts came from Korea's southern provinces than from the capital city of Seoul and its immediate environs); names and home towns of the first fifty missionaries called to Korea (1954-62), mostly from Utah and Idaho but including one Korean; presidents of Korea's four missions; the names of all native Korean missionaries called between 1962 when the Korean Mission was organized, through 1980 (the list of 183 begins with Han In Sang, translator of the Book of Mormon and currently a member of the Church's Second Quorum of the Seventy); Korean stakes organized through 1986; and temple presidents and matrons. A map locates all of the provinces and major cities.

But the heart of the book is the personal stories. The stories vary greatly in length; to their credit, the editors seem to have allowed their informants to tell their stories in the way that suits them best. It took many years and many trips to collect these stories. The subjects currently live throughout the United States and Asia. Some accounts came from oral interviews, while others were written for this volume. Except for a few accounts of early converts, all are in the first person. The book thus has an intimacy and immediacy not available in most regional histories or even biographies. The resulting variations in style, length, polish, and detail reflect the variety of life experiences of the early Korean Saints.

Like a reference book, *Korean Saints* allows—even encourages—both focused searching and random browsing. In both approaches, windows open on aspects of Korean life and on the adjustments necessitated by conversion:

My father, who centered his life on dignified Confucian ideals, was always strict. My elementary, junior high, and high school days were a successive chain of daily stress. When I went to school, even the teachers taught by the whip, and when I went home, it was customary for me to be lectured if I wasn't careful in my every action, since my father was so rigid. (321)

Since I was attending the Mormon church, which was treated as a heretical cult at that time, I received a lot of criticism. People would open their encyclopedias, say the Mormon church is a cult, and then ask me how I could attend such a church. (434)

One day when I was almost four years old, I opened the gate to play outside and was shot in the arm. My grandmother ground up some herbs, wrapped them in a small piece of rice paper, and put them in the wound. . . . My whole arm turned black and was numb for a long time, but eventually it healed. (384)

I prayed to the Lord before I was baptized. The spirit of the Lord calmed my innermost heart as it delicately came upon me. It said, "Ye shall know them by their fruits." My outlook on life completely and surprisingly changed. I awoke from the stupor of the liquor I drank due to my gloomy view of life, to the wisdom that I should live by the correct essentials of life; from habits following the popular whims of the world and from interest in materialism, to sharecropping in the fields of the Lord. I became a Latter-day Saint. (699)

The book is not without minor problems. Though not meant to be a history of Korea, or even a history of the LDS Church in Korea, it would have been helpful if the compilers had included overviews of both. The Japanese occupation; the division into North and South Korea; the Korean War; postwar political, social, and economic reconstruction—these forces will not be familiar to many people who might have an interest in the book. Similarly, understanding of these members' lives would increase in the context of significant institutional Church events—though it may truthfully be said that the lives of these people constitute the history of the Church more validly than any institutional study. The Church *is* its members. A glance at the index, giving multiple page references, shows how often members' lives intersected with each other.

Occasional inconsistencies in romanization are vexing, though minor. The compilers followed the accepted McCune-Reischauer romanization system, while also allowing some subjects to retain distinctive romanizations. Diacritical marks were used inconsistently, requiring that some individuals be indexed under more than one spelling. "Kim Young Ja" has two page references, but each refers to a different individual. Given the conventions of Korean naming and the large number of individuals named in this book, duplicates are virtually predictable. Other than a Korean telephone book, I have never seen a book with so many Korean names, naturally multiplying the possibility of error. Such minor annoyances, however, do not detract significantly from the great value of the book. Similar glitches appear almost routinely in many academic books and articles.

The compilers have modest objectives. "We are grateful," they write, "to preserve these treasured memories as a gift to future generations." They express the hope that these stories "will endure for many generations to come, as a solemn witness to posterity of the importance of the gospel in their lives" (p. ix). No doubt, for these converts and their families, the compilers' objectives are well met. But there is much here for others as well. The prologue groups excerpts topically: the Japanese occupation (1905-45), the Korean War (1950-53), the Confucian legacy, filial piety, salvation for

the dead, first Korean contacts with the Church, Korean perceptions of American missionaries, in pursuit of knowledge, Koreans as missionaries, the marvels of conversion, music, Word of Wisdom, tithing, and "blessed are the pure in heart." I found myself wishing for section introductions that provided more analysis, but even the titles suggest some areas in which researchers could use elements of these stories to good effect. Spencer Palmer has, in fact, already published on the topic of Confucian rituals in Korea.

For Korean members, the value of this book is obvious. For nonspecialists, the value is in the many fascinating insights offered into Korean life, conversion, faith, and trials. For Korean specialists, the Palmers have *created* a new primary source, the lifeblood of research.

I know of no larger collection of LDS members' firsthand stories anywhere. Eric Shumway's *Legacy of Faith*, personal accounts by Tongan Saints, is half the length. Andrew Jenson's *LDS Biographical Encyclopedia* is extensive, but in no other compilation of this length do members tell their own stories. For North American members to understand international Mormonism at more than an institutional level, we need many more collections like this. Spencer and Shirley Palmer have pointed the way. Let us encourage others to take on the task for other locales.

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Rebecca Bartholomew. *Audacious Women: Early British Mormon Immigrants*. Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1995; xiv, 288 pp., bibliography, index; \$18.95 paper. ISBN 1-56085-066-3.

*Reviewed by Lynn Matthews Anderson*

At the end of her introduction, author Rebecca Bartholomew writes, "I am painfully aware of the limitations of this work . . . they are due partly to my limited gifts and partly to not enough time and money" (p. xiv). Previously published works, as well as much of this book, give the lie to Bartholomew's "limited . . . gifts," so I am inclined to chalk up most of the flaws in this work to lack of time and money, and, in some measure, to inadequate editing/proofreading. (Signature's editor in charge of commas and pseudo-neologisms ["sturdified," "regrettedly"] must have been on vacation.)

*Audacious Women* is an ambitious attempt to give names and faces to representatives of the thousands of anonymous women who left the British Isles in the mid-nineteenth century to join with the Saints in Utah. Although openly frustrated at times by the dearth of information on her subjects, Bartholomew nevertheless succeeds in helping readers comprehend the

obstacles to conversion, the rationales for emigration, and the difficulties such pioneers faced both during their travels as well as after their arrival in Zion.

The book's biggest difficulty, I believe, is its attempt at thematic organization, which undercuts one of the book's greatest strengths—the lengthier narratives focusing on individual women. These accounts are absolutely riveting. I believe that a more logical and satisfying way to organize this book would have been to tell the stories of several women's lives as completely as possible, and then discuss the various elements of emigration common to most.

Instead, Bartholomew works through the gathering, crossing the ocean, emigration by handcart or wagon, and homesteading in Utah, repeating the stories of those few women with the most complete records several times (sometimes nearly verbatim). The effect is disjointedness, an effect compounded when certain facts are related in one telling but left out in others. For example, the story of Eliza Chapman Gadd, a non-Mormon member of the ill-fated Willie handcart company, is told three times; but the irritating question of whether she ever joined the Church is left to the third retelling at the very end of the book (she apparently did not join the Church, but nonetheless became a Utah midwife who delivered upwards of 2,000 babies).

A second difficulty is Bartholomew's tone. Bartholomew speaks of “a duality of voice and attitude” which induced many popular non-LDS authors in the nineteenth century to create and perpetuate Mormon stereotypes. Similarly, Bartholomew's own writing also reflects “a duality of voice and attitude” which seems symptomatic of an unresolved love-hate relationship with the Mormon Church. She clearly admires the Mormon women in her history, even as she acknowledges their weaknesses: “It appears that, for all Hannah [Tapfield King]'s aristocratic, self-absorbed delicacy, she produced strength and persistence in seeking her idea of God above self-interest. If this is not sainthood, it surely is an impressive attempt at sainthood” (p. 211).

Yet while Bartholomew appears to empathize with her subjects and even to accept the same gospel these women embraced, such empathy and acceptance is juxtaposed repeatedly with her evident distaste for the male-dominated institution. For example, in the context of discussing how women fared spiritually in the kingdom, Bartholomew comments: “If speeches from the Tabernacle are any indication, the priesthood brethren derived spiritual identity from ‘wearing the pants’ in the church and flexing leaderly [sic] muscles against women” (p. 251). Furthermore, she does not provide even one of myriad possible examples to back up this assertion. While I share many of Bartholomew's concerns, such an acerbic tone will likely offend many who might otherwise be drawn into reading Mormon women's history.

Another example: “The family group sheet on Richard, Mary, and their seven children has this notation: ‘Do not seal to husband’—a final insult to

Richard Bate who had already lost everything else to a faith he did not embrace. He may be one of the handful of real victims of Mormonism" (p. 203). Although it is commendable compassion for Bartholomew to read this record from Richard's perspective, it should be balanced with equal insights into the perspectives that produced such a directive.

Perhaps even more annoying than such infrequent frontal assaults on Mormon patriarchy are the parenthetical pinpricks sprinkled throughout her prose: "Apparently [Elicia Grist] left no descendants. If numbers count—and in Mormon values they do—Elicia and John left a significant posterity numbered among the Lord's people" (p. 212). Such sniping draws the reader into a complicity of disapproval that I believe many will refuse to enter.

I hope that readers will overlook these lapses, for the book has many strengths, one of which is its astonishing breadth. Bartholomew deserves great credit for locating and presenting many hitherto unavailable primary and secondary sources for Mormon women's stories. If the book lacks in depth—and it does in places—one is left feeling like Bartholomew: "hungrier" for more. There are still too many women whose names and stories are unknown and untold, and there are still many unplumbed but accessible sources of information with which to further complete the portrait, but *Audacious Women* provides an excellent jumping-off point.

Another strength, surprisingly enough, is Bartholomew's treatment of polygamy. Although she is clearly no fan of the Principle, Bartholomew tempers her criticism with an almost even-handed acknowledgment that for some women:

... polygamy seemed to relax the demands of Victorian wifehood to allow Ellis [Shipp] a full-time career. She was not constrained by the old dilemma of how to manage the home front while in the workplace. She did not need to worry about a tendency to faithlessness by her husband since he had other women under a system which legitimized multi-partner sex for men, held them responsible for its consequences, and protected the women involved from many abuses short of grief. (p. 223)

Despite having presented several instances of failure in "celestial marriage," Bartholomew is nevertheless willing to believe and pass along the stories of polygamy's success. She summarizes: "It is no surprise that some women suffered under polygamy. What is surprising—at least to me—is that other couples . . . evidently out of pure devotion to their religion, triumphed over their natural instincts to create generally loving relationships among all parties. One has to be touched and even somewhat awestruck at this achievement" (p. 238).

Although Bartholomew occasionally makes unsupported assumptions in her analyses of individual women's circumstances, she often shows remarkable insight. For example, she describes how Mormon women often felt "discounted" and "resentful" if "outsiders noted only the surface pattern of a male-dominated church hierarchy and inferred repressed and power-

less females" (p. 215) without acknowledging direct and indirect benefits. Ironically, this is exactly the same response that most contemporary American Mormon women have to feminist critiques of Mormon patriarchy.

While it would be difficult to call this book unreservedly pro-Mormon Church, it is definitely pro-woman. Bartholomew asks: "Were [Mormon women] dupes in the beginning, docile victims in the end?" (p. 249), and lets her material decisively answer that question: "One can find, among my one hundred women's histories, confirmation somewhere for nearly any stereotype. But in every woman's history is also a resounding repudiation of the composite stereotype. No one woman even comes close to resembling the rude, mean, thieving, superstitious, perverted, abused, abandoned, verminal [sic] subhuman of the Eastern and European presses" (p. 254).

Despite lapses in language, a too-obvious anti-patriarchal slant, and a certain discontinuity between chapters, *Audacious Women* represents an important contribution to Mormon women's narrative history as well as a vital resource for further research.

LYNN MATTHEWS ANDERSON has published numerous electronic and printed essays on Mormon feminism and gender issues, and is the author of the *Easy-to-Read Book of Mormon* (Apple Valley, Minn.: Estes Book Company, 1995), and *From These Hills and Valleys: A Brief History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Southwestern Pennsylvania* (Pittsburgh, Penn.: Pittsburgh Pennsylvania Stake, 1987).

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Davis Bitton. *Historical Dictionary of Mormonism*. Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1994; x, 339 pp.; photographs, bibliography, appendices; \$39.50. ISBN 0-1808-2779-4.

*Reviewed by Steven L. Olsen*

The recent spate of dictionaries, encyclopedias, and general surveys on Mormonism and related topics must signal a time of intellectual stock-taking. The Mormon pioneer sesquicentennial, the Salt Lake Temple centennial, the Utah statehood centennial, the approach of the next millennium, and the continuing emergence of Mormonism in an international public arena have seemingly encouraged Mormons and their scholars to take a step back from their particular academic interests to assess, in broader terms, the place of contemporary Mormonism within wider religious and social environments, and in relation to its own past.

Davis Bitton's recent book contributes to this collaborative reflection in a self-conscious fashion. *Historical Dictionary of Mormonism* claims that, to date, "no handy guide to Mormonism . . . reaches the broad public." Hence this volume was published "for those needing a [portable, general, and]

preliminary orientation to Mormon history, beliefs, practices, and terminology" (p. ix).

*Historical Dictionary of Mormonism* is the second volume in a series of dictionaries of religion entitled *Religions, Philosophies, and Movements*, published by Scarecrow Press and edited by Jon Woronoff. Volume 1 (*Historical Dictionary of Buddhism* by Charles S. Prebish) was published in 1993. The diversity of the first two volumes bodes well for a series of considerable breadth.

By my count, Bitton's 350-page volume contains approximately 300 entries, compared to over 2,000 entries in some 400 pages for the Buddhism volume. This suggests that the first volume is more strictly a dictionary, while the volume on Mormonism lands somewhere between a dictionary and an encyclopedia. Bitton's entries average about one per page with several extending up to four pages in length. In addition, Bitton's volume contains a brief chronology of Mormon historical events, 1805-1993, an extensive bibliography of scholarly works on Mormonism, and appendices listing LDS Church presidents to 1993, temples dedicated by the Mormons, and popular quotations by Latter-day Saints.

Although distinctions between history and belief are easily blurred in Mormon discourse, the entries in this dictionary divide quite evenly between the two general categories. The historical category breaks down further into three major subdivisions: settlement periods and specific historical events, noteworthy Latter-day Saints, and geographical or cultural regions in which Mormonism has become established. Although the most extensive and detailed entries are those on particular settlement periods, biographical sketches outnumber the entries on events and settlement periods four to one. Thumbnail biographies outnumber entries on geographical or cultural regions nine to one. This distribution suggests that the historical interest of this volume is primarily biographical.

Most of the individual sketches are of Mormon ecclesiastical leaders (primarily General Authorities and general auxiliary officers) but also include noted scholars (e.g., Henry Eyring, Franklin S. Harris), politicians (e.g., George Romney, Reed Smoot), business leaders (e.g., J. Willard Marriott, David M. Kennedy), and musicians (e.g., LeRoy J. Robertson, Jerold Ottley). Athletes, artists, entertainers, and other public figures are, for the most part, omitted. Entries in the second category—beliefs and practices—are more or less evenly divided among beliefs, practices, publications, religious terms, church organizations, and ecclesiastical positions. There is also a handful of entries addressing related topics such as the "Mormon History Association."

The measure of a dictionary is what it excludes as well as what it includes. In this respect, Bitton faced an impossible task. Being a single modest volume that exists more as a condensed encyclopedia than a strict dictionary, *Historical Dictionary of Mormonism* contains much, but necessarily omits much. Unfortunately, selection criteria are not always clear. For example, educators John Sorenson and Eugene England are included while David

Gardner, T. H. Bell, and Richard Bushman are not. Protestantism is included as a related religion, while Judaism is not. "Auditors" is an entry as a Church headquarters function but not "membership record," although the latter has a scriptural imperative (see D&C 20:82-84). "Humor" and "politics" are included as important Mormon cultural values, while "education," "learning," and "intelligence" are not; "literature" and "sports" are entries, while "charity" and "service" are not. Readers will no doubt find other examples of unevenness in selection.

Dictionaries are useful to the extent that they systematically include the terms most relevant to a general topic (e.g., Mormonism) and exclude less relevant terms. While the selection of entries will always be somewhat subjective, readers should be able to predict fairly accurately what will and will not be included. The less a dictionary is systematic and comprehensive at a specific level of inclusiveness, the less useful it is as a reference tool for those seeking an objective introductory guide to an unfamiliar topic. I believe that *Historical Dictionary of Mormonism* could have better served its primary purpose and audience with an approach that characterizes more traditional dictionaries: briefer, more numerous entries.

That said, the book's strengths are equally noteworthy. The language of the entries is clear, and the tone even-handed. A profound understanding of Mormonism is evident throughout. And the extensive bibliography is current. Even seasoned students of Mormonism will find much useful information among its pages.

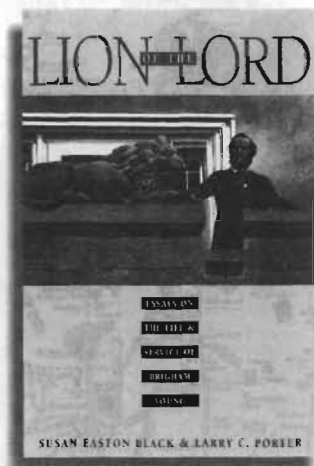
The book, relatively high priced for what it delivers, will likely not find its way into many personal libraries. However, public libraries throughout America, particularly those without the budget for the far more ambitious and expensive *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, will be well served by this single reference volume. Although the rapid development of Mormonism will inevitably date some entries, the volume as a whole will remain useful for years to come.

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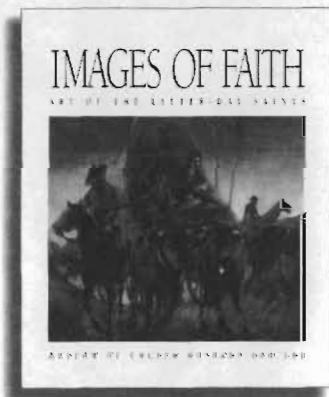


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