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The Nature and Cause of Internal and External Conflict of the Mormons in Ohio Between 1830 and 1838

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THE NATURE AND CAUSE OF INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL CONFLICT
OF THE MORMONS IN OHIO BETWEEN 1830 AND 1838

174

A Thesis

Submitted to

The Department of Graduate Studies in

The College of Religious Instruction

Brigham Young University

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In Partial Fulfillment ⁷

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Max H. Parkin

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

After the organization of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the year 1830, conflict was often a characteristic feature accompanying the members of that religious faith. Their beliefs and practices were sometimes incompatible with some of the social, religious, and ethical mores of their neighbors. Throughout the decade of the 1830's, during the Mormon residence in the State of Ohio, the Mormon people were plagued with frequent agitation, social distrust, and on occasion, deliberate persecution.

This study is concerned with the causes and nature of the conflict that the members of that Church were subjected to during the time they were growing in that area of the country.

Delimitation

This study is to be confined to the problem of Mormon conflict in Ohio during a period of nine years--from 1830 to 1838--which covers the period of the first Mormon converts in Ohio in 1830 to the departure of its leaders and most of its loyal members in 1838. Although the headquarters of the Church was located in Kirtland, Geauga Co., Ohio, and much of the anti-Mormon feeling was centered in communities of that area, this work will be concerned with the feelings of the Ohioans against the Mormons throughout the state, wherever opposition was exhibited.

This study will not only consider the nature of the conflict, but will also examine the events of that period to ascertain some of the causes of the anti-Mormon feeling as well as internal conflict. This thesis will not attempt, however, to give a complete history of the Church during the specified years in the Ohio area, but will be confined to factors that contributed to the conflict both internal and external. Because Joseph Smith, the founder of Mormonism, was a chief subject of the anti-Mormon feeling, his life during this period will appear as a central element in this study.

Some of the means whereby the anti-Mormons demonstrated their discord with the Mormons was in the press, in social and economic nonacceptance, in political and legal matters, by religious heckling, and by mob militancy. On occasion responsive members became disenchanted with the Church or its leaders and apostatized; consequently, these apostates were the cause of considerable anti-Mormon feeling. Therefore, a consideration of the apostates and their actions will be undertaken to the extent they became a source of conflict.

Consideration of Terms

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was established in Fayette, New York, April 6, 1830, by Joseph Smith and five other charter members. The Church and the LDS Church are synonymous terms to identify the above institution in this thesis. Adherents of the Church have been designated as members of the above named organization or as Latter-day Saints, Mormons, or Mormonites. The founder of the Church is identified by his name, Joseph Smith, Jr., the Prophet Joseph, or simply the Prophet

in this work. The term Gentile shall refer to someone who is not a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Method of Procedure and Sources Used

A consideration of the religious and social background in America and Ohio that had a bearing on Mormonism in Ohio will be considered to set the foundation for the future chapters. The chapters will then follow somewhat in chronological order dealing with the earlier events first whenever practical.

The primary sources which have been studied in this research include "The Journal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," The History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints by Joseph Smith, "The Manuscript History of the Great Lakes Mission--Ohio," and other useful works. A search has been made in the following Mormon newspapers or periodicals: the Evening and Morning Star, the Latter-day Saint's Messenger and Advocate, the Elders' Journal, the Times and Seasons, the Millennial Star, and other Church periodicals. Also, certain non-Mormon newspapers and periodicals as the Painesville Telegraph, the Millennial Harbinger, the Ohio Star, the Cleveland Herald, the Chardon Spectator and Geauga Gazette, the Painesville Republican, and other periodicals of the day have been studied. Some of these newspapers were studied from Dale Morgan's collection of articles of the Mormons and the West.

Private journals, diaries, letters, reminiscences, and histories of Mormon converts have been studied extensively. Libraries of the Brigham Young University, Utah State Historical Society, LDS Church Historian's Office, and Salt Lake City Public Library have been used considerably in

searching out the sources used. Secondary sources that are appropriate to this study have been used whenever suitable to cover this period of time.

CHAPTER II

RELIGIOUS AND SOCIAL BACKGROUND

The Need for a Second Awakening

Prior to the inception of the American Republic, the American religious scene received a tremendous activation in what is known as the Great Awakening of the 1740's led by the talented efforts of Jonathan Edwards. Yet, following the American Revolution, religion in America suffered a decline to the extent that the historian Tiffany described the Episcopalian Church during the period from the end of the Revolution to 1812 as an age of "suspended animation."¹ Another stated that this period was "the lowest ebb-tide of vitality in the history of American Christianity."² The forces that activated this condition in America were prompted by foreign and local innovations. The French Enlightenment had its influence upon such men as Thomas Jefferson who drafted the Virginia Statute of Religious Liberty which passed the assembly on January 16, 1786. The statute declared, "To compel a man to furnish contributions of money from the propagation of opinions which he disbelieves . . . is sinful and tyrannical," and "No man shall be compelled to frequent or support any religious worship, place or ministry whatsoever."³ Some states had established religious liberty before this and others

¹C. C. Tiffany, A History of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America (New York: 1895), pp. 388-390, cited by William Warren Sweet, The Story of Religion in America (New York: Harpers and Brothers, 1950), p. 223.

²Sweet, op. cit., p. 223.

³Samuel Eliot Morison, The Oxford History of the American People (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 293.

were to wait longer, but a "general spirit of mutual tolerance and religious liberty was in the air."⁴ Jefferson was not the only one who was angry with Christian orthodoxy; for "many prominent Americans," said a modern writer, "such as Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, Benjamin Franklin, Ethan Allen, Thomas Paine, and probably John Adams and George Washington, rejected orthodox Christianity in favor of Deism."⁵ In a letter to Timothy Pickering, Jefferson wrote:

When we have done away (with) the incomprehensible jargon of the Trinitarian arithmetic, that three are one, and one is three; when we shall have knocked down the artificial scaffolding, reared to take from view the simple structure of Jesus; when, in short, we shall have unlearned everything which has been taught since His day, and get back to the pure and simple doctrines He inculcated, we shall then be truly and worthily His disciples; and my opinion is that if nothing had ever been added to what flowed purely from His lips, the whole world would at this day have been Christian The religion-builders have so distorted and deformed the doctrines of Jesus, so muffled them in mysticism, fancies, and falsehoods, have caricatured them into forms so monstrous and inconceivable, as to shock reasonable thinkers, to revolt them against the whole, and drive them rashly to pronounce its Founder an imposter. Had there never been a commentator, there never would have been an infidel.⁶

Not only the extreme Deists, but the Unitarian and Universalist found numerous advocates throughout the country.⁷ The colleges of the East responded heartily to the independent thinking of these groups. Lyman Beecher, an influential orthodox preacher, while a student at Yale College in the seventeen nineties, observed that it was "the day of the infidelity

⁴Ibid., p. 292.

⁵Milton V. Backman, Jr., Mormonism and the American Religious Scene (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Extension Publications, 1962), pp. 17, 18.

⁶Hyrum Leslie Andrus, "Joseph Smith, Social Philosopher, Theorist, and Prophet" (unpublished DSS dissertation, Graduate School, Syracuse University), p. 47, citing a letter to Timothy Pickering, February 27, 1821.

⁷William Warren Sweet, Religion in the Development of the American Culture (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952), p. 91.

of the Tom Paine school . . . [and] most of the classes before me were infidels, and called each other Voltaire, Rousseau, D'Alembert"⁸ W. S. Tyler, in his history of Amherst College, stated that "a young man who belonged to the church in that day was a phenomenon--almost a miracle."⁹ Describing the situation in a neighboring college, another author said, "the dams and dykes seemed to be swept away, and irreligion, immorality, scepticism, and infidelity came in like a flood."¹⁰ In the year 1800, at Yale, there was but one church member in the graduating class.¹¹ Harvard and Princeton¹² experienced similar extreme religious setbacks around the beginning of the nineteenth century.

A natural development of the agitation against state-supported churches and clergy in all of the states where there had been an established religion resulted in an intense anti-clerical opposition.¹³ This feeling to some extent continued for many years and expressed itself in the West in various ways. Intense prejudice was often expressed against the clergy, and if it were known, "that a man is a missionary, a sufficient reason is at once furnished for not going to hear him preach," wrote one missionary.¹⁴ Lyman Beecher sermonized in 1804:

⁸Ibid., p. 97.

⁹Alice Felt Tyler, Freedom's Ferment (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1962), p. 29, citing W. S. Tyler, A History of Amherst College, p. 266.

¹⁰Idem.

¹¹Idem.

¹²Sweet, Religion in the Development of the American Culture, p. 224.

¹³Idem.

¹⁴Presbyterian Missionaries in the Pawnee Country (Kansas Historical Collection, XIV, 1915-1918), p. 582.

. . . Irreligion hath become in all parts of our land, alarmingly prevalent. The name of God is blasphemed; the bible denounced; the sabbath profaned; the public worship of God is neglected; intemperance hath destroyed its thousands; and is preparing the destruction of thousands more These are the causes which have destroyed other nations; their malignant nature is still the same, and unless their operation is suspended, they will destroy us.¹⁵

Migration to the West was extensive following the Revolution because of depressed economic conditions along the eastern seaboard. The settlement of Ohio, however, was delayed until the Ordinance of 1787, which authorized a territorial government for that area. Then, in 1788, the first settlement formed in Ohio was located on the Ohio River and was called "Marietta," by settlers moving in from Kentucky. The westward movement is evidenced in the growth of Ohio to over half a million by 1820, which caused a number of the old established standards to fall unnoticed. Once the people were in a new area associating with new people and exposed to new problems "the 'cake of custom' was broken, old standards were discarded, new ideas and new institutions were set up."¹⁶ In consideration of the disorganization of the times, an uncouth and a partially wild society resulted. In the words of Horace Bushnell,

They [the settlers] will think it no degradation to do before the woods and wild animals, what in the presence of a cultivated society they would blush to perpetrate. They are likely to look upon the indulgence of low vices and brutal pleasures, as the necessary garnish of their life of adventure.¹⁷

¹⁵Lyman Beecher, The Practicality of Suppressing Vice by Means of Societies for That Purpose, etc. (New London: 1804), p. 19, cited in Sweet, Religion in the Development of the American Culture, p. 93.

¹⁶Tyler, op. cit., p. 15.

¹⁷Horace Bushnell, Barbarism, the First Danger: A Discourse from Home Missions (New York: 1847), pp. 6, 7, cited in Sweet, Religion in the Development of the American Culture, p. 135.

Harvey Rice, writing of the area that the Mormons were to later settle, said, "there was very little regard for law or religion among the rank and file of adventurers who first settled Cleveland and its vicinity."¹⁸

The promiscuous standards exhibited in the West were compounded by the arrival of foreigners who came to America to relieve themselves of suppression, want, and over-population in Europe. In 1818, Samuel Crabtree wrote of the plenty which was not universally typical in America. "The poorest families adorn the table three times a day like a wedding dinner-- tea, coffee, beef, fowls, pies, eggs, pickles, good bread, and their favorite beverage is whiskey or peach brandy. Say, is it so in England?"¹⁹ During the early part of the nineteenth century, the Germans, Scotch, and Irish, found their way to the United States, many of whom settled in Ohio, along with the people from New England and other parts of the East. Years later the Irish laborers came to Ohio to dig on the Ohio Canal for thirty cents a day,²⁰ and built their "shanty towns" which developed along the canal routes. There was striking evidence of hard toil and severe privation among the people who settled away from chief population centers. The women especially appeared worn out, and the children appeared "ragged and squalid."²¹ In describing the heterogeneous composition of the migration westward, William Warren Sweet

¹⁸Harvey Rice, Pioneers of the Western Reserve (Boston: Lee and Shepherd, 1833), p. 65.

¹⁹Tyler, op. cit., p. 17.

²⁰Harlan Hatcher, The Western Reserve, the Story of New Connecticut in Ohio (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1949), p. 104.

²¹Francis P. Weisenburger, The Passing of the Frontier 1825-1850, Vol. III of the History of the State of Ohio, ed. Carl Wittke, (6 vols., Columbus: Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society, 1941), p. 28.

stated:

It is true that there were many well-qualified and enterprising young men rushing westward, but such immigrants were far outnumbered by the 'rude-minded and ignorant masses,' by 'luckless and impoverished families' fleeing westward from economic disaster, and 'hordes of foreigners from over-populated areas of Europe . . . men of all habits, characters and religions.'²²

Thus, America and particularly the West was suffering a period of religious and moral twilight which was soon to be illuminated by ambitious and dedicated men.

The Second Great Awakening

As the nation enjoyed an increase in population, the sentiments of the people became less dedicated to religion and its objectives. Church membership sank to a pathetic low of seven per cent²³ of the population in 1800, with no prospect of increasing without determined effort and a practical plan to revitalize religion throughout the country and especially in the West. Just as the movement away from religion had its seat in the eastern colleges, likewise the reawakening began there as well. Perhaps imperceptively at first, people began to show a greater interest in the churches. Somewhat typical of the interest beginning to emerge in the schools was the influence of Timothy Dwight, a grandson of Jonathan Edwards, who presided over Yale. He led that institution's return to organized religion, and by 1840, after fifteen periods of revival, Yale had more than half of its students affiliated with some church.²⁴

²²Sweet, op. cit., pp. 136, 137.

²³Milton V. Backman, Jr., American Religions and the Rise of Mormonism (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1965), p. 283.

²⁴Sweet, op. cit., pp. 136, 137.

The churches in the East met the shift of population to the West in various ways. A coalition between the Congregational and Presbyterian churches developed into the Plan of Union in 1801, from which the Presbyterians received the greater benefit. The Baptists sent their preachers with the westward migrants, and divided their time between preaching and farming; they became known as the Baptist farm-preachers. The Methodists who were showing great promise in growth, sent their ministers West and enjoyed phenomenal success while using the circuit-riding technique. "In the Presbyterian system," as one writer summarized the methods, "the minister was called by the people; the Baptist farmer-preacher came with the people; the Methodist circuit-rider was sent to the people."²⁵ The third system was perhaps the most difficult, but it resulted in greater membership.

The frontier phase of the Second Awakening was by necessity a more spirited movement than the return to religion in the eastern colleges, and it strongly appealed to the people's emotions. The inception of the camp meetings in Logan County, Kentucky, by a Presbyterian minister, James McGready, in 1800, innovated proselyting methods. This was a stroke of fortune for the growth of the churches in the West. This same year, Joseph Badger, made the first public introduction of religion in the Western Reserve, later to be the heart of Mormon activities in Ohio, by preaching a sermon in Cleveland.²⁶ He later participated in revivals throughout the Reserve. The Methodists and Baptists soon capitalized on the camp meeting system, and the method spread "like a prairie fire." Bishop Asbury of the Methodist faith wrote in 1811, that "at least four hundred camp meetings would be held that year," and by

²⁵Sweet, op. cit., p. 117.

²⁶Rice, op. cit., p. 65.

1820 it was estimated that at least one thousand were held.²⁷ The Methodists, who perhaps profited the most from the Second Great Awakening, increased from 15,000 at the time it was organized in 1784, to 258,000, in 1820, and by 1840 boasted 856,000 members.²⁸ The importance of religion grew in the West to the extent that much of the social life depended upon the religious revival and in particular the camp meeting, due to the lack of other public entertainment.

The camp meeting was usually held out of doors for want of a place sufficiently large to accommodate the crowds. They lasted for a number of days and extended late into the night, the participants remaining on the revival grounds until the dismissal of the local services days later. The camp meeting provoked a curious religious behavior never before witnessed in America. As early as 1803, in Ohio, scenes of surprising behavior excited the attention of the observer. Reverend Joseph Badger, the first missionary on the Western Reserve, described the revivals in Austinburg, Morgan, and Harpersfield as follows:

The subject was instantaneously seized with spasms or convulsions in every muscle, nerve and tendon. His head was thrown backward and forward and from side to side with inconceivable rapidity. So swift was the motion that the features could no more be discerned than the spokes of a wheel can be seen when revolving with the greatest velocity. No man could voluntarily accomplish the movement. Great fears were often awakened lest the neck should be dislocated.

And again,

By this strange operation the human frame was commonly so transformed and disfigured as to lose every trace of its natural appearance. Sometimes the head would be twitched right and left, to a half round, with such velocity that not a feature could be discovered, but the face appeared as much behind as before; and in the quick,

²⁷Sweet, op. cit., p. 150.

²⁸Backman, Mormonism and the American Religious Scene, op. cit., p. 22.

progressive jerk, it would seem as if the person was transmuted into some other species of creature.²⁹

These occurrences were common in Ashtabula County, later a source of many early Mormon converts in the Reserve. Sometimes the affected persons would hop "like frogs, and the face and limbs underwent the most hideous contortions." Others would walk on all fours, show their teeth and bark like dogs. Still others would double themselves up and roll "from one side to the other like a hoop,"³⁰ during the camp meetings.

These strange religious scenes not only effected the sympathetic but the disorderly intruders as well. James B. Finley, a pioneer Methodist missionary to Ohio, wrote in his autobiography of a band of ruffians as follows:

During the religious exercises within the encampment, all manner of wickedness was going on without. So deep and awful is man's depravity, that he will sport while the very fires of perdition are kindling around him. Men, furious with the effects of the maddening howl, would outrage all decency by their conduct; and some, mounted on horses, would ride furiously into the praying circle, uttering the most horrid imprecations. Suddenly, as if smitten by lightning, he fell from his horse. At this a shout went up from the religious multitude, as if Lucifer himself had fallen. I trembled, for I feared God had killed the bold and daring blasphemer. He exhibited no sign whatever of life; his limbs were rigid, his wrist pulseless, and his breath gone. Several of his comrades came to see him, but they fell like men slain in battle. I was much alarmed, but I had a great desire to see the issue. I watched him closely, while for thirty hours he lay, to all human appearance, dead. During this time the people kept up singing and praying. At last he exhibited signs of life, but they were fearful spasms, which seemed as if he were in a convulsive fit, through the intensest agony. It was not long, however, till his convulsions

²⁹John S. C. Abbott, The History of the State of Ohio: From the Discovery of the Great Valley to the Present (Detroit: 1875), pp. 692, 693.

³⁰Robert E. L. Faris, Social Disorganization (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1955), p. 441, citing Mooney, Publications of the Bureau of Ethnology, Vol. 14 (1892-93), Part II, pp. 942, 943.

ceased, and springing to his feet, his groans were converted into laud and joyous shouts of praise. The dark, fiend-like scowl which overspread his features, gave way to a happy smile, which lighted up his countenance.³¹

This attempt to change the direction of the American frontiersman's religious mood by exciting his emotions to such heights was rebuked by certain conservative elements in the churches. Lyman Beecher opposed Charles G. Finney in his efforts to Christianize the land by means of these intense emotional revivals. Finney, perhaps the greatest revivalist of the period, came upon the scene in 1824. He started his revivalist work in New York, but soon came to Ohio and later became affiliated with Oberlin College. Although some found the scenes of "unrestrained excitement"³² shocking and taught against it, Finney justified it on grounds that it was "impossible that real religious affections should be excited to any considerable degree, without exciting the animal sympathies and sensibilities"³³ Yet, criticism was not to stop the revival as long as converts came into the churches. The frontier was a difficult place to preach and in some quarters the audiences were unresponsive to the revivalistic appeal. George M. Hinkle, while on a short mission tour for the Mormon Church in Cuyahoga County, Ohio, in 1836, found the Methodists involved in a protracted meeting at Newburgh. They had been meeting for about ten days and intended to extend their meeting to two weeks, but were forced to cut it short due

³¹ Daniel J. Ryan, The Rise and Progress of an American State, Vol. III of History of Ohio (6 vols., New York: The Century History Company, 1912), pp. 226, 227.

³² Tyler, op. cit., p. 43.

³³ Charles G. Finney, Sermon Preached in the Presbyterian Church at Troy, March 4, 1837 (Troy, New York: Tuttle and Richards, 1837), p. 10.

to an inadequate number of listeners. He reported that they added only two to their number during extended preaching there.³⁴ The religious excitement caused by the Second Awakening was productive in arousing religious sentiment, but no years were so prolific as those that "shook the country in the years 1831 to 1834."³⁵

Bible and tract societies also added to the growing interest in religion in the West. At the commencement of the nineteenth century there were relatively few Bibles in the communities and settlements of the frontier. The movement to fill that need was answered in the form of Bible and tract societies. This plan to provide the people with religious literature was received with considerable appreciation in newspaper form. In the year 1828, there were thirty-seven religious newspapers in the United States, one of which, the Christian Advocate, had a weekly circulation of 15,000, which gave it the distinction of having the world's largest circulation, "the London Times not excepted."³⁶ The newspaper became an important factor in Ohio as well, and by 1826, there were sixty newspapers,³⁷ some of which were religious periodicals.

Many found the return to religion a happy restraining factor and welcomed it as an added security against the wild lawless extremes of the frontier. One observer wrote in the 1830's, that the law and public opinion was little felt in the wilderness, and he cherished the higher principles

³⁴George M. Hinkle, "Letter of George M. Hinkle," Latter-day Saint's Messenger and Advocate (Kirtland, Ohio), II, No. 7 (March 26, 1836), p. 304.

³⁵George Wallinford Noyes, Religious Experience of John Humphrey Noyes, Founder of the Oneida Community (New York: Macmillan Co., 1923, p. 32, cited in Andrus, op. cit., p. 35.

³⁶John Bach McMaster, A History of the People of the United States, 1821-1830 (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1900), p. 275.

³⁷Weisenburger, op. cit., p. 183.

communicated by religion.³⁸ And to a certain extent the "agnosticism, free thinking and deism of the Revolutionary period . . . had given way to a thoroughgoing and all embracing piety,"³⁹ as one writer stated, which seems "exaggeratedly mawkish" today, but which significantly changed the religious mood in the West.

Seeds of Conflict in the Early 19th Century Society

Social disorganization and conflict has its roots set in fear, apprehension, ignorance, tension, gratification of the senses, and other causes. When a society or elements therein are permeated with these forces it can be moved to behave unseemingly. The tendency toward conflict may be multiplied when a society is on the move and old standards are discarded. Some social practices may be of a nature to promote such conflict; especially is this true when popular public opinion sustains the offending parties. Drinking liquors was a common practice in America during the opening of the West. Men, women, and children used it as a principal beverage, in fact, addiction to liquor was common to "a large portion of the people."⁴⁰ Early in the century a mob of local rabble with dirks, clubs, knives and horsewhips and well fortified with raw home-made whisky moved in to break up a camp meeting in Marietta, Ohio.⁴¹ Later, Robert Boyd, a missionary writing from his place of work in

³⁸Tyler, op. cit., p. 43.

³⁹Robert E. Regiel, Young America 1830-1840 (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1949), p. 15.

⁴⁰Weisenburger, op. cit., p. 127.

⁴¹Sweet, op. cit., pp. 152-153.

the Western Reserve in 1836--the very place and time of Mormon activity there--found lawlessness distressing. He said that many of the people in that area came from New England where there was a sufficiency of religious training, but once removed from that environment behaved "like freed prisoners." While in New England "many of them walked the courts of God's house,"⁴² he said, but upon arriving in the West they threw off the shackles of conformity that had previously disciplined their actions. "The growing tendency toward social conflict was manifested,"⁴³ said a modern writer, in many areas of social life. The opinion of the majority dominated the thinking of the day; for non-conformity, Emerson observed, "the world whips you with its displeasure. In America the majority raises formidable barriers around liberty of opinion."⁴⁴ Andrus again reviews the problem:

In reality, the tyranny of the majority often degenerated into lawlessness and became a form of mob rule. West of the Allegheny mountains the force of law was diminished, giving opportunity for even greater abuses of the rights of the individual. 'Public opinion is stronger than law,' wrote the Chicago Democrat in June, 1833. In many cases it was 'exceedingly difficult to obtain justice at all,' said one observer while justifying the existence of lynch law in that area in 1838.⁴⁵

The New York Sun editorialized regarding the destruction of the new Pennsylvania Hall in Philadelphia by a riotous mob which resulted in the severe wounding of some people. "Violence, burning Halls and Lynching can

⁴² Robert Boyd, Personal Memoirs: Together With a Discussion Upon the Hardships and Sufferings of Itinerant Life (Cincinnati: 1868), pp. 184-185, cited in Sweet, op. cit., p. 136.

⁴³ Andrus, op. cit., p. 497.

⁴⁴ Ibid., citing Ralph Waldo Emerson in "Self Reliance."

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 500.

do no good in arresting fanaticism," it stated.⁴⁶ During a single week in September, 1835, Hezekiah Niles in his Baltimore paper, the Niles Register, noted over 500 items reflecting acts of violence and disorder from newspapers throughout the nation. This prompted him to note that "society seems everywhere unhinged and the daemon of 'blood and slaughter' has been let loose upon us."⁴⁷ This alarming mood in the country caused John Whitmer to state that, "the appearance of our country is truly alarming. Every mail brings new accounts of mobs and riots; great fires, and other destructions, of life and property."⁴⁸ Young George A. Smith, while on a mission tour in Ohio in 1835, delivered a Fourth of July oration in a grove near Perrysville, in which he spoke strongly about the danger the national government was in of disintegration in consequence of the great increase of mob violence throughout the country, and a total disregard on the part of officers of their solemn oaths, when sworn to support the Constitution and protect the people.⁴⁹ Concerning this same general trend, Harriet Martineau, a visitor in America wrote:

It is notorious that there is a remarkable failure in this department of political morals among certain parties in the United States. The mobbing events of the last few years are celebrated; the abolition riots in New York and Boston; the burning of the Charleston Convent; the bank riots at Baltimore; the burning of the mails at Charleston; the hangings by Lynch-law at Vicksburg; the burning alive of a man of colour at St. Louis; the subsequent

⁴⁶"Mobs Again," Painesville Telegraph (Painesville, Ohio), IV, No. 22 (May 31, 1838), p. 2.

⁴⁷Andrus, op. cit., p. 494.

⁴⁸John Whitmer, "Lo, the Days Come," Latter-day Saint's Messenger and Advocate, I, No. 11 (August, 1835), p. 166.

⁴⁹George A. Smith, "Journal of George A. Smith, 1817-1847," typescript in LDS Church Historian's Library, July 4, 1836.

proceedings there towards the students of Marion College; and the abolition riots at Cincinnati. Here is a fearful list.⁵⁰

The influence and importance of newspapers increased considerably during the second quarter of the nineteenth century, sufficient to prompt Fish to say that America had become "a nation of newspaper readers."⁵¹ W. W. Phelps, a Mormon editor, commented on the role the newspapers played in exciting public sentiment against his own people. He accused the press of "rash words, and foolish deeds" which caused "many innocent men, women, and children . . . to suffer persecution" "No wonder," he continued, "that Lynch law is murdering throughout our once happy country; no wonder mob after mob is breaking the tender thread of law, and bursting the strong bands of society, to spread anarchy, confusion, destruction, and death."⁵²

Whenever a person of odious reputation was noted in the public press, it was not uncommon for the newspapers to identify him with a personality assumed to be equally unreputable from the pages of history. This was especially true of persons associated with religion. Since the founding of the American Republic, certain colorful personalities appeared on the scene. Their views though often incompatible with the religious beliefs of the day would arouse public sentiment until mobs forced them to retreat. However, they rarely retreated in principle. One such was Ann Lee, an immigrant from England, who founded the Church of Christ's Second Appearance. Her claim of

⁵⁰Harriet Martineau, Society in America (London: Saunders and Otley, 1837), Vol. I, p. 162, cited in Andrus, op. cit., p. 500.

⁵¹Carl Russel Fish, The Rise of the Common Man (New York: The Mac-Millan Company, 1927), p. 143.

⁵²W. W. Phelps, "Letter of W. W. Phelps to John Whitmer," Messenger and Advocate, II, No. 3 (December, 1835), pp. 232-233.

visions and religious exercises not only brought her leadership in her church, but ridicule and mob violence as well. Her elders were beaten with the lash until their backs were jellied by the flogging. While on a mission in New England in 1783, she stopped at New Lebanon to rest among her followers. These followers, who believed that the Christ Spirit was making his second appearance in her, persuaded her to demonstrate some of her religious zeal in the dance and spiritual operations. Following the exercises she went to the home of George Darrow where a mob gathered. Her followers were attacked, ~~drag~~ ^{dragged} from the house by their hair, beaten and hurled into the mud. Mother Ann had been hiding in a sealed closet from which she was ejected and ~~drag~~ ^{dragged} by her heels to her carriage. Beaten and whipped, she and her group were harassed by the mob all the way to the ferry opposite Albany.⁵³

There were three Shaker colonies in Ohio at the time of the Mormon residency there, one of which was near Cleveland.

Others who emerged in the time following the American Revolution with whom Joseph Smith and the Mormons received some identity or unfavorable comparison, were Jemima Wilkinson, a prophetess of New York, and Johanna Southcott. Jemima Wilkinson died in 1819, and her sect broke up just three years following the arrival of the Smith family in the State of New York. Her followers believed that she possessed the spirit of the returned Christ,⁵⁴ which claims brought charges of blasphemy from members of established religion. Johanna Southcott, another who claimed powers of prophecy, maintained that

⁵³Carl Carmer, Listen for a Lonesome Drum (Toronto: William Sloane Associates, 1936), p. 151.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 206.

she would bring forth a son to be the Messiah to make his appearance the second time.⁵⁵ The public press assailed these groups for claiming to have prophecies and visions, and "for their corruptions of Christianity."⁵⁶

In 1828, the Geauga Gazette in the Western Reserve, noted the appearance of Joseph Dylks in Guernsey County, Ohio, who called himself Christ, making his appearance to judge the world. His "deluded followers, who worship him as God,"⁵⁷ stated the Gazette, were instructed to build a throne upon which he might reign while sitting in judgment⁵⁸ preliminary to ushering in the millennium in 1832.⁵⁹ He received a following in Salesville and others joined his ranks in New England. His movement was regarded as a fanatical fringe by the public press, which was a contributing factor in setting public opinion against him.

Lorenzo Dow--another religious lunatic as it was supposed--known as "Crazy Dow"⁶⁰ appeared in northern Ohio. He was born in Coventry, Connecticut, in 1777, and became identified with the Methodists. Years later he

⁵⁵ Joseph Smith, History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, introduction and footnotes by B. H. Roberts (7 vols. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1960), Vol. IV, p. 577, cited hereafter as History of the Church.

⁵⁶ Thomas Campbell, "The Mormon Challenge," Painesville Telegraph, II, No. 35 (February 15, 1831), p. 2.

⁵⁷ "Fanaticism," Geauga Gazette (Painesville, Ohio), I, No. 15 (December 23, 1828), n.p.

⁵⁸ Painesville Telegraph, II, No. 36 (February 22, 1831), n.p.

⁵⁹ Fawn M. Brodie, No Man Knows My History (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1960), p. 98.

⁶⁰ Rice, op. cit., p. 108.

moved to the Western Reserve, and in April, 1827, he gave notice to the citizens of Cleveland that on the second of July, at two o'clock in the afternoon he would hold a religious service on the bank of Lake Erie. At the appointed hour, Lorenzo Dow emerged with long curling hair, in his shirt sleeves. He taught that he had a commission from the New Testament to cast out devils, "with which some of you are possessed," he declared.⁶¹ Some of the spectators responded with tears while others did so with stifled laughter. Following the lengthy service, he departed, never to be heard of again in the Reserve.

The Western Reserve area of Ohio, inhabited principally by people geographically connected with the anti-Masonic area of New York and Pennsylvania, was the stronghold of the anti-Masonic movement in Ohio. In the fall of 1830, representatives of the anti-Masons entrenched themselves in county offices in Ashtabula, Geauga, and Portage counties.⁶² The Painesville Telegraph was the chief anti-Masonic spokesman in Geauga County, and expressed its suspicion of things that resembled secret orders or functions.⁶³ The

⁶¹Ibid., p. 109.

⁶²Eugene H. Roseboom and Francis P. Weisenburger, A History of Ohio (Columbus: The Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society, 1955), p. 100.

⁶³The national agitation against the Masons received its greatest impetus with the death of a New York Mason named William Morgan in 1826. Morgan, a disaffected Mason of Batavia, New York, with the assistance of a local editor, C. David Miller, published an article in Miller's Batavia Advocate announcing their intentions to expose the secrets of Freemasonry. An unsuccessful attempt to fire the press building was followed by more articles. Due to some trivial matter, Miller was confined in the Canandaigua, New York, jail, whereupon three men appeared at the jail, paid Morgan's fine, and kidnapped him. Following the events of that fateful night, Morgan was never heard of again. A popular belief is that he was killed and deposited in Lake Ontario. Following this event, anti-Masonic sentiment arose to extreme proportions in the United States.

press pictured Mormonism as a sort of conspiracy, like the Masons, that should be watched. The editor of the Telegraph wrote in February, 1831, that Mormonism should be investigated and if it is found to be a "base counterfeit, like freemasonry, let it be nailed to the counter, and ranked among the thousand impositions which have arisen in the world. . . ."64 The Ohio Star at Ravenna, further observed that "every one" of the Mormons were anti-Masons, yet they noted that there is only one other "pretense . . . equally ridiculous" as the Masons and that is the believers in the Mormon Bible.65

During the early decades of the nineteenth century, an internal revolutionary movement occurred in the Presbyterian and Baptist churches of schismatic proportions in Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Ohio, that had an effect upon Mormon establishments and growth in Ohio. One of these reformations was initiated by Thomas Campbell, a highly trained Presbyterian minister who immigrated from Ireland in 1807, and left his son, Alexander, in Ireland. Within two years, Thomas Campbell declared his independence from the Presbyterians; gained the support of his son, who arrived in America the same year, and united his Christian Association with the Redstone Baptist Association in 1813. The Campbells gained a considerable following, and his "Reformers were to be found in almost every Baptist congregation in the West, and by 1826, the Reformers began to separate from the Baptist churches to form congregations of their own."66 Yet, a nominal relationship with the

⁶⁴ Painesville Telegraph, II, No. 35 (February 15, 1831), n. p.

⁶⁵ "Anti-Masonic Religion," The Ohio Star, II, No. 12 (March 24, 1831), n. p.

⁶⁶ Sweet, op. cit., p. 237.

Baptists was maintained until as late as 1830. Earlier, however, in 1823, Campbell's liberal views were being expressed in the Christian Baptist and Sidney Rigdon, a Baptist preacher of considerable ability and promise, read and circulated its views in his sermons.⁶⁷ Rigdon's biographer said of him:

In general, Rigdon was on intimate terms with Walter Scott, Thomas Campbell, Alexander Campbell, and Adamson Bentley, the recognized leaders of the so-called 'Reformation Movement.' In training and scholarship he was at least equal to Bentley; in the type of native eloquence that was so effective among the frontier churches, he may have had no superior in the entire group.⁶⁸

At the death of Baptist minister Warner Goodall in 1826, Rigdon was called as pastor of the congregation at Mentor, Geauga County. Soon afterwards he presided over a church at Kirtland as well.

Alexander Campbell, who became the leading spokesman of the Campbellite movement, taught that the Bible was the only authorized book and that doctrines warranted by it were the only acceptable ones. Furthermore, he repudiated all sects in religion as being unscriptural.⁶⁹ The influence of Walter Scott also was greatly felt in formulating some views of their theology and practice. He is credited with the classification of (1) Faith, (2) Repentance, (3) Baptism, (4) Remission of sins, (5) The Holy Spirit, and (6) Eternal Life, through a patient continuance in well doing as fundamental first principles of their faith.⁷⁰ Alexander Campbell's plan was not only

⁶⁷A. S. Hayden, Early History of the Disciples in the Western Reserve, Ohio (Cincinnati: Chase and Hall, 1876), p. 192.

⁶⁸Daryl Chase, "Sidney Rigdon--Early Mormon" (unpublished Master's thesis, University of Chicago, 1931), p. 32.

⁶⁹Hayden, op. cit., p. 49.

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 71.

to resist Calvinistic views, but also to return Christianity to the primitive church and to unite all discordant Christian bodies into one. In the prospectus of the Millennial Harbinger which replaced the Christian Baptist in 1830, he stated that this periodical was to be engaged in the "proclamation of the Ancient Gospel, and a restoration of the Ancient Order of Things."⁷¹ By 1830, a final break from the Baptists was made and Rigdon was announced by the press in the Western Reserve as a preacher of the Campbellites.⁷² Thus, the several seeds of conflict and agitation were being sown in Ohio before the Mormon society moved westward to that scene of activity.

A Consideration of Some Physical Factors in Ohio During the
First Half of the 19th Century

The growth of the State of Ohio from 1800, three years before statehood, to the year of Mormon arrival there in 1830, presented striking evidence of a nation on the move. The population rose from 45,365 in 1800, to 937,903 in 1830. In noting the increase in population, two Cincinnati writers referring to this early period exclaimed that "this increase in a single state . . . is perhaps without a parallel in the history of this or any other country."⁷³ During these three decades, Ohio advanced from the eighteenth state in population to fourth place among the states in the Union. With this increase, the state was in the process of changing from a frontier society. Innovations in school law, canal transportation, cultural developments, and city government were being made.

⁷¹Millennial Harbinger (Bethany, Virginia), January 4, 1830, p. 1.

⁷²Ashtabula Journal (Ashtabula, Ohio), October 16, 1830, n. p.

⁷³Weisenburger, op. cit., p. 3.

The overwhelming majority of the settlers in Ohio were from New England and the middle states. Yet a large number of foreign-born immigrants found their way to Ohio, including English Quakers from the eastern seaboard, Pennsylvania Germans and Scotch-Irish. By the year 1830, most of the Indians had been removed from the state to the territory west of Missouri, and only several hundred still remained in Ohio in their reservations. According to the census of 1830, there were only six Negro slaves in Ohio, but by the same year there were approximately 10,000 free Negroes that found their way to that state.⁷⁴ However, there were only 167 colored people in the entire Western Reserve in 1820, and 591 as late as 1840. Cincinnati, a center for Negro immigration in the state, was the scene of conflict in January, 1830, where mob-rule broke out for three days and nights and resulted in many casualties.⁷⁵

The principal city of the state during the 1830's was Cincinnati, located on the Ohio River in the southern part of the state. It was proudly advertised as the Queen City of the West. C. D. Arfwedson, in 1833, described Cincinnati as follows:

Cincinnati is in every respect an extraordinary city; the only one, perhaps, on record, which has, in the course of twenty-five years, sprung up from nothing to be a place of great consequence, with a population exceeding thirty thousand souls. Banks, University, Museum, Theatre, Athenaeum, Bazaar, and Hospitals, are now seen, where a quarter of a century ago, nothing but the primitive forest was standing untouched.⁷⁶

Zanesville, which gained importance in the state because of its manufacturing, had a population of over three thousand, to make it the second town in

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 40.

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 42.

⁷⁶Ibid., p. 39.

size; Steubenville followed closely behind making it the third largest. Other communities of importance were Chillicothe and Dayton, with approximately 3,000 in 1830; Columbus, the state capitol, with 2,435; and Marietta, the original pioneer settlement, with 1,200.

The passing of the frontier was evident in some centers in Ohio with attempts of establishing the earmarks of a sophisticated society. There were an increasing number of homes of some size and prominence with distinguished architecture in some communities throughout the state.⁷⁷ Some of the towns enjoyed fine business centers with hotels, stores, government buildings, and theaters, many of which would be built of brick and stone with some two and three stories high. Yet, "poor cabins and log huts, with roofs and clapboards which often admitted the rain, were the usual abodes" of many residents in the communities and in the rural areas throughout the state.⁷⁸

The northeast section of the state of Ohio is known as the Western Reserve or the Connecticut Reserve, so called because it was part of the western section of land belonging to Connecticut before the Revolution. Connecticut later surrendered it to the federal government and it was included in the composition of the state of Ohio. In 1832, the eight counties that comprised the Western Reserve were Ashtabula, Geauga, Cuyahoga, Lorain, and Huron counties bordering Lake Erie; Trumbull, Portage, and Medina counties were situated immediately south of the first three respectively. The Western Reserve was a large "center of Puritan stock and tradition." During the period of Mormon residency there it was settled "almost wholly by persons

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 20.

⁷⁸Ibid., p. 24.

of New England" origin.⁷⁹ In many ways, the New England society was duplicated there, and in some ways resembled a Connecticut countryside. Industrial life in the Reserve was relatively unimportant and the region was known for agriculture and dairy products.

Due to its being selected as the northern terminal of the Ohio-Erie Canal system, the principal city of the Western Reserve was Cleveland in Cuyahoga County. Consequently, it was destined to be one of the major centers in the state. Its population in 1830 was scarcely one thousand inhabitants, but by 1840 it showed the notable growth of over 7,000. Painesville, one of the most promising towns in Geauga County, was located just three miles south of Fairport harbor, the chief port of the area--prior to the canal construction--and thirty miles northeast of Cleveland. In 1845, Henry Howe spoke of it as one of the "most beautiful villages in the West."⁸⁰ While the Mormons were in Ohio in the 1830's, however, it became the seat of anti-Mormon sentiment in the Western Reserve. Kirtland was located just nine miles southwest from Painesville on the east branch of the Chagrin River in Geauga County. Kirtland, or Kirtland Mills (the official post-office designation) was settled by people predominately from New England, and had a population of 1,018 in 1830.⁸¹ Kirtland, receiving its name from an early land owner in the area, Turhand Kirtland, was a center for the local farmers and for people with agricultural related occupations. In 1830, there

⁷⁹Ibid., p. 47.

⁸⁰Henry Howe, Historical Collections of Ohio (Cincinnati: E. Morgan and Co., 1861), p. 279.

⁸¹Warren Jenkins, Ohio Gazetteer and Travelers' Guide (Columbus: 1837), p. 248, cited in Willis Thorton, "Gentile and Saint at Kirtland," Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Quarterly, LXIII, No. 1 (January, 1954), p. 8.

was a grist-mill in operation down the Chagrin River on the Willoughby road, a saw-mill, and in 1832 another flouring-mill was erected.⁸² Peter French, in 1826 or 1827, erected the first hotel in Kirtland, which has the distinction of being the first brick house in that township. The first store had been established in 1823 by Newell K. Whitney, who was also the community postmaster.⁸³

Years before the arrival of the first Mormons in the state, the National or Cumberland Road was built across the Ohio wilderness from Wheeling, Virginia (now West Virginia) connecting Zanesville and Columbus, extending to the west of the state, passing north of Dayton. There were other major roads such as Zane's Trace starting from the National Road in the east then dropping southward to Chillicothe and to the Ohio River. A stagecoach line was inaugurated as early as 1816, to connect Cleveland with Buffalo or Pittsburgh on the east, and Columbus on the south. The Buffalo line served the towns along the northern part of the Reserve. One newly completed turnpike was advertised as a "splendid line, equal to any in the States."⁸⁴ Reverend Read, who traveled on that road from the western part of the Reserve to Columbus shortly after its completion in 1834, said:

All that had been estimated about bad roads now came upon me. They were not only bad, they were intolerable; they were rather like a stony ditch than a road. The horses on the first stages could only walk most of the way; we were frequently in up to the axle-tree, and I had no sooner recovered from a terrible plunge on one side than there came another in the opposite direction. I was literally thrown about like a ball. Let me dismiss the subject of bad roads for this journey by stating, in illustration, that with an empty coach and four horses, we were seven hours in going twenty-three miles.⁸⁵

⁸²History of Geauga and Lake Counties (Philadelphia: Williams Brothers, 1878), p. 247.

⁸³Idem.

⁸⁴Hatcher, op. cit., p. 153.

⁸⁵Idem.

There were, of course, hundreds of miles of township and county roads which were little more than bogs, with the animals during the wet season sinking their legs to the knees in the mire called a road. Travel on the lake was also a very hazardous trip on which few during the early decades of the century dared to risk their family or property. Lake Erie proved to be very temperamental and the casualties were high among those who did use it.⁸⁶

The successful enterprise of the Erie Canal in New York from Albany to Buffalo, prompted canal companies elsewhere in the country. Ohio responded with a canal system of her own. Work began in 1825 on the Ohio-Erie Canal to span the length of the state while linking Lake Erie at Cleveland in the north with the Ohio River at Portsmouth in the south, with feeders to important centers such as Columbus. In 1827, the northern part from Cleveland to Akron was completed.⁸⁷ Another canal on the west of the state from Cincinnati to Dayton and northward eventually to Toledo was begun and well under way by the arrival of the first Mormons in the Reserve. Due to their aggressive proselyting system, the Mormons made extensive use of the travel arteries throughout Ohio. These important arteries are illustrated in Figure 1, p. 31.

The Ohio-Erie Canal system not only meant improved transportation in the state, but it made the eastern centers available markets for agricultural products, woolen cloth, and other goods produced in Ohio. With farm goods so cheap--pork was selling at two cents a pound, beef at three, eggs at four cents a dozen, chickens a nickel each,⁸⁸ and corn at twelve and a half cents a bushel⁸⁹--there was great promise in the eastern markets. Goods were brought by wagon to a canal town, shipped up to Cleveland, eastward on

⁸⁶Ibid., p. 173. ⁸⁷Weisenburger, op. cit., p. 97.

⁸⁸Hatcher, op. cit., p. 100. ⁸⁹Rice, op. cit., p. 248.



Fig. 1. Map of Ohio showing the major roads, the Ohio Canal System, and the counties as they appeared in 1833.

Lake Erie to Buffalo, down the Erie Canal across New York, and southward on the Hudson River to New York City and the markets on the Atlantic Seaboard. This was a means of prosperity and generally better times in Ohio than they had ever known before.

In summary, the first half of the nineteenth century was a period of marked social and religious change. There was a considerable movement to the West from the eastern seaboard. This caused a breakdown of some standards previously maintained by the New Englanders. It also induced the bizarre in religious and social conduct, experiments in communities and utopian societies, and a renewed interest in religion. However, lawlessness to a large extent prevailed in America, particularly in the frontier areas of the West. It was in this type of a condition that Mormonism was first introduced and grew in Ohio during the 1830's.

CHAPTER III

MORMON ORIGINS IN OHIO--THE SEEDS OF CONFLICT ARE CULTIVATED

The Lamanite Missionaries

Following the organization of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the spring of 1830, in Fayette, New York, plans were made to send missionaries from New York to preach to the Indians in the territory west of the Missouri River. Oliver Cowdery and Peter Whitmer were called in September,¹ and in October Parley P. Pratt and Ziba Peterson were added to the group.² These four elders took leave of their families in New York, and departed on foot for the West, arriving in the Western Reserve sometime late in October.³ Upon their arrival in Ohio,

¹Joseph Smith, Jr., The Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1948), 28:8; 30:5; henceforth cited as Doctrine and Covenants.

²Doctrine and Covenants, 32:1-3.

³Pratt stated that they left "late in October." Parley P. Pratt, Autobiography of Parley Parker Pratt (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938), p. 47. Mary Rollins stated that she and her mother were baptized in the month of October, 1830, by these missionaries. Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner, "Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner Journal," p. 1. A type-written copy is in the Church Historian's Office, Salt Lake City. Lyman Wight stated that the Lamanite missionaries left the Kirtland area for their assigned destination in the West on the day he was ordained an elder, November 20, 1830, after spending "seven weeks" [which was probably an overstatement] in the Reserve. Lyman Wight, "Personal Sketch of Lyman Wight," enclosed with a letter written to Wilford Woodruff, dated at Mountain Valley, Texas, August 24, 1857. Original documents on file at the Church Historian's Office. The Painesville Telegraph stated that they arrived "about the last of October, 1830." Painesville Telegraph, II, No. 35 (February 15, 1831), n. p.

they preached as they moved through Ashtabula and other counties in the Reserve. John Corrill, a resident of Ashtabula County, made the following observation of their journey:

They professed to be special messengers of the Living God, sent to preach the Gospel in its purity, as it was anciently preached by the Apostles. They had with them a new revelation, which they said had been translated from certain gold plates that had been deposited in a hill⁴

The message of these men "soon became the topic of conversation in that section of country," he said further, "and excited the curiosity of the people." As the missionaries traveled westward through the Reserve, preaching as they went, word began to circulate concerning their teachings. Some defended their views while others spoke against them. John Murdock stated that his first impression was that "it was [of] the devil."⁵ However, after hearing a great deal about them, he decided, "I went to see for myself a distance of about twenty miles. I heard the sayings of many people by the way, some for the new preachers, and some against." When the missionaries arrived in Geauga County, they separated and Pratt and Cowdery immediately went to Pratt's old teacher, Sidney Rigdon, in Mentor.⁶ They remained with Rigdon for a week, during which

⁴John Corrill, Brief History of the Church of Christ of Latter Day Saints (St. Louis: 1839), p. 7.

⁵John Murdock, "John Murdock Journal," p. 9. Typewritten copy is located in the Church Historian's Office.

⁶In 1829, Sidney Rigdon, while preaching in Lorain County, converted Parley P. Pratt to his reformed views of faith, repentance, baptism, and remission of sins, with the promise of the gift of the Holy Ghost. Pratt, himself, began to preach and left his home in the wilderness thirty miles west of Cleveland in August, 1830, and traveled to New York to preach the Campbellite doctrine. However, he felt that the reformation movement lacked one thing. "But still one great link was wanting," he wrote, "to complete the chain of the ancient order of things; and that was, the

time he was persuaded to announce an appointment for the two men to preach in Rigdon's chapel in Mentor. Evidently, a "sign appeared [to Rigdon], and he was convinced that Mormonism was of God."⁷ In Kirtland the work was also productive due to a communitarian experiment sponsored by Rigdon and administered by Isaac Morley known as "the family."⁸ Rigdon tried to establish the "common stock" concept into the Campbellite movement in Austintown just two and a half months earlier, but he was prevented by the Campbells and turned away "mortified, chagrined and alienated."⁹ His common stock plan received a coldness at Mentor also, but Isaac Morley, Lyman Wight, and others of Rigdon's followers established a covenant in Kirtland in keeping with the principle of common property alluded to in the book of Acts, chapter two. In February, 1830, Lyman Wight moved to Kirtland to live with Isaac Morley in his home, after which others soon joined them. When the Lamanite missionaries arrived in Ohio, the Morley "family" numbering about one hundred, was settled on the Isaac Morley farm in Kirtland.¹⁰

authority to minister in holy things--the apostleship, the power which should accompany the form." While in western New York he read a copy of the Book of Mormon and found "men on earth commissioned to preach, baptize, [and] ordain to the ministry." Accordingly, he was baptized by Oliver Cowdery on September 1st, approximately two months before his visit with Sidney Rigdon in Mentor. Pratt, op. cit., pp. 31-42.

⁷Hayden, op. cit., p. 212. See also History of the Church, Vol. I, p. 125. Rigdon's biographer said he was baptized November 14th. Chase, op. cit., p. 59.

⁸Ibid., p. 211.

⁹Ibid., p. 209.

¹⁰History of Geauga and Lake Counties, (Philadelphia: Williams Brothers, 1878), p. 46.

The Mormon missionaries found this group to be a receptive bed for their religion and baptized seventeen in a single service.¹¹ Lyman Wight wrote of the arrival of the missionaries and their preaching to this group as follows:

About this time [the last of October or the first of November, 1830], five families concluded to join us [in common stock] in the town of Mayfield, about seven miles up the [Chagrin] river. They each owning a good farm and mills, it was concluded best to establish a branch there. Accordingly, I was appointed to go and take charge of this branch. When I had my goods about half loaded four men came along namely P. P. Pratt, O. Cowdry [sic], P. Whitmer, and Ziba Peterson; and brought with them the book of Mormon which they wished to introduce to us. I desired them to hold on till I got away as my business was of vital importance and I did not wish to trouble with romances nor idle speculators, but nothing daunted they were not to be put off, but war [sic] as good natured as you please curiosity got uppermost and I concluded to stop for a short time, we called a meeting and one testified that he had seen Angels, and an other that he had seen the plates, and that they had seen miracles rought and that the gifts was again in the church, the meeting became so interesting that I did not get away till the sun was about an hour high at night and it was dark before I arrived at my new home¹²

Prior to the arrival of the four Lamanite missionaries, the press in Ohio gave nominal notice to the Mormon movement. "A viler imposition was never practiced," said the Cincinnati Advertiser and Ohio Phoenix in June, 1830. "It is an evidence of fraud, blasphemy, and credulity, shocking to the Christian and moralist," it concluded.¹³ The first notice that the Telegraph at Painesville gave the Mormons was in response to the efforts of the new missionaries themselves, and appeared on November 16, 1830, prior to their departure. In the November 30th issue the

¹¹History of the Church, I, 124.

¹²Wight, op. cit., pp. 3-4.

¹³Cincinnati Advertiser and Ohio Phoenix, VIII, No. 44 (June 2, 1830), n. p.

Telegraph announced,

It being the business of an Editor to collect and lay before his readers, whatever seems to agitate the public mind, we took occasion two weeks ago to notice a pretended new revelation from God, which had recently visited this vicinity.¹⁴

Other news media in the Reserve joined in to expose the work of the four missionaries. The Ashtabula Journal stated the "Book of Mormon . . . better known as the Golden Bible . . . to be . . . one of the veriest impositions of the day."¹⁵ And the Ohio Star at Ravenna, following a review of the labors of the four missionaries, wrote of the same book and described it with little originality as, "the veriest imposition of the present day."¹⁶

John Corrill became considerably embittered upon hearing about the conversion of Sidney Rigdon and "scarcely a day passed," he wrote, "but I heard of some evil report against the new sect. These reports I need not relate. Suffice it to say, that every thing bad was reported against them, as I thought, that could be invented by man."¹⁷ Corrill, however, upon attending one of their meetings was satisfied that the evil reports were not true. The excitement engendered against the four elders was considerable; according to Levi Hancock's pungent description, "the Devil began to rage." Further he said, "there was a man by the name of Phelps that appeared to be mad and he exerted himself every way he could

¹⁴Painesville Telegraph, II, No. 24 (November 30, 1830), n. p.

¹⁵Ashtabula Journal, III, No. 2 (December 4, 1830), n. p.

¹⁶Ohio Star, I, No. 49 (December 9, 1830), n. p.

¹⁷Corrill, op. cit., p. 9.

to discourage us from believing."¹⁸ "[And soon] lies," continued Hancock, "began to circulate through the land concerning the church."¹⁹

Although some were bitterly opposed to the principles taught by the missionaries, they had frequent opportunity to preach in Medina, Kirtland, Painesville, Mayfield, and other places. During this time, they caused considerable curiosity and excitement about which Parley P. Pratt stated,

The interest and excitement now became general in Kirtland, and in all the region round about. The people thronged us night and day, insomuch that we had no time for rest and retirement. Meetings were convened in different neighborhoods, and multitudes came together soliciting our attendance; while thousands flocked about us daily; some to be taught, some for curiosity, some to obey the gospel, and some to dispute or resist it.

In two or three weeks from our arrival in the neighborhood with the news, we had baptized one hundred and twenty-seven souls, and this number soon increased to one thousand. The disciples were filled with joy and gladness; while rage and lying was abundantly manifested by gainsayers; faith was strong, joy was great, and persecution heavy.²⁰

The roads leading to Kirtland were occupied with curious and interested visitors, one of which was John Murdock. However, he met with an agitator who "bitterly opposed" his going there and tried to direct him to another road. "But," said Murdock, "I told him I was of age, and the case was an important one, of life, and death, existing between me and my God" ²¹ After being told about the missionaries by his brother Alvah, Levi Hancock journalized, "It is the truth, I feel it. I will go

¹⁸Levi Hancock, "Levi Hancock Journal," p. 37. A typewritten copy is located in the Brigham Young University Library.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 39.

²⁰Pratt, op. cit., p. 48.

²¹Murdock, op. cit., p. 9.

and hear for myself tomorrow."²² Upon arriving at Mayfield he found a crowd at the meeting place; it was so crowded that he had to remove some loosened boards from an ante-room in order to adequately hear the speakers.

Some hearers arrived with the intention of contending with the elders; one such was John Corrill, who was later converted. He said,

I felt indignant, and sought an argument with Oliver Cowdery, who refused. Tiba Peterson [sic] then took the ground, and we contended a short time. After supper I was invited to see Elder Rigden [sic]. I requested to converse with him on the subject of his new religion. He observed that he was now beyond the land of contention, and had got into the land of peace.²³

Some found the speakers irresistible and lingered to hear their message. Lyman Wight found Cowdery to be so "good natured" that he was prompted to listen, and Levi Hancock detected a gentle and sincere quality about Pratt's demeanor, about whom he wrote, ". . . as the speaker arose and began to talk I sat with both ears open for the first word he spoke. I believed all he said as much as though I knew he was Jesus Christ."²⁴ Irresistible as some found the speakers, all did not give vent to their appeals. Judge John Barr, a one-time sheriff of Cuyahoga County, and a notable authority on the history of the Western Reserve gave the following account of a meeting held by the missionaries shortly after the conversion of Sidney Rigdon:

In 1830 I was deputy sheriff, and, being at Willoughby. . . on official business, determined to go to Mayfield, which is seven or eight miles up the Chagrin River, and hear Cowdery

²²Hancock, op. cit., p. 36.

²³Corrill, op. cit., p. 8.

²⁴Hancock, op. cit., p. 37.

and Rigdon on the revelations of Mormonism. Vernem J. Card, the lawyer, and myself started early Sunday morning on horseback. We found the roads crowded with people going in the same direction. Services in the church were opened by Cowdery with prayer and singing, in which he thanked God fervently for the new revelation. He related the manner of finding the golden plates of Nephi. He was followed by Rigdon, a famous Baptist preacher, well known throughout the eastern part of the Western Reserve and also in Western Pennsylvania. His voice and manner were always imposing. He was regarded as an eloquent man at all times, and now he seemed fully aroused. He said he had not been satisfied in his religious yearnings until now. At night he had often been unable to sleep, walking and praying for more light and comfort in his religion. While in the midst of this agony he heard of the revelation of Joe Smith, which Brother Cowdery had explained; under this his soul suddenly found peace. It filled all his aspirations. At the close of a long harangue in this earnest manner, during which every one present was silent, though very much affected, he inquired whether any one desired to come forward and be immersed. Only one man arose. This was an aged "dead-beat" by the name of Cahoon, who occasionally joined the Shakers and lived on the country generally. The place selected for immersion was a clear pool on the river above the bridge, around which was a beautiful rise of ground on the west side for the audience. On the east bank was a sharp bluff and some stumps, where Mr. Card and myself stationed ourselves. The time of baptism was fixed at 2 P. M. Long before this hour the spot was surrounded by as many people as could have a clear view. Rigdon went into the pool--which at the deepest was about four feet--and after a suitable address, with prayer, Cahoon came forward and was immersed. Standing in the water, Rigdon gave one of his most powerful exhortations. The assembly became greatly affected. As he proceeded he called for the converts to step forward. They came through the crowd in rapid succession to the number of thirty, and were immersed, with no intermission of the discourse on the part of Rigdon. Mr. Card was apparently the most stoical of men--of a clear, unexcitable temperament, with unorthodox and vague religious ideas. He afterward became prosecuting attorney for Cuyahoga county. While the exciting scene was transpiring below us in the valley and in the pool, the faces of the crowd expressing the most intense emotion, Mr. Card suddenly seized my arm and said, "Take me away." Taking his arm, I saw that his face was so pale that he seemed to be about to faint. His frame trembled as we walked away and mounted our horses. We rode a mile toward Willoughby before a word was said. Rising the hill out of the valley, he seemed to recover, and said, "Mr. Barr, if you had not been there I certainly should have

gone into the water. He said, "The impulse was irresistible."²⁵

By no means did everyone find the impulse irresistible. "I found that [Mr.] Goodwell [a Campbellite contender] bore down with warmth [in argument]," journalized Murdock, "whereas Cowdery wished not for contention, and endeavoured to evade controversy."²⁶

Apparently no objection was raised against the methods and deportment of the missionaries while they were in Geauga County, but shortly following their departure, objections were raised against their teachings as well as against their character and motives. According to Lyman Wight, the four missionaries accompanied by one of their converts, Frederick G. Williams, left Kirtland November 20th, the same day Oliver Cowdery responded to a "vocal voice" to ordain Wight an elder. After the Lamanite missionaries continued their journey, news articles which incriminated Cowdery and Pratt as unworthy of the public trust began to appear. The Cleveland Herald accused Cowdery of initiating a money-making scheme in the promotion of the Book of Mormon. "For," said the Herald as reprinted in the Ashtabula Journal,

We had known Cowdry [sic] some seven or 8 years ago, when he was a dabbler in the art of Printing, and principally occupied in writing and printing pamphlets, with which as a pedestrian pedlar [sic], he visited the towns and villages of eastern N. York, and Canada²⁷

²⁵Frederic G. Mather, "The Early Days of Mormonism," Lippincott's Magazine of Popular Literature and Science (Philadelphia: Lippincott and Company, 1880), XXVI, pp. 206-207.

²⁶Murdock, op. cit., p. 9.

²⁷Ashtabula Journal, III, No. 2 (December 4, 1830), n. p.

The Herald further accused Cowdery of being a coadjutor with Joseph Smith with the intention "of making money by . . . sale of their books."²⁸ It further asserted that the purpose of Cowdery and his associates' trip to Ohio was to excite the minds of the curious, superstitious and ignorant in order to sell books. This presents "new proof that all fools are not dead," stated the Herald, "and knavery in any garb, may yet find votaries."²⁹ In editorial comment, the Ashtabula Journal concurred with the Herald and wrote of the Book of Mormon as a "newly invented money speculation."³⁰ And the Painesville Telegraph, as early as November 30, 1830, ridiculed the Book of Mormon as "a pretended new revelation from God."³¹

While passing through the western part of the Reserve, the missionaries found a listening ear in that of Simeon Carter; a knock came to his door and an officer entered with a warrant for Pratt's arrest, as he stated, "on a very frivolous charge."³² Upon arriving at the place of trial, Pratt found what he claimed were false witnesses, and a judge who was disposed to "unjust and wicked judgment . . . persecution, black-guardism and abuse . . ."³³ Following a lengthy hearing in which Elder Pratt concluded to make no defense, and to treat the entire matter with

²⁸Idem.

²⁹Idem.

³⁰Idem.

³¹Painesville Telegraph, II, No. 24 (November 30, 1830), n. p.

³²Pratt, op. cit., p. 48.

³³Ibid., p. 49.

contempt, he was placed in prison for non-payment of the fine. The following day, he escaped from the constable's custody and continued westward. A review of the trial was soon presented in the Free Press of Milan, Huron County, by a resident of Amherst who claimed acquaintance with Parley P. Pratt. This account related the incident as follows:

Parl^ey P. Pratt has been a resident of the township of Russia, Lorain co. Ohio, for the three or four years last past, until August last, when he was authorized to preach by the sect called Rigdonites, in this vicinity. The next day after receiving this eldership, he ran away from a constable, and numerous creditors, and made his way to Canaan, Columbia county, N.Y. Not being able to gain any proselytes (one young brother of his excepted), he lays his course up the Erie canal as far as Palmyra, where he finds this new Bible, and the men that are with him. It was rumored that said Pratt was expected through this place, and an officer was kept ready to arrest him for debt. He was accordingly arrested, tried, and judgment rendered against him; and at the same time an execution served on him for cost, on suits tried before he fled to the east. Said Pratt in July last, sold property belonging to one of his neighbors to the amount of several dollars. This neighbor hearing he was in this place, came to see him while he was under the officer's care, and requested a settlement. He, Pratt, refused to do any thing about it, "unless his Heavenly Father directed him,"--(these were his words.) After waiting a suitable time, he was told if he did not settle the business, he would be taken with a State warrant. He still refused and a warrant was issued; but before it could be given to the officer, he had, by falsifying his word, escaped from the Constable and fled to the woods, and is now at large, to deceive and lead silly women & more silly men astray.³⁴

By the request of the Milan paper, this story was soon reprinted for more complete coverage in Geauga County in the Telegraph.³⁵ The precise detail of truth here is hard to arrive at, but such incidents given coverage by the press contributed to a coolness towards the Mormons by the populace. Shortly after he bid departure to the four missionaries, Hancock

³⁴Free Press (Milan, Ohio), cited in Painesville Telegraph, II, No. (December 14, 1830), n. p.

³⁵Idem.

stated, "Not long after I came to Rome [Ashtabula County], lies began to circulate through the land concerning the church, this caused the people to be more cold."³⁶

The Church in New York Moves to Ohio

According to Lyman Wight, there were only four elders ordained by the missionaries--Sidney Rigdon, John Murdock, Fredrick G. Williams, and Lyman Wight, himself. Accordingly, Elder Rigdon left for New York to see the Prophet Joseph the day the missionaries departed, Elder Murdock departed for his home in Orange, Elder Hancock left for his place in Ashtabula County, and Elder Williams journeyed with the four missionaries to the West. "Thus you will see," lamented Wight, "I was left alone with the whole church on my hands and the first Elders I saw after this war [sic] from the state of N. Y."³⁷ These three elders also began to preach in their respective areas and baptized others into the Church.

By the end of the year there were at least three branches of the Church organized in Ohio, one at Mentor presided over by Sidney Rigdon, one at Warrensville in Cuyahoga County presided over by John Murdock, and John Whitmer presided over the Saints in Kirtland after he arrived from New York late in December. Possibly a fourth branch was established at Mayfield, Cuyahoga County by the end of the year as well.³⁸ There were

³⁶Hancock, op. cit., p. 39.

³⁷Wight, op. cit., p. 5.

³⁸"Journal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," Church Historian's Office, December 31, 1830. Cited hereafter as "Journal History."

approximately three hundred Church members in Ohio by the end of 1830.³⁹

The believing, but yet unbaptized Edward Partridge accompanied Rigdon to New York to see the Prophet Joseph and arrived in Fayette December 10, 1830, and Partridge was baptized the following day.⁴⁰ John Whitmer was dispatched to Kirtland by revelation⁴¹ to handle matters there. To facilitate his acceptance by the saints in Ohio, Sidney Rigdon sent a letter of introduction with John Whitmer which he addressed to the Saints in Ohio. "I send you this letter by John Whitmer," wrote Sidney.

³⁹There is some difference as to the population figures of the Church in Ohio at the end of 1830. The "Journal History" states: "At the close of the year 1830 there were about one hundred members of the Church in the State of New York, scattered from Colesville Broom County, to Canandaigua, Ontario county, a distance of about one hundred miles and also about one hundred and fifty members in the State of Ohio, mostly in and about Kirtland and Mentor" "Journal History," December 31, 1830.

John Whitmer, who arrived in Ohio shortly before the year's end, stated: "The disciples had increased in number about three hundred. . . ." John Whitmer, "The Book of John Whitmer," Chapter I. A microfilmed typed copy is located in the Church Historian's Office.

The Ohio Star seems to support Whitmer's figure, although it appeared later in 1831; the New York Saints had not yet effected the population greatly by the date of the Star's article, and it allowed for some growth since the close of 1830. The Star stated: "The new church at Kirtland, Ohio, under the auspices of the 'Book of Mormon,' is said to contain 400 members." Ohio Star, II, No. 8 (February 24, 1831), n. p.

By the end of 1831, it is estimated by documents on file at the Church Historian's Office that the Church had a membership of about 2,000, of which 1,500 were in the State of Ohio. Although not a single branch record from the early days of the Church has been preserved in the Historian's Office, by careful examination of other documents the following branches existed in Ohio by the close of 1831, the first full year of the Mormons there. These branches were: Kirtland, Mentor, Warrensville, Amherst, Chippewa, Elyria, Hiram, Chardon, Mayfield, Nelson, New Portage, Northampton, Orange, Shalersville, and Thompson. "Journal History," December 31, 1831.

⁴⁰Lucy Mack Smith, History of Joseph Smith (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1956), p. 192.

⁴¹Whitmer, op. cit., Chapter 1.

"Receive him, for he is a brother greatly beloved, and an Apostle of this church."⁴² The Telegraph, in commenting on Whitmer's arrival, stated that the more important part of Whitmer's mission was "to inform the brethren that the boundaries of the promised land, or the New Jerusalem, . . . the township of Kirtland, a few miles west of this, is the eastern line and the Pacific Ocean the western line"⁴³ It further stated that John had come with instructions to buy land and to prepare for the arrival of the Prophet Joseph and his forces. A series of revelations occurred during the latter part of December and early part of January instructing the Saints to move to Ohio.⁴⁴ Accordingly, Joseph, Sidney, and Edward arrived in Kirtland about the first of February at the home of Newel K. Whitney,⁴⁵ a prominent merchant of the city and Kirtland's first post master.⁴⁶

The Prophet Joseph became settled in the Whitney home and began to prepare for the arrival of the other New York Saints. He wrote to Martin

⁴²Eber D. Howe, Mormonism Unveiled (Painesville, 1834), p. 110.

⁴³"Mormonism," Painesville Telegraph, II, No. 31 (January 18, 1831), n. p.

⁴⁴Doctrine and Covenants, 37:1; 38:32; 39:15.

⁴⁵Of this arrival it is stated: "About the first of February, 1831, a sleigh containing four persons drove through the streets of Kirtland and drew up in front of the store of Gilbert and Whitney. One of the men, a young and stalwart personage alighted, and springing up the steps walked into the store and to where the junior partner was standing. 'Newel K. Whitney! Thou art the man.' he exclaimed, extending his hand cordially, as if to an old and familiar acquaintance. 'You have the advantage of me,' replied the merchant, as he mechanically took the proffered hand. 'I could not call you by name as you have me.' 'I am Joseph the Prophet,' said the stranger smiling. 'You've prayed me here, now what do you want of me?'" History of the Church, I, 146.

⁴⁶History of Geauga and Lake Counties, op. cit., p. 247.

Harris in New York, "I send you this to inform you that it is necessary for you to come here as soon as you can" Smith continued, "You will also bring . . . all the books [Books of Mormon] as the work here is breaking forth on the East, West, North and South." With almost a sense of urgency, he further said, "You will also inform the Elders who are there in New York State, that all of them who can be spared should come here without delay . . . [to] this our inheritance."⁴⁷ Similarly he wrote to his brother Hyrum:

We arrived here safe and are all well I have been engaged in regulating the Churches here as the disciples [sic] are numerous and the devil has made many attempts to over throw them. It has been a serious job but the Lord is with us and we have overcome and have all things regular the work is braking [sic] forth on the right hand and on the left and there is a great call for Elders in this place⁴⁸

The Colesville and Fayette, New York, branches prepared to journey to Ohio in a body, and began to arrive in the Reserve by way of Fairport Harbor May 16, 1831. The Telegraph noticed they arrived to the extent of about two hundred.⁴⁹

During the fall and winter of 1830 and 1831, Kirtland was continually crowded; and "people came from all quarters inquiring after the new religion,"⁵⁰ wrote John Corrill. Some were coming from considerable distances to see the Saints and their prophet. Because of the increasing

⁴⁷"Journal History," February 22, 1831.

⁴⁸Joseph Smith, Jr., "Letter to Hyrum Smith," March 3, 1831. Original on file in Church Historian's Office.

⁴⁹Painesville Telegraph, II, No. 48 (May 17, 1831), n. p.

⁵⁰Corrill, op. cit., p. 16.

interest shown by the public in general, the Telegraph was prompted to deviate from its normal news policy of not becoming involved in religious controversies. E. D. Howe, its editor, journalized as follows:

But when any subject becomes a matter of general enquiry and conversation through the whole community, with but few exceptions, that community will call upon the Press to speak-- and a free press will speak. We therefore declare our columns open, and free to the investigation of the divine pretensions of the "Book of Mormon," and its "Author and Proprietor," Joseph Smith⁵¹

The Telegraph deviated so far from its normal policy that in 1833 it advertized for "young converts" to enter into controversy in its columns.⁵²

One visitor, Nancy Towle, a free-lance evangelist, who journeyed to Kirtland to see the Mormons and their prophet in 1831, was induced to come in order to counsel others in the East who were "halting between two opinions." She attended a number of the Mormon services, and interviewed several of its chief figures. She stated, "I saw nothing indecorous,"⁵³ and of "their numbers, I found, ministers, of different persuasions; and some, it appeared, who had once been eminent for piety. I found, also, many men, of both influence and wealth."⁵⁴ Her reaction to Joseph Smith was that of a "good-natured, low-bred, sort of a chap; and that seemed to have force enough, to do no one, any harm."⁵⁵ However,

⁵¹Painesville Telegraph, II, No. 35 (February 15, 1831), n. p.

⁵²Ibid., V. No. 1 (June 21, 1833), n. p.

⁵³Nancy Towle, Vicissitudes Illustrated (Charleston: James L. Burges, 1832), p. 142.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 141.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 145.

she was turned against the Mormon doctrine and left Kirtland determined to direct others to be wary of the Mormonite "deep-concerted-plot of Hell, to deceive the hearts of the simple. . . ."56

Religious Beliefs as a Cause of Conflict

One can neither assess the precise shade of doctrine taught implicitly by the early elders nor the accuracy by which it was recorded in the public press. The Telegraph criticized the Geauga Gazette of shooting "wide of the mark in many important particulars."⁵⁷ However, the press did portray for the public its interpretations of Mormon thought and broadcasted its criticisms for all to read. From these sources one can determine some of the Mormon teachings that most generally irritated the public.

Revelation. Besides the rejection of the Book of Mormon as a new revelation of God, these early anti-Mormon critics made light of other Mormon claims of revelation. John Whitmer brought on his journey to Kirtland "a new batch of revelations from God, as he pretended, which have just been communicated to Joseph Smith," scoffed the Telegraph.⁵⁸ Subsequently, the Telegraph found frequent opportunity to challenge the Mormon claim of direct revelation in modern times. "False prophets,"⁵⁹ "Smith, the pretended prophet,"⁶⁰ the Mormonites are directed by "a command direct from

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 142.

⁵⁷Painesville Telegraph, II, No. 24 (November 30, 1830), n. p.

⁵⁸Ibid., II, No. 31 (January 18, 1831), n. p.

⁵⁹Ibid., II, No. 35 (February 15, 1831), n. p.

⁶⁰Ibid., II, No. 36 (February 22, 1831), n. p.

Heaven,"⁶¹ the Saints were not permitted to question "the infallibility of Jo Smith, or any thing he may say as being a command of God,"⁶² were frequent pronouncements of the Painesville Telegraph. The Dayton Evangelical Inquirer said, "Who would have thought of meeting advocates of a fresh revelation in the nineteenth century."⁶³ A visitor who reported in the Ohio Atlas declared, "They [the Mormonites] all have revelations in proportion to their faith."⁶⁴ Joanna Southcott, who published her prophecies in London in 1804, had followers that claimed the powers of visions and revelations. "If an imposture, like [hers]," the Telegraph reasoned, "could spring up in the great metropolis of England, and spread over a considerable portion of that kingdom, it is not surprising that one equally absurd, should have its origin in this neighborhood."⁶⁵

On occasion the press published the revelations of the Mormon prophet and made light of their contents. The second revelation that Joseph Smith received upon arriving in Ohio was known as the "Law of the Lord" received on the 9th of February, 1831.⁶⁶ The Ravenna Courier in its article titled "Secret Bye Laws of the Mormonites," said of

⁶¹Ibid., II, No. 48 (May 17, 1831), n. p.

⁶²Ibid., III, No. 2 (June 28, 1831), n. p.

⁶³Evangelical Inquirer (Dayton), V, No. 10 (March 7, 1831), p. 217.

⁶⁴Ohio Atlas cited in Painesville Telegraph, New Series II, No. 20 (May 20, 1836), n. p.

⁶⁵Painesville Telegraph, II, No. 39 (February 22, 1831), n. p.

⁶⁶This is printed as the 42nd section of the present edition of the Doctrine and Covenants.

the revelation,

The Prophets or Preachers, declared it to be a Law revealed to them from heaven, by the Almighty . . . and assert, that they were commanded not to communicate it to the world, nor even to their followers, until they become strong in the faith.⁶⁷

Following its quotation of the revelation, the Courier stated, "the servants Joseph, Sidney and Edward, spoken of, are Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon and Edward Partridge."⁶⁸ The Telegraph reprinted this article and E. D. Howe editorialized as follows:

They have also manuscripts among them sufficient to make several volumes of similar trash, which are, however, kept from the view of their weaker [sic] brethren. Jo Smith pretends that they are communicated to him by the Deity. Smith dictates to another, who writes them down, generally but a few sentences at a time. All among them who make bold to even doubt them, are immediately expelled as heretics. Such is human nature.⁶⁹

After this, the Ohio Star printed another revelation on December 8, 1831, and ridiculed the instructions given to certain people identified in that revelation.⁷⁰ Then in January, 1832, it printed the revelation designated

⁶⁷Ravenna Courier, cited in Painesville Telegraph, III, No. 13 (September 13, 1831), n. p.

⁶⁸In the original Church printing of this revelation as found in the Book of Commandments in 1833, only the first names--as in the newspaper article--were used. A Book of Commandments, for the Government of the Church of Christ, (Zion (Independence, Missouri): W. W. Phelps and Co., 1833), chapter 44. When this revelation was printed in the first edition of the Doctrine and Covenants in 1835, the full names for Joseph, Sidney, and Edward were inserted. Doctrine and Covenants, (Kirtland: F. G. Williams and Co., 1835), section 13. In the current edition of the Doctrine and Covenants it is found in section 42.

⁶⁹Painesville Telegraph, op. cit., n. p.

⁷⁰Ohio Star, II, No. 49 (December 8, 1831), n. p. This revelation is located in Doctrine and Covenants, section 28.

as Sidney Rigdon's Commission,⁷¹ which was reprinted in the Telegraph that same month. Just two months later, March, 1832, the Prophet Joseph began to identify certain people designated in his revelations by code names, viz., "Enoch" for Joseph Smith, "Ahashdah" for Newel K. Whitney, "Pelagoram" for Sidney Rigdon, etc. The March revelation--Doctrine and Covenants 78--was one of the earliest recorded following the printing of the "Law of the Lord" and "Sidney Rigdon's Commission" in the public press, and was the first one to contain the coded names. To avoid repetition of the public ridiculing the revelations appears to be the reason the Prophet Joseph began using code names.

In September, 1831, the Prophet Joseph moved his family to Portage County where they took up residence with John Johnson at Hiram. Sidney Rigdon joined him there to assist in revising the Bible. The Telegraph did not let this activity go without notice. It remarked editorially, "We hear frequent enquiries respecting the progress of this strange delusion and imposition." It summarized the purpose of Smith's removing to Portage County for that of "making new revelations from Heaven, and translating and remodeling the New Testament, which they pretend to do by inspiration." "They," continued the editorial, "have also discovered the book of prophecy of Enoch" ⁷² The Mormon concept of continual revelation was the cause of considerable ridicule in the early Ohio scene. Consequently, in 1834, Oliver Cowdery, attempting to relieve the Church of the impact of false doctrinal representation, listed a set of

⁷¹Ohio Star, cited in Painesville Telegraph, III, No. 31 (January 17, 1832), n. p. Doctrine and Covenants, 35.

⁷²Painesville Telegraph, III, No. 39 (March 13, 1832), n. p.

Mormon beliefs for the public, whereby they might at least be represented correctly.⁷³

The Millennium. The peculiar interpretation that some Mormons placed upon the Church's doctrine of the millennium caused some conflict to arise. The millennial concept itself, however, was not a uniquely Mormon contribution to Christian thought. The approach of the millennial era was a frequent topic of a number of religious groups and evidently elicited the title Millennial Harbinger for the Campbellite periodical. Others believed in the millennial concept and William Miller, as early as 1818, set the date of 1843 for the commencement of that era.⁷⁴ As early as 1827 the Mormon prophet anticipated that the great earth-scourging "was soon to be," and that Christ "soon would come."⁷⁵ Upon the arrival of the Lamanite missionaries in Ohio, the first public notice stated that Cowdery "proclaims destruction upon the world within a few years."⁷⁶ During the visit of the missionaries in the Reserve, the Ohio Star stated that while they were preaching in the Methodist Chapel in Painesville they "predicted the end of the world in 15 years."⁷⁷ According to an article appearing in

⁷³Latter-day Saint Messenger and Advocate (Kirtland), I. No. 1 (October, 1834), p. 1. Hereafter cited as Messenger and Advocate. Because of its importance in partially defining Mormon beliefs during the Ohio period, this article is placed in Appendix A.

⁷⁴Charles Francis Potter, The Story of Religion (Garden City, New York: Garden City Publishing Company, 1929), p. 541.

⁷⁵History of the Church, I, 13.

⁷⁶Painesville Telegraph, II, No. 22 (November 16, 1830), n. p.

⁷⁷Ohio Star, I, No. 49 (December 9, 1830), n. p.

the Painesville Telegraph, when Martin Harris arrived in Kirtland March 12, 1831, he immediately proceeded to the bar-room of the hotel and enthusiastically prophesied to the patrons that "all who believed the new bible would see Christ within fifteen years, and all who did not would absolutely be destroyed and dam'd."⁷⁸ Another non-Mormon wrote that Harris had predicted that,

Within four years from September, 1832, there will not be one wicked person in the United States; the righteous will be gathered to Zion, (Missouri); there will be no President of the United States after that time; every sectarian and religious denomination in the United States shall be broken down; every Christian shall be gathered unto the Mormonites; and the rest of the human race shall perish.⁷⁹

By what authority Harris made these alleged prophecies is not given, but the leaders of the Church did not date the advent of the millennium. John Whitmer stated, however, in his history, "There was a tradition among some of the disciples, that those who obeyed the covenant in the last days, would never die; but by experience they had learned to the contrary."⁸⁰ During these early months of Mormonism the revelations of Joseph Smith were replete with statements such as "I [Christ] say unto you, that I come quickly;"⁸¹ "the time is soon at hand that I shall come in a cloud with power and great glory;"⁸² "my [Christ's] coming . . . is

⁷⁸Painesville Telegraph, II, No. 39 (March 15, 1831), n. p.

⁷⁹James M'Chesney, An Antidote to Mormonism: A Warning Voice to the Church and Nation (New York: Burnett and Pollard, 1838), p. 59.

⁸⁰Whitmer, op. cit., Chapter III.

⁸¹Doctrine and Covenants, 33:18.

⁸²Ibid., 34:7.

nigh at hand;"⁸³ "but the day soon cometh that ye shall see me;"⁸⁴ and other such statements. In June, 1831, Levi Hancock reported,

Joseph Smith began to speak, he said, "that the kingdom that Christ spoke of . . . would some day come
Some of you shall live to see it come with great glory."⁸⁵

To what extent these early members taught and believed in the imminence of the end of the world may not clearly be established; however, there was at least one case where an afflicted Saint refused to call a physician because of his belief that he would never die.⁸⁶ Thus, the critics of Mormonism ostensibly found substantial reasons for haranguing the Latter-day Saints for their belief in the imminence of the second coming of Christ.

Spiritual Gifts. The manifestation of certain spiritual gifts which were so important to many early Mormon converts became the subject of anti-Mormon ridicule. John Murdock, after hearing about the claims of the Lamanite missionaries, admitted that if their claims were true, "their walk will agree with their profession, and the Holy Ghost will attend their ministration of the ordinances"⁸⁷ Upon spending the night in Kirtland with the Morley "family," Murdock conversed the next morning with a number of the new converts who had been confirmed into the new

⁸³Ibid., 35:15.

⁸⁴Ibid., 38:8.

⁸⁵Hancock, op. cit., p. 48.

⁸⁶Painesville Telegraph, II, No. 42 (April 5, 1831), n. p.

⁸⁷Murdock, op. cit., p. 10.

Church the previous evening. About these conversations he said,

Their testimony agreed on the subject that there was a manifestation of the spirit attended the ministration of the ordinance of laying on hands, and . . . [this and other items] all testified that it was of God.⁸⁸

The following Sunday, November 5, 1830, he was baptized and testified, "I know the spirit rested on me as it never did before and others said they saw the Lord and had visions."⁸⁹ Another testified after confirmation to receive the Holy Ghost, "his hands fell upon my head, then I felt the Holy Ghost, as warm water, to go over me."⁹⁰ The Spirit, however, did not always come upon them at the time of confirmation, but in some cases later or sooner.⁹¹ Levi Hancock, upon learning that the missionaries bestowed the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands, shortly before his own baptism, testified as follows:

I gathered faith and there seemed to fall on me something pleasant and delightful, it seemed like a wash of something warm took me in the face and ran over my body which gave me that feeling I cannot describe. The first word I said was, "It is the truth, I feel it."⁹²

The gift of tongues, power to heal, and the ability to receive signs from God in directing them in their course were other qualities of

⁸⁸Murdock, op. cit., p. 12.

⁸⁹Ibid., p. 13.

⁹⁰Towle, op. cit., p. 145.

⁹¹Murdock, op. cit., p. 14.

⁹²Hancock, op. cit., p. 36. A revelation to Joseph Smith in December, 1830, included the following: "For I am God, and mine arm is not shortened; I will show miracles, signs, and wonders, unto all those who believe on my name." Doctrine and Covenants, 35:8.

the Holy Spirit believed by the Mormons in Ohio. The Saints' belief in these claims incited further anti-Mormon attacks. Edward Partridge, writing of these powers to his old friends in Painesville, declared,

I assure you that the signs do follow in this, the church of Christ, who receive the book of Mormon as the fulness of the gospel of Christ. In many instances the sick have been healed by the laying on of the elder's hands, and also devils cast out. Many speak with new tongues, or in other languages; some speak in a number of different languages shortly after they receive the gift; others are confined to one or two-- These are not idle assertions; I know that these things are so. Some have the gift of interpretation and some have not, as yet. But say you these gifts are strange things. Well strange as they may appear, they are the gift of the Holy Ghost⁹³

In 1836, Milo Andrus stated, "I saw fire descend in thousands [sic] and rest on the heads of the Elders, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied [sic]."⁹⁴

The Prophet Joseph, himself, participated in these activities. Zebedee Coltrin said that he heard Joseph speak and sing in tongues.⁹⁵ At the Prophet Joseph's first meeting with Brigham Young in the fall of 1832, Brigham Young spoke in what was later identified by the prophet as the "pure Adamic language".⁹⁶ Jared Carter testified of miraculous healings in Thompson under the instrumentality of the Prophet Joseph. Of this he wrote,

⁹³Edward Partridge, Messenger and Advocate, I. No. 40 (January, 1835), p. 60.

⁹⁴Milo Andrus, "Milo Andrus Journal," p. 5. Copy is located in the Special Collections Library at Brigham Young University.

⁹⁵Zebedee Coltrin, "Zebedee Coltrin Journal," p. 50. Located in the Church Historian's Office.

⁹⁶History of the Church, I, 297.

My youngest child was distressingly sick at the time Joseph came to visit my house, and I told him that I had faith that the babe might be healed; he then spoke in the name of the Lord and said, that it should be to me according to my faith; the child was healed immediately. On the same day one of our sisters was healed from blindness by his instrumentality.⁹⁷

Carter further related that early in June, 1831, in Kirtland a woman fell from a wagon and was not expected to live. However, his brother, Simeon, commanded her, if she had the faith, to arise; this she did and walked from the room.⁹⁸ Lorenzo Snow who was pursuing a classical education at Oberlin College, himself not a Church member, left there with disgust because of the students' prejudice against the Mormons. Disappointed, he moved to Kirtland before going to study in the East. However, in the meantime he was converted to Mormonism. Concerning spiritual gifts he said,

[I] received a revelation from God of the most extraordinary kind giving the most perfect knowledge of the doctrine I embraced. [I] received also in a remarkable manner, the baptismal of the Holy Ghost both by hearing and feeling repeated at different times. An expansion of mind by the Holy Spirit into a knowledge [of] Eternal things the very existence of which is so strenuously disbelieved by most of the Human family.⁹⁹

These spiritual claims continued throughout the duration of the Mormon residence in Ohio; as late as the winter of 1837-38, Lorenzo Snow observed them as follows:

⁹⁷"Journal History," June 8, 1831.

⁹⁸Jared Carter, "Jared Carter Journal," p. 17. Located in the Church Historian's Office.

⁹⁹Lorenzo Snow, "Lorenzo Snow Journal," p. 33. Located in the Church Historian's Office.

There [in Kirtland] we had the gift of prophecy-- the gift of tongues--the interpretation of tongues--visions and marvelous dreams were related--the singing of heavenly choirs was heard, and wonderful manifestations of the healing power, through the administrations of the Elders, were witnessed.¹⁰⁰

With such seemingly fantastic claims uncommon to the orthodox Christian, there arose immediate objection by disbelievers. One observer who termed himself "Lover of Truth" wrote to the Telegraph shortly after the departure of the Lamanite missionaries, "these newly commissioned disciples have totally failed thus far in their attempts to heal, and as far as can be ascertained, their prophecys have also failed."¹⁰¹

Alexander Campbell wrote of Rigdon's miraculous conversion, "He who sets out to find signs and omens will soon find enough of them. He that expects visits from angels will find them as abundant as he who in age of witchcraft found a witch in every unseemly old woman."¹⁰² A contributor to the Telegraph who signed himself "M.S.C." stated that Cowdery tried to heal a number of people and in each case failed. "But as all their miracles have proved to be a mere sham," he stated, "the Mormonites have endeavored to save the credit of their prophets, [Cowdery and Pratt] by declaring that they never pronounced these people whole but only prayed for them"¹⁰³

One visitor to Kirtland who had just "witnessed the operations of that most deluded set of visionaries," as he said, chided,

¹⁰⁰Eliza R. Snow Smith, Biography and Family Record of Lorenzo Snow (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1884), p. 11.

¹⁰¹Painesville Telegraph, II, No. 25 (December 7, 1830), n. p.

¹⁰²Alexander Campbell, Millennial Harbinger, II, No. 2 (February 7, 1831), pp. 100-101.

¹⁰³Painesville Telegraph, II, No. 35 (February 15, 1831), n. p.

They assure you, with the utmost confidence, that they shall soon be able to raise the dead, to heal the sick, the deaf, the dumb, and the blind, &c. Indeed, more than one assured me, that they had, themselves, by the laying on of their hands, restored the sick to health.¹⁰⁴

In May, 1832, the cholera appeared in the United States from Quebec and claimed many lives. Cowdery believed it to be one of God's judgments upon the wicked world.¹⁰⁵ But the Saints, too, were afflicted by it during their march to Missouri in 1834 to redeem Zion. The Prophet said that it was in consequence of their "fractious and unruly spirits,"¹⁰⁶ but the Chardon Spectator thought otherwise. "Jo Smith, their great prophet, priest and physician, is getting into bad odor," it said, "Jo . . . can't cure the Cholera, as he promised--his disciples dying with it in the most frightful manner," it continued. "Jo Smith proves to be but a scurvy sort of a miracle maker," it concluded.¹⁰⁷ The small pox among the Saints received similar treatment by their critics. The Mormons found reasonable explanations for their difficulty, but the anti-Mormons found no satisfaction in their apologies.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴Ibid., New Series II, No. 20 (May 20, 1836), n. p.

¹⁰⁵Evening and Morning Star (Kirtland), II No. 24 (September 24, 1834), p. 189.

¹⁰⁶History of the Church, I, 80.

¹⁰⁷Chardon Spectator and Geauga Gazette (Chardon), IV, No. 5 (August 23, 1834), n. p.

¹⁰⁸Milo Andrus, who marched to Missouri with Zion's Camp in 1834 stated in June as follows: "About this time [June 22, 1834] the Cholera made its appearance among us, as it had been predicted by the Prophet." Milo Andrus, op. cit., p. 4. John Murdock stated that the cholera that afflicted the Saints in Missouri was a judgment sent from God and it "began at the house of God," meaning the Saints. "John Murdock Journal," p. 26. Murdock further stated that he healed four people of small pox while on a mission to James Town, New York, in 1833. Ibid., p. 22.

The power to cast out the devil, another of the spiritual powers of the Latter-day Saints, caused considerable interest. William Smith, the prophet's brother, stated that one such miracle " . . . caused much talk and excitement through the country." He related the event as follows:

A brother by the name of Newcomb moved into Kirtland, and brought with him a brother that was said to be crazy; and from all appearance possessed of evil spirits. He had to be kept in chains, to prevent him from doing harm to any one. The Elders of the Church who took this case in hand, found a circle around this man of evil spirits, prayed and laid hands upon him, and commanded in the name of Jesus Christ the evil spirits to come out of him; and in less than fifteen minutes afterwards, said crazy man was restored to his reason and released from his chains. To this then are many witnesses still living.¹⁰⁹

Ebenezer Robinson who worked in the press office in Kirtland indicated that the afflicted person was about thirty years old and a brother to Mrs. Newcomb. They lived one mile south of the Kirtland Temple, where they kept the afflicted brother chained in an out house to prevent doing harm to others and himself. Robinson described him as "a raving maniac of the most violent kind."¹¹⁰ The man was not a member of the Church, but it was arranged that one of the elders would bless him. After the Church members fasted and prayed for three days and nights in his behalf, Joseph Smith Sr., was given assignment to administer a blessing by the laying on of hands. The blessing was immediately effective. The raving madman was healed and he "wilted down and became as a little child," testified Robinson; Joseph Smith Sr., ordered the chains removed. This

¹⁰⁹William Smith, William Smith on Mormonism (Lamoni, Iowa: Herald Steam Book Office, 1883), pp. 25026.

¹¹⁰Ebenezer Robinson, "Items of Personal History of the Editor," The Return, I, No. 8 (August, 1889, p. 115.

occurred during the latter part of 1836, and in March, 1837, the freed man was baptized into the Church.

Hence, spiritual gifts were evidenced among the Saints which to them were normal operations of their religious beliefs, but which caused them considerable ridicule and a sense of being persecuted.

Mormon Religious Zeal. Zeal and unrestrained enthusiasm of some of the Mormon exponents also caused offense and scorn to be pitched at them. Harris, upon arriving in Kirtland, "was very flippant, talking fast and loud, in order that others could not interpose an opinion counter to his," said one reporter. "Every idea that he advanced, he knew to be absolutely true, as he said, by the spirit and power of God."¹¹¹ Another visitor to Kirtland observed that the Mormons were,

. . . quite polite and affable to strangers . . . until you press them with an argument, and then their wrath rises, or they assume an air of awful superiority, and dogmatically pronounce you blind and ignorant, and in the way to destruction¹¹²

In 1831, Nancy Towle found annoyance in the zeal expressed by certain Mormon leaders whom she interviewed. She quoted W. W. Phelps as

¹¹¹Ibid., II, No. 39 (March 15, 1831), n. p. Ezra Booth made the following statement about the zeal of Martin Harris and other Saints: "Martin Harris is what may be called a great talker, an extravagant boaster; so much so, that he renders himself disagreeable to many of his own society. The money he has expended, and the great things he has done, form a considerable topic of his conversation; he understands all prophecies, and knows every thing by the spirit, and he can silence almost any opposer by talking faster, and louder than he can; or by telling him, 'I know every thing and you know nothing; I am a wise man and you are a fool;' and in this respect, he stands as a fair sample of many others in the church." Painesville Telegraph, III, No. 20 (November 1, 1831), n. p.

¹¹²Ibid., New Series II, No. 20 (May 20, 1836), n. p.

saying to her, "You are in the gall of bitterness, and the strong bonds of iniquity: and I have authority to say to you; 'You shall not be saved, unless you believe that Book.'"¹¹³ Gideon Carter, who preached as a missionary in the Church wrote from Kirtland to his sister in Vermont which reflects his zeal and attitude toward the unbelieving Gentiles. He wrote in his own semi-literate style as follows:

Pregadie is giveing way and sinness is bowing to the mild standard of king Jesus and some of the old farisees tremble while the servents of God air criin the ax is lade at the roots of evry tree and that tree that may knot bring forth good frute will be hewn down and cast in to the fire Do you knot know that all those that will knot hear the words of Jesus Christ shall be cut off from among the people for Moses sez that it shal come to pas that all those that will knot hear that prophet shall be cut of from among the people.¹¹⁴

The Mormon Prophet realized that there was excessive and in some cases misguided enthusiasm for the Church and its teachings; accordingly he counseled the elders against such behavior. On one occasion he wrote,

. . . And many, we have reason to fear, having a zeal not according to knowledge, not understanding the pure principle of the doctrine of the church, have no doubt, in the heat of enthusiasm, taught and said many things which are derogatory to the genuine character and principles of the church, and for these things we are heartily sorry, and would apologize if an apology would do any good.¹¹⁵

Thusly, the Mormons regarded zeal--although sometimes misplaced--as a requisite of their heavenly commission, whereas the disbelievers often found it presumptuous and sometimes contemptuous.

¹¹³Towle, op cit., p. 143. For other leading Mormon reactions to Nancy Towle, consult Appendix B.

¹¹⁴Gideon H. Carter, "Letter to his Sister, Urilly [sic]," December 27, 1835. Located in the Church Historian's Office.

¹¹⁵Joseph Smith, "To the Elders of the Church of Latter Day Saints," Messenger and Advocate, II, No. 12 (September, 1835), p. 180.

The orthodox religious beliefs of the Mormons never ceased to be surprising and repugnant to the anti-Mormon element.¹¹⁶ The Gentile rejection of Mormon spiritual practices caused them to view other Mormon beliefs--their concept of Zion; of communal life; of economic and social affairs; and of temple building--with suspicion and contempt. Yet, the Mormons were not easily discouraged. Charles Olcott, a Gentile, writing from Medina following a discourse by Sidney Rigdon summarized the spirit of Mormon determination as follows:

. . . However strange, mysterious and marvellous, the thing nicknamed Mormonism may yet appear to most . . . it is certain, that the belief in it as a solemn reality, has become firmly established in this place.¹¹⁷

In summary, the first hand contact of the Mormon missionaries with the people of Ohio brought many conversions, in some cases for essentially the same reasons that it brought ridicule and persecution. Revelation and spiritual gifts and practices were thought to be outdated and out of harmony with the acceptable beliefs and practices of the nineteenth century Christian. These religious practices, although they were normal and desirable to an orthodox Mormon, were found by the critic to be incongruous with the enlightened age in which he was living.

¹¹⁶Certain abnormal and unacceptable religious behavior found to be offensive to Church leaders will be considered in the following chapter along with some additional spiritual experiences which, although they were acceptable to the Church polity, were, nevertheless, highly objectionable to an orthodox Christian.

¹¹⁷Charles Olcott, Ohio Free Press, cited in the Messenger and Advocate, II, No. 8 (May, 1836), p. 315.

OHIO — WESTERN RESERVE



Fig. 1 a. The Western Reserve in Ohio consisting of the eight north-eastern counties.

CHAPTER IV
SPIRITUAL ABNORMALITIES AND OTHER SUPERNATURAL
PHENOMENON AS FACTORS IN MORMON CONFLICT

The doctrine of the restoration of the ancient order of Christianity including spiritual gifts as taught by the Lamanite missionaries invited misunderstanding and extravagant behavior in the newly converted society. The Ohio converts to the Church not having been taught regulating and discriminating controls, were ill-prepared to properly handle certain subsequent events. Mormonism suffered from some of the same extremes which were characteristic of early religious revivals, as well as from outlandish expressions peculiar to Mormonism itself. The confusion increased due to the absence of Mormon leadership in Ohio to counsel the new converts in such strange and exciting spiritual operations.

Abnormal Spiritual Exercises

Immediately after the departure of the Lamanite missionaries and prior to the arrival of Joseph Smith from New York, extreme behavior by some of the Saints began to manifest itself. "Scenes of the wildest enthusiasm" occurred, reported an observer whose views were published in the Painesville Telegraph as early as February, 1831. In giving detail to these events he added:

. . . The [Mormonites] would fall, as without strength, roll upon the floor, and, so mad were they that even the females were seen on a cold winter day, lying under the bare

canopy of heaven, with no couch or pillow but the fleecy snow. At other times they exhibited all the apish actions imaginable, making grimaces both horrid and ridiculous, creeping upon their hands and feet, etc. Sometimes, in these exercises the young men would rise and play before the people, going through all the Indian maneuvers of knocking down, scalping, ripping open, and taking out the bowels. At other times, they are taken with a fit of jabbering after which they call speaking foreign languages by divine inspiration. At other times they would start and run several furlongs, then get upon stumps and preach to imagined congregations, baptize ghosts, etc.¹

These reports were not to be credited just to the malice of anti-Mormon writers alone. John Corrill, an early Mormon convert, writing of them said,

They conducted themselves in a strange manner, sometimes imitating Indians in their maneuvers, sometimes running out into the fields, getting on stumps of trees and there preaching as though surrounded by a congregation,--all the while so completely absorbed in visions as to be apparently insensible to all that was passing around them.²

About this extreme behavior John Whitmer, the Church historian added,

Some had visions and could not tell what they saw. Some would fancy to themselves that they had the Sword of Laban, and would wield it as expert as a light dragon; some would act like an Indian in the act of scalping; some would slide or scoot on the floor with the rapidity of a serpent, which they termed sailing in the boat to the Lamanites, preaching the gospel. And many other vain and foolish maneuvers that are unseemingly and unprofitable to mention. Thus the Devil blinded the eyes of some good and honest disciples.³

It seems that young men and women were chiefly involved in these odd distortions and spiritual manifestations. Three of the young men who participated in this inordinate behavior were Edson Fuller, Heman Basset,

¹"Mormonism," Painesville Telegraph, II, No. 35 (February 15, 1831), n. p.

²Corrill, op. cit., p. 16

³Whitmer, op. cit., Chapter VI.

and Burr Riggs.⁴ While engaged in proselyting activities, these young men demonstrated their peculiar gifts. These men received revelations, saw angels, prophecied, fell down while frothing at the mouth, and behaved generally in an awesome way. Levi Hancock credited the worst behavior to Burr Riggs, whom he saw jump up from the floor and strike his head against the ceiling joist, swing some minutes and then fall as if he were dead. After an hour or two in this state, he would regain his "life" and inform the spectators of what his slumber had disclosed. Of the others, Levi said,

Edson Fuller would fall and turn black in the face, Herman Bassett [sic] would behave like a baboon. He said he had a revelation he had received in Kirtland from the hand of an angel, he would read it and show pictures of a course of angels declared to be Gods, then would testify of the truth of the work.⁵

A Gentile writer further stated that they were seen "running over the hills in pursuit, they say, of balls of fire which they see flying through the air."⁶ Corrill concurred with this, for he said, they saw "wonderful lights in the air and on the ground . . ."⁷ Philo Dibble, who was in Kirtland during these winter months, said that there were many signs and wonders in the heavens and on the earth which the Saints saw as well as being viewed by the strangers among them. In fact, said he, "A pillar of light was seen every evening for more than a month hovering over

⁴Hancock, op. cit., p. 40.

⁵Hancock, Ibid., p. 41.

⁶"Mormonism," Painesville Telegraph, II, No. 35 (February 15, 1831), n. p.

⁷Corrill, op. cit., p. 16.

the place where we did our baptizing."⁸

In December, 1830, the Telegraph was informed by a correspondent that the new converts believed that Oliver Cowdery's commission to teach had been written and signed by the hand of Jesus Christ.⁹ It is doubtful that this claim came from Cowdery in the form in which it was being circulated; but the belief that he was commissioned from God, perhaps, incited others to make similar claims about themselves in most extravagant ways. In fact, the following January, the three previously named young men claimed to receive their own commissions directly "from Heaven, on parchment, which they caught in their hands in the air, and had only time to copy them, before the parchment disappeared."¹⁰ Their commission directed them to preach "repentance and remission of sins" and it was said to be endorsed by a "Divine Seal." Letters, too, were falling from heaven to exhort the receiver to increase his faith. Concerning these activities The Sun reported,

At one time, a young man gave information to his brethren, that he was about to receive a message from heaven; and specified the time and place. At the appointed time, they repaired to a spot designated; and there, they

⁸Philo Dibble, "Philo Dibble's Narrative," Early Scenes in Church History, Eighth Book of the Faith Promoting Series (Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor Office, 1882), p. 78.

⁹Painesville Telegraph, II. No. 25 (December 7, 1830), n. p.

¹⁰Painesville Telegraph, II, No. 43 (April 12, 1831), n. p.

Only Burr Riggs and Edson Fuller's names were listed in the commission, but Heman Basset to whom the commission was addressed is inferred by a following Telegraph article which states: "One of the Mormon apostles, named Basset, a copy of whose commission we published some weeks since, which he pretended he obtained from the clouds, with the seal of God, has recently abandoned the Bible speculation, and declares it to be all a miserable hoax." Painesville Telegraph, II, No. 50 (May 24, 1831), n. p.

solemnly assert, a letter descended from the skies, and fell into the hands of the young man who was expecting to receive the message;--the purport of which was, to inform him that he was about to be called to preach Mormonism, and to exhort him to increase his faith. The deluded Mormonites declare their most solemn belief that this letter was written in heaven, by the finger of the Almighty; and the youth who pretended to have received it, says, the writing was in a round Italian hand, and the letters were in gold--he attempted to copy it; but, as fast as he wrote, the letter disappeared from the original until it entirely vanished.¹¹

In addition to the three men previously named, available records do not freely identify all that participated in these strange practices. Another young man, however, twenty-year old Warner Doty, "was one of the most active and zealous" whose faith was such that he believed he should live "a thousand years." A disease struck him and he was dead in five days. Prior to his demise, he asked to shake hands with an elderly Mormon convert and said, "I must shake hands with you--this is a lesson that I have learned by actual experience, by which you ought to profit, but with me it is too late."¹²

Another participant in these strange experiences was a Negro. Of his activities George A. Smith later said;

They [the Saints] had a meeting at the [Morley] farm, and among them was a negro known generally as Black Pete, who became a revelator. Others also manifested wonderful developments; they could see angels, and letters would come down from heaven, they said, and they would be put through wonderful unnatural distortions. Finally on one occasion, Black Pete got sight of one of those revelations carried by a black angel, he started after it, and ran off a steep wash bank twenty-five feet high, passed through a tree top into the Chagrin river beneath. He

¹¹"Mormonites," The Sun (Philadelphia), II, No. 82 (August 18, 1831), n. p.

¹²"Fanaticism," Painesville Telegraph, II, No. 42 (April 5, 1831), n. p.

came out with a few scratches, and his ardor somewhat cooled.¹³

Presumably on another occasion, this "Afro-American" fancied he could fly and prepared to the banks of Lake Erie from which he leaped and spread his "pinions" only to end up on the tree-tops some fifty feet below.¹⁴

It was natural for these operations to confuse some of the sincere devotees of Mormonism who strongly accepted what they believed were the normal operation of the Holy Ghost. Both, however--the normal and the abnormal--were strange and objectionable to the non-believing Gentile who made no attempt to distinguish between the two types of operations. Some of the new converts were apprehensive about these abnormal expressions and found themselves in a dilemma. Levi Hancock, one of these, was fearful to speak out against the abnormal operations of Fuller, Basset, and Riggs for fear he should speak against the Holy Ghost.¹⁵ Yet, the majority of the Saints became angry at their claims and endeavored to convince Levi that their conduct was unworthy of his confidence. One girl said she would rather go to hell than to believe in the claims of Basset, Fuller, and Riggs, and in a short time she died. "I could not help thinking," mused Levi, "she was taken at her word."¹⁶ He admitted that he was taken in by their unusual conduct and lamented, "I believed it all, like a fool." Some,

¹³George A. Smith, Journal of Discourses of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Vol. XI, (Discourse given in Salt Lake City, November 15, 1864), p. 4. Hereafter cited as Journal of Discourses.

¹⁴"Mormonites," The Sun (Philadelphia), II, No. 82 (August 18, 1831), n. p.

¹⁵Hancock, op. cit., p. 41.

¹⁶Idem.

however, never let these events bother them, while others believed these abnormal actions were from the devil.¹⁷

These spiritual abnormalities were in operation when Joseph Smith and others arrived in Kirtland from the East in February, 1831. Likewise, by spring Parley P. Pratt had returned from Missouri to carry a message to the Prophet in New York. Upon finding the Church was established in Ohio, he circulated among the branches there and described the scenes as follows:

As I went forth among the different branches, some very strange spiritual operations were manifested, which were disgusting, rather than edifying. Some persons would seem to swoon away, and make unseemly gestures, and be drawn or disfigured in their countenances. Others would fall into ecstasies, and be drawn into contortions, which were not edifying, and which were not congenial to the doctrine and spirit of the gospel. In short, a false and lying spirit seemed to be creeping into the Church.¹⁸

These exercises arose to such alarming measures that the elders were determined to do something about them. Accordingly, Parley Pratt and John Murdock, and others contacted the Prophet to inquire about such questionable behavior in the Church. The Prophet Joseph responded with a revelation. "There are many spirits which are false spirits," stated the revelation, "which have gone forth in the earth, deceiving the world." Furthermore, the revelation offered the key by which one might discern the nature of spirits.

Wherefore, it shall come to pass, that if you behold a spirit manifested that you cannot understand, and you receive

¹⁷Dibble, op. cit., p. 77.

¹⁸Pratt, op. cit., p. 61.

not that spirit ye shall ask of the Father in the name of Jesus; and if he give not unto you that spirit, then you may know that it is not of God.¹⁹

The evil operations continued for a time, however, in some cases under the pretext of their being good spiritual experiences. At any rate, the elders felt that they had a measure by which they could properly detect true spirits if they were brought to the test. Of such a test and operation Jared Carter offers a detailed account which occurred in Amherst during the absence of Smith and other leaders in Missouri during the summer of 1831. Carter details the account as follows:

It seemed as if I was placed in the front ranks, exposed to the armies of the Pit, for I had not resided at Amherst very long before I began to be tried with certain transactions that took place in the Church, and especially certain exercises which they called visions. The first instance of this kind, that I witnessed, was at the house of a Mr. Barna, in Amherst. On seeing these manifestations, I was doubtful concerning them, and did not know what to do. I felt that I could not depend upon my own views as well as upon those of some of the others, who were present who were more experienced than myself. But I proposed that we engage in prayer. In this, however, I could not obtain a union with the spirit that prevailed in the meeting. At last I concluded to kneel down and pray openly, and it seemed to me that I could pray in faith that any false spirit present should depart from the meeting. After I arose from my prayer, I found that quite a change in the meeting had taken place for when I began my prayer, two of the members laid prostrate in what some of them called a vision, but after I had prayed a few minutes, they suddenly came out of them and were clothed in their right mind. On seeing this, I felt pretty well convinced in my own mind that these exercises were not good; but after meeting, I conversed with some of the Elders, whom, I found to be fully of the belief that these visions were from a good source, in fact so united were the members of the church in their belief that these manifestations were from God, that I almost concluded that I had been mistaken, and that the reason why their visions ceased when I prayed was because I was so far inferior to my glorious privilege under

¹⁹Doctrine and Covenants, 50:31. It had previously been announced to the Church that some of its members would be recipients of the gift of discerning of spirits. Doctrine and Covenants, 46:23.

this influence. I was led to conclude that these exercises were of the spirit of the Lord, though at other times I was very much concerned about them. At length, I proved by revelation, which had been given to the Elders, concerning these spirits, that they were not of the Lord. I proved them in the following manner.

On a certain occasion I attended a meeting together with Sylvester Smith, at Amherst, where, just as we were about to administer the sacrament, a young woman was taken with an exercise that brought her to the floor. I doubted the propriety of such an experience in a public meeting and suggested to Bro. Sylvester that we should try that Spirit according to the revelation that God had given. Complying with my suggestion, we kneeled down and asked our Heavenly Father in the name of Christ, that if that spirit which the sister possessed was of him, he would give it to us. We prayed in faith, but we did not receive the Spirit. After we had risen from our prayer I sat silently upon my seat for some minutes, while Bro. Sylvester laid hands upon the Sister and proceeded to administer to her. This, however, was not according to the commandment of the Lord, which says: "Wherefore it shall come to pass, that if you behold a Spirit manifested that ye cannot understand--and you receive not that Spirit, ye shall ask the Father in the name of Jesus, and if he give not unto you that Spirit, then you may know that it is not of God. And it shall be given unto you power over that Spirit, and you shall proclaim against that spirit with a loud voice, that it is not of God,--not with railing accusation, that ye be not overcome, neither with boasting, nor rejoicing lest ye be seized therewith," 50:31. After Bro. Sylvester had made some communication which was not proclaiming against the spirit, I arose and proclaimed against it with a loud voice, but this was very trying to the brethren present, as nearly all of them believed that the manifestations were of God and now after this I had some sore conflicts with Satan, for he told me I had lost all my influence in the Church, and sure enough that seemed to be the case for a while, but after contemplating for a time, I received assurance that I had the approbation of my Heavenly Father, which was better than the good will of many deceived brethren. After I had made this sacrifice, I was blessed with a greater gift of the word than ever before, so that my influence, instead of decreasing, began to increase.

On the following Sabbath, a week after I had proclaimed against the Spirits mentioned, we met in meeting on the North Ridge, where I experienced a marvelous display of the Spirit, though in the earlier part of the same meeting I had been almost overwhelmed with the awful influence of the powers of darkness; but in this state of mind I called upon God in mighty prayer for help. When the cloud and gross darkness burst from my soul, and I was quickly filled with the blessed

influence of the Spirit, and was endowed with power from on High in a marvelous manner. I was inclined by the Spirit to ask the Lord for what purpose I was thus marvelously blessed, and immediately it seemed as if a voice spake to me saying, 'This is the fulfillment of my word to you, and this power that is given you is the power over the Spirit you proclaimed against.' I then felt endowed with full power over that Spirit against which I had proclaimed the previous Sabbath, and after that time that Spirit never again manifested itself in our meetings when I was present. This to me was one of the most infallible proofs of the divine origin of the revelation of which I have spoken. After this gathering I attended another meeting in Brownsham, where I saw a young woman possessed of the Devil, or an evil spirit, that had taken possession of her, for she was brought into awful postures of body, so that her very looks were frightful and in this condition she was dispossessed of her right mind. The Brethren came to me and requested that I should cast out the Devil. I went to the place where she was, laid my hands on her and commanded Satan in the name of Jesus Christ to depart. And as I spoke these words, she instantly fell to the floor as though she realized an extraordinary immortal influence, and she shouted with a loud voice: glory to God.²⁰

These unacceptable exercises continued occasionally during the following years, for on the 19th of February, 1834, two days after the Kirtland High Council was permanently organized, it had the occasion to try Elder Curtis Hodge, Sr. This was the first case for the High Council, and Elder Hodge was brought to account for going into "a Methodist spasm, shouting and screaming in such a manner as caused one of the Elders to rebuke him."²¹

²⁰Jared Carter, "Journal History," July, 1831. The account appearing in the "Journal History" has been edited from the original in Carter's Journal by the Church historian Andrew Jensen. The changes include such things as punctuation, spelling and other minor changes as well as some adjustments in the structuring of the phrases. The essential content, however, has not been changed. A brief example follows: ". . . it seemed as though I was placed as in the frontiers of the armies of the pit for I had not been there long before I began to be tried with exercise and transactions that took place in the church" "Jared Carter's Journal," pp. 20-30. Located in the Church Historian's Office.

²¹Journal of Discourses, Vol. XI, p. 7.

The Prophet Joseph Smith was aware of the inherent danger in these spiritual operations and realized they could bring disgrace and ridicule upon the Church. But the means for the Church to detect them had been provided and the merit of the method would have to be tested with time. That these extreme abnormal spiritual exercises did not pass without the Prophet's notice is evidenced by his following statement:

No man or set of men without the regular constituted authorities, the Priesthood and discerning of spirits, can tell true from false spirits. This power they possessed in the Apostles' day, but it has departed from the world for ages.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has also had its false spirits; and as it is made up of all those different sects professing every variety of opinion, and having been under the influence of so many kinds of spirits, it is not to be wondered at if there should be found among us false spirits.

Soon after the Gospel was established in Kirtland, and during the absence of the authorities of the Church, many false spirits were introduced, many strange visions were seen, and wild, enthusiastic notions were entertained; men ran out of doors under the influence of this spirit, and some of them got upon the stumps of trees and shouted, and all kinds of extravagances were entered into by them; one man pursued a ball that he said he saw flying in the air, until he came to a precipice, when he jumped into the top of a tree, which saved his life; and many ridiculous things were entered into, calculated to bring disgrace upon the Church of God, to cause the Spirit of God to be withdrawn, and to uproot and destroy those glorious principles which had been developed for the salvation of the human family. But when the authorities returned, the spirit was made manifest, those members that were exercised with it were tried for their fellowship, and those that would not repent and forsake it were cut off.

At a subsequent period a Shaker spirit was on the point of being introduced, and at another time the Methodist and Presbyterian falling down power, but the spirit was rebuked and put down, and those who would not submit to rule and good order were disfellowshipped. We have also had brethren and sisters who have had the gift of tongues falsely; they would speak in a muttering unnatural voice, and their bodies be distorted like the Irvingites before alluded to; whereas there is nothing unnatural in the Spirit of God.²²

p. 747. ²²"Try the Spirits," Times and Seasons, III, No. 11 (April 1, 1842),

Legitimate Spiritual Manifestations

The Mormon leaders naturally felt that the operations of false or evil spirits were reprehensible; for they further made of Mormonism the object of mockery. These abnormal exercises eventually abated, however, but miracles and manifestations of phenomenal proportions which were largely acceptable to the Saints continued. These seemed to further convince the Gentiles that Mormonism was a peculiar expression of modern Christendom. These, too, received some public notice and abusive treatment.

In the spring of 1831, the New York Saints began to arrive in Ohio, but not without incident worthy of public chagrin. "They [these New York Saints] have full faith in Mormon doctrine," recorded the Western Courier, "having as they say, worked a miracle in cleaning a passage through the ice at Buffalo, by which they sailed several days sooner than other vessels."²³ The Saints from Colesville, New York, had prepared as a body to journey to Ohio. Upon arriving at Buffalo they prepared to board a vessel to sail to Fairport, Ohio, but they found the Buffalo harbor ice-bound. Jared Carter, however, entreated Newel Knight to join him and others in petitioning the Lord to move the ice to avoid delay. Knight reacted coolly to the idea, and Carter was authorized to lead a small company of the brethren overland to Dunkirk and board a vessel there for Fairport. This they did, and upon sailing to Erie, Pennsylvania, the wind prevented their continuance. At length, Carter prophesied to

²³Western Courier (Ravenna), cited in St. Louis Times, III, No. 105 (July 9, 1831), p. 2.

his associates that the wind would soon cease. He gave a command to that effect and in about "fifteen minutes it had entirely ceased blowing."²⁴

The main body, however, was detained at Buffalo for about one week when another company of Saints from Fayette, New York, overtook them. This second company was determined not to let the ice delay them, and under the direction of the Prophet Joseph's mother, a silent prayer was offered. "At that instant . . . the ice parted," wrote Mother Smith, "leaving barely a passage for the boat, and so narrow that as the boat passed through, the buckets of the waterwheel were torn off with a crash."²⁵ The spectators on the pier expected the boat to sink and informed the newspapers accordingly. Upon arriving at Fairport the Mormon group read in the newspapers of their own death. The Colesville Saints, however, did not attempt a departure from Buffalo for another week when the ice broke up.

Another claim of a physical manifestation occurred in a barn in Amherst during the preaching of John Whitmer to the Saints. The barn was only partially covered by shingles and a rain shower began to deposit its moisture upon the ground. Sylvester Smith and Jared Carter simultaneously offered silent prayers to the effect that the rain might not be permitted to disturb the congregation. Afterwards, the ground was inspected; it was found to be considerably moistened around the barn, but not on the barn itself. It was claimed that the storm had parted where the barn stood to keep it sufficiently dry as to protect the congregation

²⁴Jared Carter, "Manuscript History of the Great Lakes Mission, Ohio," April, 1831. Church Historian's Office.

²⁵Lucy Mack Smith, op. cit., pp. 204-205.

during the meeting.²⁶ The Latter-day Saints' claims of being commissioned to work miracles as part of the restorative powers of the ancient order of things brought disbelieving contenders into Mormon settlements to dispute with the elders.²⁷

During the latter part of February, 1831, the Prophet Joseph recorded a revelation instructing him to gather the missionaries that had been sent out to preach to return to Kirtland to hold a special missionary conference in June following. Many instructions were given to the elders as they met in Kirtland for that conference; likewise, spiritual manifestations were prevalent, some of which were from an evil source. In anticipation of the conference the Prophet, himself, announced on Friday, June 3rd, that "the man of sin" would be revealed. The following day the elders met in a string of small buildings in Kirtland to receive instructions and to attend to Church business.

As matters got underway, Levi Hancock, a witness to the strange events said that while Joseph was ordaining Harvey Whitlock a high priest, "He turned as black as Lyman [Wight] was white. His fingers were set like claws. He went around the room and showed his hands and tried to speak, his eyes were in the shape of oval O's."²⁸ Hyrum Smith was not willing to accept this behavior as being from God, and told his brother, the Prophet, so. Joseph retorted, "Do not speak against this." "I will not believe, unless you inquire of God and he owns it," demanded Hyrum. "Joseph bowed his head, and in a short time got up and commanded Satan to leave

²⁶"Journal History," July, 1831.

²⁷Idem.

²⁸Hancock, op. cit., p. 48.

Harvy [sic]," concluded Levi Hancock, "laying his hands upon his head at the same time."²⁹ John Whitmer concurred with this in saying that Satan "bound Harvey Whitlock and John Murdock, so that they could not speak."³⁰

Leman Copley, a very large man of two hundred and fourteen pounds, from his sitting position in the window turned a complete summer-sault in the house and settled back across a bench where he lay helplessly. The Prophet instructed Lyman Wight to "chase" Satan out of Copley, after which the evil spirit immediately left him.³¹ Then another, Harvey Green, was bound and began screaming like a panther. These operations continued all day and into the night intermixed with the instructions from their Prophet. Levi Hancock reflected upon the scenes of the day by writing, "I was so scared I would not stir without his [Joseph's] liberty for all the world. I knew the things I had seen were not made [up]."³² After the

²⁹Idem. Ezra Booth, although writing as an apostate, concurred with Hancock's observation that Joseph exhibited momentary confusion concerning the nature of the spirit in Harvey Whitlock. Booth said, "Some conjectured that Harvey was possessed of the Devil, but Smith said, 'the Lord binds in order to set at liberty.' After different opinions had been given, and there had been much confusion, Smith learnt [sic] by the spirit, that Harvey was under a diabolical influence, and that Satan had bound him; and he commanded the unclean spirit to come out of him." Ohio Star, II. No. 44 (November 3, 1831), n. p. For a complete rendition of Ezra Booth's account, consult Appendix C.

³⁰Whitmer, op. cit., Chapter VII.

³¹Hancock, op. cit., p. 48.

³²Ibid., p. 49. Levi Hancock related a number of other incidents of interest relative to these meetings. He also wrote, "Joseph Smith then stepped out on the floor and said, 'I now see God, and Jesus Christ at his right hand, let them [i.e. his enemies] kill me, I should not feel death as I am now' "After this [these spiritual manifestations] we went down to the house and heard Harvey Whitlock say when Hyrum Smith said it was not God, he disdained him in his heart and when the Devil was cast out he was convinced it was Satan that was in him and he then knew it. I also heard Harvey Green say that he could not describe the awful feeling he experienced while in the hands of Satan." Ibid., pp. 48-49.

conference meetings ended, twenty-eight elders were appointed to travel to Missouri and to preach as they traveled.³³

Much of the criticism cast against Mormonism during this early period was directed against the Prophet, himself. "It is surely a melancholy comment," stated the Telegraph, "to see so many people . . . truckling along at the car of a miserable impostor submitting themselves, both soul and body, to his spiritual and temporal mandates."³⁴ He was

³³Doctrine and Covenants, Section 52. Levi Hancock, who was one of the elders assigned to travel to Missouri, took a short visit to see his father before going West. He started on this short visit with some others leaving on the evening of June the 5th; concerning this trip he related the following experience:

"When night came Solomon and J. Wheeler Baldwin and some others started to my father, we walked heavily, some said that they felt as if they would be ceased [sic] by Satan. Others that they felt as the Devil and his angels were hanging about them. I kept my feelings to myself, until we came to the mill pond of Mr. Forgdsons about half or a little over the distance we had to go that night. When we had got against the pond which was about fourteen rods across and very deep, I said, 'let us pray.' So we all kneeled down and prayed around the circle, as soon as the last one got through about nine o'clock at night and the moon shown brightly. A sudden bray of a jackass was heard about twenty feet behind us we looked and could see nothing in the way. It started toward the pond braying all the time. I never had seen one in my life and I know that there was none about there for I was well acquainted there. I heard how they brayed. The most of our company had seen them. This braying continued across the pond and ascended the high hills on the other side until it grew less and less distant until it got out of hearing. 'There,' said Brother Baldwin, 'this proves to me that this work is true, for when we prayed for assistance the Devil ran away.' We all felt that it must have been Satan, and some said as much. We then started on our way feeling much better and as light as ever we felt. We told it to some but it seemed like an idle tale to them. This took place on the fifth of June, 1831. This may appear strange to some but God knows that I lie not. And am ready to meet it before the heaven. That night ceased [sic] me and I thought he would destroy me. I went to Solomon and he prayed for me, however I was not bound but awfully tired the next day." Hancock, op. cit., pp. 50-51.

³⁴Painesville Telegraph, II, No. 48 (May 17, 1831), n. p.

spoken of as the deceiver and his followers as the dupes. Yet, the loyalty that some of the converts had for Joseph Smith was solemn indeed. Their confidence in him was often enforced, if it had not originated, through spiritual experiences of a persuasive nature. Joseph Coe, in observing the prophet during a period of prophesying found his countenance changed, and the prophecies he had offered to be fulfilled by subsequent events.³⁵ Lydia Knight also made reference to her strong impression of the Prophet by noticing a strange brilliant light that shone through his features "like the mellow radiance of an astral lamp, only purer and brighter."³⁶ Mary Rollins' reaction to the Prophet was similar to Lydia Knight's. Upon her first seeing the Mormon leader in Kirtland in 1831, she said, "I was sent for and when I entered the room he looked at me so earnestly I felt afraid and I thought 'He can read my every thought.'"³⁷ To further emphasize the penetrating impression Joseph Smith made on Mary and others by supernatural means, she wrote as follows:

A few evenings after his visit to our house, Mother and I went over to the Smith home. We wanted to hear more about the Golden Bible. They were not settled yet, but as there were other visitors, when the Prophet saw us he said, 'We might as well have a meeting.' I sat with others on a plank that had been provided, the ends resting on boxes. After prayer and singing, Joseph began talking. Suddenly he stopped and seemed almost transfixed. He was looking ahead and his face outshone the candle which was on a shelf just behind him. I thought I could almost see the cheek bones. He looked as though a search-

³⁵"Journal History." September 25, 1831. Likewise, in September, 1831, Jared Carter visiting with the Prophet in Hiram said, "I saw that the form of his countenance was changed, while looking upon me." "Jared Carter Journal," op. cit., p. 35.

³⁶Lydia Knight, "Lydia Knight's History," The First Book of the Noble Women's Lives Series (Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor Office, 1883), p. 31.

³⁷Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner, op. cit., p. 3.

light was inside his face. After a short time he looked at us very solemnly and said, 'Brothers and Sisters, do you know who has been in our midst this night?' One of the Smith family said, 'An angel of the Lord.' Joseph did not answer. Martin Harris was sitting at the Prophet's feet on a box. He slid to his knees, clasped his arms around the Prophet's knees and said, 'I know, it was our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.' Joseph put his hand on Martin's head and answered, 'Martin, God revealed that to you. Brothers and Sisters, the Savior has been in your midst. I want you to remember it. He cast a veil over your eyes for you could not endure to look upon Him. You must be fed with milk and not meat. I want you to remember this as if it were the last thing that escaped my lips. He has given you all to me and commanded me to seal you up to everlasting life, that where He is there you may also be, and if you are tempted of Satan say, 'Get thee behind me, Satan.' These words and his looks are photographed on my brain. Then he knelt and prayed. I have never heard anything like it since. I felt he was talking to the Lord³⁸

Lyman Wight was promised at the June, 1831, conference by the Prophet that he would see the Lord. Of this Hancock recorded Joseph to have said, "You shall see the Lord and meet him near the corner of the house."³⁹ About this occasion Wight later reported, "I again saw the visible manifestations of the power of God as plain as could have been on the day of pentecost."⁴⁰ Others, likewise, developed an intense loyalty for their Prophet by spiritual or supernatural experiences, and they were well shielded from the maligning spirit expressed by the anti-Mormon element.⁴¹ The non-Mormon public was amazed at the Saints' credulity;

³⁸Ibid., pp. 4-5.

³⁹Hancock, op. cit., p. 48.

⁴⁰Wight, op. cit., p. 5.

⁴¹The following statement by Wilford Woodruff is somewhat typical of the intense loyalty certain members of the Church had for the Prophet Joseph Smith during the Kirtland period. The following statement was journalized after a meeting in the Kirtland Temple wherein the ordinance of washing of feet took place on April 6, 1837. Woodruff wrote, "The Prophet Joseph then arose and addressed the congregation for the space of

yet it was admitted on occasion that the Mormons were "an active, intelligent and enterprising sect of people."⁴² These loyal Saints in return were often ready to find false and vicious statements in every report about their Prophet.

Supernatural Manifestations During Later Years

Manifestations during general Church meetings frequently occurred during the years following the construction of the Kirtland Temple. Prior to its dedication visions of the Lord Jesus Christ, angels' voices, and visions of the future were not uncommon examples.⁴³ At the dedicatory service on March 27, 1836, Frederick G. Williams, second counselor to President Joseph Smith, testified that an angel entered a window and sat between Father Smith and himself on the stand during the opening prayer.⁴⁴ Lydia Knight stated that the Prophet informed her that the angel was Christ discernible by the dress he wore.⁴⁵ The evening of the day of

three hours, clothed with power, spirit and image of God. He presented many things of vast importance to the Elders of Israel. O! that the record could be written as with an iron pen of the light, principle and virtue that came from out of the mouth and heart of the Prophet Joseph whose soul like Enoch's seems wide as eternity. That day showed strikingly that he is in very deed a Prophet of God raised up for the deliverance of Israel" "Wilford Woodruff Journal," entry listed under the date of April 6, 1837. The Journal is located in the Church Historian's Office.

⁴²Western Courier, cited in St. Louis Times, III, No. 105 (July 9, 1831), p. 2.

⁴³History of the Church, Vol. II, pp. 334-5, 382-3, 392-3.

⁴⁴Messenger and Advocate, II, No. 6 (March, 1836). p. 281.

⁴⁵Lydia Knight, op. cit., p. 33. Edward Partridge also stated the following about the angel: "Doct. F. G. Williams saw an angel, or rather the Savior during the forenoon services." Edward Partridge, "Edward Partridge Journal," p. 46. Located in the Church Historian's

dedication while four hundred and sixteen officers of the Church were in the temple other supernatural events occurred which were reported by the Prophet Joseph as follows:

Brother George A. Smith arose and began to prophesy, when a noise was heard like the sound of a rushing mighty wind, which filled the Temple, and all the congregation simultaneously arose, being moved upon by an invisible power, many began to speak in tongues and prophesy; others saw glorious visions; and I beheld the Temple was filled with angels, which fact I declared to the congregation. The people of the neighborhood came running together hearing an unusual sound within, and seeing a bright light like a pillar of fire resting upon the Temple, and were astonished at what was taking place.⁴⁶

About these events and others that followed, Levi Jackman stated in his journal, "I believe that as great things were heard and felt and seen as there was on the day of Pentecost with the apostles."⁴⁷ Other Mormon

Office. George A. Smith gave the following reference to this event: "On the first day of the dedication, President Frederick G. Williams, one of the Council of the Prophet, and who occupied the upper pulpit, bore testimony that the Savior, dressed in his vesture without seam, came into the stand and accepted of the dedication of the house, that he saw him, and gave a description of his clothing and all things pertaining to it." Journal of Discourses, Vol. XI, p. 10.

⁴⁶History of the Church, Vol. II, p. 428.

⁴⁷Levi Jackman, "Levi Jackman Journal," p. 17. A typed copy is located in the library at Brigham Young University. Prescindia Huntington witnessed another spectacular event regarding the temple, which she described as follows: "In Kirtland we enjoyed many very great blessings, and often saw the power of God manifested. On one occasion I saw angels clothed in white walking upon the temple. It was during one of our monthly fast meetings, when the saints were in the temple worshipping. A little girl came to my door and in wonder called me out, exclaiming, 'The meeting is on the top of the meeting house.' I went to the door, and there I saw on the temple angels clothed in white covering the roof from end to end. They seemed to be walking to and fro: they appeared and disappeared. The third time they appeared and disappeared before I realized that they were not mortal men. Each time in a moment they vanished, and their reappearance was the same. This was in broad daylight, in the afternoon. A number of the children in Kirtland saw the same." Prescindia Huntington cited in Edward W. Tullidge, The Women of Mormonism (New York: Tullidge and Crandall, 1877), p. 207.

journals and reminiscences make reference to these curious supernatural events.

Individuals and groups of individuals continued to report spiritual experiences that they encountered during this period in Ohio. In July, 1838, a notice of the death of Apostle Thomas B. Marsh's fourteen year-old son, James G. Marsh, accompanied a list of spiritual experiences the boy reportedly had during his young life there. It seems that his searching and studious nature brought him much perception in history and in scripture as well as in personal supernatural experiences. It was reported that when he was about nine years old he had talked with "the Father and many of the ancient prophets face to face, and beheld the Son of God coming in his glory," among other things.⁴⁸

Luman Shurtliff, a skeptic from Lorain County, who had investigated Mormonism in 1832 and rejected it, attempted to give it a final trial. He visited Kirtland in August, 1836, talked with David Whitmer and others and was baptized with neither having faith in Joseph Smith's prophetic calling nor in the Book of Mormon. While he was spending a few days in Kirtland investigating the Church he stated, "The tormentor whispered in my mind and said my little boy Lewis was dead, and if I did not go home immediately he would be buried, and I would not see him more."⁴⁹ Likewise he was pained with a lame leg due to a hunting accident in 1832 which was giving him considerable distress. After his uneventful

⁴⁸Elders' Journal, I, No. 3 (July, 1838), p. 48.

⁴⁹Luman Andros Shurtliff, "Luman Andros Shurtliff Journal," p. 23. Located in the Utah Historical Society Library.

baptism, he took leave of Kirtland to return home. He was greatly troubled as to how he could defend his recent baptism to his family and neighbors. He felt weak--physically and spiritually--discouraged and anxious to return to his sick son. He departed from Kirtland; then he noted the following experience while he was journeying along the road:

While I was praying something came on my head resembling cold water and passed gradually down through my whole system removing all pain, and made me a sound man from the top of my head to the soles of my feet.

As soon as this was past, I heard a sweet melodious voice about me say, 'Joseph Smith, Jr. is a Prophet of the Most High God, raised up for the restoration of Israel in these last days, and the Book of Mormon which you hold under your arm is true and brought forth for the restoration of the scattered remnants of Jacob.'

As this passed off, I cast my eyes to the South. A little way from me I saw my wife standing with my little boy sitting on her left arm on her left shoulder and with her right hand pointing to me as if she was saying, 'See father, there is father.' They both were well and all right. This passed, I was in the road, a sound man, praising God.⁵⁰

Many strange operations of the spirit as well as unnatural phenomenon occurred in the communities where the Mormons were settled in Ohio. The Gentiles found these exercises silly and repugnant, and they thought the Mormons who believed in them to be supercilious and deluded. The Latter-day Saints also found some of them perplexing and disconcerting to their sense of propriety and good judgment. Yet, the Saints felt that their Prophet had adequately guided them in the proper discernment of spirits and spiritual exercises. Most of the unacceptable practices stopped, but their impress upon the public mind was irrefutable. The Saints, however, continued to seek what they maintained were desirable

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 24.

heavenly interventions. The anti-Mormons whenever they knew about them, however, believed that the entire operation of these spiritual functions were abnormal and un-Christian; therefore they did not hesitate giving release to incredulous and contemptuous feelings.

CHAPTER V
EARLY INTERNAL DISSENSION AND APOSTASY
AS FACTORS IN MORMON CONFLICT

The public image of Mormonism during their sojourn in Ohio was lamentable; the Mormons lacked popular appeal and normal acceptance by other Christians. The roads to Kirtland were filled with curiosity seekers, some of whom came to observe the Mormons and their Prophet. Others came to embrace or to remain after previously embracing the new doctrine. Yet, Mormonism lacked the dignity and respectability afforded some other religious movements where doctrinal differences were respected or tolerated. The ungraceful exercises by some of the early converts naturally contributed little to dignifying the Church's public image. Typical of public feeling about the Mormons was an expression in the Chardon Spectator which said, "The idle, foolish whim whams of this sect excite, and very properly, we suppose, the ridicule of the people generally."¹ On the other hand, S. A. Davis, a Universalist publisher from Pittsburgh, who later visited the Mormons in Kirtland was surprised in finding them to be an honorable people. Although he embraced the popular view that the Mormons were an unorthodox and superstitious group of Christians, he felt they were unkindly pre-judged by their neighbors. He reported that he had "seldom, if ever, been treated with

¹Chardon Spectator and Geauga Gazette, III, No. 3 (August 10, 1833), n. p.

greater kindness by any denomination of Christians, or seen manifested more . . . Christian charity, than by the Latter Day Saints."² He further stated that the Mormon's "bitterest persecutors would do well to imitate" this spirit of broadmindedness and Christian charity he found among them. This, however, was not the popular view of the Mormons generally held by clergy, business leaders, and institutional officers throughout the Reserve. More characteristic of the public sentiment was contained in the expression by Lydia Partridge who said that the people in Painesville thought that "Edward [her husband] was crazy" when he accepted Mormonism.³ An unidentified visitor to Kirtland related in the Ohio Atlas,

I was introduced to the Immortal Prophet, Jo Smith, and his renowned coadjutor, Sidney Rigdon, and a host of the inferior satellites; and could scarcely suppress a laugh. . . . I have no doubt that Jo Smith's character is an equal compound of the impostor and fanatic . . . while the mass of the disciples are men of perverted intellect, and disordered piety.

The unpopular public image which was enhanced by the circulation of stories and by the many articles that appeared in the public press, perhaps, could have been mitigated in time. Certainly, a determined effort by the Church to dignify its reputation would have improved conditions. This, however, seemed impossible in consequence of certain internal problems that arose which kept the unpopular image well fueled. In fact, domestic discord in some cases which resulted in apostasy

²S. A. Davis, The Glad Tidings and Ohio Christian Telescope (Pittsburgh), cited in Messenger and Advocate, III, No. 7 (April, 1837), pp. 490-491.

³Lydia Partridge, "Edward Partridge Journal," op. cit., p. 5.

⁴Ohio Atlas (Elyria), cited in Messenger and Advocate, II, No. 7 (April, 1836), p. 302.

became a major factor contributing to Mormonism's unpopularity in Ohio.

Early Apostasy Among the Saints

Apostasy among the Mormons during the first year they were in Ohio (1831), and a few years that followed, contributed extensively to anti-Mormon opposition. Some attention here will be given this important factor. Heman Basset, one of the participants in the abnormal spiritual activities during the first winter, was one of the earliest converts to withdraw from the Mormon faith in Ohio. The Telegraph stated that he "declared it all a miserable hoax."⁵ He was in attendance on the first day of the conference in June and the Prophet said to him, "Heaman Bassett [sic] . . . the Devil wants to sift you!"⁶ And three days later on June 7, 1831, the Mormon Prophet said of him by way of revelation, "In consequence of transgression, let that which was bestowed upon Heman Basset be taken from him"⁷

Two other early dissenters were Wycom Clark and Northrop Sweet. Clark claimed that he was the recipient of a revelation directing him to be the Lord's prophet, telling him in effect that he was the true revelator instead of Joseph Smith. Four others joined Clark and Sweet and organized the "Pure Church of Christ."⁸ These six members held meetings

⁵Painesville Telegraph, II, No. 50 (May 24, 1831), n. p.

⁶Hancock, op. cit., p. 49.

⁷Doctrine and Covenants, 52:37.

⁸George A. Smith, Journal of Discourses, Vol. XI, (Discourse given in Salt Lake City, November 15, 1864), p. 3. Northrop Sweet had shown some promise while in New York before Joseph Smith moved to Ohio and was the subject of a revelation there. But when he arrived in Ohio he apostatized. About some of these New York Saints, John Whitmer said, "About these days the disciples arrived from the state of New York, to this place, Kirtland,

and preached, but the schism made no lasting inroads into the Church. John Noah, another seceder claiming the prophetic office, was able to elicit at least one supporter from New York.⁹

Another member to apostatize early from the Church remembered only by the name of Mr. Hoton renounced the Church and organized a new one which he named the "Independent Church." He gained a nominal following of ten members whose headquarters was located by the forge in Kirtland. The bishop in this new church, who administered the common property principle practiced by them, charged Hoton with being too familiar with the pork barrel; the president in turn charged Bishop Montague with being too intimate with his wife. This quarrel caused the church to disband after only two or three months of operation.¹⁰

The reasons for apostasy during these early years of Mormonism

state of Ohio. They had some difficulty because of some that did not continue faithful, who denied the truth and turned into fables." Whitmer, op. cit., Chapter VII.

⁹George A. Smith described the conduct of this supporter of John Noah after he arrived in Kirtland as follows: "I shall not undertake to detail all of this species of character that have arisen; but there was another by the name of Hawley. He was attacked by a spirit of revelation, somewhere in the State of New York, while he was ploughing; and it took him in such a hurry that he had not time to put on his boots, but travelled barefoot to Kirtland, some six hundred miles distant, to warn Joseph that he was a fallen Prophet; that God had cut Joseph off, and placed in his stead a man by the name of Noah; and the reason Joseph was cut off was, he had suffered the men to wear cushions on their coat sleeves, and the women to wear caps. He went through the streets of Kirtland with a dismal howl, crying, 'Woe, woe to the people.' On one occasion, about midnight, Brigham Young went out, and took with him a cowhide, and said to Hawley, 'If you don't quit annoying the people with your noise, I will cowhide you;' upon which he concluded he had suffered persecution enough for his master's sake, and shut up his noise. Journal of Discourses, Vol. VII, p. 114.

¹⁰Idem.

were varied and numerous. The nature of the people that joined the Church was, likewise, greatly diversified; some were noble and sincere, and others joined with the Mormons as a matter of speculation. Concerning the vain motives that prompted some to join the Church, John Whitmer said,

The time has not yet come that the law [Doctrine and Covenants section 42 on Consecration and Stewardship] can be fully established, for the disciples live scattered abroad and are not organized; our numbers are small, and the disciples untaught, consequently they understand not the things of the kingdom. There were some of the disciples who were flattered into this church because they thought that all things were to be common, therefore they thought to glut themselves upon the labors of others.¹¹

The Messenger and Advocate later accused some of the Church members of conduct "evincive of corrupt hearts and debased principles."¹² Some of those who became disappointed in the Church not only left it but also evoked a vindictiveness that brought persecution upon the Saints. Jacob Scott, one of the missionaries commissioned at the general conference of June, 1831, threw his Book of Mormon down while he was out preaching, jumped on it and declared, "[I] would go to hell before [I] would preach it where [I am] so much persecuted."¹³ Scott never performed his mission to Missouri and he soon began preaching against the Mormons. He was not alone in this rebellion among those elders, about whom John Whitmer wrote, ". . . some of those who had been commanded to take their journey [to Missouri] speedily . . . had denied the faith and

¹¹Whitmer, op. cit., Chapter III.

¹²Messenger and Advocate, III, No. 8 (May, 1837), p. 507.

¹³Hancock, op. cit., p. 51.

turned from the truth."¹⁴ He later stated, "In the absence of the elders [that went to Missouri] many apostatized, but many have returned again into the fold from whence they have strayed."¹⁵

Reasons for losing faith in the Church proved to be varied. In 1832 it became necessary for some of the Saints to take up arms as a matter of self protection against threatening mobs. Some members apostatized because they felt it was wrong to arm themselves.¹⁶ Norman A. Brown, who was on his journey to the promised land of Missouri, lost his horse. "Now," he reasoned, "is it possible that this is the work of God? If this had been the work of God, my horse would not have died when I was going to Zion."¹⁷ Brown not only withdrew from the Church but proceeded to vigorously contend against it.

Joseph H. Wakefield justified his withdrawal from the Church upon seeing the Prophet Joseph playing with the children after coming down from his translating room. About this, George A. Smith, one of Wakefield's converts to the Church, stated, "This [act] convinced him that the Prophet was not a man of God, and that the work was false."¹⁸

One family that arrived in Kirtland in 1833, was entertained in the Prophet's home. Emma Smith, the Prophet's wife, offered them a cup of

¹⁴Whitmer, op. cit., Chapter VIII.

¹⁵Ibid., Chapter IX.

¹⁶George A. Smith, "George A. Smith Journal," this entry is located at the end of 1833. A typed copy is located in the Church Historian's Office.

¹⁷Journal of Discourses, Vol. VII, p. 112.

¹⁸Idem.

tea or coffee to refresh themselves after their long journey. They were offended by this gesture and declared it to be contrary to a revelation and left the Church.¹⁹ Still another, Frazier Eaton, apostatized in 1836, because he was unable to enter the new Kirtland Temple on the first day of its dedication because it was filled. He felt that his contribution of seven hundred dollars toward its construction should have secured him a seat in attendance.²⁰ The faith of others faltered because the Mormon Prophet read the dedicatory prayer instead of offering it extemporaneously.

In the fall of 1831, after the elders returned from Missouri, apostasy continued as evidenced by Simeon Carter's statement that he "mourned because of the falling away in Kirtland."²¹ During this early period numerous trials were held in the Church courts for problems and improprieties committed among the Saints.²² Those in high office as well as the lesser members were subject to Church trials. Oliver Cowdery, although his trial was held in Missouri May 26, 1832, was brought to account for a certain transgression he had committed in the fall of 1830

¹⁹"George A. Smith Journal," May 27, 1833. This family believed that Emma Smith's invitation of a cup of tea or coffee was contrary to the instructions contained in the revelation known as the Word of Wisdom. Doctrine and Covenants, Section 89.

²⁰Journal of Discourses, Vol, XI, p. 9.

²¹"Journal History," October 25, 1831. This statement was taken from Minutes of a General Conference held at Orange, Cuyahoga County, Ohio.

²²"Far West Record," pp. 23-33. This document contains minutes of meetings held in Ohio and Missouri. Microfilmed copy is in the Church Historian's Office.

in the township of Mayfield, Ohio.²³ Newell Knight, the leader of the Coalesville, New York, Saints that settled in Thompson, Ohio, lost his license to function as an officer because of his bad spirit and wrong teaching.²⁴ Sidney Rigdon was brought to task for preaching false doctrine when possessed with an evil spirit;²⁵ Martin Harris was put on trial for stating that the Prophet Joseph had drunk "too much liquor when he was translating the Book of Mormon . . . and that he exalted himself above Joseph."²⁶

Other problems arose among the Church members during the early years of the Mormons in Ohio. Orson Pratt and Reynolds Cahoon were

²³Ibid., p. 33. Ziba Peterson was tried on a similar charge for which he lost his Church credentials to teach. Ezra Booth learned of this and added the following detail to the incident. "While descending the Missouri River, Peter [Whitmer] and Frederick [G. Williams], two of my company, divulged a secret respecting Oliver [Cowdery], which placed his conduct on a parallel with Ziba's [Peterson]; for which Ziba was deprived of his Elder and Apostleship: 'Let that which was bestowed upon Ziba, be taken from him, and let him stand as a member in the Church and let him labor with his own hands with the brethren.'" Ohio Star, II, No. 47 (November 24, 1831), n. p. The minutes of Oliver Cowdery's trial reads as follows: "To take into consideration a certain transgression of our Brother Oliver committed in the fall of 1830, in the Township of Mayfield, Cuyahoga County, State of Ohio. Which after some discussion he, having frankly confessed the same to the satisfaction of all present; it was resolved, that these proceedings be recorded for the benefit and satisfaction of the Church of Christ. The reason why the above case was not taken into consideration by proper authority in the Church previous this day, is that some of the Elders supposed that the affair had been adjusted last year when Brother Oliver made his confession to the individuals injured and received his forgiveness." "Kirtland High Council Minutes," p. 33. A microfilm copy of the original is located in the Church Historian's Office.

²⁴"Far West Record," pp. 29-30.

²⁵Journal of Discourses, Vol. XI, p. 6.

²⁶History of the Church, II, p. 26.

appointed to visit the doubting members in the communities of Painesville, Chardon and Kirtland in January, 1832. In so doing they excommunicated several members for transgressing the laws of the Church.²⁷ George A. Smith, later reminiscing over this period of internal problems, said,

We had High Council [court] upon High Council Council [court], Bishop's trial upon Bishop's trial; and labor[ed] and toil[ed] constantly to settle difficulties and get our minds instructed in principle and doctrine, and in the power that we had to contend with.²⁸

Upon this subject, the Messenger and Advocate added, "there was much evil done, and many difficulties presenting themselves before the high council and bishop's council."²⁹ Undoubtedly, in some cases these internal problems became public knowledge and contributed to a lack of confidence on the part of the non-Mormons.

Economic problems constituted a source of domestic irritation from the beginning and continued as a major problem throughout the Mormon interlude in Ohio. The establishment of the Morley common property "family" prior to the missionaries in 1830, lent itself to internal dissatisfaction later in the Church. John Whitmer reflected on this matter as follows:

About these days [February, 1831] Joseph and Sidney arrived at Kirtland, to the joy and satisfaction of the Saints. The disciples had all things common and were going to destruction very fast as to temporal things, for they considered from reading the scripture that what belonged to one brother, belonged to any of the brethren, therefore they would take each other's clothes and other

²⁷"Journal History," January 1, 1832.

²⁸Journal of Discourses, Vol, XI, p. 7.

²⁹Messenger and Advocate, I, No. 11 (August, 1835), p. 168.

property and use it without leave, which brought on confusion and disappointments, for they did not understand the scripture.³⁰

Although it was not a feature of the Mormon faith, some of the participants of common stock continued in it after their conversion to Mormonism. Levi Hancock, upon making a visit to Kirtland in February, 1831, observed that the company that Isaac Morley maintained at the farm was "large enough to bring on a famine," and he wondered how it was all financed. Levi related the following disturbing incident during his short visit to that society:

While I was in the room at "Father Morleys" as we all called him, this same Hermon Bassett [sic] came to me and took my watch out of my pocket and walked off as though it was his. I thought he would bring it back soon but was disappointed as he sold it. I asked him what he meant by selling my watch. 'Oh,' said he, 'I thought it was all in the family.' I told him I did not like such family doings and I would not bear it.³¹

Upon the arrival of the Prophet Joseph Smith in Kirtland, he counseled the Church against this system of community of goods and appointed Edward Partridge, a merchant of Painesville, to the office of "bishop unto the Church."³² Partridge was instructed to devote all of his time to the economic or financial affairs of the Church. Shortly after this appointment, the "law" previously promised the Saints was given which outlined an economic replacement for Morley's "family." This new

³⁰Whitmer, *op. cit.*, Chapter II.

³¹Hancock, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

³²Doctrine and Covenants, 41:9. Partridge's appointment as bishop was contained in the first revelation the Prophet received in Ohio.

economic system of the Church became known as the Law of Consecration and Stewardship.³³ It replaced the common property notion then being practiced by the Morley group. This new system specified, "Thou shalt not take thy brother's garment; thou shalt pay for that which thou shalt receive of thy brother."³⁴

It required a period of several months, however, before Morley's "common stock" ceased to be a matter of concern to some of the members in the Church. In Chardon, Geauga County, in April, 1831, a case was brought against three Mormon women for an assault and battery offense against the wife of Benjamin Shattuck. It seems that the bickering began with a controversy over the common stock principle which was being practiced to some extent by the members in Chardon. The three ladies claimed that

³³The Law of Consecration and Stewardship requires each participating member to consecrate all of his property to the Church under the direction of the Bishop. This was to be done by deed and the decision, theoretically, was to be a final one. The participant, then, received by the mutual consent of the bishop and himself a certain amount of property and goods judged to be "sufficient for himself and family." The surplus property or earnings from the several stewardships marked as surplus was to be used for community growth and to care for the needy families. The stewardship was to be deeded to the recipient and the property he received was legally his, and upon leaving the society he could remove such property with him. Certain peculiarities and details of this economic program may be further considered in the revelations themselves, beginning with Doctrine and Covenants, Section 42 and also the following sources: Hyrum Andrus, "Joseph Smith and the Law of Consecration," 1962 Seminar on the Prophet Joseph Smith, (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Extension Publication, 1962), pp. 2-29. Leonard J. Arrington, "Early Mormon Communitarianism," Western Humanities Review, VII, (Autumn, 1953), pp. 341-364. Max H. Parkin, "An Attempt to Clarify and to Make Some Distinctions Between the Law of Consecration and Stewardship and the United Order," (Provo, Utah: An unpublished graduate paper located in the special collections division of the Brigham Young University Library), pp. 1-29.

³⁴Doctrine and Covenants, 42:54.

they entered the Shattuck residence to retrieve property belonging to themselves. Shattuck's wife, who was present, objected; Shattuck alleged they abused his wife and behaved in an un-Christian way. The court acquitted the three women of the charges. Shattuck was furious with the results and aired his disapproval against the ladies, as well as their presiding elder, Edson Fuller, and the folly of the Church members in general in the Painesville Telegraph.³⁵ Shattuck, who had been a member of the Church, also lamented that, "They [the Mormons in Chardon] have made every effort to blast my character and deprive me of the means of livelihood since I left them."³⁶ In bringing such private matters to public attention, Benjamin Shattuck added to Mormonism's already unpopular image.

When the Saints from Coalesville, New York, arrived in Ohio in May, 1831, they were directed to move to Thompson, Geauga County, and settle there and participate in the system of Consecration and Stewardship. To the chagrin of the Church in Thompson, Lemán Copley withdrew his consecration of a considerable tract of land upon which the Saints were settled. Their leader, Newel Knight, hurried to the Prophet in Kirtland for advice, only to be instructed to gather the Thompson Saints and journey to Missouri to settle there. John Whitmer, referring to the difficulty in Thompson, said that it caused some **to** deny the faith while others quickly left for Missouri to avoid being harmed by their enemies

³⁵Painesville Telegraph, II, No. 45 (April 26, 1831), n. p.

³⁶Idem.

in Thompson.³⁷ Ezra Thayer and Leman Copley figured in the problem, but neither was immediately excommunicated from the Church for these failings. These many domestic problems in the Church left their harmful effects upon it. "There was such trouble and unbelief among those who call themselves disciples of Christ," said John Whitmer. "Some apostatized and became enemies to the cause of God, and persecuted the Saints," he concluded.³⁸

The Apostasy of Ezra Booth

This discordant teasing by the apostates was to receive considerable impetus by the defection of Ezra Booth, a Methodist minister of Mantua, Geauga County, who was converted to the Church in May, 1831. The means by which he was drawn to Mormonism is one of the most celebrated acts of healing performed by the Mormon Prophet. The story was preserved by B. A. Hindsdale, the president of Hiram College, as he retold it at the funeral service of Simonds Ryder in 1870.³⁹

After his conversion, Booth went to Hiram, Portage County, on a short missionary tour. While there he heard Simonds Ryder, a Campbellite

³⁷Whitmer, op. cit., Chapter VIII.

³⁸Ibid., Chapter IX.

³⁹President Hindsdale's account of the healing is as follows: "Ezra Booth, of Mantua, a Methodist preacher of much more than ordinary culture, and with strong natural abilities, in company with his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Johnson, and some other citizens of this place [Hiram], visited Smith at his home in Kirtland, in 1831. Mrs. Johnson had been afflicted for some time with a lame arm, and was not at the time of the visit able to lift her hand to her head. The party visited Smith partly out of curiosity, and partly to see for themselves what there might be in the new doctrine. During the interview, the conversation turned on the subject of supernatural gifts, such as were conferred in the days of the apostles. Some one said, "Here is Mrs. Johnson with a lame arm; has God given any power to men now on the earth to cure her?" A few moments

minister, preaching a sermon. Booth requested the opportunity to speak afterward which Ryder granted. Booth's sermon so impressed Ryder that he also was determined to visit the Saints in Kirtland. While Ryder was in Kirtland, he heard a young Mormon girl allegedly predict the destruction of Pekin, China. He was not greatly impressed by his visit to Kirtland, but the following month he read a newspaper article reporting the destruction of Pekin. He was so deeply moved by that event that he joined the Mormon Church. Accordingly, he was ordained an elder at the June, 1831, conference.⁴⁰ At that conference Ezra Booth was commissioned by the Prophet Joseph to participate in the first missionary tour to Missouri. Symonds Ryder's commission to preach, however, was not included among the twenty-eight missionaries to go to Missouri, but it did come later with an unfortunate misspelling of his name.⁴¹ This misspelling

later, when the conversation had turned in another direction, Smith rose, and walking across the room, taking Mrs. Johnson by the hand, said in the most solemn and impressive manner: 'Woman, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, I command thee to be whole, and immediately left the room.

The company were awe-stricken at the infinite presumption of the man, and the calm assurance with which he spoke. The sudden mental and moral shock--I know not how better to explain the well attested fact--electrified the rheumatic arm--Mrs. Johnson at once lifted it up with ease, and on her return home the next day she was able to do her washing without difficulty or pain." Cited in A. S. Hayden, "Life and Character of Symonds Ryder [sic]," Early History of the Disciples (Cincinnati: Chase and Hall Publishers, 1876), p. 250.

⁴⁰"Far West Record," p. 5.

⁴¹B. H. Roberts, a Church historian, wrote concerning Ryder's faulty spelling, "Both in the letter he received and in the official commission to preach, however, his name was spelled R-i-d-e-r, instead of R-y-d-e-r" History of the Church, footnotes by B. H. Roberts, Vol. I, p. 261. In Hindsdale's account he only mentions the commission, but not the letter. Said he, "His commission came, and he found his name misspelled." Hayden, op. cit., p. 252.

perplexed Ryder, and caused him to question the source of such a commission. While meditating over this problem during the summer, he was ready to withdraw from the Church upon the return of Ezra Booth from Missouri in September. When the two men met in the late summer, they found that their enchantment for Mormonism was gone, and they were both ready to speak against the Church.

The apostasy of Ezra Booth, a man of notable background, was thought to be a means of diverting others from Mormonism. Accordingly, Reverend Ira Eddy of Nelson, Portage County, requested Booth to make available to others his observations and criticisms of the Church.⁴² Booth complied with the request and wrote a series of nine letters to Rev. Eddy which appeared in the Ohio Star at Ravenna from October 13 to December 8, 1831. In anticipation of the series, the Star editorialized as follows:

We shall commence next week the publication of several numbers on the subject of Mormonism--being an exposition of that delusion, by the Rev. Mr. Booth, who, as many of our readers are aware, about a year since embraced their faith, but has recently become convinced of their hypocrisy, and has publicly withdrawn from them. The numbers of Mr. Booth bear the impress of honest sincerity and deep repentance.⁴³

Booth realized that his own conversion to Mormonism was instrumental in bringing others into the Church, and his expressed purpose in writing the letters were to help relieve those people of the Mormon

⁴²Ohio Star, II, No. 42 (October 20, 1831), n. p.

⁴³Ohio Star, II, No. 40 (October 6, 1831), n. p.

delusion and to dissuade others from joining.⁴⁴

These nine letters had extensive circulation and an imposing effect upon the public mind for a time; therefore, a consideration of a number of their most conspicuous objections to Mormonism will be considered. Much of Booth's writing was confined to the proceedings of the mission to Missouri during the summer of 1831 in establishing Zion of the latter days.⁴⁵ Also, two of the letters reviewed the supernatural events that occurred earlier in the year. An examination of three of Booth's most salient objections to Mormonism will be considered. They

⁴⁴Ohio Star, II, No. 41 (October 13, 1831), n. p. A week later in a note to Lewis L. Rice, the editor of the Star, Booth extended his reasons for writing the letters as follows: "1st. To discharge a duty which I owe to God and the public. 2d. To rescue, if possible, the honest and conscientious who are involved in it. 3d. To prevent others from falling into it. 4th. To comply with the request of a number who have solicited an exposure of Mormonism." "Mormonism," Ohio Star, II, No. 42 (October 20, 1831), n. p.

⁴⁵Much of the Mormon concept of Zion or the New Jerusalem was developed during the fall and winter of 1830 and summer of 1831. Prior to the departure of the Lamanite missionaries from New York, the Prophet Joseph recorded by way of revelation that, ". . . the city of Zion shall be built, but it shall be given hereafter. Behold, I say unto you that it shall be on the borders by the Lamanites." Doctrine and Covenants, 28:9. Apparently Oliver Cowdery spoke of this fact when he first passed through the Western Reserve because the first Telegraph article about the Mormons stated, "We understand that he [Cowdery] is bound for the regions beyond the Mississippi, where he contemplates founding a 'City of Refuge' for his followers" Painesville Telegraph, II, No. 22 (November 16, 1830), n. p. Upon John Whitmer's arrival in Ohio in December, the Telegraph made reference to the boundary of the promised land. Supra., p. 46. When the Prophet Joseph arrived in Ohio, he was told by revelation, "Thou shalt ask, and it shall be revealed unto you in mine own due time where the New Jerusalem shall be built." Doctrine and Covenants, 42:62. Following the June, 1831, conference and the arrival of the elders in Missouri, they were informed that Missouri "is the land of promise, and the place for the city of Zion." Furthermore, they were informed that Independence, Jackson County, was to be the center place of Zion. Doctrine and Covenants, 57:1-3. On August 2, 1831, Zion was dedicated by Sidney Rigdon for the gathering place of the Saints as a place of refuge when future judgments from God were to come.

include his assertions to (1) the inconsistencies in Smith's revelations; (2) the Church's despotic tendencies; (3) the manifest weakness in the personality of Joseph Smith and other leaders.

(1) An Assertion of Inconsistencies in the Revelations.

In Booth's seventh letter to Rev. Eddy, he included an extensive letter he had previously written to Bishop Edward Partridge in Missouri. He had written to Partridge to dissuade him from Mormonism by reviewing some of the complaints the Bishop, himself, had expressed during the visit to Missouri the previous summer. Booth felt that Partridge was about to fall from the Church and needed but little encouragement from him to bring it about. Booth said of Partridge, "he has frequently staggered and been ready to fall."⁴⁶ Partridge, himself, admitted this, and Booth knew that if the Bishop would join him, the anti-Mormon force could be strengthened. In appealing to Bishop Partridge, Booth said that he must "cease to support a system, which [he] conceive[d] to be grossly inconsistent."⁴⁷ Referring to the high expectation of those who made the expedition to Missouri in 1831, Booth further stated in his letter to Partridge,

⁴⁶"Letter Number VII," Ohio Star, II, No. 47 (November 24, 1831), n. p. On August 5, 1831, while in Missouri, Bishop Partridge wrote to his wife who remained in Painesville as follows: "You know I stand in an important station, and as I am occasionally chastened I sometimes feel as though I must fall, not to give up the cause, but I fear my station is above what I can perform to the acceptance of my Heavenly Father. I hope you and I may conduct ourselves as at last to land our souls in the haven of eternal rest. Pray for me that I may not fall" Edward Partridge, "Edward Partridge Journal," op. cit., p. 7.

⁴⁷"Letter Number VII," op. cit., n. p.

The first thing that materially affected my mind, so as to weaken my confidence, was the falsehood of Joseph's vision. You know perfectly well that Joseph had, or said he had, a vision, or revelation, in which it was made known to him by the spirit, that Oliver had raised up a large Church in Missouri.⁴⁸

According to Booth, when the elders arrived in Missouri with the Prophet Joseph, the efforts of Oliver Cowdery and the other Lamanite missionaries who arrived there the winter previously did not meet the anticipations of the elders; Booth inferred that it was expected that they would find a church of substantial size prepared for them, but they had only converted four females.⁴⁹ Evidently, Bishop Partridge was disturbed over their disappointment and he reprimanded the Prophet for making his prophecy to the contrary. The Prophet replied to the Bishop, "I see it, and it will be so," reported Booth.⁵⁰ It was this event that prompted Booth to write, "And from that time I resolved to weigh well every circumstance"⁵¹ Concerning his disappointment in not finding a large Church established in Missouri, Booth further stated,

On our arrival in the Western part of the State of Missouri, the place of our destination, we discovered that prophecy and vision had failed, or rather proved false. This was so notorious, and the evidence so clear that no

⁴⁸"Letter Number V," Ohio Star, II, No. 45 (November 10, 1831), n. p.

⁴⁹Idem. Peter Whitmer stated that after the Lamanite missionaries were discharged from the Indian lands west of Missouri, "then we resorted among the Gentiles and declared the word and baptized seven." He made this entry January 13, 1831, and possibly other members were received after that time until the arrival of the Prophet and the elders during the summer, "Journal History," January 29, 1831.

⁵⁰"Letter Number VII," op. cit., n. p.

⁵¹Idem.

one could mistake it--so much so, that Mr. Rigdon himself said that "Joseph's vision was a bad thing." This was glossed over, apparently, to the satisfaction of most persons present; but not fully to my own. It excited a suspicion that some things were not right, and prepared my mind for the investigation of a variety of circumstances⁵²

This disappointment seemed to be the start of Booth's serious objections against the Church. In the area of Church inconsistency he further contended that the law of the Church objected to Church members from getting into debt, whereas the Church itself did so if it were expedient. About this he said,

The law of the Church enjoins, that no debt with the world shall be contracted. But a thousand acres of land in the town of Thompson, could be purchased for one half its value, and he [Bishop Partridge] was commanded to secure it; and in order to do it, he was under the necessity to contract a debt with the world, to the amount of several hundred dollars. He hesitated but the command was repeated, 'you must secure the land.'⁵³

⁵²"Letter Number I," Ohio Star, II, No. 41 (October 13, 1831), n. p. Booth also stated that Bishop Partridge expressed disappointment in the size of the branch of the Church in Missouri and complained to the Prophet as follows: "I wish you not to tell us any more, that you know these by the spirit when you do not; you told us, that Oliver had raised up a large Church here, and there is no such thing." Booth also quoted a revelation that was given to the Prophet to quiet Partridge's insolence. The fact that the Prophet had the revelation corroborates that he had trouble with the Bishop; however, the Prophet gives no commentary to explain the reason for the rebuke. The revelation reads, "Yea, for this cause I have sent you hither, and have selected my servant Edward Partridge, and have appointed unto him his mission in this land. But if he repent not of his sins, which are unbelief and blindness of heart, let him take heed lest he fall. Behold his mission is given unto him, and it shall not be given again." Doctrine and Covenants, 58:14-16. The Prophet does state, however, that Ezra Booth arrived shortly before he received that revelation, and it may have reference to the same problem that Booth recorded. History of the Church, Vol. I, p. 191. In an attempt to identify the reason for the Prophet's chastizement of Bishop Partridge a study of Mormon commentaries offers no explanations.

⁵³"Letter Number VII," op. cit., n. p. Doctrine and Covenants 64:27-28.

After affairs had been settled in Missouri, most of the elders prepared to return home. The elders were instructed to return to Ohio by sailing down the Missouri River as far as St. Louis in some canoes they were to secure.⁵⁴ Upon the third day of their travels, they arrived at McIlwaine's Bend far short of St. Louis; here a revelation was uttered by the Prophet revoking the former one which directed them to travel on the river. The new revelation instructed the elders not to travel on the water due to its inherent dangers in the last days.⁵⁵ At this time the company of elders separated and a smaller party consisting of the Prophet, Rigdon, and Cowdery which continued by stage were instructed to preach at Cincinnati enroute to Kirtland.⁵⁶ Upon arriving in that city, the small party failed to spend time there preaching, but responded to a subsequent revelation which instructed them that their "labors even now are wanted more abundantly" in Kirtland than in the "congregation of the wicked" city of Cincinnati.⁵⁷

Booth felt that all these changes were prompted by selfish expediency and were contradictions to former revelations. He described his feelings as follows:

Thus they turn and twist the commandments, to suit their whims, and they violate them when they please with perfect impunity. They can at any time obtain a commandment suited to their desires, and as their desires fluctuate and become reversed, they get a new one to supercede the other, and

⁵⁴Doctrine and Covenants, 60:5-7.

⁵⁵Doctrine and Covenants, 61:23-28.

⁵⁶Doctrine and Covenants, 60:6; 61:30.

⁵⁷Doctrine and Covenants, 61:32.

hence the contradictions which abound in this species of revelations.⁵⁸

The Prophet Joseph and his faithful followers, however, found no inconsistency in a changed circumstance justifying a revelation from the Lord instructing the brethren to change their course. In fact, before the Prophet started on the Missouri trip a circumstantial alteration in Kirtland evoked the following counsel to the Lord's Prophet, "Wherefore I, the Lord, command and revoke, as it seemeth me good; and all this to be answered upon the heads of the rebellious, saith the Lord."⁵⁹ Yet, for Booth and his readers, the seemingly inconsistent message of the revelations was the basis for criticism and disbelief.

(2) An Assertion of the Church's Despotic Tendencies.

Prior to the movement of the Church from New York to Ohio, a schism occurred in Fayette, New York, wherein Hyrum Page claimed to receive revelations through the means of a "seer stone." Some of the members believed Page. Consequently, the Prophet Joseph was directed by revelation that he alone should receive revelations for the Church.⁶⁰ Booth vigorously objected to such autocratic control in the hands of the Mormon leader. In fact, his eighth letter is wholly devoted to this objection and Booth referred to the subject a number of times in the other

⁵⁸"Letter Number VII," op. cit., n. p.

⁵⁹Doctrine and Covenants, 56:4. This particular repeal of a revelation was given due to Ezra Thayre's failure to fulfill a mission to Missouri with Thomas B. Marsh.

⁶⁰Doctrine and Covenants, 28:2.

letters. On this subject, he said,

In this, as well as several of the commandments, it is clearly and explicitly stated, that the right of delivering written commandments, and revelations, belong exclusively to Smith, and no other person can interfere, without being guilty of sacrilege In this office he is to stand, until another is appointed in his stead, unless he falls through transgression; and in such a case, he himself is authorized to appoint his successor. But how is he to be detected, should he become guilty of transgression?⁶¹

Booth further objected because the elders were obliged to conform to instructions contained in Smith's revelations in matters both large and small. He complained that the revelations contained instructions that Smith was "to rule the conference;" he was to "head the church;" the Saints were to "build him a house;" and they were to "lend him a thousand dollars," or they would be "cast off for rebelling against the commandments of the Lord."⁶²

Booth maintained that once the Mormon Prophet had control of the Church, the next step would be to gain an "ascendancy over the hearts and consciences of the natives [Indians]" as well as put the old Missouri settlers in a "state of servitude."⁶³ In regard to his belief that Mormonism was an underhanded scheme to conquer men's hearts and minds Booth said,

There probably never was a plan better suited to lead the sinner and the conscientious, when in an unguarded hour they listen to its fatal insinuations. The plan is so ingeniously contrived, having for its aim one principal point, viz: the establishment of a society in Missouri, over which

⁶¹"Letter Number VIII," Ohio Star, II, No. 49 (December 8, 1831), n.p.

⁶²"Letter Number II," Ohio Star, II, No. 42 (October 20, 1831), n.p.

⁶³"Letter Number VI," Ohio Star, II, No. 46 (November 17, 1831), n. p.

the converts of this delusive system, are to possess unlimited and despotic sway. To accomplish this, the Elders of the Church, by commandment given in Missouri, and of which I was both an eye and ear witness, are to go forth to preach Mormonism to every creature; and now, said Mr. Rigdon--'The Lord has set us our stint; no matter how soon we perform it--for when this is done, he will make his second appearance.'⁶⁴

Again on the subject of servitude Booth stated,

But when viewing it [Mormonism] as an instance of a deep laid scheme, and the cunning artifice of crafty impostors, designed to allure the credulous and the unsuspecting, into a state of unqualified vassalage, it presents a melancholy picture of the direful depravity of the human heart. . . .⁶⁵

Booth further alleged that the Church was a system whereby the Mormon Prophet would be provided a livelihood without the efforts of "the sweat of the brow" by allowing the Church to support him in his role as Prophet.⁶⁶ To some extent Smith's revelations corroborated some of Booth's objections, but to the Mormons these objections were easily explained. It seems that it was not the events Booth reported that the Mormons objected to, but rather the conclusions he drew which prompted the leaders to repudiate Booth's letters as containing falsehoods.

(3) Weakness in the Personality of the Prophet and Other Leaders.

One night during their visit in Missouri, Joseph and others lodged in a school house. Apparently Booth was there and observed that Bishop Partridge brought to the Prophet's attention that the land selected for Zion was inferior in quality to other adjoining areas. According to Booth's report of the incident in his letter to Bishop Partridge,

⁶⁴"Letter Number I," Ohio Star, II, No. 41 (October 13, 1831), n.p.

⁶⁵"Letter Number V," op. cit., n.p.

⁶⁶"Letter Number VI," op. cit., n.p.

he thought that Joseph behaved inappropriately for a prophet. Booth recounted the events with Bishop Partridge, and then concluded,

. . . Had you seen the same spirit manifested in me, which you saw in him [Joseph], would you not have concluded me to be under the influence of violent passions, bordering on madness, rather than the meek and gentle spirit which the Gospel inculcates.⁶⁷

Booth further said,

Now, permit me to inquire, have you [Partridge] not frequently observed in Joseph, a want of the sobriety, prudence, and stability, which are some of the most prominent traits in the Christian character? Have you not often discovered in him, a spirit of lightness and levity, a temper of mind easily irritated, and an habitual proneness to jesting and joking? Have you not reason then to believe, or at least to suspect, that the revelations which come from him, are something short of infallible, and instead of being the production of divine wisdom, emanate from his own weak mind?⁶⁸

Joseph and some of the elders left Independence on the 9th of

⁶⁷"Letter Number VII," op. cit., n. p. It should be remembered that according to Booth, Bishop Partridge reproached Joseph on two counts, the first being against Joseph's selection of Independence for Zion, and the second was the disappointment in finding such a small branch of the Church in Independence as a result of Oliver's efforts.

On November 19, 1831, Sidney Rigdon wrote a letter of reproof to the leaders in Independence censoring Bishop Partridge for insulting the Prophet Joseph. A conference was held in Zion March 10, 1832, during which Rigdon's letter was discussed and answered; the committee's answer to Sidney Rigdon in part said, "In relation to the fifth charge which reads: 'His [Partridge's] having insulted the Lord's prophet in particular and assumed authority over him in open violation of the Laws of God.' Brother Edward says, that in relation to the same although the circumstances occurred previous to said conference if Brother Joseph has not forgiven him he hopes he will, as he is and has always been sorry." "Kirtland Council Minutes," pp. 27-28. Located on microfilm in the Church Historian's Office.

⁶⁸"Letter Number VII," op. cit., n. p. Others on occasion were unimpressed with the Prophet's personality, and were either repelled by it or accepted it for what it was. In 1833 Joel Hills Johnson reported the Prophet to have said, "I suppose you think that I am [a] great green lubberly, fellow." "His expression was an exact representation of his

August and traveled on the Missouri River aboard a flotilla of sixteen canoes. The morning after their departure Booth stated that the spirit of animosity and discord manifested itself on board. Oliver, upon finding this conduct displeasing cautioned, "As the Lord God liveth, if you do not behave better, some accident will befall you." Booth stated that a "spirit, similar to that which influenced Joseph in the school house," was manifested in Cowdery at that time.⁶⁹

On the third day of travel similar feelings of irritation arose and some of the men refused to exert their physical powers in maintaining stability on board the canoes which placed them in danger of upsetting. This was sufficient, said Booth, "to flutter the timid spirit of the Prophet and his scribe."⁷⁰ Near nightfall they landed and made camp near the water's edge. Considerable discussion ensued and "Joseph and Sidney were reprimanded for their excessive cowardice," said Booth, by some of the elders in consequence of their apprehension during the dangerous trip.⁷¹ The following day the journey by water was discontinued

person," said Johnson, "being large, and tall and not having a particle of beard about his face." "Joel Hills Johnson Journal," p. 11. Located in the Special Collections Library at Brigham Young University. Luman Andrus Shurtliff wrote in 1832 after traveling to Kirtland to see the Mormon leader, "[Joseph Smith was] not such a looking man as I expected to see. He looked green and not very intelligent. I felt disappointed and returned home rather cast down." "Luman Andrus Shurtliff Journal," p. 19. Located in the Special Collections Library at Brigham Young University. Yet, both of these men overcame the repulsion and eventually joined the Church.

⁶⁹Idem.

⁷⁰Idem.

⁷¹The Prophet does not add any details to this trouble, but it seems that he alludes to the problem in a future revelation. Joseph and his party arrived in Kirtland on the 27th of August; then on September 11, he received the following revelation: "Behold, I, the Lord was angry with

as directed by a revelation because of the danger of traveling on the waters in the last days. Of these eventful days, the Mormon Prophet only briefly noted the trouble they had while traveling on the river during the third day. Of this he said, "Nothing very important occurred till the third day, when many of the dangers so common upon the western waters, manifested themselves"72

Although these events in Missouri did not topple the faith of the elders, they strongly contributed to the defection of Ezra Booth, and he used them to assail the Church and assist him in persuading others to re-examine Mormonism.⁷³ Naturally, all of these objections were printed in the Ohio Star and read by many people in the Reserve.

him who was my servant Ezra Booth, and also my servant Isaac Morley [Booth's traveling companion], for they kept not the law, neither the commandment. They sought evil in their hearts, and I, the Lord, withheld my Spirit. They condemned for evil that thing in which there was no evil; nevertheless I have forgiven my servant Isaac Morley. And also my servant Edward Partridge, behold, he hath sinned, and Satan seeketh to destroy his soul" Doctrine and Covenants, 64:15-17. It seems evident that this rebuke referred to the events that occurred during the trip in Missouri, for Partridge remained there and did not return to Kirtland with the others. Possibly the chastizement of Booth and Morley for finding fault with Joseph may have reference to their criticism against the Prophet on the canoe while traveling down the Missouri River.

⁷²History of the Church, I, pp. 202-203.

⁷³Booth wrote his letter to Bishop Partridge in Missouri with the expectation that he might persuade the bishop also to renounce Mormonism. Seemingly, the fact that Booth's letter to Partridge which comprised most of his seventh letter to Rev. Eddy, which recounted certain of the Missouri events they mutually experienced, would give credibility to the events reviewed in the letter--Booth's personal impressions and conclusions excepted--despite the fact that Booth wrote it after he defected. Consequently, Booth's seventh letter in the Ohio Star is reproduced in Appendix C.

An Underlying Cause of Booth's Defection. There is evidence that Booth's apprehension began in Kirtland at the time of his call to travel to Missouri. The missionaries were instructed to travel two by two and preach along the way while journeying on foot to Missouri. Booth, who was unaccustomed to such a method of travel, acknowledged that he "hesitated for a while."⁷⁴ George A. Smith accused Booth of being weakened by his "living on the fat of the land, as he did among his Methodist brethren," and found that when he had "to labor and toil for the good of Zion he began to question his faith."⁷⁵ Booth obviously resented the fact that the Prophet and his party--Rigdon, Harris, and Partridge--traveled to Missouri as "gentlemen" while he and the others traveled with packs on their backs and subsisted by begging and preaching as they traveled.⁷⁶ Likewise on their return, Joseph, Sidney, and Oliver, took the stage after the McIlwaine's Bend incident, and the others were left to manage for themselves. Booth was indignant about this, and he stated that he resented the beggardly way he and the others were expected to return while living off the land and preaching as they traveled.⁷⁷

He was also noticeably disappointed upon his arrival in Missouri, for he said he expected further manifestations of the Spirit of God and a display of that Spirit in the form of speaking in tongues,

⁷⁴"Letter Number V," op. cit., n.p.

⁷⁵Journal of Discourses, Vol. VII, p. 113.

⁷⁶"Letter Number V," op. cit., n.p.

⁷⁷"Letter Number VII," op. cit., n.p.

miracles, and an increase in his own fervor for the work. Yet, no such re-inforcements occurred.⁷⁸ The Mormon Prophet observed such an expectation in Booth and commented on it as follows:

. . . When he [Booth] actually learned that faith, humility, patience, and tribulation go before blessing, and that God brings low before He exalts; that instead of the 'Savior's granting him power to smite men and make them believe,' (as he said he wanted God to do in his own case) . . . he was disappointed.⁷⁹

These disappointments prompted a spirit of suspicion and fault-finding which caused Booth to return to Ohio disgruntled and disenchanted. It did not take the Church long to act against Booth who arrived in Kirtland on September 1st, for on the sixth of the month he was relieved of his license to teach as an elder of the Church and excommunicated.⁸⁰ Later in the month both Booth and Simonds Ryder participated in a Methodist Camp meeting at Shalersville, Trumbull County, at which time they both made a public renunciation of their Mormon faith.⁸¹ The following month Booth wrote his first letter to Reverend Ira Eddy after which it and the other eight letters appeared in the Ohio Star. Upon reading the letters the Mormon Prophet seemed to be most concerned over Booth's faulty interpretations and absurd conclusions. About this Smith wrote,

When he was disappointed by his own evil heart, he turned away, and, as said before, became an apostate, and wrote a series of letters, which, by their coloring, falsity, and vain calculations to overthrow the work of the Lord, exposed

⁷⁸"Letter Number V," op. cit., n. p.

⁷⁹History of the Church, I, p. 216.

⁸⁰"Manuscript History of the Great Lakes Mission--Ohio," September 6, 1831. This history is located in the Church Historian's Office.

⁸¹Warren News Letter and Trumbull County Republican (Warren, Ohio), III, No. 7 (October 4, 1831), n. p.

his weakness, wickedness and folly, and left him a monument of his own shame, for the world to wonder at.⁸²

It was expected that Booth's letters would have a ruinous effect upon the Church. Later in November, 1831, the Ohio Star observed that the letters were "exerting an important influence in opening the eyes of many of the really deluded subjects of Mormonism."⁸³ Ambrose Palmer, one who was converted to the Church by the preaching of Booth earlier in the year, noticed that the letters gave Mormonism "such a coloring, or appearance of falsehood, that the public feeling was, that 'Mormonism' was overthrown."⁸⁴ The Church sent out a number of the elders--including Reynolds Cahoon, David Whitmer, Thomas B. Marsh, and others--to visit the branches and thereby lessen the consequence of the letters upon the Saints. This proved to have an ameliorating effect upon the Church members and much of the harm that could have resulted was nullified. The Prophet also participated in the campaign against the letters, for he wrote,

⁸²History of the Church, I. pp. 216-217. It seems to this writer that the main objection that the Prophet entertained against Booth's letters were contained in the statement, "by their coloring, falsity, and vain calculations." One need not suppose, however, that there may not be many truths reflected in Booth's letters regarding his association with the Mormons. Corroborative entries in other histories or journals would suggest that this is true. (Compare Appendix C with Mormon sources in chapter four.) It would seem that Smith's objection to the letters was to be found in Booth's distorting certain objectives and motives of Mormonism, which were designed to save men from God's impending judgments. It seems, too, that it was in the area of Booth's interpretations that the Prophet and others resisted, not so much that he extensively altered the events themselves.

⁸³Ohio Star, II, No. 42 (October 20, 1831), n. p.

⁸⁴"Journal History," December 31, 1831.

From this time [early in December, 1831], until the 8th or 10th of January, 1832, myself and Elder Rigdon continued to preach in Shalersville, Ravenna, and other places, setting forth the truth, vindicating the cause of our Redeemer; showing that the day of vengeance was coming upon this generation like a thief in the night; that prejudice, blindness and darkness filled the minds of many, and caused them to persecute the true Church, and reject the true light; by which means we did much towards allaying the excited feelings which were growing out of the scandalous letters then being published in the Ohio Star, at Ravenna, by the before-mentioned apostate, Ezra Booth.⁸⁵

Sidney Rigdon planned a visit to the town of Ravenna on Sunday, Christmas Day, 1831, to review the letters in a public debate with Booth, himself, whom Rigdon requested to attend the meeting. In Sidney's announcement of the debate he said the letters "are unfair and false representation of the subject on which they treat."⁸⁶ In the same public announcement, Rigdon also invited Simonds Ryder, who resided in Hiram to debate the Book of Mormon with him. Ryder responded to the invitation with a lengthy letter to the editor of the Star. He refused to meet Sidney in public on the grounds that they both lived in Hiram, and a private meeting would avoid them embarrassment if a problem arose. Ryder expressed the fear that Rigdon's

Irrascible temper, loquacious extravagance, impaired state of mind, and want of due respect to his superiors. . . would render him in such a place, unmanageable, and . . . therefore fail of accomplishing the desired object.⁸⁷

Ryder informed Sidney that since the return of the elders from Missouri the people had generally left the Mormon meetings in Hiram and

⁸⁵History of the Church, Vol. I, p. 241.

⁸⁶Ohio Star, II, No. 50 (December 15, 1831), n. p.

⁸⁷Ohio Star, II, No. 52 (December 29, 1831), n. p.

the debate would only serve "to save, if possible, a sinking cause."⁸⁸ He further objected to debate on the subject of the Book of Mormon because he felt that one who accepted the book was under the necessity of accepting all of Smith's commandments, which he was unwilling to do. Although the Rigdon-Ryder debate never saw fruition in person, the men continued haggling through the medium of the Star. In another issue of that newspaper Sidney said of Ryder:

He presented himself before the public as an accuser; he has been called upon before the same public, to support his accusations; and does he come forward and do it? nay, but seeks to hide himself behind a battery of reproach, and abuse, and low insinuations.⁸⁹

Accordingly, the two men never met in a public debate, and the matter between them was dropped.

As he had previously announced, Sidney Rigdon made his trip to Ravenna to debate with Ezra Booth; Booth failed to show up, and Sidney proceeded to assail his character. Rigdon always maintained that Booth's letters contained a "bundle of falsehoods" and asserted that Booth "dare not appear in their defense because he knew his letters were false, and would not bear the test of investigation."⁹⁰ Booth, however, did not feel that Rigdon's accusations could be tolerated without some defense, which he attempted through the medium of the Star. The editor, Lewis L. Rice, upon receipt of Booth's letter, however, announced his intention of discontinuing the controversy. He declared that out of fairness to

⁸⁸Idem.

⁸⁹Ohio Star, III, No. 2 (January 12, 1832), n. p.

⁹⁰Messenger and Advocate, II, No. 4 (January, 1836), p. 242.

Sidney Rigdon's right for a reply, he chose not to print Booth's letter and this matter was also dropped.⁹¹ This ended the argument between the Mormon spokesman and Ezra Booth just two weeks after the Rigdon-Ryder controversy had ended. However the full consequence of the apostasy of Ezra Booth and Simonds Ryder was yet to be felt.

The Apostasy of Doctor Philastus Hurlburt

On March 13, 1833, Doctor Philastus Hurlburt, an ambitious and ostentatious person, came to the house of the Mormon Prophet in Kirtland and visited with him at length about the Book of Mormon. This visit was to have long-range implications. According to the Prophet, Hurlburt told him that if he ever "became convinced that the Book of Mormon was false, he would be the cause of my destruction."⁹² This, however, did not excite sufficient alarm to prevent Hurlburt from being ordained an elder by Sidney Rigdon on the 18th of March.⁹³ Shortly afterwards, Hurlburt was sent on a mission to Pennsylvania, but was soon recalled for immorality, and accordingly was excommunicated June 3, 1833, by a bishop's court in Kirtland for his "unChristian conduct with women."⁹⁴ He appealed for a rehearing on the grounds that he was absent during the trial. His

⁹¹Ohio Star, III, No. (January 26, 1832), n. p.

⁹²Joseph Smith, "Joseph Smith Journal," pp. 48-49. This private journal was kept by Joseph Smith between 1832-1834, the microfilm of which is located in the Church Historian's Office. Much of this journal was reproduced in the History of the Church, but this visit of Hurlburt's was not reproduced there.

⁹³Idem.

⁹⁴History of the Church, I, p. 352.

appeal was granted. A high council court was held and it concurred with the decision of guilt offered by the bishop's court, but Hurlburt was forgiven because of his begging and tearful entreaty.⁹⁵ Two days later, June 23rd, evidence was presented to the council to show that he was insincere in his repentance; accordingly, he was extended a final excommunication on that date. After his excommunication, he began lecturing against the Church throughout the area and indulged in the extravagance of threatening the life of the Mormon Prophet.⁹⁶ Hurlburt's threat greatly alarmed the Mormon leader, for he not only petitioned the "thrown of Grace" for protection from Hurlburt,⁹⁷ but also had Hurlburt indicted for his malicious threats. There was a preliminary hearing in Painesville in January, 1834, then Hurlburt was turned over to the county court for trial.⁹⁸ Joseph attended court in Chardon on April 2nd and 3rd where testimony was heard in the case. The Chardon Spectator stated that the court was filled, "almost to suffocation, with an eager and curious crowd of spectators, to hear the Mormon trial."⁹⁹ One female

⁹⁵Of this trial George A. Smith, who was present stated, "He promised before God, angels, and men that he would from that time forth live his religion and preserve his integrity, if they would only forgive him. He wept like a child, and prayed and begged to be forgiven. The Council forgave him; but Joseph told him, 'You are not honest in this confession.'" Journal of Discourses, Vol. VII, p. 113.

⁹⁶Chardon Spectator and Geauga Gazette, III, No. 38 (April 12, 1834), n. p.

⁹⁷"Joseph Smith Journal," op. cit., p. 49.

⁹⁸Messenger and Advocate, II, No. 19 (April, 1834), p. 150.

⁹⁹Chardon Spectator and Geauga Gazette, III, No. 38 (April 12, 1834), n. p.

witness, who testified to the threats of Hurlburt, when being cross-examined was asked the reason she had not informed Smith of the threats, answered that "she did not believe Hurlburt, or any other human being, had the power to hurt the prophet."¹⁰⁰ The court eventually found Hurlburt guilty and fined him two hundred dollars, and ordered him to keep the peace for six months.

From the time he was excommunicated, June, 1833, until the trial in Chardon, April, 1834, Hurlburt was occupied with a plan to impede the growth and well being of the Church. For some undisclosed reason, perhaps because of his eldership in the Church or simply because of the prestige that might be gained by his Christian given name-- "Doctor"--Hurlburt was selected by a committee of community leaders in Kirtland to gather material and publish a book hostile to the Mormon cause.¹⁰¹ That a committee sponsored Hurlburt in this endeavor, there can be little doubt. The editor of the Messenger and Advocate wrote of the "celebrated committee, residing in our country. . . who have employed this Hurlbut [sic] to expose, the 'origin of the book of mormon.'¹⁰² This committee advertised its intention as early as January, 1834, to find some way to "avert the evils [of Mormonism] which threaten the Public." It further declared that the "impoverished population" in Kirtland was threatening them "with an unsupportable weight of pauperism."¹⁰³ Apparently the

¹⁰⁰Idem.

¹⁰¹At least one of the committee members who signed the statement, Josiah Jones, Geauga County Assessor, was prominent in political affairs. Painesville Telegraph, V. No. 7 (February 14, 1834), n. p.

¹⁰²Messenger and Advocate, II, No. 19 (April, 1834), p. 150.

¹⁰³Painesville Telegraph, V, No. 33 (January 31, 1834), n. p.

fear that the Mormons would become public charges was a factor in motivating the committee to this action. The fact that a committee of Kirtland citizens employed Hurlburt to write an anti-Mormon book reveals the antipathy towards Mormonism entertained by others besides disgruntled apostates.

The entire article advertising the committee's intention of publishing a book to expose Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon while employing D. P. Hurlburt to do the task reads as follows:

To the Public.

The undersigned Committee appointed by a public meeting held in Kirtland, Geauga Co., Ohio, for the purpose of ascertaining the origin of the Book of MORMON, would say to the Public, that when met as directed by said meeting, it became a subject of deliberation whether the committee without violating the spirit of that instrument which declares that "no human authority can in any case whatever control or interfere with the rights of conscience" could take measures to avert the evils which threaten the Public by location in this vicinity, of Joseph Smith Jun. otherwise known as the Mormon Prophet--and who is now, under pretence of Divine Authority, collecting about him an impoverished population, alienated in feeling from other portions of the community, thereby threatening us with an insupportable weight of pauperism. The committee were of the opinion that the force of truth might without delay to be applied to the Book of Mormon, and the character of Joseph Smith, Jun. With this object in view, the Committee employed D. P. Hurlbut [sic] to ascertain the real origin of the Book of Mormon, and to examine the validity of Joseph Smith's claims to the character of a Prophet. The result of this inquiry so far as it has proceeded has been partially laid before the public in this vicinity by Mr. Hurlbut [sic]-- and the Committee are now making arrangements for the Publication and extensive circulation of a work which will prove the 'Book of Mormon' to be a work of fiction and imagination, and written more than twenty years ago, in Salem, Ashtabula County, Ohio, by Solomon Spalding, Esq. [sic] and completely divest Joseph Smith of all claims to the character of an honest man, and place him at an immeasurable distance from the high station which he pretends to occupy.

O. A. CRARY,
AMOS DANIELS,

JOSIAH JONES,
WARREN CORNING, Jr.

JOHN F. MORSE,
SAMUEL WILSON,

JAMES H. PAIN,
JOS. H. WAKEFIELD,

SYLVESTER CORNWELL,
TIMOTHY D. MARTINDALE.

Kirtland, Geauga Co., Ohio.¹⁰⁴

From a legal notice in the February 14th issue of the Telegraph, it appears that Josiah Jones was Geauga County assessor.

During the winter and spring of 1834, Hurlburt spent his time and effort in securing information to fill the anticipated book, but in consequence of the unfavorable publicity he received from the trial in Chardon in April his name was dropped and that of Eber D. Howe, the editor of the Painesville Telegraph, replaced it. Hurlburt was given the promise of four hundred copies of the volume when it was published in exchange for his research efforts. E. D. Howe published the book containing Hurlburt's work during the latter part of 1834. The book was called Mormonism Unveiled, and Howe took credit as the author throughout his life. Writing his memoirs in 1878, Howe said that he "wrote and compiled" the book Mormonism Unveiled.¹⁰⁵ However, if he wrote anything

¹⁰⁴Painesville Telegraph, V, No. 33 (January 31, 1834), n. p.

¹⁰⁵Eber D. Howe, Autobiography and Recollections of a Pioneer Printer (Painesville: Telegraph Steam Printing House, 1878), p. 45.

Although Howe made this claim and is generally recognized as the author of Mormonism Unveiled it should be remembered that Hurlburt acquired the information for the forthcoming book by visiting Joseph Smith's old neighborhood in New York and soliciting affidavits from the Prophet's previous neighbors. The nature of these affidavits were derogatory to Smith's character. Hurlburt also went to Monson, Massachusetts, and received permission from the ex-Mrs. Solomon Spaulding--Mrs. Davison--to acquire her ex-husband's romantic fantasy, "Manuscript Found." She gave Hurlburt a note to go to Hartwicks, New York, where the manuscript was stored in a family trunk to procure it. This Hurlburt did and returned to Ohio with the manuscript. The manuscript had been written by Solomon Spaulding prior to 1816 in Conneaut, Ohio, and became the basis of Hurlburt's claim that Joseph Smith did not receive the Book of Mormon

in it, it was a matter of collecting his earlier Telegraph articles about the Mormons and rewriting them for the book; but as for the extended work of Hurlburt which was used in the book, Howe does not deserve credit. There was no question in the mind of the Prophet and other Mormon leaders that Hurlburt was the true author of the book. The Mormon Prophet in a letter to John Whitmer stated the following concerning the true authorship of the book Mormonism Unveiled:

. . . Doct. P. Hurlburt, who is the legitimate author of the same Mormonism Unveiled, who is not so much a doctor of physic, as of falsehood, or by name. We could also give him an introduction to the reverend Mr. Howe, the illegitimate

by revelation, but reproduced it from Spaulding's manuscript. Solomon Spaulding, a graduate of Dartmouth College where he studied theology, engaged in preaching, merchandising, and manufacturing in successive turns. It appears that his great interest was history, however, which led him while living in New Salem or Conneaut, Ashtabula County, Ohio, to become intrigued with the Indian mounds in the vicinity. Consequently he wrote a fantasy about the early history of those Indians which he named "Manuscript Found." He died in Amity, Pennsylvania, in 1816, after previously moving to Pittsburgh. He was offered by Mr. Patterson, an editor in Pittsburgh, the chance to publish the romance which he was unwilling to do. After Spaulding's death, the widow and her daughter, Matilda, moved to New York where Mrs. Spaulding married a Mr. Davison of Hartwicks. Following Davison's death she moved to Massachusetts where she lived with her daughter at the time of Hurlburt's visit. The "Manuscript Found" was alleged to be the source from which Joseph Smith wrote the Book of Mormon. Although Hurlburt did not print the manuscript itself, this claim became the popular theory of the Book of Mormon's origin as introduced in Mormonism Unveiled. It was not until 1884 that the "Manuscript Found" was located and identified that the theory was seriously questioned by anti-Mormon writers. At that time, James H. Fairchild, the President of Oberlin College, visited Lewis L. Rice, former editor of the Ohio Star and the Painesville Telegraph residing in Honolulu, Hawaii, who located the "Manuscript Found" among some old anti-slavery papers. Apparently Hurlburt left the old manuscript which he never returned to Mrs. Davison with E. D. Howe at the Telegraph office. Years later when L. L. Rice took possession of the Telegraph he also acquired the manuscript which he removed to Hawaii with other papers. Hurlburt had endorsed the "Manuscript Found" which identified it as being the writings he had acquired from Spaulding's widow in 1834. Extensive consideration of the Spaulding theory has been given in anti-Mormon literature as well as in Mormon apologetical works, and this study will not consider the matter at any further length.

author of Mormonism Unveiled, [sic] in order to give currency to the publication as Mr. Hurlburt, about this time, was bound over to court, for threatening life.¹⁰⁶

While Hurlburt was in the process of gathering his material for the book, the Chardon Spectator gave him the following notice:

Doctor Hurlbut [sic] of Kirtland, Ohio, who has been engaged for some time in different parts of this state but chiefly in this neighborhood on behalf of his fellow townsmen, in the pursuit of facts and information concerning the origin and design of the Book of Mormon, which to the surprise of all in this region who know the character of the leaders in the bungling imposition, seems already to have gained multitudes of believers in various parts of the country, requests us to say, that he has succeeded in accomplishing the object of his missions and that an authentic history of the whole affair will shortly be given to the public. The original manuscript of the Book was written some thirty years since by a respectable clergyman, now deceased, whose name we are not permitted to give. It was designed to be published as a romance, but the author died soon after it was written, and hence the plan failed. The pretended religious character of the work has been superadded by some more modern hand--believed to be the notorious Rigdon. These particulars have been derived by Doctor T. Hurlbut [sic] from the widow of the author of the original manuscript.¹⁰⁷

In the November 28, 1834, and December 5, 1834, issues of the Telegraph advertisements appeared announcing the availability of the book Mormonism Unveiled. The book contained a lengthy review of the Book of

¹⁰⁶Messenger and Advocate, II, No. 3 (December 1835), p. 228.

¹⁰⁷Chardon Spectator and Geauga Gazette, III, No. 26 (January 18, 1834), n. p. Eva Pancoast using the above article from the Spectator maintained in her thesis that D. P. Hurlburt joined the Mormons expressly to expose them, and therefore, she said that he had gathered much of the materials for his book before he joined the Mormon Church. On this point Miss Pancoast said, "Thus he had a book exposing Mormonism nearly ready for the printer at the time he joined their Church." Eva L. Pancoast, "Mormons at Kirtland" (unpublished master's thesis, Western Reserve University, Ohio) May 1, 1929, p. 3 in Appendix 1. It appears that Miss Pancoast erred in her view by ascribing the erroneous date January 18, 1833, to the article, which was two months before Hurlburt joined the Mormon Church. However, the Spectator article accurately bears the date January 18, 1834.

Mormon, a recital of the supernatural abnormalities of the winter of 1830 and 1831, a reprinting of Booth's nine letters, an introduction of the Spaulding theory of the origin of the Book of Mormon, and affidavits taken from Joseph Smith's old New York neighbors, uncomplimentary to the character of the Prophet.

Hurlburt received the four hundred copies of the first edition promised him in exchange for turning the manuscript of the book over to E. D. Howe. He then proceeded to acquire subscription commitments for these copies at the price of one dollar each. Through some method of duplicity, Howe was able to craftily get Hurlburt's list of subscribers and fill it himself. When Hurlburt made his deliveries he was naturally chagrined upon learning that his patrons had previously been served by Howe.¹⁰⁸ After this trickery, Hurlburt had great difficulty selling his books for over ten or twenty cents each, and a number of them were never sold.¹⁰⁹ In Westfield it was reported that the book was selling there for eighteen and three-quarter cents.¹¹⁰

It is difficult to assess correctly the influence that the Hurlburt-Howe book had in exciting anti-Mormon resentment. Certainly it did not help alleviate the naggingly unpopular Mormon image, but its greatest damage was not immediate.¹¹¹ Alexander Campbell stated that

¹⁰⁸Journal of Discourses, Vol. XI, p. 8.

¹⁰⁹Journal of Discourses, Vol. VII, p. 113.

¹¹⁰Messenger and Advocate, I, no. 8 (May, 1835), p. 116.

¹¹¹In his Recollections, E. D. Howe stated, "I have reason to believe [Mormonism Unveiled] has been the basis of all the histories which have appeared from time to time since that period touching that people [the Mormons]." Eber D. Howe, Recollections of a Pioneer Printer, p. 45.

any reader with "the half of five grains" of common sense who would read the new book would find that the Mormons were "unprincipled deceivers" and a "set of superlative fanatics."¹¹² The Mormons replied by saying that Mr. Campbell has begun to "howl prodigiously, calling upon the people in great agony to read Mr. Howe's book, as a sure antidote against delusion."¹¹³ That the book had some deteriorating effect upon certain members of the Church there can be no doubt, but the efforts of the missionaries and the visiting elders to the branches had a nullifying influence in many cases. The elders in Westfield in 1835, were bold enough to report to the editor of the Messenger and Advocate, "Tell everybody to buy and read 'Mormonism Unveiled' if they wish . . . ," for they were confident that it would not hurt the Church.¹¹⁴ And by 1836, in Portage County, Orson Hyde reported that it was not even "quoted by opposers, and I believe," said he, "for no other reason than . . . they are ashamed of [it]."¹¹⁵

Other Internal Problems

The plan of the Church to build Zion in Missouri was received with enthusiasm by many. From time to time families or groups of families left Ohio and moved to Missouri which caught public attention. The local

¹¹²Alexander Campbell, Millennial Harbinger (Bethany, Virginia), VI, No. 1 (January, 1835), p. 44.

¹¹³Messenger and Advocate, I, No. 76 (February, 1835), p. 76.

¹¹⁴Messenger and Advocate, I, No. 8 (May, 1835), p. 116.

¹¹⁵Messenger and Advocate, II, No. 7 (April, 1836), p. 296. This statement by Orson Hyde referred also to the nine letters of Ezra Booth and a pamphlet written by Alexander Campbell.

newspapers noted the passage of the Saints "on their way to the New Jerusalem."¹¹⁶ This heavy immigration into Missouri incited conflict between the Mormons and the old settlers there, and the Saints were maliciously driven from Jackson County. Yet, improprieties within the Church aggravated conditions sufficient to prompt Cowdery to write, "those [members] whose mouths are continually open, and whose tongues cannot be stayed from tattling; and the Church will never have peace while such remain in her." Attempts to re-instate the exiled Saints by legal means or to get satisfactory redress proved futile. Therefore, the Prophet Joseph introduced a plan to redeem the distressed Missouri Saints by the force of arms if necessary. Zion's Camp, a militarily disciplined body, was organized and financed by the Saints to march to Missouri to force, if necessary, the mob elements there to permit the exiled Mormons to regain their lost homes in Jackson County. In May, 1834, a number of companies were organized and departed from Ohio for Missouri. The establishment of such an organization, amounting to approximately two hundred men, naturally caused some attention in both Ohio and Missouri. The Camp, however, failed to accomplish its objective of re-instating the distressed Saints and it further aided in festering the sore of unpopular public opinion the Mormons already had in Ohio. The march incited internal problems which were later brought to the attention of the public in the form of false stories and litigation.

¹¹⁶Cambridge Times (Ohio), cited in Chardon Spectator and Geauga Gazette, III, No. 3 (August 10, 1833), n. p.

¹¹⁷Oliver Cowdery, "Letter of Oliver Cowdery," cited in "Edward Partridge Journal," August 10, 1833.

During the Camp's march to Missouri, Sylvester Smith in particular complained of the Prophet Joseph's behavior on a number of occasions and accused him of conduct unbecoming a man in a religious station. Sylvester Smith alleged that the Prophet was guilty of "insulting and abusive language, of "prophesying lies," of reviling against him, and other complaints during their trip with Zion's Camp.¹¹⁸ After the members of Zion's Camp returned to Kirtland, an extensive hearing was given the entire matter and much testimony was heard concerning the specific charges made by Sylvester Smith. A number of the Camp members admitted in testimony that their feelings toward the Prophet had been greatly agitated by Sylvester's reports.¹¹⁹ A final trial was held in Kirtland in August, 1834, and at the risk of being excommunicated from the Church, Sylvester Smith signed an acknowledgment of his guilt in misrepresenting the Prophet's conduct. Two months after that confession, Sylvester observed that the effects of his complaints were still being circulated; consequently in October he made a voluntary public statement in the Messenger and Advocate clearing Joseph of his former allegations and pleaded for a ceasing of the rumors he had caused. He said,

Having heard that certain reports are circulating abroad, prejudicial to the character of Brother Joseph Smith, Jun. and that said reports purport to have come from me, I have thought proper to give the public a plain statement of the facts concerning this matter. It is true, that some difficulties arose between bro. J. Smith Jr. and myself, in our travels the past summer to Missouri; and that on our return

¹¹⁸ A further consideration of Sylvester Smith's complaints against Joseph Smith and the later trials may be found in History of the Church, II, pp. 65, 68, 83, 100, 142-144, 149-160.

¹¹⁹ History of the Church, II, pp. 152, 156.

to this place I laid my grievances before a general council, where they were investigated in full, and the result showed to the satisfaction of all present, I believe; but especially to myself, that in all things bro J. S. jr. had conducted worthily, and adorned his profession as a man of God, while journeying to and from Missouri.¹²⁰

He trusted that his public confession would bring an "end to all evil reports" which may have originated about the Mormon leader from his careless accusations. It may be understood that rumors and false stories may never completely be reclaimed. Sylvester Smith's repentance undoubtedly stabilized someone's wavering faith, but it could not have completely redeemed the Prophet's reputation from the effects of his malevolence in the public mind.

The expedition of Zion's Camp was again brought to the public notice when Dennis Lake, one of its participants, sued Joseph Smith for payment for the service he rendered to the Camp. A judgment for the plaintiff was given, and the press scoffingly added, "The case we learn has been appealed to higher tribunal, where it will be determined how far individuals are obliged to serve as soldiers . . . under a pretended revelation from God."¹²¹

Other domestic quarrels occurred in the Church, some of which included the family members of the Church president. To what extent these were made public may not be known, but in April, 1835, the Telegraph announced that the Prophet had been summoned to the Court of Common Pleas in Painesville for an assault and battery charge committed against his

¹²⁰Messenger and Advocate, I, No. 1 (October, 1834), p. 10.

¹²¹Painesville Telegraph, VI, No. 24 (December 5, 1834), n. p.

brother-in-law, Calvin Stoddard.¹²² Stoddard earlier had a falling out in the Church and lost his license to preach in December, 1832. The Telegraph failed to record the disposition of the case, so the Mormon Prophet desiring to set the public mind straight on the matter, wrote to the editor to inform him that he had been properly acquitted from the charge, and requested it to be so stated. The editor of the paper responded to Smith's request by recounting the lurid details of the court record of the trial. The apparent reason for doing so was to publicly embarrass the Mormon Prophet with its recital. Although it was true that Smith was released on the grounds of self-defense, the grim fact that he knocked Stoddard down with a blow to the forehead would tend to further prejudice the public against him. The Telegraph recorded the details of the trial as follows:

COURT OF COMMON PLEAS
Saturday, June 20, [1835].

Joseph Smith, Jr., was put upon his trial on a charge of Assault and Battery committed [sic] upon the person of a Mr. [Calvin] Stoddard. By consent of the parties, the case was submitted to the Court without Jury.

Stoddard examined--States that Smith had irritated him in a controversy about water--he had affirmed that there was water in a certain lot, which Smith denied--as Smith passed towards his house, he [Stoddard] followed him, and said, '[I] don't fear you, or no other man'--Smith then came up and struck him in the forehead with his flat hand--the blow knocked him down, when Smith repeated the blow four or five times, very hard--made him blind--that Smith afterwards came to him and asked his forgiveness--was satisfied--had forgiven him--would forgive any man who would injure him and ask his forgiveness.

Cross ex.--Had a cane--did not attempt to strike him, or threaten.

William Smith examined--Saw Stoddard come along cursing

¹²²Painesville Telegraph, XIII, No. 44 (April 24, 1835), n. p.

and swearing--Joseph went out--Stoddard said he would whip him, and drew his cane upon Joseph--Joseph struck him once or twice.

Cross ex.--Joseph stopped in the yard--they were close together when he saw them--cautioned Joseph to stop, that he had done enough.

Mr. Smith, the Prophet's mother--Saw some of the affrey--was upstairs--heard Stoddard talking loud--called Joseph 'a d--d false prophet, and a d--d one thing another'--saw Joseph slap him--did not hear Stoddard say he would flog him--did not see Stoddard attempt to strike him.

Burgess--Says Stoddard struck at Smith first, and raised his cane in a threatening attitude when down.

The Court, after summing up the testimony, said that as the injured party was satisfied, there would be no cause for further prosecution; that the assault might perhaps be justified on the principle of self-defense. The accused was then acquitted.¹²³

Summarily, the internal problems of the Mormon people further infected the public mind with a sense of discomfiture toward the Latter-day Saints and especially their leader Joseph Smith. Some of the Mormons themselves--including Ezra Booth, Simonds Ryder, Doctor Philastus Hurlburt, Joseph H. Wakefield, and others--after losing their confidence in the Church became hateful antagonists. They began to indulge in defamatory tactics calculated to justify their own disaffection from Mormonism and attempt to dispel the Mormon influence from the Western Reserve. Certain internal problems of the Mormons, characteristic of many new, aggressive organizations, became public knowledge in some cases which intensified their unpopular reputation.

¹²³Painesville Telegraph, New Series, I, No. 25 (June 26, 1835), n. p.

CHAPTER VI

SOCIAL FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTED TO MORMON CONFLICT

The Missionary Effort

A Voice of Warning. The alarming report by Moroni to Joseph Smith during the fall of 1823 to the effect that a catastrophic finale awaited an unrepentant world undoubtedly pervaded much of Smith's thinking.¹ Without question, he sensed an urgency in his life's work and conveyed to his disciples a belief in the imminence of the Second Coming. He not only frequently prophesied that the day of the coming of the Lord was soon at hand, but also taught that this generation was a day of preparation for the disastrous preliminaries to Christ's second advent. In keeping with this view, Joseph Smith claimed that after being commanded by God, he wrote a letter to N. E. Seaton, a Rochester, New York, editor.² The Prophet intended the letter for publication in

¹The Prophet Joseph Smith claimed that in September, 1823, Moroni, a resurrected ancient Nephite prophet appeared to him and reported among other things the following about the earth's future: "For behold, the day cometh that [the earth] shall burn as an oven, and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly shall burn as stubble" And further Moroni said, using the words of Joel 3:31, "The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord comes," and all this was soon to happen. History of the Church, I, pp. 12, 13.

²History of the Church, I, p. 326.

Seaton's paper for the perusal and instruction of a generation soon to face disaster. In his concluding paragraph he declared,

And now I am prepared to say by the authority of Jesus Christ, that not many years shall pass away before the United States shall present such a scene of bloodshed as has not a parallel in the history of our nation; pestilence, hail, famine, and earthquake will sweep the wicked of this generation from off the face of the land, to open and prepare the way for the return of the lost tribes of Israel from the north country. The people of the Lord, those who have complied with the requirements of the new covenant, have already commenced gathering together in Zion, which is in the state of Missouri; therefore I declare unto you the warning which the Lord has commanded to declare unto this generation 'Fear God, and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment is come.' Repent ye, repent ye, and embrace the everlasting covenant, and flee to Zion, before the overflowing scourge overtake you, for there are those now living upon the earth whose eyes shall not be closed in death until they see all these things, which I have spoken, fulfilled. Remember these things; call upon the Lord while He is near, and seek Him while He may be found, is the exhortation of your unworthy servant.

[Signed] Joseph Smith, Jun.³

In August, 1831, prior to his writing this letter, Joseph had stated, "this is a day of warning, and not a day of many words."⁴ Three years later, while attending a meeting in Norton, Medina County, the Prophet recited the prophecy of Joel concerning disastrous future events and said, "for without a Zion and a place of deliverance, we must fall . . . for God will gather out his saints from the gentiles and then comes desolation or destruction and none can escape except the pure in heart who are gathered. . . ."⁵

³History of the Church, I, pp. 315, 316.

⁴Doctrine and Covenants, 63:58.

⁵"Kirtland Council Minutes," p. 44. Microfilm copy located in the Church Historian's Library. See also the statement by the Kirtland bishopric concerning Joel's prophecy. Messenger and Advocate, III, No. 12 (September, 1837), pp. 562, 563.

Although the voice of warning was unwelcome news to credulous audiences, the Prophet acted in order that the message might be carried to the nation and eventually to the world. Shortly before the organization of the Church, he reported that this was the time to broadcast the news, "for behold the field is white already to harvest."⁶ Harvesting missionaries were dispatched from Kirtland with the admonition, "Behold, I send you out to testify and warn the people, and it becometh every man who hath been warned to warn his neighbor."⁷ Only a few days passed following the Prophet's arrival in Kirtland in 1831 before he counseled the missionaries in the name of the Lord, "ye shall go forth in the power of my Spirit, preaching my gospel, two by two" and "behold, it shall come to pass that my servants shall be sent forth to the east and to the west, to north and to the south."⁸ Thus, the concentrated efforts of the Church in Ohio to effect a resourceful and enthusiastic missionary force brought astounding results within a few years.

Actually, the enthusiasm for proselyting Mormonism was exhibited in Ohio prior to Smith's arrival. Following the departure of the four Lamanite missionaries from the Western Reserve, converts such as Lyman Wight, John Murdock, and Levi Hancock immediately felt the missionary spirit and proceeded to preach and hold meetings among their neighbors and in the communities of northern Ohio.

⁶Doctrine and Covenants, 4:4.

⁷Doctrine and Covenants, 88:81.

⁸Doctrine and Covenants, 42:6, 63. See also 44:3; 45:64; 52:10.

The Church's first periodical was established the following year in Missouri, and it, too, exhibited the spirit of warning. In the first issue of the Evening and Morning Star, an article appeared addressed "TO MAN" which included the following statement: "the Star comes in these last days as the friend of man, to persuade him to turn to God and live, before the great and terrible day of the Lord sweeps the earth of its wickedness."⁹ Another article appearing in another periodical of the Church was Orson Hyde's "A Prophetic Warning" which was addressed "To all the Churches, of every sect and denomination, and to every individual into whose hands it may fall." Expressing his concern for the country's future welfare, Hyde wrote:

God will soon begin to manifest his sore displeasure to this generation, and to our own country, by vexatious and desolating wars; bloody! bloody in the extreme! The war cloud will arise from an unexpected quarter The prime cause of all these calamities coming on the earth, is: the apostasy of the [Christian] church. If the church was all righteous, they could save the nations from destruction. But the salt has lost its savor; and all men seem determined to pursue their own course.¹⁰

These principles were further disseminated at a missionary gathering held in Kirtland in June, 1831; from that time till 1838, the missionaries devoted themselves strenuously to teaching and warning the country about the disasters that the Prophet claimed would come. Subsequent to that meeting, large and small conferences were held to indoctrinate the evangelists for their work. Perhaps typical of such meetings

⁹The Evening and Morning Star (Independence, Mo.), I, No. 1 (June, 1832), p. 6.

¹⁰Messenger and Advocate, II, No. 10 (July, 1836), pp. 334, 345.

was one held in Kirtland on October 1, 1831, when nine elders and possibly other official members convened. In describing this meeting one member stated, "The spirit declared on this occasion that the duty of the Elders was to go forth and warn the inhabitants of the earth of the things known in the Church in these last days."¹¹ Because the elders dedicated themselves to this assignment, it added to the antagonism and agitation of some of the Ohioans.

The Vicissitudes of the Missionaries. After receiving instructions, the elders and priests were sent throughout the United States and sections of Canada to preach the message of Mormonism. Because missionaries traveling to other fields of labor constantly passed through Ohio communities and preached, Ohio received a concentrated missionary emphasis. Moreover, short missionary tours of a few days or a few weeks usually confined the elders to the Ohio communities, especially the Western Reserve.¹² The proselyting technique usually employed by the elders was to make arrangements to use a local school house, sectarian chapel, court house, or other public or private building and then inform others of a scheduled meeting.

The results of their efforts varied from the gathering of audiences of hundreds to cold and bitter resistance. Levi Jackman in 1832, while visiting in Columbus was treated with respect and courtesy. Of the experience he wrote,

¹¹"Journal History," October 1, 1831.

¹²For the location of communities prominent in Mormon events in the Western Reserve, see Figure 2.

WESTERN RESERVE

1833

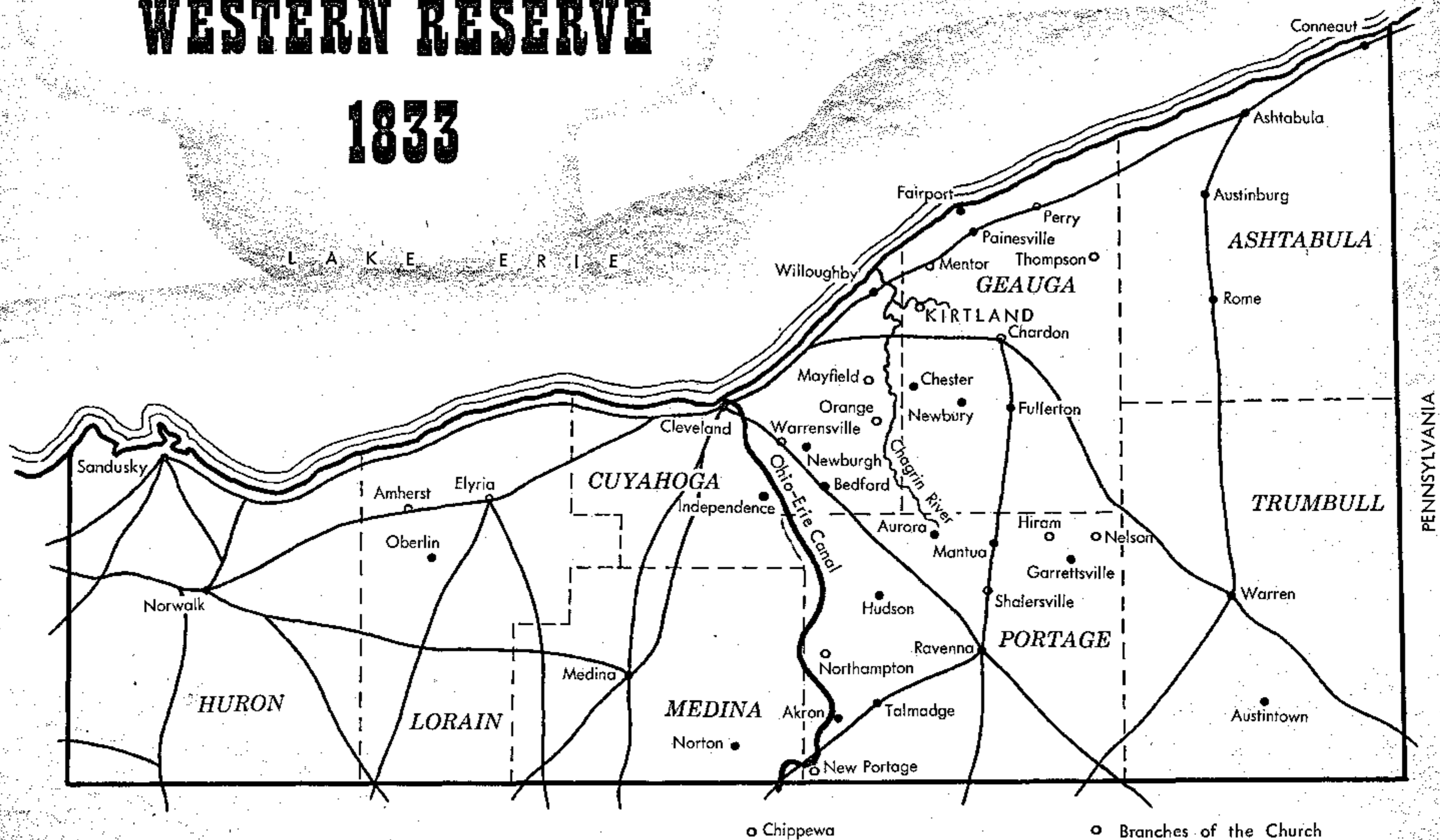


Fig. 2. The Western Reserve was the cradle of Mormonism in Ohio.

We attended a Methodist meeting and were invited to preach. It was new work to us, but we did the best we could. We were invited to preach the next evening in a school house in another part of the town. At the appointed time we went to the place. The house was full I found good liberty in speaking and¹³ the people did honor to the name of gentlemen and ladies.

While on a mission in Perpoint with John F. Boynton in 1833, Evan M. Greene wrote concerning the way they were received by the people. The two missionaries had a meeting and "spoke to a large company who were verrily [sic] attentive and civil but cared very little about the Gospel."¹⁴ In March, 1835, Orson Pratt wrote of his experience in the southern part of the state as follows:

Since writing the above we have preached three times in Cincinnati, three times in Fulton, and three times in the village of Cummingsville, six miles from the city. We have had large congregations and many are astonished at the doctrine; some believe, many disbelieve and others obey. We have this day baptized two who reside in Cincinnati. There are now 22¹⁵ or 23 members of this Church in Fulton and Cincinnati.

Church growth in Ohio resulting from the missionary efforts continued until 1838. The Church records of this period unfortunately were not retained, but it is apparent from the available sources that there were scores of branches of the Church in Ohio by 1838, the year of the major Mormon exodus from the state. In 1834, the Messenger and Advocate, the second Church periodical established following the destruction of the Star in Independence, Missouri, editorialized, "There are

¹³ Levi Jackman, "Levi Jackman Journal," p. 3. A typed copy is located in the Special Collections Library at Brigham Young University.

¹⁴ Evan M. Greene, "Evan M. Greene Journal," entry made March 28, 1833. Located in the Church Historian's Library.

¹⁵ "Journal History," February 16, 1835.

numbers daily embracing the truth, and many calls are heard on the right and on the left, for the elders to fill." The editorial continued, "In fact, we know not when the work has been more prosperous, than at present. There is a general enquiry where ever the word is preached. What a field for labor."¹⁶

In December, 1835, Elder David Evans wrote from Richland County saying, "The Lord is moving on his work in this section of country. Since the 28th of October last, I have baptized 18. Eleven in Knox Co., 5 in the church at Perry, 2 near New Portage."¹⁷ Then Lorenzo Barns while preaching near Cincinnati journalized, "Here a large field opened for labour and we had calls for preaching on the right hand and on the left."¹⁸ Many missionaries reported that their meetings were often well attended by "large congregations,"¹⁹ and in some cases attended by hundreds.²⁰ Samuel Brown wrote from Kirtland that he had traveled eight thousand miles in his preaching services since his conversion three years previously and had seen many come into the Church.²¹ Although Wilford Woodruff spent some of his time out of the state, his missionary efforts and successes were similar to the elders confined to Ohio. In summarizing his 1835

¹⁶Messenger and Advocate, I, No. 2 (November, 1834), p. 25.

¹⁷Messenger and Advocate, II, No. 4 (January, 1836), p. 255.

¹⁸Lorenzo Barns, "Lorenzo Barns Journal," p. 8. Located in the Church Historian's Library.

¹⁹Messenger and Advocate, I, No. 9 (June, 1835), p. 141.

²⁰George A. Smith, "George A. Smith Journal," July 4, 1837 entry. Located in the Church Historian's Library.

²¹"Journal History," December 6, 1835.

labors he specified,

During the last year, I travelled 3,248 miles, held 170 meetings, baptized 43 persons; procured 22 subscribers for the Messenger and Advocate; also 73 on the petition to the Governor of Missouri; wrote 18 letters, and ordained two Teachers and One Deacon. Held three debates &c.²²

Elisha H. Groves who left Kirtland for a mission tour in Ohio wrote in December, 1835, "I travelled about two hundred miles, preached sixty times, and built up a small church in the towns of Bedford and Independence, Cuyahoga co., Ohio, consisting of 12 members."²³ Hence, the Mormon missionaries found Ohio a productive field for converts.

By no means were all efforts successful for Lorenzo Barns indicated that although he and his companion were in a region nearly six weeks and held forty meetings, they only baptized two people.²⁴ Samuel H. Smith, the Prophet's younger brother, while preaching in Portage County said, "people seemed to be very hard hearted as they interrupted us a number of times;" then while in Trumbull County with his companion William E. McLellin, they found the people "very wicked" so they soon left.²⁵

Some elders were dispatched on short-term tours of only a few weeks while others were sent out for longer durations. The season of the year seemed to have little bearing on the assignments. This was true in the summer when the men might otherwise be working in the fields or at

²²Messenger and Advocate, II, No. 4 (January, 1836), p. 255.

²³Idem.

²⁴Barns, op. cit., p. 9.

²⁵"Journal History," November 16, 1831.

their crafts, as well as during the inclement winter months. In June, 1835, W. W. Phelps who was working in Kirtland, wrote to his wife, Sally, in Liberty, Missouri, "The Elders are constantly coming and going. Last week Bros. Simeon Carter and Solomon Hancock started for the east. Bishop Partridge and Counselor Isaac Morley will start soon," he continued. "Elder Amasa M. Lyman came in last week. Elder Peter Dustin and James Emmett arrived last week and Elder Oziel Stephens this week," he concluded.²⁶

Likewise, the endeavor to push the missionary work forward often meant privation and hardship including traveling during the winter months in hostile neighborhoods. During the winter of 1833 Levi Hancock and Evan Greene were sent to preach in the East. Of this assignment Hancock recorded the following:

He /i.e. Joseph the Prophet then said I must go with Evin Green /sic/, we started by the way of Chardon and preached by the way. The snow came and it began to get cold to travel, but we went as far as we could get and returned back. Joseph talked plain to me for not pressing forward into Pennsylvania. I told him that I was to blame for I had had a dream that troubled me. He said don't let that trouble you for I have had bad dreams as you ever had. You do as I now tell you to and you will come out allright He said go again and we started forthwith for Pennsylvania. We went as far as Panesville /sic/ and stayed the night. The next day it snowed all day and we had to wallow through drifts and at times it seemed almost impossible. It seemed that the Devil was determined to discourage us. We tried to get the privilege of laying by the fire but no we could not. We were among the people called Campbelites /sic/. Seven times we were turned down at the doors. The eighth time we got in to stay all night. One of the Holy men came in who had turned us down and by his actions we thought he intended to have us turned out again. But we were able to spend the night there and in the morning the woman gave us a nut cake each. That

²⁶Ibid., June 2, 1835.

was all we could get from the time we left Painsville /sic/. Nothing but starvation stared us in the face. We were then determined to trust the Lord.²⁷

The missionary effort did not diminish until after most Latter-day Saints migrated from Ohio. In September, 1837, Marcelus Cowdery wrote to a friend in Virginia of the importance of the missionary work:

Brother Joseph and Sidney say that the Elders must be out all winter this year. No compulsion, you know, but this is the word to the Elders, and there are great promises to those who go and are faithful. From what I learn it seems to me that the cause is a greater one and of more intense interest to the children of men than I have ever before fully realized it to be.²⁸

These missionary assignments were taken seriously by the Church leaders, and at least one assignee, Daniel Copley, was excommunicated from the Church because of his refusal to fulfill his mission calling.²⁹

The Church attempted to coordinate the missionary duties by issuing a certificate to the ordained officer, by so doing the individual was regarded as an official member, otherwise they were designated as private members. William Smith, another brother of the Prophet and future apostle, noted the importance his certificate was to him. "This made me feel," said he, "more and more the importance of my mission."³⁰ Concerning this document he further stated, "My license was as follows:--"

This certifies that William Smith, a member of the Church of Christ, organized on the 6th of April, 1830, has been ordained a Priest of said Church, by authority of a

²⁷Levi Hancock, op. cit., p. 75.

²⁸"Journal History," September 26, 1837.

²⁹History of the Church, I, p. 354.

³⁰William Smith, op. cit., p. 21.

conference held in Orange, Cuyahoga Co., Ohio, on the 25th day of October, A.D., 1831. This is therefore to give him authority to act in the office of his calling, according to the articles and covenants of said Church.

F. G. Williams, Clerk.³¹

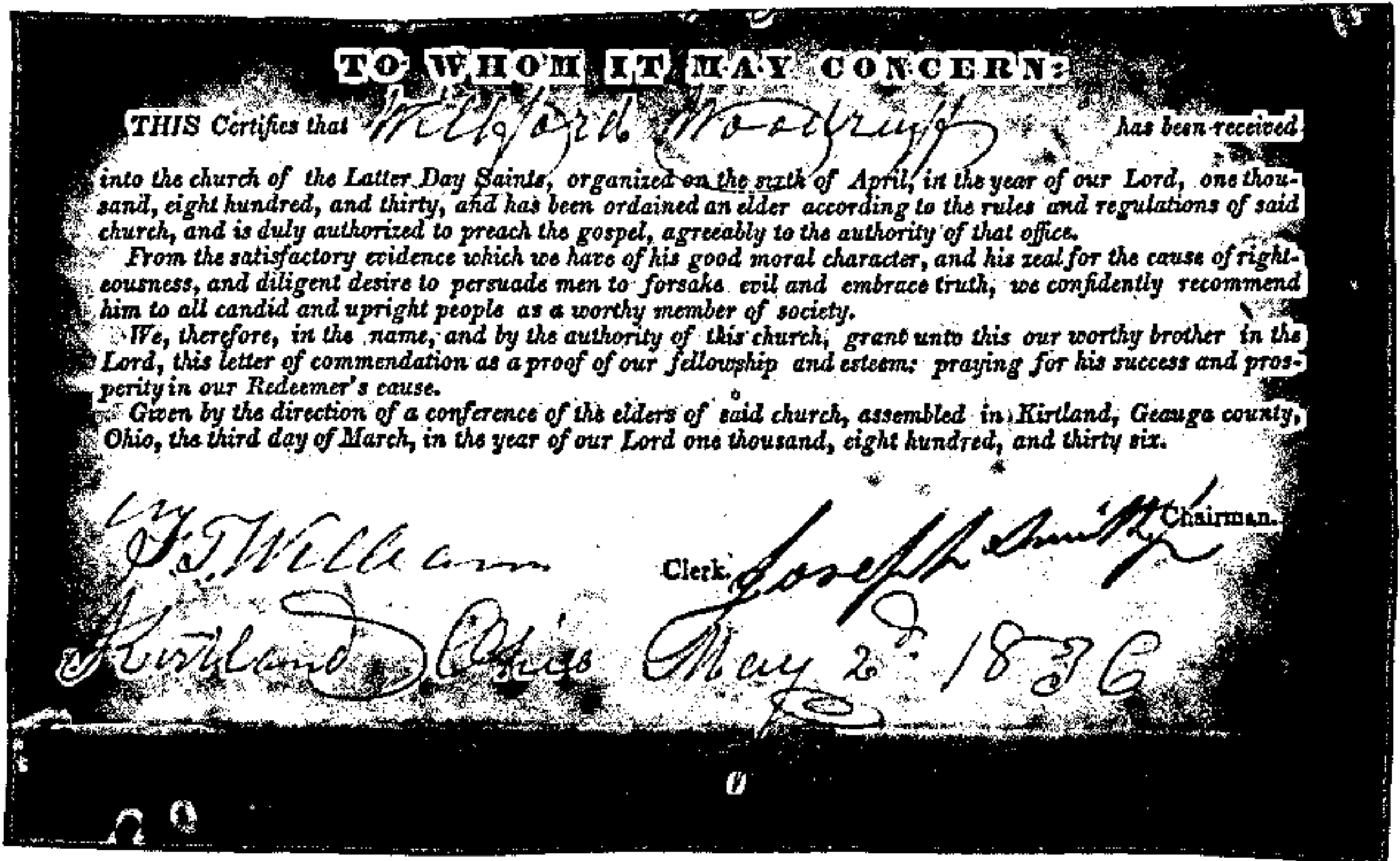
In February, 1836, a committee was appointed in Kirtland to draft new regulations concerning the "Licensing of the official members" of the Church in order to prevent unauthorized people from representing the Mormon faith. All previous licenses were called in and new ones were issued in order to better control and administer the affairs of the lay priesthood bearers.³²

It was soon realized that an educated lay ministry had an advantage over an uneducated one. Therefore, according to instructions contained in a revelation--Doctrine and Covenants Section 88--an educational institution known as the School of the Prophets was established in Kirtland. It first convened in January, 1833, for the instruction of the potential missionary force of the Church. Of the initial organization Zebedee Coltrin said, "The School of the Prophets began in Kirtland, January 24, 1833, much instruction received by the gift of tongues and the interpretation thereof." Coltrin further journalized, "The science we engaged in for the winter was English grammar, of which we obtained a general knowledge."³³ Although other subjects were pursued from foreign languages to theology, the study of English grammar

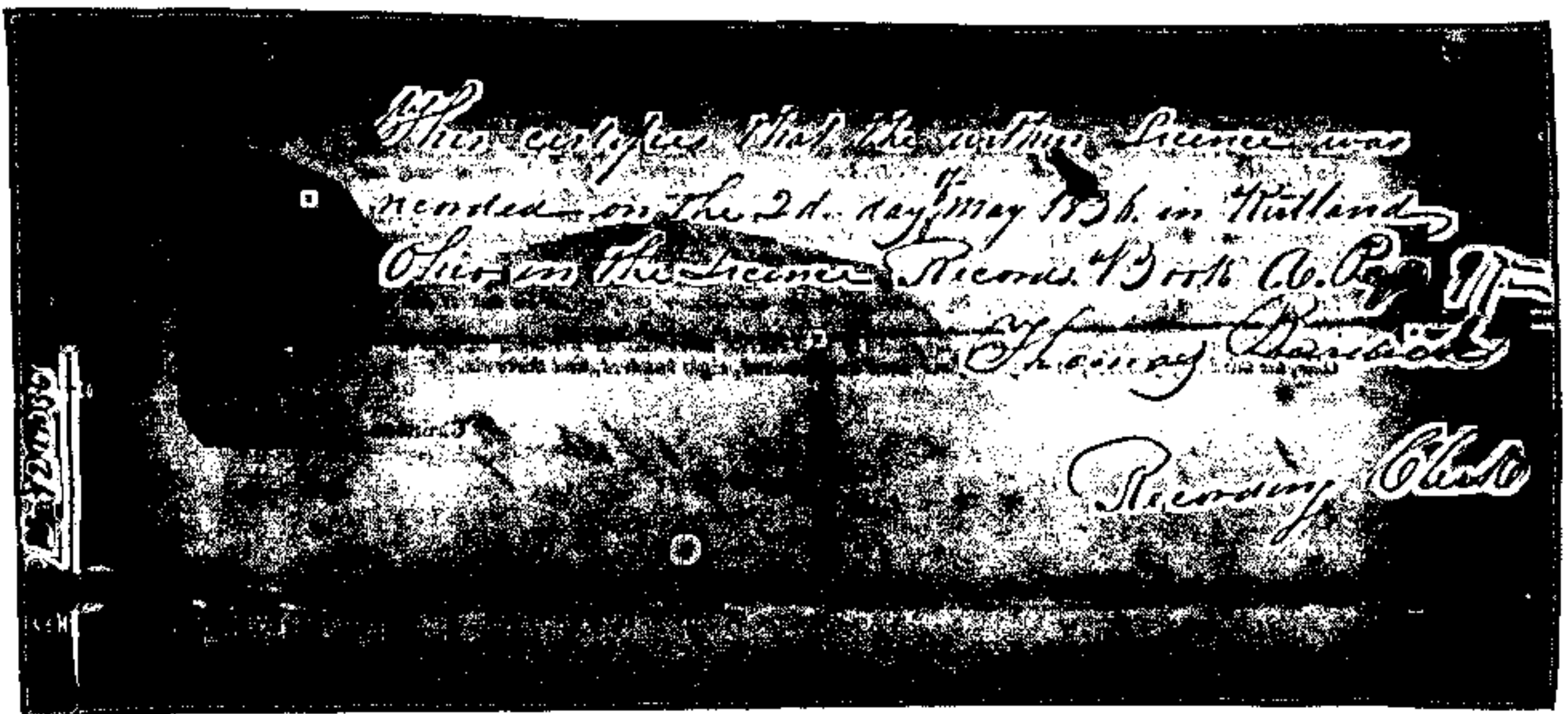
³¹Idem.

³²Messenger and Advocate, II, No. 5 (February, 1836), p. 267. The committee's recommendations concerning licensing the official members were accepted at a conference of Church officials March 3, 1836. Note Wilford Woodruff's certificate in Figure 3.

³³"Journal History," January 24, 1833.



FRONT



REAR

Fig. 3. Wilford Woodruff's license issued by the Church authorizing him to officially represent the Church by preaching. The notations on the front and rear conform to the requirements of the licensing committee. (Courtesy, Church Historian's Library.)

was emphasized. Consequently, a grammar school was organized and commenced in Kirtland which was taught by Sidney Rigdon and William E. McLellin. This school was held especially for the benefit of the young elders of the Church, many of whom lacked the necessary education as representatives of the Church and missionaries to preach the Gospel to the world.³⁴ The school ended March 13, 1835, and the elders went out to proclaim the precepts of Mormonism. It was following its closure that young George A. Smith first embarked upon his missionary duties. In some ways his early experiences suggest characteristics typical of the neophyte missionary. Concerning his missionary activities that spring, George A., aged seventeen laboring with Lyman Smith aged twenty, stated,

I was appointed on a mission to preach the Gospel in the East. My circumstances were so reduced that I could not procure clothes to go in. Joseph and Hyrum gave me some grey cloth to make a coat, a snuff-colored vest and pantaloons. Brother Charles Thompson cut them out, and Sister Eliza Brown made them up for me. Elder Brigham Young gave me a pair of shoes. As I had no valise, I took a small tin trunk and put into it a couple of extra shirts. My father gave me a pocket Bible I called to see Cousin Joseph /i.e. the Prophet/; he gave me a Book of Mormon, shook hands with me and said, 'preach short sermons, make short prayers and deliver your sermons with a prayerful heart.' This advice I have always denominated my collegiate education.³⁵

A few days later he encountered his first speaking engagement about which he later recorded,

We retired early to the woods and asked the Lord to give us something to say and enable us to preach by the

³⁴"Ms. History of the Great Lakes Mission, Ohio," December 22, 1834.

³⁵"George A. Smith Journal," May 30, 1835 entry. Smith acknowledges that he was illiterate at the time, and learned to write at a later date.

power of His spirit, for we certainly felt our weakness. A small congregation assembled, filled Brother Daniel Allen's home /In Montville, Geauga County/. As Brother Lyman was the oldest, he agreed to preach first. He was a handsome looking young man, six feet high and well proportioned, with beautiful dark hair. . . . Now came my turn; it was an awful moment. Suffice it to say I talked about fifteen minutes and it seemed to me that I told everything I had ever heard taught by the Elders, and much that I never thought of before. At least I hinted at every principle which I understood and bore a strong testimony of the truth of the work and sat down confused. The people, however, seemed very well satisfied and said that we had done first rate for boys.³⁶

Although some of the missionaries were inexperienced and unsophisticated, many quickly developed into formidable defenders of their faith. In the spring of 1837, in Minerva, Ohio, Elder Lorenzo Barns, George A. Smith's companion at that time, preached on the subject of revelation and defended his views against the interrogation of four Campbellite preachers. Later in the day, George A. demonstrated improvement over his first preaching experience two years previously. After his sermon, a Mr. Cole, the local gentleman who had secured the school house in which the missionaries were preaching, inquired of the Campbellite clergy as to why they had not torn "Mormonism to pieces, when those two young men had so perfectly annihilated Campbellism."³⁷

In 1835, David Evans in finding that he could not get an audience in Georgetown, Columbiana County, except through a debate with the local Methodist Episcopal preacher wrote to the Messenger and Advocate that since the debate "I had been informed that all the citizens of that place

³⁶Ibid., June 6, 1835, entry.

³⁷George A. Smith, op. cit., Spring, 1837 entry.

decided in my favor with the exceptions of two individuals."³⁸ A short time following, another formal debate was announced, moderators were chosen, and "the decision was in favor of the Latter Day Saints," quipped Elder Evans. Following other preachment exchanges by Mormon and non-Mormon clergymen an observer stood up and declared, "if there could be no better arguments raised against Mormonism [than those offered], it would sweep the land."³⁹

Opposition by the Clergy. The enthusiastic and determined efforts of the missionaries were the target of considerable opposition and conflict throughout the communities and rural neighborhoods of Ohio. In the words of William Smith, "the gospel spread like wild-fire,"⁴⁰ during these early years of Mormonism. This spreading was so intense around Kirtland, that "many of the Methodists and Presbyterians were obliged to give up holding meetings and vacate their meeting houses in and about Kirtland."⁴¹ The non-Mormon clergy became agitated whenever the success of the Mormons threatened their own congregations. In Suffield, in 1836, Lorenzo Barns stated, "I was very warmly opposed by a Methodist class leader by the name of Cane. He made many statements and seemed [sic] much agitated in his mind."⁴² David Evans said that a Methodist preacher railed at him and called the Mormons "deceivers,

³⁸ Messenger and Advocate, I, No. 9 (June, 1835), p. 141.

³⁹ Idem.

⁴⁰ William Smith, op. cit., p. 25.

⁴¹ Idem.

⁴² Barns, op. cit., April 14, 1836.

false prophets, etc."⁴³

Sylvester Stoddard writing from Portage County in 1837 reported, "We found some friendly and believing, yea almost persuaded to be Saints; but the cross being so great, together with the many false reports that were put in circulation--for we met with no small opposition from priest and people--hindered them [i.e. the believing people] from obeying the truth."⁴⁴ Lorenzo Barns testified as to the influence of the Christian clergy during his labors in 1835 in Clermont County as follows:

Here a large field opened for labour and we had calls from preaching on the right hand and on the left The hearts of many of the people were stirred up and numbers were led to seek seriously and diligently to know whether these things were so or not. The priests of the day used their greatest exertions to put down the truth but all they could do was to read news paper stories, call for signs and cry false prophet, false teacher, delusion, imposition, &c., but this had but little affect on the minds of those that had herd [sic] the doctrine and were honest and desired to know the truth.⁴⁵

Concerning the treatment of the clergy George A. Smith while on a journey with Elder Marcellus F. Cowdery in Ohio wrote,

We traveled a few miles and seeing a meeting house, we called on the trustees, got permission to preach and circulated an appointment. Then went on to LaGrande and put up at McCullough's hotel, and gave out an appointment to preach in the morning at the school house, where we preached at 10 o'clock to a crowded house; then walked 4 miles to fill our 4 o'clock appointment, and found a large assembly standing at the meetinghouse. The trustees told me that their minister had sent them word they must not let a Mormon preach to the house, and although it was built with an understanding that it was free to all denominations, when the Methodists were not using it, yet they were compelled by a due obedience to their spiritual pastor to shut the

⁴³Messenger and Advocate, I, No. 9 (June, 1835), p. 141.

⁴⁴Messenger and Advocate, III, No. 12 (September, 1837), p. 567.

⁴⁵Barns, op. cit., p. 8.

door against us. (We preached outside on a pile of 'staves' to a crowd double the size that could get into the meeting house.)⁴⁶

The local ministry doubtless in some cases became concerned about the Mormons making inroads into their flock and protected their pastorate by attacking the Mormon elders. This was certainly true with the Campbellite church in communities such as Mentor and Mantua where such places were shaken with Mormonism by a force like that of an "earthquake."⁴⁷ Mormonism was conquering as with a sword and soon received an identity with relentless Mohammedanism. In 1831, Orson Hyde, a recent Campbellite member himself, observed, following a missionary tour in Lorain and Erie Counties, "In these places we were the means of converting and baptizing many of my old Campbellite friends--raised up and organized two or three branches of the Church . . . in the midst of much opposition. . . ."⁴⁸ Likewise, one writer in the Messenger and Advocate observed that the "different sects in our neighborhood" were "foremost in persecuting the saints."⁴⁹

Milton Stow baptized a number including some from the Methodist Church in New Portage and found that it caused a lot of excitement in that church which motivated the Methodist circuit-riding clergy to spread

⁴⁶ George A. Smith, op. cit., cited in his 1837 mission entry. The Messenger and Advocate indicated that the Protestant meeting houses were often made available to their traveling elders, and in return the Mormon facilities in Kirtland were made available to others. Messenger and Advocate, III, No. 1 (October, 1836), pp. 395, 396.

⁴⁷ Hayden, op. cit., pp. 195, 240. See Chapter VIII for further consideration of the Campbellite persecution of the Mormons.

⁴⁸ "Journal History," November, 1831.

⁴⁹ Messenger and Advocate, II, No. 9 (June, 1836), p. 333.

anti-Mormon sentiment wherever they went. These circuit riders went "forth with great exertions to prevent its influence spreading further," stated Ambrose Palmer, and "with the strongest expression of their exasperated feelings, thundered out anatemies and divine vengeance on the heads of those 'wolves in sheep's clothing' as they called the Mormon preachers."⁵⁰

David W. Patten following his conversion in 1832, while preaching in upper Ohio observed, "boath /sic/ the priest and the people war /sic/ (to all appearance) in allegiance with the Devil for they raved like mad men and would not allow /sic/ us to preach to them."⁵¹ George A. Smith, while preaching with his companion, Marcellus F. Cowdery, said a Presbyterian minister heckled them considerably and then the "preachers commenced a howl," wrote Smith, "and the congregation gnashed their teeth upon us, as if they were going to tear us in pieces."⁵² Hence, the ministers of the various churches in Ohio took an active part in stirring the people up against the new Church.

Overt Resistance Against the Missionaries. On occasion, overt action was resorted to in order to frustrate the missionary efforts. David Patten had to discharge a trouble maker from a meeting in Father Bosley's home in Avon, who had disturbed several meetings and refused to be quiet. The trouble maker defied anyone to make him be still or remove him from

⁵⁰Messenger and Advocate, I, No. 4 (January, 1835), p. 62.

⁵¹David W. Patten, "David W. Patten Journal," p. 20. Located in the Church Historian's library.

⁵²George A. Smith, op. cit., July 4, 1837.

the house. Patten presented him with the ultimatum of conforming to a standard of propriety or he would personally take him out. The interloper promptly defied the elder who replied, "In the name of the Lord I will do it," whereupon in the words of Patton,

I walked up to him and seizing him by the neck with one hand and by the seat of the breeches with the other hand I carried him to the door and threw him about ten feet on to a pile of wood. This quieted him for the time being. From this circumstance the saying went out that David had cast out one devil soul and body.⁵³

Parley P. Pratt in the fall of 1835, while waiting for others to prepare to join him in an extended mission, took a short trip to Mentor where he visited from house to house to preach to the people, "but they were full of lying and prejudice," said he, "and would not hear the Word."⁵⁴ Hence, he began to preach from the steps of the Campbellite meeting house to the people on the street. He said that this prompted "a mob of some fifty men and a band of music" to come forward marching back and forth drowning out his sermon with their instruments. The episode ended in Pratt's being smeared with eggs thrown at him. The disturbance was later brought to the attention of the Court of Common Pleas at Chardon under Pratt's complaint, the defendant being Grandison Newell.⁵⁵ The Chardon Spectator summarized the court findings as follows:

⁵³"Journal History," March 24, 1832.

⁵⁴Parley P. Pratt, op. cit., p. 128.

⁵⁵It is the author's assumption that the defendant was Grandison Newell. The Chardon Spectator and Geauga Gazette simply reports the case as Pratt vs. Newell. The conclusion that it was Grandison Newell is derived from the fact that he was a resident of Mentor, the scene of the encounter, and that he was a known anti-Mormon.

The defendant /i.e. Newell was/ noted as captain of a company, who, with drums, fifes, trumpets, &c., marched back and forth before the stand chosen by the preacher /i.e. Pratt/ and saluted him with music and bows; some, in the rear of the company, also pelted him with eggs until he was well besmeared;--to recover damages for which, the suit was brought. It was proved that defendant issued orders to march, and halt, and keep time, but gave no orders to fire. The jury, however, came to the conclusion that, holding them under military command, he was responsible for their acts, and returned a verdict against him for forty-seven dollars damages.⁵⁶

The Mormon elders while preaching in Cleveland complained of a threatened attack upon them by a banditti. John Whitmer related the details as follows:

John Murdock and others held a meeting in the city of Cleveland, Ohio, in the Masonic Hall, by the request of some of the citizens of said city. An opportunity which some sought to bring about their evil designs. Elder Murdock addressed the congregation on the subject of the gospel, and warned the inhabitants of that place to flee the wrath to come. Others followed him; and while they were yet speaking, one of the congregation came towards the stand and kneeled down and began to pray, a sign to the banditti to begin their abuse. At this time they began to blow out the candles and throw inkstands and books, etc., at the speaker; and one of the brethren prayed that the Lord would stop the utterance of the fellow that came and kneeled at the stand, and he became silent and could not rise from his knees for some time, because of the prayer of faith.⁵⁷

Then in 1837 Luman Andrus Shurtliff, as he and his companion were passing through Cleveland, stated, "We were abused and mistreated. Tar and feathers were prepared for our backs but the Lord delivered us."⁵⁸

⁵⁶Chardon Spectator and Geauga Gazette, V, No. 18 (October 30, 1835), n. p. See also P. P. Pratt, op. cit., p. 128.

⁵⁷John Whitmer, op. cit., Chapter IV.

⁵⁸Luman Andrus Shurtliff, "Luman Andrus Shurtliff Journal," p. 26. Typed copy is located in the library of the Utah State Historical Society.

The same year Lorenzo Snow stated that he was "saved from being dangerously mobbed by a very singular Dream."⁵⁹ After starting on a mission in the spring of the year and receiving courteous treatment and some success in Medina County he toured Stark County where he dreamed one night that arrangements were in the progress to mob him.⁶⁰ The evening following the dream, while conversing with friends, a loud knock at the door preceded the entering of two well dressed young men. They politely invited Lorenzo Snow to attend a meeting at the school house to address an audience anticipating his arrival. The invitation seemed urgent to Snow when the dream of the previous night crossed his mind; promptly, he refused the invitation. The two men expressed indignation and left. The following day Snow learned of the presence of the audience in the school house, but found their intentions as he said, "corresponded precisely with my dream."⁶¹

During the summer of 1836, George A. Smith went on a short mission touring Richland, Knox, Wayne, Medina, and Portage counties, during which time he attended a Methodist camp meeting. Although he had never been within ten miles of the place, the Mormon elder declared that as he entered the camp grounds he was identified to the ministers on the stand as a Mormon missionary. Immediately the speaker commenced an

⁵⁹Lorenzo Snow, "Lorenzo Snow Journal," p. 34. Located in the Church Historian's Library.

⁶⁰Lorenzo Snow, cited in Eliza R. Snow Smith, Biography and Family Record of Lorenzo Snow (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1884). p. 17.

⁶¹Idem.

abusive tirade against the Mormon Prophet and the Latter-day work. At the intermission, several of their preachers surrounded him and began to interrogate him. He feared that their intentions were to involve him in a dispute in order to have him arrested for disturbing their proceedings. To avoid the conflict he chose to read from the Bible in a low unassuming tone. As a hundred people gathered about him, he described the scene as follows:

A rough looking man came up, and in a tone of authority enquired, 'What are you going here, sir?' I replied, 'Reading in the Bible,' 'What gathers so many people around you?' I said, 'Reading the Bible, which is a new thing to them.' Finding they could get no cause to arrest me, the ministers stood guard around me and kept the people from me.⁶²

At dark he decided to remain to observe the events of the camp meeting which he did unmolested. Of the excitement of the evening he made the following observation:

At dark twenty fires of hickory bark on scaffolds eight feet high were lighted around the camp, which gave the woods a pleasant appearance. An eloquent discourse depicting the terrific miseries and endless duration of hell fire was closed by a general shout, when several hundreds of men, women and children commenced shouting screaming indiscriminately, and as the meeting had been in session four days, they all looked dirty and haggard, the females particularly; their hair being disheveled, which was plainly manifested by the clear light of the fires. The motley combination of voices, some shouting glory, some hallelujah, others bless God, at the very top of their voices; others crying for their sins, mourning and howling for fear of hell fire; many falling to the earth, groaning in apparent agony which would compare with the death wails in a cholera hospital⁶³

Repercussions and Failings of the Missionaries. As converts came

⁶²George A. Smith, op. cit., July 4, 1836.

⁶³Idem.

into the Church, an invitation to gather to Kirtland and to Zion was extended to them which sometimes resulted in problems for the Church. It was alleged that the Mormons "break up families, and give license for men to leave their families; women their husbands; children their parents, and slaves their masters," wrote the Prophet to John Whitmer, "thereby deranging the order, and breaking up the harmony and peace of society."⁶⁴ As early as 1831, Nancy Towle made a similar accusation:

I found . . . husbands, who had left their wives; and wives that had left their husbands.--Children that had left their parents; and parents, their children,-- that they might be 'accounted worthy,' as they said, 'to escape all the things that should come to pass; and to stand before the Son of Man.'⁶⁵

Naturally, the appeal of Mormonism was compelling for those who believed, and in some cases no sacrifice was too much for them. However, the Mormon Prophet did not concur with the criticism and claimed it to be a "wicked misrepresentation."⁶⁶ In order to clarify the policy that the Church did not countenance home breaking, he issued the following directive "To the elders of the church of the Latter Day Saints:"

Firstly, . . . and no influence should be used, with children contrary to the consent of their parents or guardians. . . . First teach the parents, and then, with their consent, let him /sic/ persuade the children to embrace the gospel also. And if children embrace the gospel, and their parents or guardians are unbelievers, teach them to stay at home and be obedient to their parents or guardians. . . . Secondly, . . . if the man forbid his wife, or his children before they are of age,

⁶⁴Messenger and Advocate, I, No. 12 (September, 1835), p. 180.

⁶⁵Towle, op. cit., pp. 141, 142.

⁶⁶Messenger and Advocate, I, No. 12 (September, 1835), p. 180.

to receive the gospel, then it should be the duty of the elder to go his way and use no influence against him
 Thirdly, it should be the duty of an elder, when he enters into a house to salute the master of that house, and if he gain his consent, then he may preach to all that are in that house, but if he gain not his consent, let him go not unto his slaves or servants, but let the responsibility be upon the head of the master of that house, and the consequence thereof⁶⁷

Some elders made enemies for the Church while being engaged in their missionary labors. Perhaps, the lack of tact of some of the many missionaries roaming throughtout Ohio contributed to the agitation. Joel Hills Johnson, the presiding elder over the branch of the Church at Amherst and a missionary, himself, taught that all the Protestant sects sprang from the Church of Rome which is the "mother of harlots [so] they [i.e. the Protestants] must consequently be her daughters."⁶⁸ When the question, "Will everybody be damned but Mormons?" was presented to the Saints, the answer was given by the editor of the Elders' Journal, "Yes, and a great portion of them unless they repent and work righteousness," was the reply.⁶⁹

Furthermore, the lack of understanding or erroneous concepts may have misled some and irritated others. Jared Carter in 1831, was called to preach from "Ohio to Vermont where I," as he journalized when he received his official appointment, "received the authority of an

⁶⁷Messenger and Advocate, II, No. 2 (November, 1835), p. 211.

⁶⁸Joel Hills Johnson, "Joel Hills Johnson Journal," June, 1831. Typed copy is located in the Special Collections Library at Brigham Young University.

⁶⁹Elders' Journal, I, No. 3 (July, 1838), p. 42.

apostle."⁷⁰ Actually it was not until four years later that the apostolic office was established in the form of a quorum in the Church. Gladden Bishop's membership was at stake in 1835 for "advancing doctrine, which were derogatory to the character of the Church."⁷¹ Another traveling elder the same year was found guilty of "teaching erroneous doctrine and perverting the word of God."⁷²

The elders were counseled not to stir up trouble by challenging others to enter into debates with them and not to contend with the churches. Yet, the council^{se} to the elders was that if they are "attacked, as they invariably will be, we commend them for defending themselves with the sword of the spirit."⁷³ Years later Brigham Young criticized the labors of some of the elders, he said,

I know that when I have travelled with some of the Twelve, and one of them has asked for breakfast, dinner, supper, or lodging, we have been refused dozens of times. Now, you may think that I am going to boast a little; I will brag a little of my own tact and talent. When others would ask, we would often be refused a morsel of something to eat, and so we would go from house to house; but when I had the privilege of asking, I was never turned away--no, not a single time. Would I go into the house and say to them, 'I am a 'Mormon' Elder; will you feed me?' It was none of their business who I was. But when I asked, 'Will you give me something to eat?' the reply was invariably, 'Yes.' And we sit, and talk, and sing, and make ourselves familiar and agreeable; and before our departure, after they had learned who we were, they would frequently ask, 'Will you not stay and preach for us?' and proffer to gather in the

⁷⁰Jared Carter, "Jared Carter Journal," September, 1831. Located in the Church Historian's Library.

⁷¹History of the Church, II, p. 284.

⁷²Messenger and Advocate, I, No. 8 (May, 1835), pp. 115, 116.

⁷³Messenger and Advocate, II, No. 10 (July, 1836), p. 251.

members of their family and their neighbours; and the feeling would be, 'Well, if this is 'Mormonism,' I will feed all the 'Mormon' Elders that come.' Where as, if I had said, 'I am a 'Mormon' Elder; will you feed me?' the answer would often have been, 'No: out of my house.'⁷⁴

Then, President Young gave a case in point to illustrate the obvious results of poor diplomacy and wrong teaching. He continued,

James Carroll . . . went into a neighbourhood where there was a Baptist Society, . . . and the minister invited him into his pulpit. He arose, and began to preach 'Mormonism,' as he called it; and about the first item that he presented to the people was nearly the last event that will take place on the earth concerning the Church. Instead of preaching the restoration and first principles of the Gospel, almost the first remark that he made was, 'You have a pretty meeting-house, and good buildings and farms; but do you know that the 'Mormons' are coming here to possess the whole of them?'

He never heard Joseph Smith, the Twelve, or any of the Elders that understood the Gospel, teach any such doctrine, but had probably gathered the idea from reading the Bible. By the time he had got through with so short a sermon, the congregation was ready to kick him out of the neighborhood, and he ought to have been kicked out of the pulpit at the first dash.⁷⁵

The preaching of most of the missionaries, however, was undoubtedly orthodox and representative of the LDS Church doctrine. When the elders recorded in their journals titles of their sermons the topics nearly always conformed to subjects recommended by the Church leaders. Lorenzo Barns in 1835, for example, while preaching in the southern part of the state gave a synopsis of his preaching, by writing,

Our maner [sic] of teaching the people generally [sic] was in the first place to lay before them the first principles of the gosple [sic] faith repentance Baptism for the remission of sins & the Laying on of the hands for the gift

⁷⁴Journal of Discourses, IV, p. 305.

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 306.

of the holy Ghost. There we proved from the New Testament to the people were preached and practiced by the Apostles and obeyed by the people in ancient days and Paul says if we or an Angel from heaven preach any other let him be accursed and then by comparing the ancient order of things with the teachings of the present generation and left the people to judge who were preaching the gospel that Paul did and who were preaching a different one.

Secondly showed what the power of Godliness was and who were denying it proved the necessity of more revelations where ever the church of Christ is on the earth and then that according to the prophecies there will be more revelations given in the last days to bring about the great work that is to be accomplished. And then the prophecies concerning the restoration of the house of Israel and the means that God will make use of to bring about the great work.⁷⁶

Orson Pratt took extra pains to list the subjects upon which he preached during his journeys in southern Ohio near Cincinnati; he usually listed the topics of his sermons which included the subjects selected by most of the elders. During his mission ; from February through April, 1835, he preached on the following subjects:

On 22 [of February] in Fulton preached on gathering of the Jews and gathering of saints to Zion; 29th chapt. of Isaiah; 25th difference between faith and knowledge and that signs and wonders most generally served to harden the hearts of those who would not believe through the testimony; and unexpected coming of Jesus' 2nd coming. On 27 we preached on first principles of the gospel and something concerning the spiritual gifts On 28 preached . . . upon the scattering and gathering of Israel and the miracles that would be wrought at their restoration. March 1. Falling away, and restoration of Church. Invited to debate with a Campbellite about spiritual gifts, prophecies, revelations, miracles, and gifts of healings In Newburry, March 13 preached on coming of the Book of Mormon; falling away, and restoration March 17 preached on restoration of Israel, Jer. 16, Is. 49:66, Exek. 2 sticks. On March 18 preached on New Covenant March 22 preached upon spiritual

⁷⁶Lorenzo Barns, op. cit., p. 9. Mechanical errors in writing are represented as in the original.

gifts and gave them a history of the Book of Mormon
 April 1 preached . . . the coming forth of the Book of
 Mormon and its contents in short and Angel haying the
 gospel. Rev. 14 chapt. the little stone he cut from
 the mountains Dan. 2 chapter.⁷⁷

The unorthodox doctrines of the Mormons and in some cases the spreading of incorrect doctrine, as well as the untactful or undiplomatic efforts, contributed to their being rejected. The definite threat the Mormon elders offered other religionists became another factor too real to be ignored. Perhaps, the real wonder is that the message of the Mormon elders continued to find interested hearers in face of all of their problems; consequently converts were made by the scores throughout the towns and villages of Ohio during the decade of the 1830's.

The Mormon Marriage Problems

In Salt Lake City in 1852, Brigham Young assigned Orson Pratt to make the official announcement of the Mormon doctrine of plural marriage. Pratt directed his words to the people of the United States and to the world from the Old Tabernacle at a General Conference of the Church. Pratt declared, "it is rather new ground to the inhabitants of the United States, and not only to them, but to a portion of the inhabitants of Europe; consequently," he forcefully added, "we shall have to break up new ground. It is well known, however, to the congregation before me, that the Latter-day Saints have embraced the doctrine of a

⁷⁷Orson Pratt, "The Fourth Book of Orson--Orson Pratt's Diary," February-April, 1835. Located in the Church Historian's Library. The mechanical form is the same as in the original.

plurality of wives, as a part of their religious faith."⁷⁸ Pratt made no pretention that this doctrine was new with Brigham Young and the Mormons in Utah. Concerning this he said,

But, says one, how have you obtained this information? By new revelation. When was it given, and to whom? It was given to our Prophet, Seer, and Revelator, Joseph Smith, on the 12th day of July, 1843; only about eleven months before he was martyred for the testimony of Jesus.⁷⁹

Although Smith wrote the revelation in Nauvoo in 1843, its practice and mispractice had a prelude in the days of Kirtland, which caused a measure of problems for the Mormon Prophet there. Naturally it is difficult to search the details of a factor as personal and unpublished as a man's relationship with a female--ostensibly his wife; yet, it is impossible to ignore the evidence that the beginning of the practice of Mormon polygamy had a bearing upon the internal if not upon the external conflict of the Mormons in Ohio. It contributed to apostasy and disharmony among some of the Saints as well as suspicion by the non-Mormon community.

The Inception of Plural Marriage. According to the Doctrine and Covenants 132:1-4, the Old Testament law of marriage was taught to Joseph Smith who was evidently expected to live it himself. Possibly, the principle of practicing plural marriage was endorsed by the Prophet as early as 1831, in Kirtland or Hiram, Ohio. During the fall of that year, Joseph moved from Kirtland to live with the John Johnson family in Hiram, Portage County. Orson Pratt stated that word about plurality of wives

⁷⁸Journal of Discourses, I, p. 54.

⁷⁹Ibid., p. 64.

began to be circulated while Smith was living in Hiram. Concerning this Pratt said,

Lyman Johnson, who was very familiar with Joseph at this early date, Joseph being at his father's home and who was also very intimate with me we having travelled on several missions together, told me himself that Joseph had made known to him as early as 1831, that plural marriage was a correct principle. Joseph declared to Lyman that God had revealed it to him, but that the time had not come to teach or practice it in the Church, but that the time would come.⁸⁰

Levi Hancock had an active role in the Church in Kirtland, and he instructed his son, Mosiah, to lend his testimony at an appropriate time concerning his own knowledge of plural marriage during those early years in Kirtland. Later, Mosiah Hancock made the following statement:

Concerning the doctrine of celestial marriage the Prophet told my father /Levi/ 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. But, said Brother Joseph, "Brother Levi, if I should make known to my brethren what God has made known to me they would seek my life." My father made some 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.⁸¹

Benjamin F. Johnson, an intimate of Joseph Smith's during the Kirtland and Nauvoo periods, and one whom the Prophet consulted prior to

⁸⁰The Latter-day Saint Millennial Star (Liverpool), Vol. XL (December 16, 1878), p. 788. (Italics added.) Elsewhere Orson Pratt states, "it /i.e. the doctrine of plural marriage/ was given in 1831, when the one-wife system alone prevailed among this people In the fore part of the year 1832, Joseph told individuals, then in the Church, that he had inquired of the Lord concerning the principle of taking more wives than one is a true principle, but the time had not yet come for it to be practiced." Journal of Discourses, XIII, p. 193.

⁸¹Mosiah Hancock, "Letter to the Editor," Deseret News Daily, XVII, No. 77 (February 21, 1884), p. 4. Italics added.

his taking some of Johnson's own sisters as plural wives in Nauvoo, recorded a most important account of the Prophet's first plural wife in Kirtland in 1835. Concerning the commencement of plural marriage Benjamin F. Johnson wrote,

And now as to your question /i.e. a question concerning plural marriage contained in a letter of one George F. Gibbs enquiring of Johnson's first-hand knowledge about the subject 'How early did the Prophet Joseph practice polygamy?' I hardly know how wisely to reply, for the truth at times may better be withheld; but as what I am writing is to be published only under the strict scrutiny of the wisest, I will say, that the revelation to the Church at Nauvoo, July 12, 1843, on the Eternal Covenant of Marriage and the Law of Plural Marriage, was not the first revelation of that law received and practiced by the Prophet. In 1835, at Kirtland, I learned from my sister's husband, Limay R. Sherman, who was close to the Prophet, and received it from him, 'That the ancient order of Plural Marriage was again to be practiced by the Church.' This, at the time, did not impress my mind deeply, although there lived then with his family (the Prophet's) a neighbor's daughter, Fannie Alger, a very nice and comely young woman about my own age, toward whom not only myself, but every one seemed partial, for the amiability of her character; and it was whispered even then that Joseph loved her.⁸²

Then Johnson added, "Without doubt in my mind, Fanny Alger was, at Kirtland, the Prophet's first plural wife, in which, by right of his calling, he was justified of the Lord."⁸³ This statement by Benjamin F. Johnson gives substance to the brief reference to Joseph and Fanny Alger made by other Mormon writers.⁸⁴

⁸²Benjamin F. Johnson, "Letter to George F. Gibbs," p. 8. Located in the Church Historian's Library and a typed copy is located in the Special Collections Library at Brigham Young University. George F. Gibbs was the secretary to the First Presidency of the Church.

⁸³Ibid., p. 10

⁸⁴Church Historian, Nephi Jensen, in a list of Joseph Smith's plural wives said, "Fanny Alger, /was/ one of the first plural wives sealed to the Prophet Joseph." Andrew Jensen, Historical Record, VI (Salt Lake City: Published by Andrew Jensen, 1887), p. 233. Also Oliver Cowdery refers to her later in this work.

Joseph Smith's initial institutionalizing the precept of plurality of wives, at best, was a difficult doctrine to handle, and it seemed that he confided in the trust of only few men such as Levi Hancock, Lyman Johnson, and Oliver Cowdery. Brigham Young admitted that Joseph told him in Kirtland that if he should divulge all that the Lord had revealed to him, the people would all desert him.⁸⁵ The charge of adulterous relations "with a certain girl"⁸⁶ was leveled against Smith by Cowdery in Missouri in 1837; this accusation became one of the complaints the Church had against Cowdery in his excommunication trial in Far West, April 12, 1838. In rationalizing Cowdery's accusation, the Prophet testified "that Oliver Cowdery had been his bosom friend, therefore he entrusted him with many things."⁸⁷ The minutes of the meeting, however, are vague as to how the problem was solved. At any rate, it seems that the "certain girl" referred to by Cowdery was Fanny Alger, whom Benjamin F. Johnson named as Smith's first plural wife. Concerning this problem Johnson wrote,

And 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 afterwards told by Warren Parish [sic], that he himself and Oliver Cowdery did know that Joseph had Fanny Alger as wife, for they were spied upon and found together.⁸⁸

Cowdery further alluded to the Fanny Alger relationship in a letter from Far West--where he had removed himself--after Smith's visit

⁸⁵Journal of Discourses, IX, p. 294.

⁸⁶"Far West Record," p. 117. This is a record book containing minutes of meetings in Kirtland and Far West, Missouri. This problem was also discussed in Elders' Journal, I, No. 3 (July, 1838), p. 45.

⁸⁷Idem.

⁸⁸Benjamin F. Johnson, op. cit., p. 8.

to Missouri in November, 1837. During the visit Smith and Cowdery had a conversation on the subject of "the girl." Apparently their conversation lent itself to considerable misunderstanding and controversy. Concerning this interview, Oliver later wrote to his brother in Kirtland about Joseph as follows:

When he [i.e. Joseph] was here he had some conversation, 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 [Joseph's] and Fanny Alger's was talked over in which I strictly declared that I had never deviated from the truth in the matter, and as I supposed was admitted by himself. At any rate, just before leaving, he wanted to drop every past thing, in which had been a difficulty or difference-- he called witnesses to the fact, gave me his hand in their presence.⁸⁹

It seems, that following the disclosure of the fact that Joseph was participating in plurality of wives clandestinely, Cowdery, Parrish, and Jared Carter assumed that prerogative for themselves. On this point Benjamin F. Johnson later reflected,

On learning from the Prophet 'the Lord had required him to take plural wives,' and that he had then thought to ask for some of my sisters [in Nauvoo], the past [i.e. in Kirtland] with its conditions and influences began more fully to unfold to my mind, the causes that must, at least in part, have led to the great apostasy and disruption in Kirtland Oliver Cowdery, J. Carter, W. Parrish, or others were not justified in their criticism upon the doings of the Prophet, or in their becoming a 'law unto themselves,' thru which they lost the light of their calling and were left to darkness.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Oliver Cowdery, "Letter to Warren Cowdery," Far West, Missouri, January 21, 1838. Located in the Huntington Library, San Marino, California. Microfilm copy at Brigham Young University Special Collections Library.

⁹⁰ Benjamin F. Johnson, op. cit., p. 10.

In fact, Johnson avowed that Jared Carter agitated Joseph somewhat on the subject of plural wives for as Carter "had built himself another house, he wanted another wife," but Joseph would not permit it.⁹¹

Warren Parrish's promiscuousness was also referred to by George A. Smith who overheard a conversation in Kirtland informing him that Warren Parrish, while in good standing in the Church, began to have difficulty because of his kind attentions toward a brother's wife. "Then," said Smith, "I learned the commencement of his apostasy."⁹² This conduct placed Parrish's membership in the Church in jeopardy and the matter was reviewed by the Elders' Journal as follows:

He went into Kirtland, Ohio, some few years since to live, and hired his boarding in the house of one Zerah Cole; he had not however been there but a short time, until Mr. Cole began to make a grievous complaint, about his taking unlawful freedom with his (Cole's) wife. Parrish was, accordingly, brought to an account, before the authorities of the church, for his crime. The fact was established, that such unlawful conduct had actually taken place between them (Parrish and Cole's wife).⁹³

In reference to the apostasy of Parrish and some other prominent elders, including several leaders George A. Smith later reflected,

You may go to every one of these men--I care not which one; you cannot put your finger on any one of these thirty men⁹⁴ but what you will find that the spirit of adultery or covetousness had got possession of their hearts; and when it did, the Spirit of the

⁹¹Ibid., p. 8.

⁹²Journal of Discourses, VII, p. 115.

⁹³Elders' Journal, I, No. 4 (August, 1838), p. 57. See also p. 59.

⁹⁴For a consideration of this apostasy and some of those involved in it consult Infra., Chapter X.

Lord left them.⁹⁵

Possibly Oliver Cowdery also unauthoritatively participated in the practice of plurality of wives during this early period which added to the trouble. Brigham Young is reported to have said,

They /i.e. Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery/ had a revelation that the order of Patriarchal Marriag /sic/ and the Sealing was right. Oliver said unto Joseph, 'Br. Joseph why don't we go into the Order of Polygamy, and practice it as the ancients did we know it is true then why delay.' Joseph's reply was I know that we know it is true and from God, but the time has not yet come. This did not seem to suit Oliver who expressed a determination to go into the order of Plural Marriage anyhow, altho Joseph said, 'Oliver if you go into this thing it is not with my faith or consent.' Disregarding the counsel of Joseph, Oliver Cowdery took to wife Annie Lyman cousin to Geo. A. Smith. From that time he went into darkness and lost the spirit. Annie Lyman is still alive, a witnes /sic/ to these things.⁹⁶

Just when Oliver might have indulged in this liberty is not known, but possibly it followed his return from Missouri during the summer of 1833, where he had previously married Elizabeth Ann Whitmer, his first wife, on December 18, 1832. It is possible that his marriage with Annie Lyman, which was considered in disobedience, came after 1835, when Oliver learned of Joseph and Fanny Alger, and used this as a pretext for his own plural marriage, or it may be that he experimented with it shortly after his return from Missouri in 1833.

The editor of the Juvenile Instructor, George Q. Cannon, gives

⁹⁵Journal of Discourses, VII, p. 115.

⁹⁶Brigham Young, cited in "Charles L. Walker Journal," VIII, p. 118 or whole p. 444. This statement was made by Brigham Young July 26, 1872, according to Walker, in the Fourteenth Ward meeting house in Salt Lake City. The journal is located in Brigham Young University Special Collections Library in typed form. The statement appears as if it is contained in the Walker journal except for a few minor punctuation additions. Italics added.

credence to Oliver Cowdery having a second wife by the following historical account:

For instance, the Lord revealed to the Prophet Joseph in an early day, some points connected with the doctrine of celestial marriage. He was told that it was to obey God's will that His ancient servants had taken more wives than one; and he probably learned, also, that His servants in these days would be commanded to carry out this principle. The Prophet Joseph, however, took no license from this. He was content to await the pleasure and command of the Lord, knowing that it was as sinful to enter upon the practice of a principle like this before being commanded to do so, as it would be to disobey it when required to carry it into effect. Not so with Oliver Cowdery. He was eager to have another wife. Contrary to the remonstrances of Joseph, and in utter disregard of his warnings, he took a young woman and lived with her as a wife, in addition to his legal wife. Had Oliver Cowdery waited until the Lord commanded His people to obey this principle, he could have taken this young woman, had her sealed to him as his wife, and lived with her without condemnation. But taking her as he did was a grievous sin, and was doubtless the cause of his losing the Spirit of the Lord, and of being cut off from the Church.⁹⁷

In 1885, George Q. Cannon in response to the excommunication of apostle Albert Carrington for adultery was prompted to review the same problem concerning Oliver Cowdery. He said,

The case of Oliver Cowdery illustrated in the most striking manner this great and important truth. Chosen to be one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon, he beheld an holy angel. It might be thought that after receiving the ministration of heavenly messengers and beholding the face of the Redeemer, there would be no danger of his falling; but, alas! he transgressed the law of God; he committed adultery; the spirit of God withdrew from him, and he, the second elder in the Church, was excommunicated from the Church.⁹⁸

⁹⁷George Q. Cannon (ed.), "History of the Church," Juvenile Instructor, XVI, No. 18 (September 15, 1881), p. 206. Italics added.

⁹⁸George Q. Cannon (ed.), "Editorial Thoughts," Juvenile Instructor, XX, No. 23 (December 1, 1885), p. 360. Italics added.

Joseph F. Smith, although not a contemporary of the Mormons in Kirtland, further added credence to the statements of others concerning Oliver Cowdery's taking another wife. He stated,

I have declared that the principle of plural marriage was not first revealed on the 12th day of July, 1843. It was written for the first time on that date, but it had been revealed to the Prophet many years before that, perhaps as early as 1832. About this time, or subsequently, Joseph, the Prophet, instructed this fact to Oliver Cowdery; he abused the confidence imposed in him, and brought reproach upon himself, and thereby upon the church by 'running before he was sent' and 'taking liberties without license,' so to speak hence the publication by O. Cowdery, about this time, of an article on marriage, which was carefully worded, and afterwards found its way into the Doctrine and Covenants without authority.⁹⁹

The "Article on Marriage" referred to by Joseph F. Smith, President of the Utah Mormon Church and nephew of the Prophet, was presented to a general assembly of the Church in Kirtland, August 17, 1835, convened to gain the approval of the body of the Church for the new book of revelations, the Doctrine and Covenants. Smith, however, was away visiting the Saints and preaching in Michigan at the time of the conference. The "Article on Marriage" was written because of rumors circulating concerning unorthodox marital relations among the Mormons. Although the Mormons continued to deny polygamy as a principle of faith, the complaint that it was being practiced among them was occasionally raised.

The particular phrase in the "article" that was pertinent to the case which contained the charge of polygamy reads as follows:

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 the case of death, when

⁹⁹Journal of Discourses, Vol. XX, p. 29.

either is at liberty to marry again.¹⁰⁰

Oliver Olney, who lived in Kirtland at this time, but who was, perhaps, neither aware of the current polygamous experimentation of Smith or the others, said that "an unlawful intercourse amongst the two sexes existed of which testimony plainly spoke." Then he added,

Also an introduction of principles that would soon be, that the ancient order of God that was formerly, would again have its rounds, as it was in the days of old Solomon and David. They had wives and concubines in abundance, as many as they could support. The secret whispering /in Kirtland/ was, that the same will eventually be again.¹⁰¹

Joseph F. Smith's knowledge concerning Cowdery's purpose for writing the "Article on Marriage" may have stemmed from Brigham Young, for T. B. H. Stenhouse said that he heard Brigham Young give the reason for Cowdery's issuing the "Article on Marriage" as being one to cover up his own promiscuity. Concerning Young's statement, Stenhouse said,

Brigham on that occasion /i.e. on the occasion he had made the statement in Stenhouse's hearing/ made the damaging avowal that the Appendix /"Article on Marriage"/ was written by Oliver Cowdery against Joseph's wishes, and was permitted to be published only after Cowdery's incessant teasing and Joseph's warning to him of the trouble which his course would create.

¹⁰⁰ Messenger and Advocate, I, No. 11 (August, 1835), p. 162. See also Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of the Latter Day Saints (Kirtland: F. G. Williams & Co., 1835), p. 251. History of the Church, II, pp. 246, 247. To some, perhaps, the fact that Oliver Cowdery was responsible for the writing of the "Article on Marriage" is sufficient cause to feel that he repudiated plural marriage; furthermore, they might point out that the absence of an accusation against Cowdery for adultery in his excommunication trial is confirming evidence. In view of the secret nature of its practice--admittedly all is not yet known--it is not surprising that such a charge against Cowdery was not entered by his accusers in his Missouri excommunication trial.

¹⁰¹ Oliver Olney, Absurdities of Mormonism Portrayed (Hancock Co., Illinois: 1843), p. 5.

. . . For he /i.e. Oliver/ insisted, Brigham says, upon adding to his marital relations a young woman familiar with his family, and did hold the relation of husband to her, To silence the clamour and surmising that arose over this "second wife," he wrote that Appendix¹⁰²

The question of the Mormons and plural marriage in Kirtland did not stop with the denial in the "Article on Marriage," for in April, 1837, the presidents of the Seventies Quorum again spoke out against any member who may be guilty of polygamy. If such a guilty party existed among the Seventy, he could expect to lose the fellowship of that official body.¹⁰³ Later in the fall, one of the questions "daily and hourly asked by all classes of people," reported the Elders' Journal, concerning the Mormons was "Do the Mormons believe in having more wives than one?"¹⁰⁴ When the answer was finally given to that question, an unequivocal "No" was the response. Hence the rumor of plural marriage among the Mormons in Kirtland was a question of much interest.

To what extent these rumors became a factor in adding to the anti-Mormon resentment may never be known, but Fanny Brewer, a Church member in Kirtland commenting on the events during the troubled year of 1837, stated that "there was much excitement against the Prophet" on a matter other than the financial problem they were having. This other matter included "an unlawful intercourse between himself and a young

¹⁰²T. B. H. Stenhouse, The Rocky Mountain Saints (London: Ward, Lock, and Tyler, 1878), p. 193. Italics added.

¹⁰³Messenger and Advocate, III, No. 8 (May, 1837), p. 511.

¹⁰⁴Elders' Journal (Kirtland), I, No. 2 (November, 1837), p. 28. See also Elders' Journal (Far West), I, No. 3 (July, 1838), p. 43.

orphan girl residing in his family and under his protection."¹⁰⁵ If such rumors existed which caused excitement among some of the members it is unlikely that they were kept from the anxious ears of the Mormon antagonists.

It appears that polygamy was a secret practice in Kirtland in the 1830's and the Church, or rather the Church's Prophet, neither had an intention of making it a public matter nor at that early date making it a principle of the Mormon faith. Hence, the official answers of denial were correct as far as the body of the Church was concerned and the principles they were expected to embrace. But within the Church, the conflict of the period was accentuated by the few who understood the new principle, and by others who mispracticed it.

The Unlawful Solemnizing of Marriage. Another problem concerning marriage existed among the Mormon community which did not escape the critical scrutiny of their opponents. The question as to whether the Mormons could claim the right to solemnize marriages became an issue in Ohio. At the wedding party of Newell Knight and Lydia Bailey it was intended that Elder Seymour Brunson (who received his license to solemnize marriages while visiting in the southern part of the state where prejudice against the Mormons was not so high) would officiate in the ceremony. "The prevailing law of Ohio did not recognize the Mormon Elders as

¹⁰⁵Fanny Brewer was a member of the Church in Kirtland, but left the Church following the apostasy there in 1837 and 1838. In 1842 she wrote an affidavit which included the statements herein quoted. Her affidavit afterwards found itself in a number of anti-Mormon pamphlets, the first may have been Edward Brotherton's Mormonism Its Rise and Progress (Manchester, England: 1846), n. p.

ministers,"¹⁰⁶ stated Lydia Bailey. Hyrum Smith prepared to get Brunson to perform the marriage but he was stopped by Joseph who stated that he intended to do the marrying himself in this case. Hyrum was shocked, for the act was punishable by arrest and a fine, which had been the course of a number of the elders previously.¹⁰⁷ Lydia reported the Prophet to have said,

Our Elders have been wronged and prosecuted for marrying without a license. The Lord God of Israel has given me authority to unite the people in the holy bonds of matrimony. And from this time forth I shall use that privilege and marry whomsoever I see fit. And the enemies of the Church shall never have power to use the law against me.¹⁰⁸

The Prophet proceeded with the ceremony, and the following Sunday he married four more couples in public meetings.

Smith's act of solemnizing his own early plural marriage--if in fact this is what he did--as well as officiating in marrying people without the appropriate civil license was in complete harmony with his concept of divine authority. The Prophet maintained he had a heavenly commission to organize the Church and perform the necessary ordinances in it. Orson Pratt later said,

He held the keys of these matters [i.e. marriage]. . . . They are the sealing keys of power, or in other words, of Elijah, the Prophet, who held many keys They were committed by that Angel who administered in the Kirtland

¹⁰⁶Homespun (Pseud.), "Lydia Knight's History," The First Book of Noble Women's Lives Series (Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor Office, 1883), p. 31.

¹⁰⁷Idem.

¹⁰⁸Idem.

Temple, and spoke unto Joseph the Prophet, at the time of the endowments in that house.¹⁰⁹

For the Mormon Prophet this was sufficient authority to breach the civil requirement and administer the civil ceremony of marriage.

Sidney Rigdon, however, neither had the same heavenly commission nor, it seems, the impunity from civil regulations. In 1835 he was indicted for "solemnizing marriages without license, and tried," stated the Chardon Spectator "at the present term of the Court of Common Pleas of this county."¹¹⁰ However, he had previously received a license to marry couples as a Campbellite minister as long as he remained in regular standing in that church. Fortunately for Rigdon, however, the fact that the minutes of the Campbellite meetings never showed an entry to the effect that he had been dismissed from that faith, the court "rejected the testimony, and a nolle prosequi was entered."¹¹¹

In January, 1836, the Mormon Prophet read (at the wedding of Apostle John F. Boynton) a "license--according to the law of the land--granting any minister of the Gospel the privilege of solemnizing the rights of matrimony."¹¹² Following this, it was an easy matter to find

¹⁰⁹Journal of Discourses, I, p. 64.

¹¹⁰Chardon Spectator and Geauga Gazette, V, No. 18 (October 30, 1835), n. p.

¹¹¹Idem. E. D. Howe later stated, however, that on this or another occasion--he does not specify--that Rigdon was fined \$1,000 "for solemnizing marriages without a license." E. D. Howe, Autobiography and Recollections of a Pioneer Printer (Painesville: Telegraph Steam Printing House, 1878), p. 45.

¹¹²History of the Church, II, p. 377.

marriages recorded in the Messenger and Advocate performed by the Mormon elders. Yet, it seemed, there still existed in the minds of some a question as to the proper right of the Mormon ministers to perform such marriages.¹¹³

¹¹³Messenger and Advocate, III, No. 7 (April, 1837), p. 496. The statement read, "Should the propriety of our elders entering into matrimonial contracts be questioned, we just say in the language of Paul, 'have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord & Cephas?'" For a charge against Joseph Smith, Sr., in 1838 see Infra., p. 319.

CHAPTER VII

POLITICAL AND ECONOMICAL FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTED TO THE MORMON CONFLICT

The Mormon Political Position as a Factor in their Conflict

The Mormon people had strong political views during the years they resided in Ohio, and they enthusiastically expressed their opinions. The Democratic President, Andrew Jackson, had presided in Washington two years when Joseph Smith arrived in Kirtland in 1831, and the Mormons became avid spokesmen of Jacksonian Democracy. Among the programs endorsed by Jacksonian Democrats that Smith and the Latter-day Saints reacted towards were federal suppression of nullification, withdrawal of support from the United States Bank, the rise of the common man, and the spoils system. Mormon involvement in these and other local and national political matters became the subject of further agitation and conflict. The Prophet's interest in political affairs later caused some of his enemies to criticize him and his people. Nevertheless, when national issues arose, he took occasion to speak out regarding them, for his Church was not one to withdraw from political and social responsibility. Illustrative of the Prophet's concern over a national issue was his reaction to the secession threat of South Carolina in 1832.

Mormonism's Reaction to South Carolina's Threatened Secession. In 1828 a protective tariff was passed by Congress which proved detrimental

to southern cotton growing states. The leader in resisting the effects of the tariff was the state of South Carolina. In fact, on November 24, 1832, the South Carolina legislature declared that after February 1, 1833, the federal tariff was not to be binding within its sovereign boundaries. The implication of this act was that a state could nullify laws passed by Congress to which it did not ascribe, and thereby the union of states could be threatened. South Carolina "threatened instant secession if the federal government attempted to blockade Charleston or to use force."¹

Jackson warned South Carolina against their nullification decision and apparent intention of secession, for "a high duty obliges me solemnly to announce that you cannot secede," wrote the President. "The laws of the United States must be executed Disunion by armed force is treason. Are you really ready to incur its guilt?" he asked the people of South Carolina.² South Carolina's refusal to pay the tariff immediately met resistance by the federal government and President Jackson ordered Forts Moultrie and Sumter reinforced; revenue cutters were ordered to collect the duties if the federal custom officials were resisted.

While the country was under this stress and waiting its outcome, the Mormon Prophet on Christmas Day, 1832, received a revelation which stated in part,

¹Samuel Eliot Morison, The Oxford History of the American People (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 436.

²Andrew Jackson, cited in Glyndon G. Van Deusen, The Jacksonian Era (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1959), pp. 74, 75.

Verily, thus saith the Lord concerning the wars that will shortly come to pass, beginning at the rebellion of South Carolina, which will eventually terminate in the death and misery of many souls;

And the time will come that war will be poured out upon all nations, beginning at this place.

For behold, the Southern States shall be divided against the Northern States³

The following January, the Church's Evening and Morning Star reported that "the dissolution of South Carolina from the Union," along with other current plagues and disasters are signs "that the end is near."⁴

Due to congressional efforts to gradually reduce the tariff schedules, the matter was resolved in an orderly manner; South Carolina did not secede nor was Smith's prophecy fulfilled at that time. However, in 1843 the Prophet again reported,

I prophecy, in the name of the Lord God, that the commencement of the difficulties which will cause much bloodshed previous to the coming of the Son of Man will be in South Carolina.

It may probably arise through the slave question. This is a voice declared to me, while I was praying earnestly on the subject, December 25, 1832.⁵

It is generally maintained by Mormon writers that the prophecy was fulfilled in part following the Confederate firing on Fort Sumter in 1861, which precipitated the War Between the States.⁶ This issue strongly

³Doctrine and Covenants, 87:1-3. For further consideration of Smith's reaction to the threatened secession and the revelation he received on the impending war see History of the Church, I, pp. 301, 302.

⁴The Evening and Morning Star (Missouri), I, No. 8 (January, 1833), p. 62.

⁵Doctrine and Covenants, 130:12, 13.

⁶B. H. Roberts, A Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Vol. I (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1930), pp. 295-302. This source offers an extensive consideration of the prophecy and its implication and fulfillment.

demonstrated the Prophet's concern over national problems. Other national issues followed; they, too, prompted Mormon reaction. Such partisan differences added to Mormon-Gentile trouble. It is difficult to ascribe specific reasons for each anti-Mormon attack, threatened attack, or hateful word; yet, an awareness of some of their political and social differences leads one to realize that therein lies much of the discord between the Mormons and their neighbors in Ohio.

Mormon Reaction to the National Bank and the American Aristocracy.

The Mormon people were not passive concerning social and political issues. Because their views set them apart from many other settlers in Geauga County, these differences further contributed to their dislike by their neighbors. President Jackson was opposed to the United States Bank and denounced it in his 1832 campaign. He argued that it would perpetuate an undesirable monopoly which would benefit only foreign investors and the privileged American aristocracy. After Jackson's reelection, government deposits were withdrawn from this institution, and the bank's charter was not renewed in 1836. Most Mormons were avowed supporters of much of Jacksonian politics and expressed their feelings against the U. S. Bank as well as the aristocratic class in America generally symbolized by the Whig political party. The Chardon Spectator stated that the first issue of a new Mormon paper, the Northern Times, devoted six columns to an "attack upon that dead monster, the United States Bank."⁷ The Mormon views as expressed preliminary to the Ohio state elections in 1836 bespeaks their contempt for the Whigs who were active in winning the

⁷Chardon Spectator, IV, No. 32 (February 28, 1835), n. p.

state election. The Whigs were involved in "great strife," said the Northern Times.

To corrupt and buy until they effect their object in defeating the people, and then impose upon them another monster in the shape of a national bank, or something else as bad or worse, and ensure ever after a free control of offices, credit and money to fatten their own ambition and corrupt the minds of the rising posterity, who coming up under the guidance of these aristocrats, will think it a virtue to enslave the poor and rivet firmer and firmer the fetters of despotism upon all, to prevent the noble spirit of democracy from rearing its head in a land so famed, so exalted, so blessed!⁸

Concerning encumbering political controls, the Mormons stated,

A remissness on the part of the democrats may, and indeed will, give the aristocracy their ticket in our legislature, thus subjecting us to whatever scheme of policy their avarice may invent, till we are loaded with shackles which we can never throw off, and the State disgraced with 'life insurance trust companies,' till our necks are sore, and we are subjected to live in the society of men who ride over us in gilded coaches, bought with money thus filched from the pockets of the farmers and mechanics!⁹

Latter-day Saints continued to speak out against the monopolistic and privileged institutions as a legal right for one class of citizens to make money at the expense of another class. "If we grant privileges and monopolies to a few," editorialized the Messenger and Advocate in 1837, "they always continue to undermine the fundamental principles of freedom, and sooner or later, convert, the purest and most liberal form of Government, into the rankest aristocracy."¹⁰

⁸"The Election," Northern Times, I, No. 27 (October 2, 1835), p. 2.

⁹Idem.

¹⁰Messenger and Advocate, III, No. 10 (July, 1837), p. 538.

Writers in the Church's political paper expressed themselves to be in favor of preserving principles of freedom and concern over encroaching federal powers. Perhaps the most telling available statement includes the following:

To a liberal spirit, a liberal policy, a liberal government, and free institutions, we owe our present safety and our future prosperity. Take from us these, and farewell to American liberty--deprive us of these, and adieu to our blood-bought freedom. . . .¹¹

Such statements as "we must burst the shackles of despotism, throw off the chains of federalism" which appeared within its columns reflected the Mormon concern over government restrictions.¹² Similarly, the Messenger noted that the Mormons "indeed profess to be liberal, not only in a religious, but in a political point of view."¹³

Lest they should be criticized for their "liberal" views concerning the government, the Mormons at the Kirtland conference in 1835--convened to render the Doctrine and Covenants official sanction--approved an "Article on Government" like the aforesaid one on marriage.¹⁴ By way of introduction the "Article" included,

¹¹Northern Times, I, No. 27 (October 2, 1835), p. 2.

¹²Northern Times, I, No. 28 (October 9, 1835), p. 2. Concerning this matter the Times further elaborated, "Our democratic friends must remember, that they are not to contest this war /i.e. the election/ with swords and bayonets, but with their every vote, safely deposited in the ballot box, which if done, will reverberate in the ears of the federalists of all shapes, grades and descriptions, from Hartford Conventionists, to the factious and unprincipled new-fangled Whigs, louder than the artillery at Austerlitz or Waterloo!"

¹³Messenger and Advocate, II, No. 7 (April, 1836), p. 295.

¹⁴Supra., Chapter VI.

That our belief, with regard to earthly governments and laws in general may not be misunderstood, we have thought proper to present, at the close of this volume, our opinion concerning the same.¹⁵

The "Article" recognized and sanctioned divine approval of governments and man's obligation to "sustain and uphold the respective government in which they reside." Yet, the Mormons left no doubt in the public mind of their strong leanings toward the Democratic Party and their contempt for the Whigs.

Mormon Political Entanglements. In the fall of 1833 the future looked bleak for the Mormon goal of building Zion in Missouri due to current mob action there; likewise, organized resistance was becoming more militant in the Kirtland area as well. It would appear that an expedient means to ameliorate the situation would be justified in the mind of the Mormon Prophet. Apparently one means of meeting the situation was to align themselves with a political party that would strengthen their position in Ohio, make friends for them, and aid in shielding them from their enemies. As early as December, 1833, Joseph noted his intention of establishing a political weekly newspaper favoring the administration of President Andrew Jackson. A letter the Prophet wrote to Bishop Partridge in Liberty, Missouri, contained the following:

The inhabitants of this country threaten our destruction, and we know not how soon they may be permitted to follow the example of the Missourians; but our trust is in God, and we are determined, His Grace assisting us, to maintain the cause and hold out faithful until the end We expect shortly to publish

¹⁵Messenger and Advocate, I, No. 11 (August, 1835), p. 163. See also Doctrine and Covenants, (1835 ed.), p. 252. History of the Church, II, p. 247.

a political paper weekly in favor of the present administration. The influential men of that party have offered a liberal patronage to us, and we hope to succeed, for thereby we can show the public the purity of our intention in supporting the government under which we live.¹⁶

Whatever came of this promise of patronage is not known, but certain Whig newspapers in the Reserve and in the East recoiled and struck at the threat of such a possibility. The New York Evening Star in response to the Mormon avowed support of Jackson's hand-picked replacement--Martin Van Buren, editorialized as follows:

Being, as his [i.e. Joseph Smith's] disciples all are zealous advocates of General Jackson's right to appoint his successor, they will of course be immense favorites at the white house; and we look every day to see some of them announced in the Globe as having been appointed to some lucrative station. Josy himself will probably have a "foreign mission," and to speak sober truth, he is about as fit for such an appointment as some of those who have already been thus rewarded for their subserviency to the court favorite.¹⁷

The Buffalo Whig in December, 1836, following the election of Martin Van Buren, Jackson's vice-president and successor, indicated that Kirtland went strong for Van Buren because of the Mormon vote and stated,

The reason assigned for this vote of the Mormons was, that if they had been promised by an agent of Van Buren, that if he were elected, they should have their lands in Jackson County, Missouri, from which they had been driven by the citizens there restored to them.¹⁸

¹⁶Joseph Smith, "Letter to Edward Partridge," December 5, 1833. Located in Joseph Smith's Kirtland Letter Book including letters from November 27, 1832, to August 4, 1835, which is stored in the library of the Church Historian. The Painesville Telegraph, a Whig paper, accused Andrew Jackson of employing the spoils system by appointing more friends to certain offices than "all his predecessors put together." Painesville Telegraph, VI, No. 20 (October 31, 1834), n. p. Italics added.

¹⁷Evening Star (New York), cited in Painesville Telegraph, New Series I, No. 35 (September 4, 1835), n. p.

¹⁸Buffalo Whig, cited in the Painesville Republican, I, No. 3 (December 1, 1836), n. p.

The Painesville Republican, a newly established Democrat paper attempted to exonerate the Democratic party from the responsibility assigned to them by the Buffalo Whig. The Painesville Republican occasionally showed friendliness to the Mormons, but it did not feel as if it could leave such an accusation against their party on the part of the Whig paper without comment. In attempting to clear the Democratic Party of such an involvement with the Mormons, the Painesville Republican editorialized,

Now let us examine this foul piece of calumny. In the first place, we would inquire, who it was 'that assigned' the reasons for the vote given in Kirtland, to be 'a promise made by an agent of Van Buren,' that if elected--they [the Mormons] should have their lands restored to them. Secondly, if such reasons have been assigned by any one, who was the 'agent of Van Buren,' by whom such a promise was made? And lastly, if such a promise was made, what evidence have we that Mr. Van Buren ever authorized such a promise? Not a particle. And we hesitate not to say, that the whole is a base fabrication--a malignant slander, such no man who has the least regard to candor, or common honesty would write, publish, or republish.¹⁹

It is doubtful that the support the Mormons gave the Democratic Party benefitted them in the form of political patronage. The prospect, however, of receiving spoils was sufficient to agitate the political situation and further ferment Whig anti-Mormon enmity.

The Northern Times. The Mormon interest in local and national politics received an important emphasis by their forming a political newspaper to be published in Kirtland. Initial plans to establish such a paper to be known as the Democrat were considered as early as November, 1833, but this did not materialize. In reference to this proposed paper, Oliver Cowdery in a letter in November to Horace Kingsbury of Painesville

¹⁹Painesville Republican, I, No. 3 (December 1, 1836), n. p.

said that they expected to "draw a prospectus soon."²⁰ The purposes for establishing the political paper in the words of Cowdery were to combat "abuse and calumny," for he wrote,

There are to be sure a certain little party, who feel themselves intruded upon if they discover any move toward circulating the true principles of our constitution, and the exact Policy of our Government: from them we expect abuse and calumny, but we shall take the field with a view to show the Publick /sic/ in this region the false insinuations of a party who cry blood and murder for no other reason than to feed the minds of the ignorant with falsehoods, to carry their own purposes into effect, to ride into office and hold an unbounded control over everything that will not bow to their futile system.²¹

Although this first attempt to establish a political paper failed, plans moved forward and the periodical Northern Times was established under the editorship of Oliver Cowdery and published by Frederick G. Williams in Kirtland.²² An issue or two appeared during the fall of

²⁰Oliver Cowdery, "Letter to Horace Kingsbury," November 29, 1833. Huntington Library Collection, San Marino, California. The local press made the following notice of this periodical: "Church & State, -- the News-letter says that proposals have been issued for publishing a Jackson paper in Kirtland, in this county. From other sources we learn that said paper is to be under the guidance of the Mormon leaders. . . ." Painesville Telegraph, V, No. 29 (January 3, 1834), n. p. It could well be that the 1835 "Article on Government" was produced in part because of "falsehoods" certain members of the opposing political party was circulating about the Mormon political views, perhaps, by questioning their loyalty to the government. For Joseph Smith's reference to this first attempt at a political paper see his letter to Edward Partridge. Supra. p. 185.

²¹Ibid., "Letter to Horace Kingsbury."

²²Chardon Spectator and Geauga Gazette, IV, No. 31 (February 21, 1835), n. p. The editor's office later changed hands, concerning which the Telegraph gave notice in their paper. It is quoted here to show the scoffing spirit by which routine Mormon events were handled in the public press. "Important.--We learn by the Warren News Letter that O. Cowdery has withdrawn from the editorial department of the Northern Times, a Mormon Van Buren paper published in this county, and that F. G. Williams will henceforth act as editor of that invaluable journal. It is thought

1834,²³ but the first regularly appearing edition came out sometime during February, 1835, and appeared almost every week for at least one year.²⁴

Although neither its prospectus nor the first editions are available, Whig newspaper reaction which was not cordial leaves us with a brief record of the political subjects with which it dealt. The fact that the paper was not only a Mormon publication but also a Democratic paper made it the target of proliferated scorn. The Telegraph made the following observation concerning this newspaper:

The Mormonites in this county, as if weary of the dull monotony of dreams and devotion, of visions and vexation--of profitless prophecies, and talking in tongues--have concluded to turn their attention to political matters. A paper entitled the Northern Times has made its appearance from their press in Kirtland, bearing the name of O. Cowdery, one of their leaders and preachers, as Editor. The editor breaks forth with a flood of words, filling seven columns under his editorial head--pounces

that the cause of Democracy will not be endangered by this change, as the new incumbent /sic/, if he has not, like his predecessor, seen an angel, and 'hefted' the golden plates, is at least a faithful follower of the Prophet, by whose inspiration the paper will doubtless still be guided in its political course." Painesville Telegraph, XIII, No. 51 (June 12, 1835), n. p.

²³When the Northern Times appeared in February, 1835, the Spectator noted that it had previously appeared as "two little black half sheets, under the same title, just before our late /i.e. Fall, 1834/ election" Chardon Spectator and Geauga Gazette, IV, No. 32 (February 28, 1835), n. p.

²⁴The Union List of Newspapers, 1937, locates only two copies of the Northern Times, October 2, and 9, 1835, at the Connecticut State Library at Hartford. It gives with a question mark the obviously erroneous date of April 3, 1835, as the first date of issue since both the Painesville Telegraph and the Chardon Spectator noted the appearance of the first regular issue in their columns in February, 1835. It is also known that the paper continued as far as Volume, I, Number 42, dated January 13, 1836, for George A. Smith had a fragment of that number as late as 1870. Stanley R. Gunn, Oliver Cowdery (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1962), p. 140.

upon the dead carcass of the United States Bank with most Quixotic ferocity--talks about 'WIGS'--praises the President--and says, the nomination of Van Buren "we STILL add, would meet our mind, and receive our warm support." As the editor professes to have communications with the spirits of the invisible world, and certifies that he had seen an Angel, and 'hefted' the golden plates of the Prophet, he will be a political anomaly, if not a dangerous opponent.²⁵

Two months later the Telegraph observed that the Times was still "prating about Church and State, Bank, Democracy, Federalism, &c. &c."²⁶

The Mormons and Public Office. When President Jackson's second term approached its end, consideration was given for a Democratic successor; Martin Van Buren became that man. A year before the national election of 1836, the Northern Times threw its support to Van Buren and a running announcement for his nomination for President and Richard M. Johnson for vice president was carried in the Church paper. At the election, however, Van Buren neither carried Geauga County nor the state of Ohio, but he did gain a majority of the Kirtland votes.²⁷

The Mormons were not only interested in supporting these national politicians, but also electing their own candidates for public office. Consequently, their involvement in politics became a basis for added criticism and served to alienate themselves further from some of

²⁵Painesville Telegraph, VI, No. 35 (February 20, 1835), n. p. Since the days of E. D. Howe's proprietorship over the Telegraph, it had been transferred to Asahel Howe as the publisher and M. G. Lewis as its editor. Yet, the same anti-Mormon sentiment still came from its pages.

²⁶Painesville Telegraph, XIII, No. 43 (April 17, 1835), n. p.

²⁷Painesville Republican, I, No. 3 (December 1, 1836), n. p. Figure 4 shows the announcement superimposed upon a reduced front page of the Northern Times.

their neighbors. At first their position was naturally weak; eventually, however, the Telegraph noted a threatening growth of the Mormons in local politics:

Now, the people of this township who are not governed by the pretended revelations of Jo Smith, think they can fully comprehend the design of these religious impostors. Their object is to acquire political power as fast as they can, without any regard to the means they made use of. They are ready to harness in with any party that is willing to degrade themselves by asking their assistance. They now carry nearly a majority of this township, and every man votes as directed by the prophet and his elders. Previous to the recent township election here, it was generally understood that the Mormons and Jacksonians had agreed to share the 'spoils' equally, in consequence of which the other citizens thought it useless to attend the polls. This brought out an entire Mormon ticket which they calculated to smuggle in, independent of the 'democrats' not under the orders of the prophet. This caused the citizens to rally and make an effort, which by a small majority, saved the township from being governed by revelation for the year to come.²⁸

Eventually, Mormon strength grew until a number of Latter-day Saints were elected to local offices. Oliver Cowdery and Sidney Rigdon were elected to the Township Committee.²⁹ Then in 1835 Cowdery was elected to the state electoral convention for the national election of 1836, and while serving in this capacity, wrote to both Martin Van Buren and Richard M. Johnson. Later Cowdery and F. G. Williams were elected Justices of the Peace.³⁰ Expressing his anxiety concerning the Mormon political threat, E. D. Howe contended,

²⁸Painesville Telegraph, XIII, No. 43 (April 17, 1835), n. p.

²⁹Painesville Republican, I, No. 16 (March 2, 1837), n. p.

³⁰Painesville Republican, I, No. 28 (May 25, 1837), n. p.

They began to make their boasts that in a short time they would control all the county offices and elect a member of Congress from their own ranks. All their doings and performances were held out as having been dictated and commanded by Jesus Christ, in writing, through the head of their prophet Joseph.³¹

Rumor began to circulate--contrary to fact--that Mormons secured control of all the county offices. Presumably, these reports were issued by individuals living at a distance who were not acquainted with the local situation. Criticism continued to occur over Mormon political involvements; and although other papers failed to make similar accusations, the Telegraph complained about the Mormons mishandling the ballots during the election of 1836, by reporting,

Thus it is that this clan of fanatics trample upon the laws of the land. A more dangerous combination of men have not been congregated since the days of Mohamet. Their leaders are proud, haughty, overbearing, grasping at all wealth and political power within their reach. They already have undisputed control of the township where they reside and the manner in which they intend to exercise it was faintly displayed at the last Presidential election where about 100 illegal votes were given in, permitting mere boys to vote who had not resided in the state three days, when the law requires a year residence for every voter, and the payment of a tax.³²

The Telegraph, however, failed to give any evidence for its accusation and expressed chagrin that no other newspaper had reported the fact since the election. The editor of the Telegraph further denounced the Mormons by noting that "when they attempt to rob the people of this country of their political rights . . . it is time for the

³¹E. D. Howe, Autobiography and Recollections of a Pioneer Printer, p. 44.

³²Painesville Telegraph, IV, No. 4 (January 27, 1837), n. p.

community to be alarmed."³³ To be sure, one can understand that this kind of criticism, whether the facts were true or not, would intensify the strained relations.

William Harris, an L.D.S. Church member in Kirtland but later a dissenter, referred to the threat of the political strength of the Mormon body as follows:

Now, I ask the community, while men are duped, as we know that they are, is not Mormonism inimical to the institution of our country? Cannot Smith, at any time set himself up as superior to the civil law? Can he not commit any act of depredation, and screen himself from punishment? Can he, ah! Let the ballot box, at every election where they have voted answer, and it will be found that they have voted almost to a man, with Smith.³⁴

Certainly, the inception of Mormon political influence in the country presented itself as a threat to existing forces; likewise, the possible existence of a power block controlled by the Prophet, coupled with the suspicion that stemmed from the accusation that laws were being abridged, widened the unharmonious relationship between Mormon and non-Mormon in Geauga County. Naturally, Mormonism's strong resistance against the politics of the Whigs prevented their ingratiating themselves into the hearts of these political opponents. Moreover, friction over these political differences later prompted the Painesville Republican to accuse Grandison Newell of a personal crusade to ruin Joseph Smith.

Mormon Anti-Abolition Sentiment. During the 1830's, contention between the North and South increased as a result of the problems of

³³Idem.

³⁴William Harris, Mormonism Portrayed Its Errors and Absurdities (Warsaw, Illinois: Sharp and Gamble Pub., 1841), p. 15.

slavery. Abolition societies were demonstrating some influence in the North; and for practical and theological reasons, the Mormons took occasion to speak out against that movement.³⁵ The Mormons through their political newspaper, the Northern Times, stated the following:

Several communications have been sent to the Northern Times, for insertion, in favor of anti-slavery--or the abolition of slavery. To prevent any misunderstanding on the subject, we positively say, that we shall have nothing to do with the matter--we are opposed to abolition, and whatever is calculated to disturb the peace and harmony of our Constitution and country. Abolition does hardly belong to law or religion, politics or gospel, according to our idea on the subject.³⁶

In 1836 a Mormon meeting house in Kirtland was made available to a traveling Presbyterian abolitionist lecturer. He was courteously, although not enthusiastically, received by the inhabitants of Kirtland; and he presented his abolitionist argument "to nearly naked walls," quipped Joseph Smith, Jr.³⁷ It was anticipated that he might have an appealing effect upon the Mormon people, but the contrary was true. His appearance, however, evoked no less than three newspaper articles which

³⁵In 1833 one of the complaints the Missouri mob had against the Mormons in Jackson County was the allegation that the Mormons had invited the free Negro to migrate to Jackson County which served to agitate the slavery problem. History of the Church, I, p. 397. This criticism prompted the following statements from the Mormons in Missouri: "Slaves are real estate in this and other states, and wisdom would dictate great care among the branches of the church of Christ, on this subject. So long as we have no special rule in the church, as to people of color, let prudence guide; and while they, as well as we, are in the hands of a merciful God, we say: Shun every appearance of evil." "Free People of Color," The Evening and the Morning Star (Missouri), II, No. 14 (July, 1833), p. 109.

³⁶Northern Times, I, No. 28 (October 9, 1835), p. 2.

³⁷Messenger and Advocate, II, No. 7 (April, 1836), p. 289.

were written by the Prophet, Warren Parrish, and a third writer, presumably the editor, Oliver Cowdery.

Joseph Smith concluded that a concern about abolitionism had relevance in Church matters, for some of the Saints believed that Church fellowship should be withdrawn from those members in the South who would not "renounce the principle of slavery." In fact, this appeal prompted the Prophet to speak out against abolitionism in no uncertain terms; otherwise, he said, their position might prove detrimental to missionary efforts in the southern states--particularly in Virginia, Tennessee, and Kentucky--where a recurrence of the Jackson County persecutions were threatened.³⁸ He also questioned the advisability of freeing the slaves to overrun the "country and violate the most sacred principle of human society--chastity and virtue." Then, out of deference to the L.D.S. Church members in the South he added,

I do not believe that the people of the North have any more right to say that the South shall not hold slaves, than the South have to say the North shall.

The Prophet, furthermore, found justification for slavery on spiritual and scriptural grounds, and entered into a lengthy consideration of slavery from that viewpoint.³⁹ Parrish, however, noted that the

³⁸Idem. One reference as to the trouble that would come upon the Church if they supported the abolition movement is reflected in the following extract: "For you will see, in a moment, that if madam rumor, with her thousand poisoned tongues, was once to set afloat the story that this society had come out in favor of the doctrines of Abolitionism, there would be no safety for one of us in the South." Messenger and Advocate, II, No. 8 (May, 1836), p. 313.

³⁹Ibid., pp. 290, 291. Among other things the Prophet said, "It is my privilege then, to name certain passages from the Bible, and examine the teachings of the ancients upon this matter, as the fact is

abolition meetings were successful enough to establish an abolitionist society in Kirtland, but added that Mormons were going to "stand aloof from abolition societies."⁴⁰ "A little squad of Presbyterians" joined the Kirtland Abolition Movement, but as to the particulars in its widening the defile between themselves and the Mormons, little is known.

The third article in the same issue of the Messenger was even more explicit than the previous ones, although they were all similar in sentiment. Among other things, this editorial contained the following precise views concerning abolitionism:

What benefit can the slave derive from the long harrangues and discussions held in the north? Certainly the people of the north have no legal right to interfere with the property of the south, neither have they a right to say they shall, or shall not, hold slaves. . . .

Where can be the common sense of any wishing to see the slaves of the south set at liberty, is past our comprehension. Such a thing could not take place without corrupting all civil and wholesome society, of both the north and the south! Let the blacks of the south be free, and our community is overrun with paupers, and a reckless mass of human beings, uncultivated, untaught and unaccustomed to provide for themselves the necessaries of life--endangering the chastity of every female who might by chance be found in our streets--our prisons filled with convicts, and the hang-man wearied with executing the functions of his office! This must unavoidably be the case, every rational man must admit, who has ever travelled in the slave states, or we must open our houses, unfold our arms, and bid these degraded and degrading sons of Canaan, a hearty welcome and a free admittance to all we

uncontrovertable, that the first mention we have of slavery is found in the Holy Bible, pronounced by a man who was perfect in his generation and walked with God What could have been the design of the Almighty in this wonderful occurrence is not for me to say; but I can say, that the curse is not yet taken off the sons of Canaan, neither will be until it is affected by as great power as caused it to come."

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 295. See also 313.

possess! A society of this nature, to us, is so intolerably degrading, that the bare reflection causes our feelings to recoil, and our hearts to revolt.

We repeat, that we have long looked upon this subject with deep feeling, and till now have remained silent; but for this once we wash our hands of the matter.

We have travelled in the south, and have seen the condition of both master and servant; and without the least disposition to deprive others of their liberty of thinking, we unhesitatingly say that if ever the condition of the slave is bettered, under our present form of government, it must be by converting the master to the faith of the gospel and then teaching him to be kind to his slave. The idea of transportation is folly, the project of emancipation is destructive to our government, and the notion of amalgamation is devilish!--And insensible to feeling must be the heart, and low indeed must be the mind, that would consent for a moment, to see his fair daughter, his sister,⁴¹ or perhaps, his bosom companion, in the embrace of a NEGRO.

Although abolition meetings were held in the Western Reserve and feelings favoring the freeing of the slaves were being engendered, if the Mormons had been abolitionists this would have led to increased persecution. The Saints possibly were criticized by abolitionists for not supporting enthusiastically their program, but if they would have joined the crusade, their support undoubtedly would have become a major factor of persecution.

Other Potential Political Threats. Occasionally local political matters of a controversial nature involved the Mormons. One such controversy in 1834 was the proposition to transfer the Geauga County seat from Chardon to Painesville. The Mormons were solidly behind this promotion and lent its support to it thereby receiving a measure of criticism. Removalist meetings were held in Kirtland to support this transfer of county government. Likewise, the Mormon press lent its support by issuing

⁴¹"The Abolitionist," Messenger and Advocate, II, No. 7 (April, 1836), p. 300.

handbills and extras. Moreover, the first issue of the Northern Times enthusiastically publicized it.⁴² The matter, presumably, gained inadequate support, for in the summer of 1835 the Mormons withdrew their strength in favor of "other fish to fry," quipped the Chardon Spectator.⁴³ The available sources fail to provide sufficient information to clarify the benefit such a move would offer the Mormons, but they lend insight into the unpopularity of any proposal endorsed by the Mormons.

The presidential election of 1832 and 1836 included participation of three political parties in Ohio. Besides the Democrats and the Whigs--which included the National Republican Party--the anti-Masonic Party was influential enough to establish a national ticket. Although this ticket was never strong in Ohio politically, the anti-Masons did exist as a potential threat to the Mormons. In 1831, when the Mormons first arrived in Ohio, there was some effort to identify them with the principles of freemasonry. The anti-Masonic papers in the Reserve kept their eye upon the Saints in order to make an identity between them and Masonry if one existed. The Telegraph from Painesville in 1831 became suspicious of such a union when some "zealous masons . . . beset Jo Smith for 'more light.'"⁴⁴ It was also observed that the Book of Mormon had been first printed by a Masonic press in Palmyra, New York. If this were not enough to convince the public, the editor of the

⁴²Chardon Spectator, IV, No. 13 (October 18, 1834), n. p.

⁴³Chardon Spectator, V, No. 4 (August 14, 1835), n. p.

⁴⁴Painesville Telegraph, II, No. 40 (March 22, 1831), n. p.

Telegraph further noted "striking resemblance between masonry and mormonism." The Telegraph observed that "both systems pretended to have a very ancient origin, and to possess some wonderful secrets" ⁴⁵ Concerning such secrets it added,

The secrets of masonry are kept from the world by blasphemous oaths, under a penalty of death--the secrets of mormonism by making the candidate believe that it will be violating the "express command of Heaven," and the penalty is the eternal displeasure of God, and all worthy and well qualified mormons. ⁴⁶

Actually, the so-called "secrets of Mormonism" consisted in the fact that the Church leaders chose not to make their organizational policies and routine administrative rules available to the public.

The Ohio Star, however, gave publicity to the fact that the Mormons were anti-Masonic which seemed to be more plausible to the citizens of the Reserve. "The Mormon Bible is antimasonic," it stated, "and it is a singular truth that every one of its followers, so far as we are able to ascertain, are antimasons. . . ." ⁴⁷ The Geauga Gazette also took issue with the Telegraph's attempt to identify Mormonism with something sinister; it observed that William W. Phelps who had been editor of the anti-Masonic Phenix of Ontario, New York, who was then prominent in the Church, was "one of the most zealous, and self styled, patriotic anti-masons of his day." ⁴⁸ The Gazette further stated,

Here we see Mormonism walking in, close upon the steps of political anti-masonry! How far this is the case in this section, we are not positively informed. In the state of New York, most of the Mormons that we knew were first antis. ⁴⁹

⁴⁵Idem.

⁴⁶Idem.

⁴⁷Ohio Star, II, No. 12 (March 24, 1831), n. p.

⁴⁸Geauga Gazette, I, No. 25 (May 1, 1832), n. p.

⁴⁹Idem.

Actually, the Mormons officially neither opposed nor supported the Masonic movement in Ohio, although certain individual members seemed to have anti-Masonic leanings. Fortunately for the Church, they lost one of their potentially worst identities in northern Ohio--that of free-masonry; for the citizens of the Western Reserve were strongly anti-Masonic in sentiment, and it is likely that the Mormons would have suffered by identification with them.

The Mormon Economy As a Factor In Conflict

During the summer of 1831, the Prophet announced that Missouri was to be the gathering place for the Saints, preparatory to the day of judgment. After Joseph Smith announced that Kirtland was to be retained as a "stronghold. . . for the space of five years," the call to gather to Zion lost some of its urgency.⁵⁰ This re-emphasis upon the importance of Kirtland naturally prompted many new converts to take up their residence there instead of or prior to their moving to Missouri. This gathering into Kirtland proved to be a shock to the old settlers as well as to the available living accommodations there. At this time A. G. Riddle described the scene in Kirtland as follows:

One almost wondered if the whole world were centering at Kirtland. They came, men, women, and children, in every conceivable manner, some with horses, oxen, and vehicles rough and rude, while others had walked all or part of the distance. The future 'City of the Saints' appeared like one beseiged. Every available house, shop, hut, or barn was filled to its utmost capacity. Even boxes were roughly extemporized and used for shelter

⁵⁰Doctrine and Covenants, 64:21.

until something more permanent could be secured.⁵¹

Although many individuals of high purpose and noble character migrated to Kirtland, according to John Whitmer, some came to "glut themselves upon the labors of others."⁵² A few unprincipled members were easily discouraged and soon left, while others remained and after getting money from trusting Church members deserted them. Benjamin F. Johnson, who arrived in Kirtland in the fall of 1833, when this great in-gathering was underway, observed that the Saints in Kirtland were mainly of the "poorer class."⁵³

When the Latter-day Saints started to build a large stone temple in 1833, there was not a scraper and hardly a plow obtainable among them in their impoverished condition.⁵⁴ The entire Church was expected to participate in the expense involved in the temple construction, and it was necessary to solicit funds from the Church in the eastern branches in order to complete its construction. Even at that, the mortgage on the temple later suffered a threatened foreclosure which was met by a wealthy benefactor, John Tanner, who was rated the wealthiest man in the Church.⁵⁵ The tremendous effort of building a sixty thousand dollar temple along with buying land, building homes, and

⁵¹A. G. Riddle, cited in Williams Brothers (pub.), History of Geauga and Lake Counties (Philadelphia: Williams Brothers, 1878), p. 248.

⁵²John Whitmer, op. cit., Chapter III.

⁵³Benjamin F. Johnson, My Life's Review (Independence, Missouri: Zion's Printing and Publishing Co., 1947), p. 15.

⁵⁴Idem.

⁵⁵Utah Pioneer Biographies, Vol. 28, p. 3 (Utah 31).

maintaining themselves and their missionaries kept many of the Saints in a perpetual state of poverty. Yet, despite the demands made upon them, the community developed, property was bought, and nominal prosperity began to emerge. In 1837, a visitor gave the following industrious description of the Kirtland scene:

They now own most of the land on two square miles, which is laid out into lots and streets in the style of modern cities, and most of the lots sold. Hundreds of dwellings are erected, mostly small frames, but some of them large and quite elegant

Four years ago . . . they commenced the building of a temple of worship It is a splended edifice . . . built of rough stone and handsomely stuccoed, which gives it a very rich appearance.⁵⁶

Jacob K. Butterfield in a letter to his mother in Maine shortly after his arrival in Kirtland wrote of the temple,

The house of the Lord which is a large splended stone building covered or washed with a kind of cement which looks very beautiful. I cannot now describe the inside of the house but let me say it is the most beautifully constructed of any that I ever saw.⁵⁷

This degree of prosperity acquired by the Saints was a result of considerable privation, sacrifice, and industry.

The Kirtland bishopric--consisting of Bishop Newel K. Whitney and counselors Hyrum Smith and Reynolds Cahoon--considered the problem of the poor Kirtland Saints as early as February, 1832. Their desire was to "support themselves as much as possible," wrote Reynolds Cahoon,

⁵⁶The Glad Tidings and Ohio Christian, cited in Messenger and Advocate, III, No. 7 (April, 1837), p. 490.

⁵⁷Jacob K. Butterfield, "Letter to Persia Butterfield," November 4, 1836. The original letter is on file in the Utah Historical Society. This sentiment, however, was not viewed by all that saw the temple. One Kirtland visitor said, "Their temple at Kirtland is a huge mis-shapen edifice." Cited in the Messenger and Advocate, II, No. 7 (April, 1836), p. 295.

and not be a burden to each other."⁵⁸ What progress was made to this end, he did not record, but it might be assumed that the limited Mormon industrial facilities were the result.⁵⁹

Besides having insufficient capital to quickly re-establish themselves in Kirtland and, accordingly, to avoid accompanying hardships, the cost of living in Kirtland was inflated due to an increase of population and unprecedented business activity in the Western Reserve. The Telegraph gave notice in 1836 of the business expansion in Painesville by reporting,

In contrasting the present village of Painesville, with what it was three or four years since, our mind is led to enquire what has produced this busy hum of business that now salutes our ears? We believe it to have been produced from none but natural causes, and these cause a general development of resources of our section of the state. In 1832, our population was about 400; now within the corporate limits, we have about 1100. In 1833, there were but 8 stores and shops, now there are 18 Merchant stores⁶⁰

Although the Saints in Kirtland later benefitted from this growth, for several years they found the increased costs highly taxing to their economic welfare. W. W. Phelps, who corresponded with his family in Missouri while he spent the summer of 1835 in Kirtland, frequently mentioned that the high cost of living aggravated their impoverished condition. In May, 1835, he wrote to his wife Sally, "But it is hard

⁵⁸Reynolds Cahoon, "Reynolds Cahool Journal," February 10, 1832. Located in the Church Historian's Office.

⁵⁹R. Kent Fielding, "The Mormon Economy in Kirtland, Ohio," Utah Historical Quarterly, XXVII, No. 4 (October, 1959), p. 340.

⁶⁰Painesville Telegraph, II, No. 46 (November 18, 1836). n. p.

living here, flour costs from six to seven dollars per barrel and cows from twenty to thirty dollars a head." Then he concluded, "It is a happy thing that I did not move [you and the family] back for everything here is so dear. Our brethren are so poor and hard run for money that it would have been more than I could have done to maintain my family."⁶¹

Then in December he wrote,

Everything is dear with us in Kirtland, fresh pork costs from five to six cents per pound and beef from $2\frac{1}{2}$ to $3\frac{1}{2}$ cents per lb; wheat is $\$1.12\frac{1}{2}$ cents per bushel and raising; corn 75 cents per bushel, cheese 9 cents per lb. by wholesale, butter 25 cents per lb., and hay and oats are also high. Without great business or plenty of money a family fares coarse in this part of the country. We have not had any butter for six or eight weeks past.

Mosiah Hancock, born in Kirtland in 1834, later lamented that his parent's financial welfare was so strained that the first pair of shoes that he owned were given to him as a gift when he was seven years old.⁶³ To further illustrate the pressing financial conditions of some of the Kirtland Saints, Jonathan Crosby, who moved in with Parley P. Pratt, related the following incident:

Shortly after we got to Kirtland, Brother B. Young, H. C. Kimball, [and] P. P. Pratt came to me to borrow money. I had nearly 100 dols . . . they were very poor. Pres. Young said he had nothing in the house to eat, and he knew not where to get it . . . He stood in the door of the printing office thinking of his condition and he felt so bad the sweat rold of [sic] him. Soon P. P. Pratt came along, and he said to him, 'What shall we do?' I

⁶¹W. W. Phelps, "Letter to Sally Phelps," May 26, 1835, cited in the "Ms. History of the Great Lakes Mission--Ohio."

⁶²Ibid., letter dated December 18, 1835.

⁶³Mosiah Hancock, "Mosiah Hancock Journal," p. 3. Typed copy is located in the Special Collections Library at Brigham Young University.

have nothing to eat and I don't know where to get it. Broth. Pratt said there was a brother and his wife just come to my house he got some money and I think he will lend us some (I had let Brother Pratt have 7 dolls. before). So they all came and gave me their joint note and I let them have 75 dolls.--25 each, this was Jan. of 18/35.⁶⁴

The Mormon poverty problem became a matter of public concern, and in January, 1834, an anti-Mormon group in Kirtland complained of the "impoverished" Mormons which threatened the citizens with an "insupportable weight of pauperism."⁶⁵ Commenting on non-Mormon reaction to the hard times his people were having, Wilford Woodruff said that the Saints were "poor, despised, and even looked upon by the pomp of Babylon with disdain and disgrace. . . ." ⁶⁶

Steps were taken by the non-Mormon community to force the Saints away from Kirtland because of their poor economic condition. In the spring of 1835, George A. Smith said that "a majority of the inhabitants of Kirtland united and warned all the Saints to leave town. This was done to prevent any of our people becoming a town charge in case of poverty."⁶⁷ Later he added,

The law of Ohio being that if a person, who had been warned out of town, applied for assistance, he was to be carried to the next town and so on till he was taken out of the state or to the town from which he formerly came.⁶⁸

⁶⁴Jonathan Crosby, "Jonathan Crosby Autobiography," p. 15. Located in the Church Historian's Office. Minor punctuation adjustments were added to the original, but the spelling is given as appearing in the original.

⁶⁵Painesville Telegraph, V, No. 33 (January 31, 1834), n. p.

⁶⁶Woodruff, op. cit., November 25, 1836.

⁶⁷George A. Smith, op. cit., entry is made at the last of 1835.

⁶⁸Journal of Discourses, Vol. XIII, p. 106.

The east branch of the Chagrin River running through Kirtland accommodated a local chair factory and a saw mill owned by Grandison Newell who employed a large number of men.⁶⁹ Newell was a maleficent critic of Joseph Smith and his people and like others refused to employ them in his factory and shops.⁷⁰ This type of economic boycott was adopted by a number of non-Mormons, for in 1837 Caroline Barnes Crosby wrote, "None of the business men would employ a Mormon scarcely on any condition."⁷¹

Another method of applying economic pressure against the Saints was in the form of boycotting the sale of certain consumer goods. Grain was scarce in Kirtland during the summer of 1835, and the local non-Mormon merchants refused to sell to the Mormons with the intention of starving them out of town. "The authorities," said George A. Smith, "proceeded to warn all the Latter-day Saints out of the township, and formed a compact not to employ us or sell us grain"⁷² The owner of the Kirtland grist mills, had three thousand bushels of wheat which he refused to make available to the Mormon market; consequently the Latter-day Saints were forced to send fifty miles for their grain and spend a dollar fifty a bushel for its purchase. "Wheat cost \$1.50 per bushel, corn 75 cents," lamented W. W. Phelps referring to the problem. The "brethren at Kirtland troubled some for a while to get a

⁶⁹History of Geauga County, op. cit., p. 250.

⁷⁰Journal of Discourses, Vol. XIII, p. 106.

⁷¹Caroline Barnes Crosby, "Caroline Barnes Crosby Autobiography," taken from the 1837 entry. Located in the Church Historian's Library.

⁷²Journal of Discourses, XIII, p. 106.

supply," he continued, "till at last they sent off and bought some."⁷³ Upon having the grain shipped into Kirtland, the Mormons refused to have the local Gentile-owned mills grind it; rather, they sent it to mills outside of Kirtland owned by Church members not having any owned by their people there. This further burdened the Saints with increased costs, but provided them with the necessary staple and the satisfaction of not aiding their enemy.

According to George A. Smith, a Mr. Chase, another Gentile merchant, who had refused to sell to the Mormons at any price, requested George A. Smith's father, John Smith, to assume the responsibility of boarding the local school mistress for a term. Chase alleged that he did not have enough food to feed her; however the Mormons suspected the matter to be a pretext to test their own tottering economic welfare. The situation found John Smith in destitute conditions, for his family had consumed their last morsel of bread the previous meal. The matter was carried to the Mormon President's attention who was determined to meet the test with concerted effort. Concerning this, George A. Smith journalized,

Joseph on learning the plan of our enemies, got the brethren to put their mites together and sent to Portage County and purchase a supply of wheat at a reasonable price and carried it to a mill owned by one of the brethren several miles from town; so that our Christian friends not only had the mortification of not starving out the Saints, but had when the harvest came round a large quantity of grain on hand and no market for it, as our people had raised a

⁷³William W. Phelps, "William W. Phelps Journal," May 31, 1835 entry. Located in the Church Historian's Library.

supply for themselves.⁷⁴

The leaders of the Church were grieved by the prevailing economic conditions of the Saints, and felt that the Church members had added to the distressing nature of affairs by not conforming to counsel and good sense in moving to a new country. In the summer of 1836, the matter was reviewed in the pages of the Church paper. It said,

The Saints have neglected the necessary preparation beforehand; they have not sent up their wise men with money to purchase land, but the rich have generally staid back and withheld their money, while the poor have gone first and without money. Under these circumstances what could be expected but the appalling scene that now presents itself?⁷⁵

In the fall of 1836, a conference of the Church was held to consider the nagging problem of poverty in Kirtland which was intensified by the eastern branches of the Church sending their poor to Kirtland. The conference with Joseph Smith, Jr., as chairman resolved,

1st. . . Whereas the church in this place being poor from the beginning. . . that it becomes the duty, henceforth, of all the church abroad, to provide for those who are objects of charity, that are not able to provide for themselves; and not send them from their midst, to burden the church in this place, unless they come and prepare a place for them and means for their support.

2nd That there be a stop put to churches or families gathering or moving to this place, without their first coming or sending their wise men, to prepare a place for them, as our houses are full, and our lands mostly occupied. . . .⁷⁶

The effect this announcement may have had upon the Saints in the branches abroad was not significantly realized in Kirtland, for the Saints there

⁷⁴George A. Smith, op. cit., entry made the last part of 1835.

⁷⁵Messenger and Advocate, II, No. 12 (September, 1836), p. 379.

⁷⁶Messenger and Advocate, III, No. 3 (December, 1836), p. 443.

See also History of the Church, II, pp. 468, 469.

prepared to evacuate the area in a little more than a year.

By 1836 economic conditions, fortunately, improved in Kirtland, for there was an increase in available work, and the Saints were generally kept busy. Nevertheless, the cost of living was high and wages were moderately low. Reporting to his mother as to the nature of the Kirtland economy in 1836, Jacob K. Butterfield wrote,

Provisions are high but not so high as they are in Maine--flour is 8 dollars a barrel, wheat \$1.25 to \$1.50 per bushel, corn 75 cts. per bushel, potatoes 25 cts. per bushel, oxen and cows and sheep are high. This is partly on account of so many moving into the place. There is no lack of work here but it is a better place to work than it is in Maine. Wages are from 12 dollars to 30 or 40 dollars per month. I have 12 or 13 dollars per month to work on a farm or build road or drive a horse team. There is plenty of work of most kinds for men, women or horses.⁷⁷

The Messenger and Advocate also reflected conditions of the Saints in Kirtland township during the more prosperous year of 1836. Concerning that time in Kirtland it said,

It was all activity, all animation--the noise and bustle of teams with lumber, brick, stone, lime or merchandise, were heard from the early dawn of morning till the grey twilight of evening. The sound of the mechanic's hammer saluted the ear of the sluggard before the rising sun had fairly dispelled the sable shades of night, and the starting up, as if by magic, of buildings in every direction around us, were evincive to us of buoyant hope, lively anticipation, and a firm confidence that our days of pinching adversity had passed by⁷⁸

Regarding this period of emerging prosperity, the paper again reflected that "the laborer found employ and fair wages. The farmer living near

⁷⁷Butterfield, op. cit., November 4, 1836.

⁷⁸Messenger and Advocate, III, No. 9 (June, 1837), p. 520.

found a ready market for all his surplus produce. The mechanic had constant employ for all the hands he could engage."⁷⁹

During these early years in Kirtland the poverty of the Saints was reflected in their dwellings there. Kirtland was not an especially beautiful town. A survey of the newly constructed area between the temple and the river and the area a mile south of the temple which was built during their poverty, found the dwellings generally to be "small and inelegant, evincive of any thing but wealth, standing in no regular order." Furthermore, the eye might rest "upon rude dwellings scattered in all directions below the temple," admitted the Messenger and Advocate which gave the area an unflattering image.⁸⁰ However, a master plan for the city development was made by 1836 by the Mormon Prophet. The plan provided for the streets to cross each other at right angles and the town to be divided into regular plots. This would give the place a consistent system throughout which would eventually add to the beauty and orderliness of the community. In April, 1837, Wilford Woodruff said,

Joseph presented us in some degree the plot of the city of Kirtland (which is the strong hold of the daughter of Zion) as it was given him by vision, it was great, marvelous and glorious. The city extended to the east, west, north, and south, steam boats will come puffing into the city our goods will be conveyed upon railroads from Kirtland to many places and probably to Zion. Houses of worship would be reared unto the most high, beautiful streets was /sic/ to be made for the saints to walk in, Kings of the earth would come to behold the glory thereof, and many

⁷⁹Ibid., p. 521.

⁸⁰Messenger and Advocate, II, No. 10 (July, 1836), p. 349.

glorious things not now to be named would be bestowed upon the saints⁸¹

There was promise of a continuation of the new-found prosperity that had finally come to the city of the Saints. Besides there being a public inn and three dry-good stores kept by the brethren, there were two others kept by Gentile merchants; likewise craftsmen of varying occupations found constant employment there. Furthermore, there was some promise of increased industry in the area with two saw-mills, one grist-mill, one fulling-mill and one carding machine located on the branch of the Chagrin River flowing north of the town.⁸² After the completion of the temple, which had been a major contributor to the Kirtland work force, plans were made to establish a Mormon bank to implement the economy of the Saints, and offer new life to the growing and promising community. As late as January, 1837, an optimistic promise of the future was acknowledged in the pages of the Messenger and Advocate as follows:

Our streets are continually thronged with teams loaded with wood, materials for building the ensuing season, provisions for the market, people to trade, or parties of pleasure to view our stately and magnificent temple.⁸³

The new-found prosperity provided hope for the future of the Saints in this state of activity, and a promising future was expected.⁸⁴

⁸¹Woodruff, op. cit., April 6, 1837. Punctuation added.

⁸²Messenger and Advocate, II, No. 10 (July, 1836), p. 349.

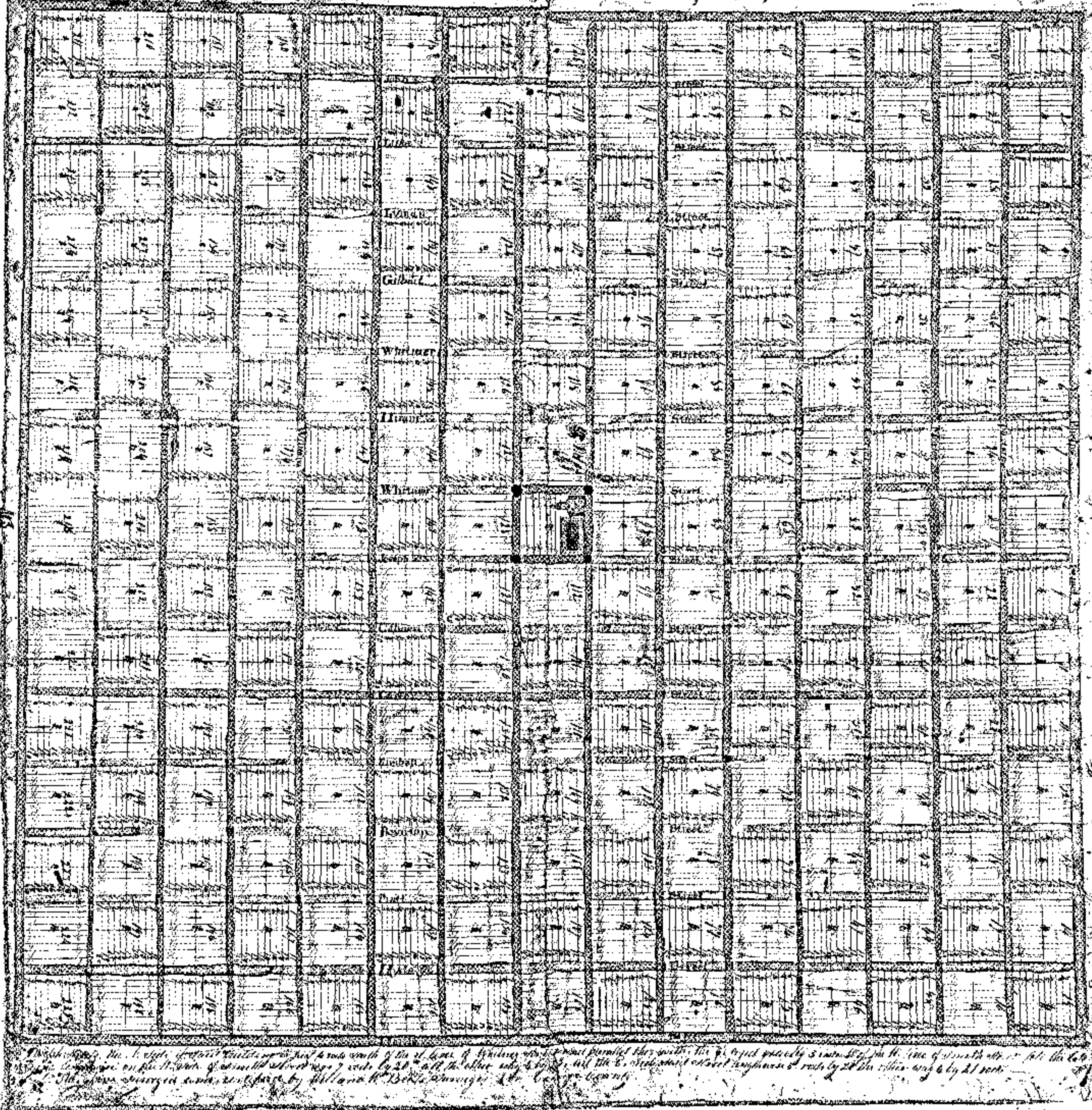
⁸³Messenger and Advocate, III, No. 4 (January, 1837), p. 445.

⁸⁴In 1837 the Saints were counseled by Joseph Smith to do what they could in their power to save Kirtland, for if they did "Kirtland should speedily be redeemed and become a stronghold not to be thrown down," wrote Wilford Woodruff after a meeting in the temple. "Woodruff Journal," April 6, 1837.

Fig. 5

Extract from the Journal of Joseph Smith, 1830, p. 100. The plan of Kirtland, Ohio, which is here shown, is a square of 100 rods on each side, divided into 100 lots, each 10 rods square. The ground was purchased by the Prophet Joseph Smith, and is now owned by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

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Fig. 5. The Plan of Kirtland as conceived by the Prophet Joseph Smith. (Courtesy, Church Historian's Library.)

The Kirtland Safety Society Bank

In order to strengthen the Mormon economic situation in Kirtland, some of the leading brethren of the Church formulated articles of agreement for a new banking institution known as the "Kirtland Safety Society" on the 2nd of November, 1836. Justification for the organization of the bank was "for the promotion of our temporal interests, and for the better management of our different occupations, which consist in agriculture, mechanical arts, and merchandising," stated the articles of agreement.⁸⁵ The establishing of the bank would provide a circulating medium which had previously been woefully scarce.⁸⁶ Oliver Cowdery was promptly dispatched to Philadelphia to secure plates from which to print the bank money, and Orson Hyde was sent to the state capitol at Columbus to petition the legislature for an act of incorporation. This petition was turned down by a Democratic legislature "because we were 'Mormons,'" stated the Prophet Joseph Smith.⁸⁷

⁸⁵Messenger and Advocate, III, No. 4 (January, 1837), p. 441. This statement was actually made at the reorganization meeting two months later, but it is to be presumed that their justification for the institution had not changed.

⁸⁶Messenger and Advocate, III, No. 10 (July, 1837), p. 537. Oliver Olney said, "But money was scarce, so the bank was started and currency issued. . . ." Olney was a stockholder in the new society. Oliver Olney, op. cit., p. 4.

⁸⁷History of the Church, II, p. 468. Fielding suggests that the reason for the denial of the charter was for reasons other than religious prejudice. There were seventeen applications made besides the Mormon attempt to secure a bank charter during that session of the legislature during the 1836-37 session at all. R. Kent Fielding, "The Growth of the Mormon Church in Kirtland, Ohio" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, 1957), p. 181. Willis Thornton said that there was one charter issued during that session by the legislature. Thornton, op. cit., p. 21.

Following Cowdery's return from Philadelphia and the disappointment of Hyde's Columbus visit, another meeting was held to consider the new developments. This meeting, held January 2, 1837, annulled the previous articles of agreement and established the "Kirtland Safety Society Anti-Banking Company," a joint-stock association. The new firm issued stock certificates in varying denominations based on the capital subscribed by stockholders. The certificates were to be circulated throughout the community as regular bank-issued money. "The private property of the stock-holders," said the Messenger, "was holden in proportion to the amount of their subscription, for the redemption of the paper issued by the bank."⁸⁸ Thus, the private land owned by the stockholders along with what specie--gold and silver--that was received, became the capital basis upon which the firm operated. To avoid wasting the money expended on the production of the bank plates the necessary prefix, "anti," and suffix, "ing Company," added to the name "Bank"--to read "Anti-Banking Company"--was stamped on the bills. This was more adaptable to the three dollar note than to the others which did not conveniently receive the alteration.

The firm was expected to grow to an enormous size, for it was established with a capital stock "not to be less than four millions of dollars."⁸⁹ The Mormon Prophet, as bank cashier,⁹⁰ made a public appeal

⁸⁸Messenger and Advocate, III, No. 10 (July, 1837), p. 535.

⁸⁹Idem.

⁹⁰There seems to be some confusion as to the office Joseph Smith, Jr., held in the Kirtland Safety Society. Historian B. H. Roberts refers to "the Prophet as treasurer, Sidney Rigdon as secretary." Roberts, op.

to the Church members to take stock in the company preferably by the payment of specie.⁹¹ The amount of specie paid in was never disclosed, but most of the stock was paid for in the form of land owned by the stockholders which consisted of approximately 180 charter members.⁹²

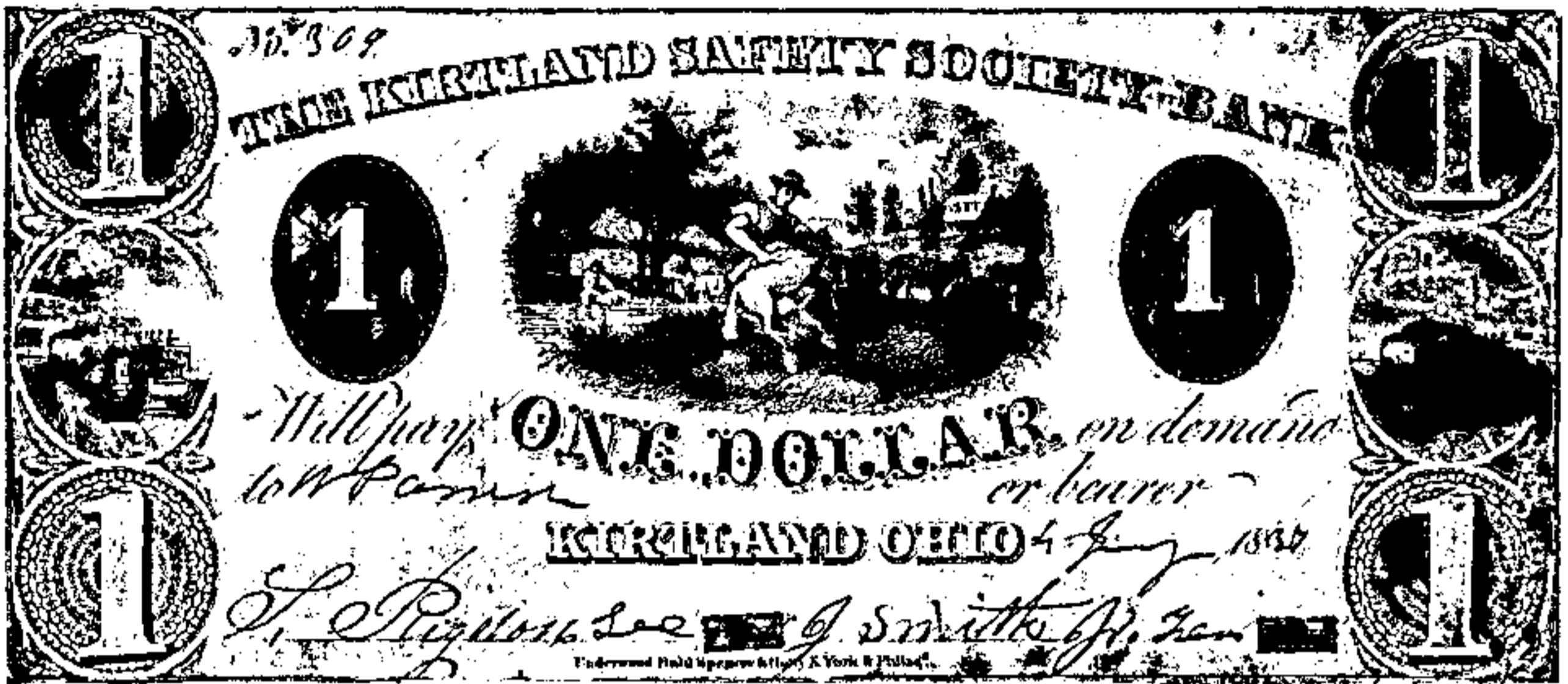
The bills of the Kirtland Safety Society were well received by the Saints and enthusiastically put into circulation by the stockholders. Oliver Olney, a charter member of the institution, said, "Money was soon so plenty that hardly a man but what had a big roll of bills of the Kirtland Safety Funds to do business."⁹³ Although the public gave some support to its circulation, it generally resisted the bills and lacked faith in the institution for two main reasons. One was due to the reputation of the Mormon religion and its leaders; the other was the failure

cit., I, p. 403. This agrees with Ebenezer Robinson who said that the bills were signed "Joseph Smith, Jr., treasurer, and Sidney Rigdon, Secretary." The Return, I, No. 7 (July, 1889), p. 108. Yet, the available bank notes carry Smith's name also as Cashier and Rigdon's as President. The Messenger and Advocate in noting the resignation of these two men from the institution said, "About this time the two first officers of the bank resigned," without identifying their official positions. Messenger and Advocate, III, No. 10 (July, 1837), p. 537. In referring to the change of officers the Elders' Journal observed Warren Parrish was appointed as Cashier and F. G. Williams as President to replace Smith and Rigdon. Elders' Journal, I, No. 4 (August, 1838), p. 58. The Cleveland Weekly Gazette noted that Rigdon "is at the head of the concern /i.e. the Kirtland Safety Society/. I, No. 3 (January 18, 1837), n. p. Also see Journal of Discourses, XI, p. 11. It would, therefore, seem that Rigdon was the President and Smith the Cashier. Note other variations of the Prophet's signature on Figures 6 and 7.

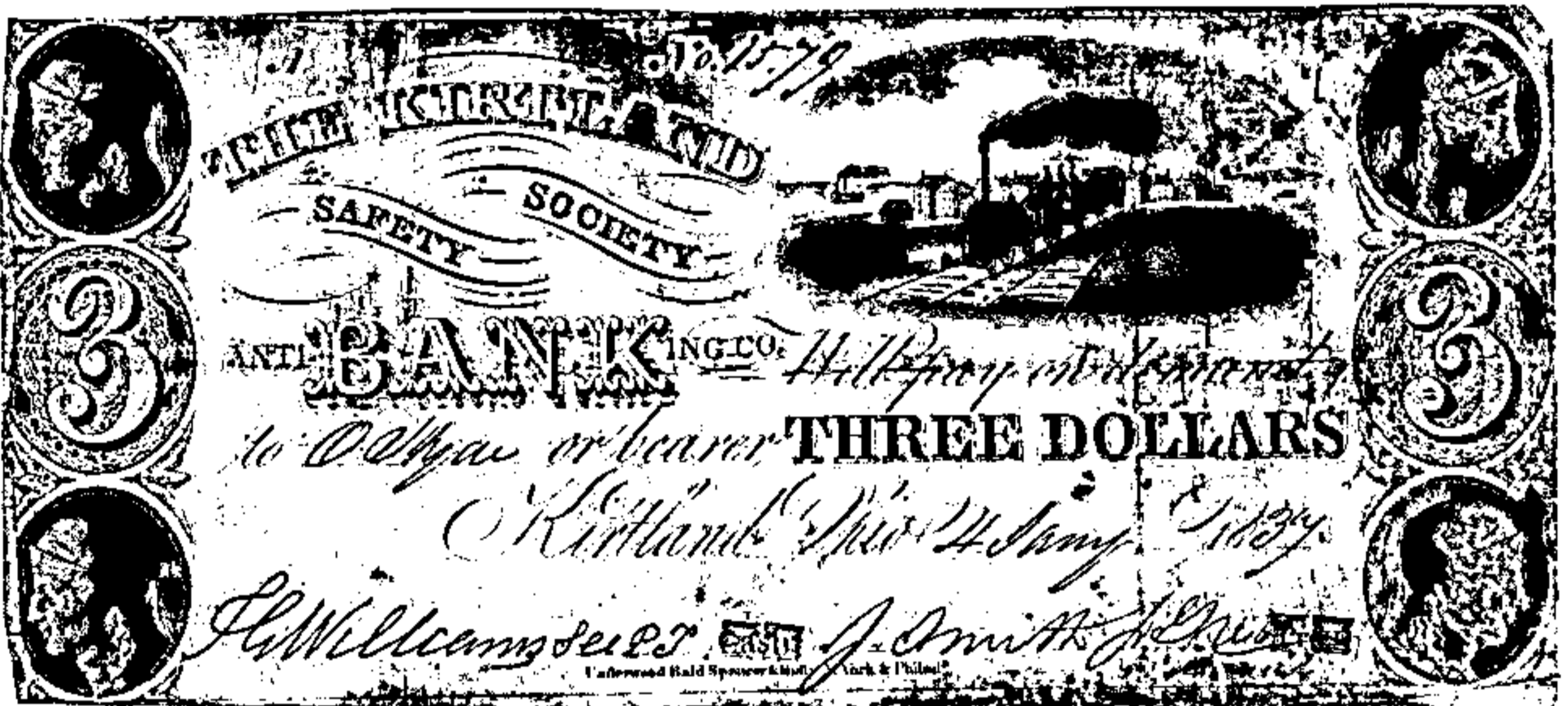
⁹¹Messenger and Advocate, III, No. 10 (July, 1837), p. 443.

⁹²Cleveland Weekly Gazette, I, No. 3 (January 18, 1837), n. p. Also see a list of the charter members in Messenger and Advocate, III, No. 6 (March, 1837), p. 476.

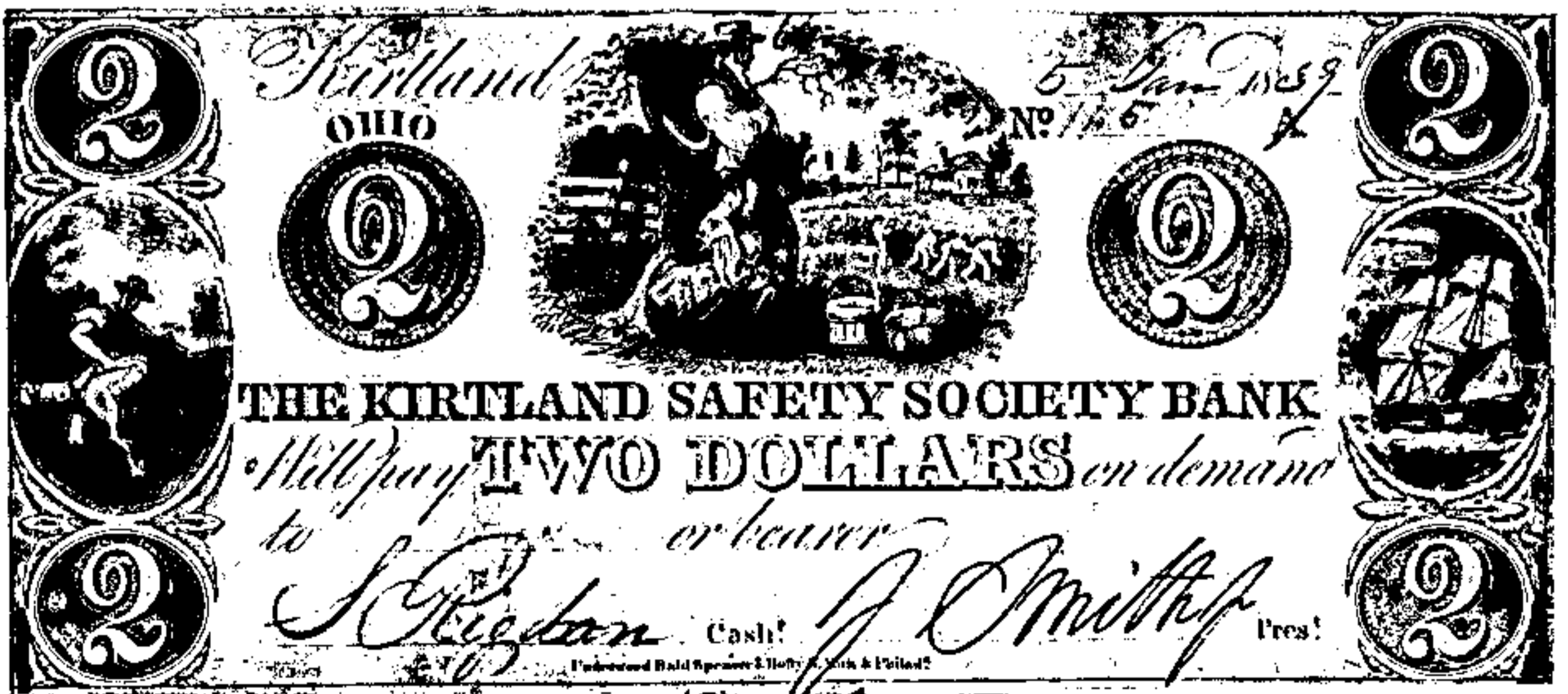
⁹³Olney, op. cit., p. 4.



(A)



(B)



(C)

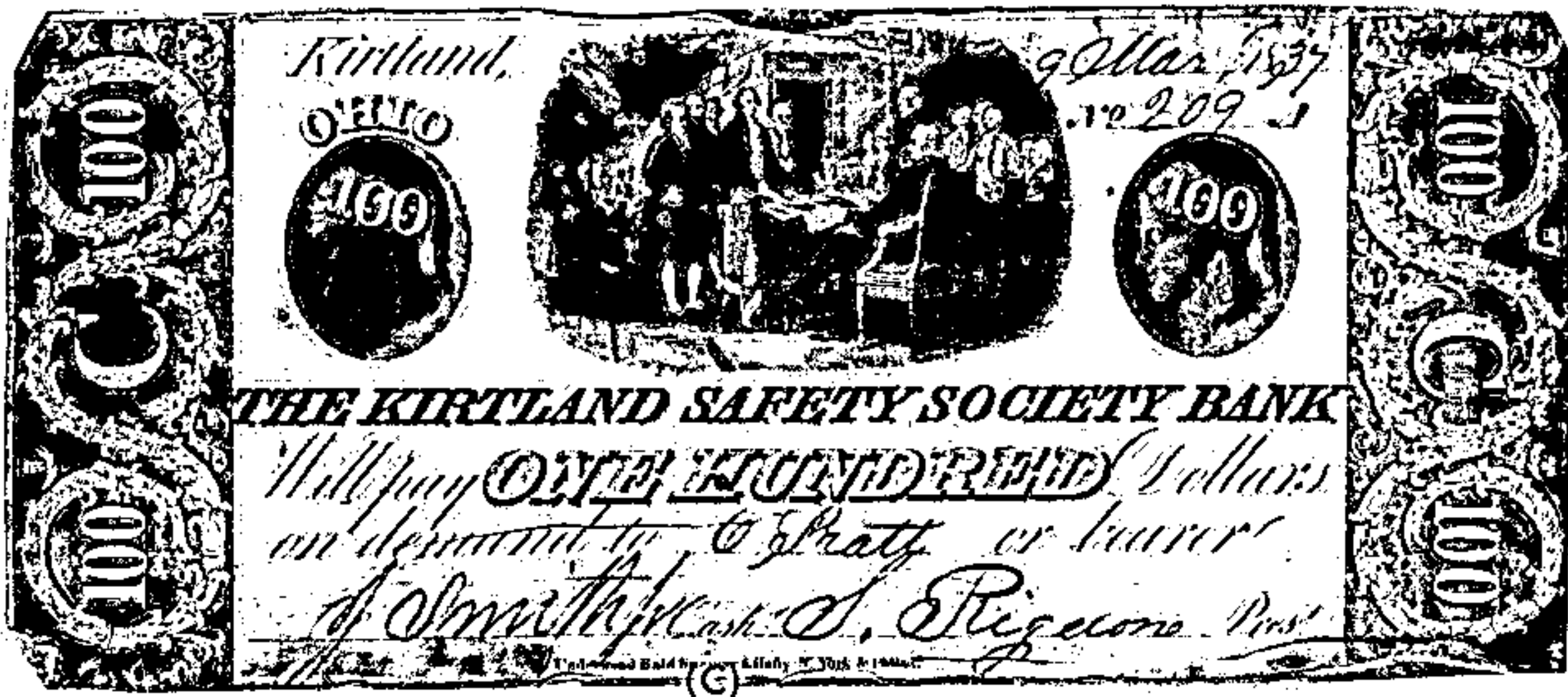
Fig. 6. Bills of original issue of various denominations of the Kirtland Safety Society Anti-Banking Company. (Courtesy, Church Historian's Library.)



(A)



(B)



(C)

Fig. 7. Kirtland Safety Society bills dated after the original issue with Joseph Smith as Cashier and Sidney Rigdon as President.

of the firm to receive a state charter which infected a lack of confidence in it. Concerning these objections the Messenger and Advocate observed, "But the unpopularity of our religion, together with the institution being an unchartered one, tended to render the circulation, as we before remarked, limited."⁹⁴

That the bank received support by the Cleveland Herald and the Cleveland Advertiser is evidenced by the squabble that occupied space in their columns and in the Cleveland Gazette, an avowed enemy of the bank. The Gazette confessed its desire to expose the bank as a fraud, and if the "'Kirtland Safety Society' should fail the Gazette cannot be charged," it boasted, "with neglecting any thing to bring about the result."⁹⁵ That religion was a factor in the Gazette's rejection of the bank, there can be no doubt. It is true that much of their criticism was directed at the Society's financial structure; but the following article from the Gazette attests well to the fact that the Mormon religious peculiarities rested at the center of their rejection of the Kirtland Safety Society:

Now we said we had nothing against the Mormons, or their religion, if they choose to believe in the pretended revelations of Joe Smith.--They may be, and probably are, in the main honest men, but when they hold forth their honor as a pledge to the world, we cannot forget that there is appended to the book of Mormon, judicial oaths attesting the actual existence and inscriptions of the 'plates of Nephi,' plates of pure gold, which it was not permitted ordinary men to see and handle, but only Harris and some others who swear to the fact . . . but when we find this deception

⁹⁴Messenger and Advocate, III, No. 10 (July, 1837), p. 336.

⁹⁵Cleveland Weekly Gazette, I, No. 5 (February 1, 1837), n. p. The Gazette took issue with the other Cleveland papers during the months of January and February and into the spring concerning the circulation of the Kirtland money.

and corruption in matters of religious faith, and know that Rigdon, a notorious hypocrite and knave, is at the head of the concern, for ourselves, we are anxious to see some guaranty that there is good faith and property in this banking matter--something to protect the community against a revelation that Joe Smith should take up what little money they have, and depart hence.⁹⁶

The Gazette generally denounced the Mormon bank as a "stupendous fraud in the community" and accused it of causing the innocent to suffer when it failed.⁹⁷

The fact that the Safety Society was unchartered caused some banks to reject its currency as payment to them by creditors, and many people and institutions did not want to risk the passing of its bills. Although the bills were freely passed for a few weeks, at first occasional rejection by some was to be expected. This is illustrated by the experience of D. B. Hart as follows:

Mr. D. B. Hart, of Mentor, informs us that he received the first Mormon bill that was placed in circulation by this bank. He happened to be in Kirtland the Saturday evening preceding the Monday morning on which the bank was first opened for business, and having a debt against some of the chief Mormon worthies, was, upon requesting payment, proffered one of the new Mormon ten-dollar bank bills. He received it, but the next Monday morning, finding it impossible to use it for any legitimate commercial ends, he presented it to the officers of the bank, demanding its redemption in something which should pass for a legal tender among his neighbors. They were very reluctant to oblige him, and, in fact, refuse to do so until he threatened them with the law, when some one, not an officer of the bank, stepped up to him and proffered him a genuine ten-dollar bill in exchange for his spurious one.⁹⁸

⁹⁶Cleveland Weekly Gazette, I, No. 3 (January 18, 1837), n. p. Italics added.

⁹⁷Idem.

⁹⁸History of Geauga County, op. cit., p. 248.

The bank officials naturally wanted the public to gain confidence in their circulating medium and began offering redemption in specie payment for bills turned back to them.

There were two classes of people, however, that desired to circulate the bills of the society; one being those who were anxious to pay their debts, buy food, and generally build up the place and make a success of the bank; the other were the enemies of the faith and the institution who accepted the bills of the bank only to immediately return to the teller and demand specie payment in exchange for the notes he possessed. In some cases the enemies would receive the bills at a sizable discount and demand reimbursement with specie at par value.⁹⁹ "Hundreds, who were enemies," said the Messenger, "either came or sent their agents and demanded specie."¹⁰⁰ Consequently, during the latter part of January the Safety Society found it necessary to refuse payment.¹⁰¹ Nevertheless, the bank continued operation with adjustments in its official staff, policy and procedure until it closed its doors in

⁹⁹Messenger and Advocate, III, No. 10 (July, 1837), p. 536.

¹⁰⁰Idem.

¹⁰¹In announcing the stoppage of specie payment the Gazette said, "But day-before-yesterday . . . the establishment refused to cash its phantom money, as we were credibly informed, (and can give names) night before last. Yesterday the news was confirmed and the reasons given, which will probably be satisfactory to the Advertiser and its coadjutor friend Herald. Says one Mormon, "the public have misused us, by refusing to circulate our bills, and therefore we will just cut Mr. Public back again, and refuse to take our bills too!" Cleveland Weekly Gazette, I, No. 5 (February 1, 1837), n. p.

November, 1837.¹⁰²

Action was taken during the winter months by S. D. Rounds to bring the bank authorities to court on charges of illegal banking practices. This matter was delayed until the October term at which time a fine of one thousand dollars each was executed upon Smith and Rigdon. A final decision was deferred on their defense that the Kirtland Safety Society was not a bank but a "mutual savings association."¹⁰³ Inasmuch as some of the bank officials left the state within the next several months, the matter was never settled.

The Panic of 1837. During the early spring of 1837, a devastating financial panic began to be felt throughout the United States. "The boom in Western land, manufacturing, transportation, banking and all other business enterprises that began about 1825, resulting in over-extension of credit," historian Samuel E. Morison said, were factors causing the panic, but "speculation was the basic cause." Summarizing the depression's effect he added,

Martin Van Buren was no sooner seated in the White House than American mercantile houses and banks began to fail, and there were riots in New York over the high cost of flour. In May 1837, after almost every bank in the country had suspended specie payments, and the government had lost \$9 million through the collapse of pet banks, the President summoned Congress for a special session. In the meantime, there was widespread suffering. . . .¹⁰⁴

¹⁰²For a consideration as to the bank's internal problems and resulting conflict consult Infra., Chapter X.

¹⁰³Daniel J. Ryan, op. cit., p. 419. See also Painesville Republican, I, No. 14 (February 16, 1837), n. p. Howe, Autobiography, p. 45. Willis Thornton, op. cit., p. 28.

¹⁰⁴Morison, op. cit., p. 455.

The Saints, not excepted, suffered extensively due to its effect upon their economy through their unsound speculation in lands, credit buying, and their newly formed banking institution.¹⁰⁵ Because the Mormons had a predominantly non-farm economy the effects of the panic was felt more severely among them.

The William B. Huntington family had arrived in Kirtland the year before the panic struck. Huntington had sold his farm in New York for thirty-five hundred dollars, a thousand less than its value due to unseasonable selling prompted by his desire to settle among the Saints.¹⁰⁶ The effects of the depression and the eventual failure of the Church bank caused him to lose his Kirtland investments, and privation and destitution faced him and his family. Young Oliver B. Huntington wrote of his father's adversity during the spring of 1837,

We all worked hard . . . to live for that spring was the hardest time we, as a family ever seen or ever have for provisions and stuff to save life. That spring was a general time of severity of all kinds of eatables, and it was the more so with us in consequence of having but a short time before come from a farm of everything, and had spent all our money, and did not know to beg, neither wanted to know.

There was nothing to be had either for love or money, for Mormons, when they had everything to buy with. Many a time did my mother go without her meal of victuals to leave enough for the children, when there was nothing but beach leaves, after string beans and sometimes a very scanty allowance of corn bread, to leave. Once in a while when we were most starved out we would kill a starved to death hen we

¹⁰⁵For further consideration as to the effect the 1837 Panic had upon the Church economy and the apostasy that followed, see Chapter X.

¹⁰⁶William B. Huntington, "William B. Huntington Journal," p. 3. Typed copy is located in the Special Collections Library at Brigham Young University.

had wintered over on nothing, and eat as necessity called hardest. My poor old father who six months ago was in affluent circumstances; and surrounded with everything to make him comfortable and render life desirable; that a farm of upwards of 230 acres in New York; a good stone house and two frame barns could afford, with close calculation; together with a still greater comfort, which was as good a companion as any man ever chose It was a torment to each, to see the other in want and still more to see their children cry for bread and have none to give them nor know where the next was coming from. . . . John and I, though small, felt for them as much as our age would and could be expected; we often would kneel beside each other in the woods and in the barn, daily, and pray to God to have mercy and bless father and mother, that they should not want nor see us want for bread. We used to pray three times a day as regularly as Daniel; and often more than three times.¹⁰⁷

The anti-Mormon community was, doubtless, affected by the depression, but they resorted to further persecute their suffering neighbors. In the words of Caroline Barnes Crosby, alluding to the summer of 1837, "It seemed that our enemies were determined to drive us away if they could possibly, by starving us out." thus resorting to measures they had used previously.¹⁰⁸ While attending a meeting in the temple in 1837, Wilford Woodruff reported that instructions from both Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon were on the economic welfare of the people. Woodruff reported Rigdon to have said, "The gentiles are striving to besiege the saints in Kirtland and would be glad to starve the saints to death."¹⁰⁹ The Mormons, naturally, considered their condition to be

¹⁰⁷Oliver B. Huntington, "Oliver B. Huntington Journal," pp. 27, 28. Typed copy is located in the Special Collections Library at the Brigham Young University. Italics added.

¹⁰⁸Crosby, op. cit., this statement is located in her 1837 entry.

¹⁰⁹Woodruff, op. cit., April 9, 1837.

unfortunate, but believed that their enemies took advantage of their disarranged economics and used it to further persecute and torment them.

Although the peculiarities of the Mormon religion initiated local resentment, there were other factors which contributed to the disharmony the Latter-day Saints experienced with their Ohio neighbors. The Mormon leaders were strong supporters of much of Jacksonian Democracy which caused the political opposition in the area to take issue with them. A reading of the public press during this period shows that an antagonism grew towards the Mormons due to their preference for Jackson and later for Van Buren and their policies. Snide remarks, sarcastic epithets and derogatory statements were expressed in the press exhibiting disdain for the Mormons over their political differences. Undoubtedly resentment grew out of these differences. This is testified by the formation of the Church's political periodical, anti-Mormon political articles, and the general state of ill-will that arose between the Democratic Mormons and the anti-Mormon Whigs in the area.

Mormon economic instability added its influence toward further disharmonious relations. Their state of poverty evoked criticism, the establishing of their bank caused suspicion and considerable comment by certain non-Mormon observers. All of these factors coupled with their religious beliefs, missionary efforts, and social practices contributed toward unharmonious relations between the Saints and their neighbors.

The particular ways each of these objections prompted persecution, perhaps, cannot always be identified; nevertheless, resentment

grew, opposition was encountered, and the Mormons were eventually forced to leave Kirtland. The purpose of the following two chapters enumerate some of the specific ways which this resentment was demonstrated.

CHAPTER VIII

THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF ANTI-MORMON RESENTMENT

The aversions that certain Ohioans had for the Mormons were expressed in many different ways, depending upon the intensity of the resentment and the type of objections that were entertained. In addition to applying economic pressure to drive the Saints from Kirtland, anti-Mormons circulated slanderous tales and resorted to the use of threats, mob violence, and vexatious litigation. Initially, the churches in the Reserve received the greatest threat from the emergence of Mormonism and members of these religious societies began to resent Mormon intrusions.

The Campbellite Persecution

The Campbellites suffered more from the growth of Mormonism in Ohio than any other religious society. The conversion to Mormonism of Sidney Rigdon, a leading Campbellite figure, and other Disciples prominent in Kirtland and Painesville--Edward Partridge, Newell K. Whitney, John Murdock, and Isaac Morley, to name a few--alarmed the leaders of the Campbellite church. Just as Rigdon showed apprehension upon learning that seventeen members of the Morley "family" were baptized in one night, likewise, the Campbellite leaders bristled with resentment upon the conversion of Rigdon and large numbers from their fold into the new faith. The Campbellite church in Kirtland "became

engulfed" by the tenets of the new religion, and other communities such as Mentor were "shaken as by a tempest under the outbreak of Mormonism," admitted Campbellite historian A. S. Hayden.¹ The advent of Mormonism also caused a "great shock to the little Church at Mantua," and elsewhere the impact upon the Disciples of Christ "was like an earthquake," he added.² An observer in Portage County in 1832 reported, "I hear considerable about Campbellites and Mormonites The Mormonites in some places, seem to be swallowing Campbellites, Universalists, &c."³

Sidney Rigdon on the 30th day of January, 1831,--immediately after his return to Kirtland from his initial visit with Joseph Smith in New York--extended a public challenge to anyone who would attempt to refute the claim that the Book of Mormon was of divine origin.⁴ It did not take long for the most influential leaders of this restorationist movement to take notice of the Mormon challenge. Thomas Campbell who spent much of the winter in Mentor, accepted by letter on February 4 Rigdon's offer. In his letter, Campbell outlined the details for the encounter, including several objections to Mormonism which he intended to develop in the debate. Among his objections was Joseph Smith's character; Mormon claims of miraculous gifts; the Mormon belief that they alone possessed authority to administer baptism; Campbell's rejection of common property; and the Mormon belief of bestowing the Holy Spirit by

¹Hayden, op. cit., p. 195.

²Ibid., p. 240.

³Brattleboro Messenger (Brattleboro, Vt.), XI, No. 9 (March 24, 1832), p. 1

⁴Painesville Telegraph, II, No. 35 (February 15, 1831), n. p.

the imposition of hands.⁵ Thomas Campbell's letter displayed cordiality to Ridgon, but reflected considerable contempt for the movement that had been responsible for the fall of one of their brightest stars. Apparently, Ridgon did not accept the challenge and the matter was quietly dropped.⁶

Thomas Campbell's eminent son, Alexander, joined the conflict and soon published a sixteen page pamphlet which received considerable circulation. It not only appeared in pamphlet form but also received publication in the Millennial Harbinger early in February and in the Painesville Telegraph a month later. The pamphlet was devoted to attacks on the Book of Mormon which contained the following:

Smith, its real author, as ignorant and as impudent a knave as ever wrote a book, betrays the cloven foot in basing his whole book upon a false fact, or a pretended fact, which makes God a LiarSmith is a very ignorant man and is called the author on the title page. I cannot doubt for a single moment but that he is the sole author and proprietor of it.⁷

Campbell added, that the Book of Mormon "is, without exaggeration, the meanest book in the English language," and contained scriptural inconsistencies. The Mormons later made light of the incongruity between Campbell's argument that Joseph Smith wrote the book and Doctor Philastus Hurlburt's claim that Solomon Spaulding wrote it. This inconsistency

⁵Idem.

⁶Simonds Ryder used this fact as a pretext for excusing himself from a debate with Ridgon later in the year. Ohio Star, II, No. 52 (December 29, 1831), n. p.

⁷Alexander Campbell, Delusions, An Analysis of the Book of Mormon (Boston: Benjamin H. Greene, 1831), p. 11. See also Millennial Harbinger, II, No. 2 (February 7, 1831), pp. 85-96.

prompted a writer in the Messenger and Advocate to editorialize, "Will these two gentlemen settle this dispute; for it truly looks pitiful to see this wide disagreement, since they both express so much anxiety."⁸

In June, 1831, Alexander Campbell made a visit from his headquarters in Bethany, Virginia, to the Western Reserve and preached in Kirtland, Chagrin, Chardon, Painesville, and Mentor. During this tour, he referred to what he called the Latter-day Saint "delusions and religious imposition." While preaching in a meeting in Painesville attacking the Book of Mormon, Campbell declared that he did not expect God to ever "make a new revelation of his will to men, because it would be only to acknowledge that the sending of Christ and his apostles was an abortion, a total failure of his designs."⁹ While Alexander Campbell was in Ohio, he conversed with Rigdon, but the details of that confrontation are not available.

The Mormons officially ignored the objections in Campbell's pamphlet at first, but in 1835 the Messenger and Advocate offered a belated rebuttal to the pamphlet.¹⁰ Prior to that time, however, it was not uncommon for the Mormon elders to be forced to answer the objections contained in it. Jared Carter, while debating with two Campbellite ministers, Messrs. Castle and Hill, in 1833, found to his chagrin that he was competing against the writings of Alexander Campbell. Carter wrote concerning this encounter as follows:

⁸Messenger and Advocate, I, No. 7 (April, 1835), p. 105.

⁹Painesville Telegraph, III, No. 1 (June 21, 1831), n. p.

¹⁰Messenger and Advocate, I, No. 6 (March, 1835), pp. 90, 91.

But instead of speaking he /i.e. the Campbellite preacher Mr. Castle/ began to read in a book, and after he had read a little, I perceived that it was the writings of Mr. Campbell's pamphlet, his objections against the book of Mormon, on finding that instead of having to resist the arguments of Mr. Castle and Mr. Hill we had got to withstand the greatest arguments of one of the greatest writers in the United States (as Mr. Campbell is called.)¹¹

The arguments developed by Campbell received wide circulation by the Disciples and others. Many took advantage of the pamphlet's contents and used them to lessen the spread of Mormonism in their respective areas.¹² Whenever Alexander Campbell concluded it would benefit his cause, he declaimed against Mormonism via the medium of the Millennial Harbinger. Although the Prophet never met Campbell, he frequently read the Harbinger and wrote the following to the Star:

As I take this course to inform the gentleman /A. Campbell/, that while he is breathing out scurrility he is effectually showing the honest, the motives and principles by which he is governed, and often causes men to investigate and embrace the book of Mormon, who might otherwise never have perused it. I am satisfied, therefore he should continue his scurrility: indeed, I am more than gratified, because his cry of Joe Smith! Joe Smith! false prophet, false prophet! must manifest to all men the spirit he is of, and serves to open the eyes of the people.¹³

During these early years, the Campbellite church successfully fought for pre-eminence in some of the communities of the Western Reserve. Relative to their defense, A. S. Hayden wrote,

¹¹Jared Carter, "Jared Carter Journal," pp. 168, 169.

¹²Messenger and Advocate, I, No. 8 (April, 1835), p. 104.

¹³The Evening and Morning Star (Kirtland), II, No. 24 (September 24, 1834), p. 192. For the complete text of Smith's letter, consult Appendix D.

The opposition to it [i.e. Mormonism] was quick on its feet, in rank, and doing effective work to check the imposture. J. J. Moss, at the time a young school-teacher in the place, pelted them, but not with grass. Isaac Moore stood up, and became a shield to many. The vigilance of the Clapps prevented any serious inroads into the church of Mentor. Collins forbade its approach to Chardon, and it merely skulked around its hills. Alexander P. Jones was there also, young, shrewd, and skilled. In many an encounter he was left without a foe.¹⁴

According to Hayden, J. J. Moss was the first Campbellite to "raise a testimony against Mormonism," and he and Alexander P. Jones "were both teaching in the vicinity of Kirtland, when Mormonism invaded the place, and hand in hand, though young, they often put its champions to flight."¹⁵ The Campbellites repudiated Mormonism wherever they could because of their resentment to the first inroads the Mormon elders had made, and as a safeguard against future ones.

The contest between the clergy of these two religious societies continued both in the field and in the press so long as the presence of Mormonism was threatening. "No sooner do they come in contact with the elders of the church of the Latter Day Saints," said Orson Pratt about certain Campbellite ministers with whom he was contending near Cincinnati, "than they set up a prodigious cry of Delusion! false Prophet! Impostor! and almost every other evil epithet which they can invent."¹⁶ And George A. Smith in 1837 journalized while preaching in Franklin and Suffield,

¹⁴Hayden, op. cit., pp. 215, 216.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 197. See also Messenger and Advocate, I, No. 9 (June, 1835), p. 189.

¹⁶Messenger and Advocate, I, No. 9 (June, 1835), p. 189.

"There was great opposition in this part of the country by a number of Campbellite priests, who followed us, interrupted our meetings and opposed us everywhere we went."¹⁷

Many harsh words were exchanged between Campbellites and Mormons, reciprocating mutual contempt. Rigdon wrote, "We venture to make the following declaration without fear, and that is, there is not a Campbellite preacher possessing the common intelligence . . . who dare hazard an investigation before men."¹⁸ And a Campbellite minister of Mentor swore before a justice of the peace that he "would not believe any of the saints under oath."¹⁹ The Saints regarded these Protestants as a "gang" of persecutors and Campbellites regarded Mormons as a "band of the most unprincipled deceivers that ever disgraced any age or nation."²⁰

Rigdon frequently reported persecutions that he believed Campbellites had promoted. On one occasion in 1833, he wrote regarding a Campbellite minister and a close former colleague:

I feel myself called upon to notice the conduct of Adamson Bently, a Campbellite reformer, as I have had to suffer as much from his hand as he could heap upon me, if the information which I have received be correct. He has exhausted nearly all his ingenuity, to do what little

¹⁷George A. Smith, op. cit., Spring, 1837 entry.

¹⁸Messenger and Advocate, II, No. 4 (January, 1836), p. 243. See also Evening and Morning Star (Kirtland), II, No. 19 (April, 1834), pp. 147, 150, 155.

¹⁹Messenger and Advocate, III, No. 4 (January, 1837), p. 438.

²⁰Millennial Harbinger, VI, No. 1 (January, 1835), p. 44.

he could to injure me and my family, in both character and property.²¹

Adamson Bentley continued to speak against Rigdon and the Mormons throughout the years; and in 1835, in Trumbull County, he attacked Rigdon's character and charged him with unwillingness to defend Mormonism in public. Upon learning of Bentley's charge, Rigdon accepted the opportunity to debate with him, but Bentley instead backed out.²² In 1837, Rigdon discussed the persecution the Church was receiving generally and again referred to the Campbellite role in that persecution:

In our own vicinity we have a most striking proof of the spirit of persecution in a religious society which made as great a boast of liberty and the blessings of freedom, as any other. I mean the Campbellites.

Then Rigdon added,

The shameful and disgraceful house kept by old [Judge] Clapp, of Mentor, where all men and women were at liberty to come and slander the saints Adamson Bentley, of will-making memory, was . . . a partner in his slander Richard Brooks [a Campbellite deacon], who, with his wife Rachel, united with the before mentioned kidney in slandering and vilifying the saints of the last days, and kept a house devoted to slander, for years²³

Rigdon accused the Campbellites of putting into circulation "nine-tenths" of all the lies with which the Mormon people had to con-

²¹The Evening and Morning Star (Kirtland), II, No. 19 (April, 1834), p. 153.

²²Messenger and Advocate, II, No. 4 (January, 1836), pp. 242, 243.

²³Messenger and Advocate, III, No. 4 (January, 1837), pp. 436, 437. Adamson Bentley was Rigdon's brother-in-law and according to Rigdon, was successful in using his influence with Mrs. Rigdon's father in cheating Mrs. Rigdon out of her fair share of the family estate. For details see Messenger and Advocate, II, No. 9 (June, 1836), p. 335, and III, No. 4 (January, 1837), p. 437.

tend.²⁴ He further claimed that part of the trouble the Campbellites caused the Saints was by certain Campbellite families directing their children to slander and pester the Mormon people. Relevant to that problem Rigdon wrote,

That the public may have some faint idea of what the saints have had to bear from them /i.e. the Campbellites/, it will only be necessary to tell them that when this /Mr./ Brooks could do nothing else to injure the saints, they actually sent their children from thirteen years old and upwards, to their houses, to sauce and scandalize them /i.e. the Mormons/. I speak this from experience; never was my house so abused and scandalized, by any human being, since I kept a house, as it was by a gang of these creatures' children, sent from Richard Brooks' in Warren, and Adamson Bentley's. I am now convinced, and always shall be, that there are no children on earth who would act as basely as they did, unless they were put up to it, and encouraged in it, by their parents. And then to finish the matter, after they went away, they hatched up and told some of the basest lies, that could be invented by human beings; and when I complained to Adamson Bentley of their conduct, he tantalized me, and justified the children in what they did; though he knew that they had told base lies. And what adds to this whole matter is, that these children were members in the Campbellite church; Adamson Bentley was their preacher, and Richard Brooks deacon; truly as priest, so people. Not only this once, but at different times, I have been insulted, and so has my house, by children from these hordes of impudence and ill-breeding, and dens of slander.²⁵

Apparently, the official Campbellite objections to Mormonism were topics of conversation in the family setting and were reflected in the children by their mischievous irritations and taunts.

It is ironical that the Campbellite movement, which indirectly served to introduce Mormonism to Ohio and was responsible for preparing

²⁴Idem.

²⁵Ibid., pp. 437, 438.

Rigdon and his flock for Mormonism,²⁶ was responsible for being Mormonism's first powerful opponent in Ohio. Some Campbellites never forsook a hatred for the Latter-day Saints and their religion. According to Dean McBrien, a recent writer who analyzed the influence of Campbellism upon Joseph Smith, the Campbellites continued their resistance by issuing more anti-Mormon books and pamphlets through the century from their publishing house than any other denomination.²⁷

The Circulation of Outlandish and Slanderous Stories

The Mormons were never insensitive to the stories that were circulated about them and their Prophet. After the arrival of the Lamanite missionaries in the fall of 1830, stories and tales of a ridiculous and defamatory nature were circulated about the Saints. "In a very short time," said George A. Smith, "a literary war commenced."²⁸ This literary "war" was not only devoted to the circulation of outlandish stories about the Saints, but also included printed objections from an incredulous public that must have sincerely rejected Mormonism. The anti-Mormon public attempted to justify its rejection of Mormonism with articles reflecting its own theological, intellectual, and personal biases. Naturally, the Mormons found such derisive articles--although some were not un-

²⁶Historian B. H. Roberts admits the possibility of this. B. H. Roberts, New Witnesses for God (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1951), Vol. III, pp. 349, 350. See also Doctrine and Covenants, 35:3-5.

²⁷Dean Depew McBrien, "The Influence of the Frontier on Joseph Smith," (an unpublished doctor's dissertation for George Washington University, April 16, 1929), p. 112. McBrien stated, "This statement is based on a check made of the publications of the leading denominational publishing houses."

²⁸Journal of Discourses, Vol. VII, p. 111.

realistic--offensive to their point of view.

Such literary objections were immediately brought to the attention of the public. During the latter part of the winter and early spring, 1831, the Painesville Telegraph reprinted a series of six articles originating in the Palmyra Reflector by Obediah Dogberry, a New York enemy of Joseph Smith. The first major publication of importance against the Mormons, was Alexander Campbell's pamphlet that appeared in February, followed by Ezra Booth's nine letters that appeared in the Ohio Star during the following autumn and winter. Then, in 1834, the team of Hurlburt and Howe produced Mormonism Unveiled.²⁹ These works comprised the greatest literary attempts by anti-Mormons to destroy the new faith. Yet, these resourceful efforts failed to injure the Church extensively. Regarding these literary efforts, Orson Hyde reported their decreasing effect in 1836 as follows:

The first weapon raised against the spread of truth, of any consideration in this country, was the wicked and scurrilous pamphlet published by A. Campbell. Next, perhaps, were the letters of E. Booth, and thirdly, Mormonism Unveiled written by Mr. E. D. Howe, alias, Doct. P. Hurlburt. These were designed severally in their turn for the exposure and overthrow of 'Mormonism' The writings of the above named persons I find have no influence in the world at all; for they are not even quoted by opposers, and I believe for no other reason than--that they are ashamed of them.³⁰

In addition to these formal attempts to decry the Mormon theological and historical claims, fantastic tales and outlandish stories

²⁹For further consideration of these works, consult Supra., Chapter V.

³⁰Messenger and Advocate, II, No. 7 (April, 1836), p. 296.

were circulated concerning the Mormon people and their beliefs. John Whitmer spoke of "many foolish reports" that were in circulation;³¹ W. W. Phelps wrote of "every foolish thing, that a giddy headed generation could invent, were thrown out to hinder the spread of the truth;"³² and Oliver Cowdery said, "It would be a Herculean task to point out the innumerable falsehoods and misrepresentations, sent out detrimental to this society."³³ Stories were told and retold and the newspapers reported them. In some cases the circulated accounts were based upon facts, but were told with the critical coloring of an unsympathetic gossip. No doubt, some of the tales from eye witness accounts gave credence to certain abusive stories. A letter of one observer in Chagrin, Geauga County, which was promptly printed in a New York paper reflected the basis from which tales could have sprung. The correspondent said,

Hundreds in this vicinity, have become fanatics, complete, complete--call themselves apostles, prophets, and etc.--perform miracles--call down fire from heaven--impart the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands, and say that they shall be renovated and live a thousand years. The old women say that they shall again become young, and become fruitful and replenish the earth. They have all things in common. They assume the general name Mormonite. They have a new bible which they call the Book of Mormon. Many have joined from whom we might expect better things.³⁴

Although this account is an unsympathetic reference to a number of actual events that happened among the Mormons, it was reports such as these that

³¹Messenger and Advocate, I, No. 9 (June, 1835), p. 142.

³²Messenger and Advocate, I, No. 8 (May, 1835), p. 115.

³³Messenger and Advocate, III, No. 1 (October, 1836), p. 395.

³⁴"Editorial Correspondence," Evangelical Magazine and Gospel Advocate (Utica, New York), II, No. 6 (February 5, 1831), n. p.

provided a basis for outlandish tales that followed. When such reports were reprinted at places distant from their Ohio source, they found a credulous audience; one senses that twice told tales began to invite unrealistic embellishments.

The Saints, naturally, found such tales offensive. As early as the spring of 1831, the Prophet noted that at that period of time "many false reports, lies, and foolish stories, were published in the newspapers, and circulated in every direction, to prevent people from investigating the work, or embracing the faith."³⁵

"By this time," journalized Reynolds Cahoon in September, 1831, "the people had been influenced by many fabulous stories concerning 'Mormonism' and were somewhat frightened."³⁶ Time failed to correct or diminish the abusive stories. In fact, ridicule from the press occurred on the slightest provocation. The newly constructed Mormon temple was designated by the New York Evening Star as a "Heathen Temple on Lake Erie" which would turn the waters "crimson with shame," and the derision prompted by the purchase of four mummies and two ancient papyri scrolls in 1835 was typical of other newspaper statements.³⁷

The newspapers were not only responsible for perpetuating stories,

³⁵History of the Church, I, p. 158.

³⁶Cahoon, op. cit., September, 1831.

³⁷Messenger and Advocate, II, No. 3 (December, 1835), pp. 232-236. Certain false reports were circulating about the identity of the mummies labeling them as Abraham, Abimelech, and Joseph who was sold into Egypt, whereas the Mormons denied their ability to identify the mummies at this time.

but also for creating many bizarre and curious anti-Mormon tales; for when incongruous or fantastic events were reported in the press, the appellation of "Mormonism" was often applied for no apparent reason than to cast ridicule upon the Latter-day Saints. A traveler from a sailing vessel from Canton, China, appeared in Ohio in 1831, with some copies of the Canton Register containing prophecies of a Chinese astronomer, Chang-Teen-Sze, predicting a disastrous pestilence to appear in the fall that would destroy the wicked and leave the ground covered with the bodies of the dead. "The virtuous shall be spared, but the wicked will find it impossible to escape." came the report. "At the third watch when the cocks crow and dogs bark, a malignant God will go forth to slay by the pestilence." "Mormonism in China" was the press' caricature of the frightful prediction.³⁸ At another time, a disastrous earthquake in China was "burlesqued," said Joseph Smith, Jr. "as 'Mormonism' in China."³⁹

A bizarre occurrence in Vermont prompted by a disciple of Joseph Dylks,⁴⁰ although the event had nothing to do with the members of the Mormon faith, resulted in the press notice "Mormonism in Vermont." It seems that one of Dylks' disciples, a man named Davidson, who had converted some adherents in Fairfield and Bakersfield, Vermont, claimed to be endowed with the Holy Spirit which enabled him to prophesy things to come. After the Burlington Sentinel alluded to an identity between this fanatical group and the Mormons, it reported,

³⁸Painesville Telegraph, II, No. 42 (April 5, 1831), n. p.

³⁹History of the Church, I, p. 158.

⁴⁰For a consideration of Joseph Dylks see Supra., p. 21.

They meet together every Sabbath and carry on in a manner most shocking to human feelings. They roll naked on the floor, both men and women, and commit other sins too revolting to be mentioned. But this is but a fair picture of their shameful conduct. Modesty forbids that I should utter the whole. A few days since they pretended to crucify a woman, and put her in a box and began to pray over her, in order to raise her from the dead; but being wearied with lying shut up in a close/d/ box, she finally came forth with her own accord before they intended.

They had a woman among them by the name of Thompson, who pretended now that she is Jesus Christ, and baptises Davidson's followers The man who hanged himself /the justification for the newsworthiness of the entire article was to report this suicide/ was threatened by Mrs. Thompson that unless he immediately obeyed her commands he should be sent forth with to hellfire.⁴¹

Although little was said concerning the Saints in such articles, so long as the Mormons were identified with the frightful orgies, the articles served to harrow up vexatious and fearful apprehensions against them.

An article in the Chardon Spectator titled "Mormonism in Massachusetts" reflected another event of dubious identity. It reported,

Strange as it may seem, those senseless wretches, the Mormons, have numerous and organized Societies, in the neighborhood of Northhampton, Mass., and in South Hadley, they have formed junction with another precious denomination of fanatics, who call themselves "Perfectionists," forsooth. Their religious exercises consist of exhortations, jumpings, dances, and so forth, and they have, says a Northhampton paper, found a dozen proselytes among the highly intelligent citizens of old Hampshire. | . . .⁴²

Other articles appeared in the press which were printed and reprinted as they were circulated. The following slanderous account appeared

⁴¹"Mormonism in Vermont," Burlington Sentinel (Vermont), cited in Millennial Harbinger (Virginia), II, No. 8 (August 1, 1831), pp. 356, 357.

⁴²Chardon Spectator and Geauga Gazette, IV, No. 36 March 28, 1835), n. p.

in at least three papers before it was reviewed in the Church's paper:

An Angel Caught.--The Magazine and Advocate says, that while the Mormon Prophet, Jo Smith, was in Ohio, engaged in proselying the people to the faith of the "Golden Bible," he sought to give additional solemnity to the baptismal rite, by affirming that on each occasion an angel would appear on the opposite side of the stream and there remain till the conclusion of the ceremony. The rite was administered in the evening in Grand River, near Painesville, not by the Prophet in person, but by his disciples. In agreement with the prediction of the Prophet, on each occasion a figure in white was seen on the opposite bank, and the faith of the faithful was thereby greatly increased. Suspicions, as to the incorporeal nature of the reputed angel, at length induced a company of young men (unbelievers of course) to examine the quality of the ghost, and having secreted themselves, they awaited its arrival. Their expectations were soon realized, by its appearance in its customary position, and rushing from their lair, they succeeded in forcing it into the stream, and although its efforts at escape were powerful, they succeeded in bearing it in triumph to the opposite side of the stream, when who should this supposed inhabitant of the upper world be, but the Mormon Prophet himself!⁴³

The Saints, naturally strongly protested such tales. This one adds "another to the numerous catalogue, framed by designing men, and put in circulation by them and their dupes."⁴⁴ They maintained that Smith had never baptized anyone nor was present during the baptism of anyone near Painesville, the cite of the alleged hoax. Furthermore, "had any occurrence of the kind ever transpired, it would have been proclaimed through this region [i.e. Geauga County and the Western Reserve] upon the house tops," they insisted,⁴⁵ and the local press made no mention of it. These extravagant stories often originated in distant quarters and were

⁴³New York Mercury, cited in the Messenger and Advocate, I, No. 10 (July, 1835), pp. 148, 149.

⁴⁴Messenger and Advocate, I, No. 10 (July, 1835), p. 149.

⁴⁵Idem.

eventually reported in the papers in the Western Reserve.

Another tale included the alleged claim of a Mormon elder's power to perform the miracle of walking on water. According to the story, the elder was supported by a sub-surface network of planks resting a few inches below the water's surface upon which he would walk and preach. Some mischievous pranksters who intended to expose the plot sawed the submerged bridge into a weakened support over the most perilous part of the water. When the elder proceeded to that point the platform gave way and he sank to his doom. "The scene was indescribable," reported the Philadelphia Saturday Courier. "Even those who had spoiled the miracle, were filled with horror when they actually saw the unfortunate impostor disappear."⁴⁶ Another version of the same tale placed the Prophet in the role of the unfortunate elder: "but just as all were convinced, and the Prophet was about to step on shore, some rogues pulled out the plank, and he fell into the water, and was drowned," was that version.⁴⁷ Again, another story had Smith nursing a leg wound while the Camp of Zion was confronted in Missouri; the wound reportedly caused the loss of his leg and then his life.⁴⁸ Still another tale about the Prophet Smith included:

Among the many impositions which Smith practiced was the following: he privately trained a pet dove to fly through an open window of the temple, light upon his shoulder, and

⁴⁶Philadelphia Saturday Courier, cited in the Evening and Morning Star (Kirtland), II, No. 19 (April, 1834), p. 153. For other accounts, see also Messenger and Advocate, II, No. 3 (December, 1835), pp. 230-233.

⁴⁷Journal of Discourses, Vol. VII, p. 112.

⁴⁸Messenger and Advocate, II, No. 3 (December, 1835), p. 231.

pick grains of wheat, while he stood in the pulpit. In this way, when engaged in public services, he procured a visit from the dove at pleasure; and when the dove appeared, he would very gravely and solemnly announce to his credulous audience that it was the dove of the "Holy Spirit" sent from heaven to communicate to his ear a divine message.⁴⁹

A Baptist semi-monthly paper further perverted the life of the leader of the Latter-day Saints by arguing that Smith, "who had been a book peddler, and was frequently about printing establishments, had procured some old copper plates for engravings, which he showed for golden plates." "This is a new one," reflected the Advocate.⁵⁰ That the traveling elders were confronted with reproachful news stories is evidenced by an encounter of Orson Pratt's as he was preaching at a meeting in the southern part of the state. A Methodist spectator arose and proceeded to read a slanderous article about Joseph Smith from the newspaper. Another gentleman objected to the reading, whereas Pratt offered to read the article.⁵¹ A few days later while attending a meeting in Newbury, a similar objection was presented and another article was read from a newspaper to warn the people of Mormonism's "awful delusions," reported Orson Pratt.⁵²

Many defamatory articles about Mormonism appeared in church publications. "To be sure," reported the Advocate, "Many leading papers of

⁴⁹Rice, op. cit., p. 303.

⁵⁰Messenger and Advocate, I, No. 7 (April, 1835), pp. 104, 105.

⁵¹Orson Pratt, op. cit., March 29, 1835.

⁵²Ibid., April 2, 1835.

the sects are lying in our office, with much scurrility, and defamation." But they were not to bear the burden of the charge of passing slanderous accounts and interfering with the Mormons alone, for no sooner would "the elders of the Church of the Latter Day Saints set foot in any place," continued the church editor, "among any people, than an alarm was sounded, and every professor, liar, drunkard, false swearer, infidel, or atheist, was exerting his influence to hinder others from hearing."⁵³

It was not uncommon for the press to place the name of Joseph Smith among others who were creating a sensation by their religious anomalies. Joseph Smith received identity with Johanna Southcott, Joseph Dylkes, Edward Postlethwayt Page, and Robert Matthias, each of whom withdrew from the mainstream of conventional religious orthodoxy. Robert Matthias, the only one with whom the Prophet Joseph spent some time, was a noted traveler throughout the states including Ohio during the decade of the 1830's. The Harrison Telegraph in 1832, devoted almost two columns on Robert Matthias, "a man who has been prowling our streets for some time past, with a long black beard, a sanctimonious face, and a sten/t/orian voice," who professed "to be commissioned from Heaven"⁵⁴ As Matthias gained disciples, "he assumed a bolder tone," said the Harrison Telegraph. At first, he said he was sent from God, then he claimed to be a prophet, again, the Savior of the earth, and finally Almighty God, himself, which in September, 1832, caused him to be arrested on

⁵³Messenger and Advocate, I, No. 3 (December, 1834), p. 47.

⁵⁴Harrison Telegraph (Cadi, Ohio), XII, No. 14 (November 3, 1832), n. p. In 1837 the following colorful description was given of him: Matthias, the Hairy Prophet.--The Peru (Indiana) Forrester, gives an amusing description of this individual. His beard is two feet long by measurement,

a blasphemy charge. He was also known variously as "Matthias the prophet" and Joshua the Jewish Minister."⁵⁵

In 1835, Matthias was tried on a murder charge and the Painesville Telegraph printed the testimony of a witness in the case under the head, "Matthias, the Imposter." The Telegraph prefaced the court account with the following reference to Mormonism:

If an imposition so bold and barefaced as this can succeed in an intelligent community, need we be surprised that Mormonism, backed as it is by all the art and cunning of its wiley leaders has found its votaries, too?⁵⁶

In the fall of 1835, Matthias passed through the Western Reserve inquiring as to the location of the Mormon settlement at Kirtland.⁵⁷ Then, on the morning of November 9, 1835, he appeared at the home of the Mormon

and gray as a badger. His moustaches three inches long, added to other hairy appendages, would have entitled him altogether to rank as a veteran grenadier of Napoleon's Imperial guard. Over his broad shoulder also, a profusion of smoothly curled black locks. His costume exhibited a toilette of the recherche character. A large red bandanna encircling his waist. While preaching lately at Magnolia in Ohio, he many a time and oft industriously plied the comb to his beard. His creation was two and a half hours long. He was seated astride a chair 'dos-a-dos' to the audience. He said the New Jerusalem was to 'be by the margin of Erie's fair waters,' when and where he was to be second in power to the Messiah. After the sermon, when twitted of his trial at Sing Sing, for murder, by poison, he got into a terrible huff and made tracks." Cleveland Herald and Gazette, XIX, No. 15 for the Herald and I, No. 37, for the Gazette (September 8, 1837), n. p. There had been a recent merger of these two papers, but they continued to use their previous volumes and numbers. See also, History of the Church, II, p. 304.

⁵⁵Harrison Telegraph, XII, No. 14 (November 3, 1832), n. p. See also Painesville Telegraph, New Series I, No. 45 (November 13, 1835), n. p., and History of the Church, II, p. 304.

⁵⁶Painesville Telegraph, XIII, No. 46 (May 8, 1835), n. p.

⁵⁷Western Reserve Chronicle, cited in Painesville Telegraph, New Series I, No. 45 (November 13, 1835), n. p.

Prophet. He was reluctant to give his true identity, perhaps, because of his unsavory reputation and his recent release from prison. After some equivocation, however, he revealed his identity as Robert Matthias of New York. He and the Prophet Joseph Smith discussed religion during the greater part of the two days. Matthias professed to the Mormon leader that he possessed the soul of Christ as well as that of the ancient apostle Matthias. On the morning of the third day of their association, the Prophet Joseph discharged him from his house as an impostor. Smith reflected that "My God told me, that his god was the devil."⁵⁸

The press naturally did not let such a newsworthy story remain unnoticed and soon announced,

Prophet catch Prophet. The notorious impostor Matthias has performed a pilgrimage to the temple of the equally notorious Joe Smith, where he held forth his doctrines last week. It appears that the new pretender met with less encouragement than he anticipated from the Latter Day-ites, and after a two days' conference the Prophets parted, each declaring he had miraculously discerned a devil in the other.⁵⁹

The January following, under the heading "The age of impostors," the press again associated Smith with Matthias. It reported,

It has become very true to boast of the superiority of our age over every former--to represent it as emphatically the 'Golden Age,' for intelligence and intellectual elevation and to consider ourselves as placed upon the very 'acme' of human attainment. But when we take into consideration the most absurd, ridiculous, and Bedlamitish fantasies of Joe

⁵⁸History of the Church, II, p. 306.

⁵⁹Painesville Telegraph, New Series I, No. 46 (November 20, 1835), n. p.

Smith, Matthias, and Edward Postlethwayt Page,⁶⁰ which are solemnly promulgated as religious truths, as challenging universal belief--and when we see, furthermore, that hundreds have no more sense than to be deceived and enchanted by the mad-house ranting of those 'Prophets of the Lord' and 'Priests of Nature,' we must conclude, that this is 'the age of impostors,' instead of 'the age of reason and sober sense.'⁶¹

The active tongue of the story-teller multiplied the abuse amassed upon the Saints of the Latter-days and particularly their leader and Prophet. On occasion the derogatory tales received the authority of the press which not only circulated them with a vengeance, but propounded that rogue, lunatic, religious fanatic, and Joseph Smith were all molded out of the same cast. The Saints, however, regarded such stories and identities as slanderous and as another source of persecution.

⁶⁰Edward Postlethwayt Page said of himself and his "religious" beliefs, "Never conquered by those who trample my pearls of science under foot, as though they were members of the swining multitude association--here I am, High priest of Nature, and Founder of that Church of Nature, which shall enchant every living creature, when I prove (as anon I will) that Nature is a Coast, Scripture its Chart, Paradise the Port, our Earth the Steamboat, Religion of Nature the Anchor, and all the concatenate Arts and Sciences its Elucinean Chain Cable.

August 7, 1835 EDWARD POSTLETHWAYT PAGE. Cited in the Painesville Telegraph, New Series I, No. 52 (January 1, 1836), n. p.

⁶¹Idem.

CHAPTER IX

THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF ANTI-MORMON

RESENTMENT CONTINUED

Anti-Mormon Resistance by Mob Violence

Shortly following Joseph Smith's return from his first journey to "Zion" with the elders in the summer of 1831, he made preparations to move his family to Hiram, Portage County, Ohio, thirty miles southeast from Kirtland where he planned to revise the King James version of the Bible. He made the move on the 12th of September and several days later Sidney Rigdon, his scribe, joined him. The Mormon Prophet, his wife, and adopted twin son and daughter, moved into the home of John Johnson and his family, while Rigdon occupied a log house across the street. Hiram had been a successful field of labor for the Mormons and according to one historian, A. S. Hayden, "perhaps in no other place, except Kirtland, did the 'Latter-day Saints' gain a more permanent footing than in Hiram."¹

On the night of March 24-25, 1832, one of the most painful events in the young Prophet's life occurred. A mob, numbering about twenty-five or thirty, disguised with colored faces, and stimulated by whiskey, attacked Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon in their homes.² Afterwards

¹Hayden, op. cit., p. 220.

²Geauga Gazette, I, No. 23 (April 17, 1832), n. p.

the mob beat, abused, tarred and feathered the two men. The Prophet Joseph Smith recorded the event as follows:

On the 24th of March, the twins before mentioned, which had been sick of the measles for some time, caused us to be broken of our rest in taking care of them, especially my wife. In the evening I told her she had better retire to rest with one of the children, and I would watch with the sicker child. In the night she told me I had better lie down on the trundle bed, and I did so, and was soon after awakened by her screaming murder, when I found myself going out of the door, in the hands of about a dozen men; some of whose hands were in my hair, and some had hold of my shirt, drawers and limbs. The foot of the trundle bed was towards the door, leaving only room enough for the door to swing open. My wife heard a gentle tapping on the windows which she then took no particular notice of (but which was unquestionably designed for ascertaining whether or not we were all asleep), and soon after the mob burst open the door and surrounded the bed in an instant, and, as I said, the first I knew I was going out of the door in the hands of an infuriated mob. I made a desperate struggle, as I was forced out, to extricate myself, but only cleared one leg, with which I made a pass at one man, and he fell on the door steps. I was immediately overpowered again; and they swore by G---, they would kill me if I did not be still, which quieted me. As they passed around the house with me, the fellow that I kicked came to me and thrust his hand, all covered with blood, into my face and with an exulting hoarse laugh, muttered: 'Gee, gee, G-- d-- ye, I'll fix ye.'

They then seized me by the throat and held on till I lost my breath. After I came to, as they passed along with me, about thirty rods from the house, I saw Elder Rigdon stretched out on the ground, whither they had dragged him by his heels. I supposed he was dead. I began to plead with them, saying, 'You will have mercy and spare my life, I hope.' To which they replied, 'G-- d-- ye, call on yer God for help, we'll show ye no mercy;' and the people began to show themselves in every direction; one coming from the orchard had a plank; and I expected they would kill me, and carry me off on the plank. They then turned to the right, and went on about thirty rods further; about sixty rods from the house, and thirty from where I saw Elder Rigdon, into the meadow, where they stopped, and one said, 'Simonds, Simonds,' (meaning, I supposed, Simonds Ryder,) 'pull up his drawers, pull up his drawers, he will take cold.' Another replied: Ain't ye going to kill 'im? ain't ye going to kill 'im? when a group of mobbers collected a little way off, and said: 'Simonds, Simonds, come here;' and 'Simonds' charged those who had hold of me to

keep me from touching the ground (as they had done all the time), lest I should get a spring upon them. They held a council, and as I could occasionally overhear a word, I supposed it was to know whether or not it was best to kill me. They returned after a while, when I learned that they had concluded not to kill me, but to beat and scratch me well, tear off my shirt and drawers, and leave me naked. One cried, 'Simonds, Simonds, where's the tar bucket?' 'I don't know,' answered one, 'where 'tis, Eli's left it.' They ran back and fetched the bucket of tar, when one exclaimed, with an oath, 'Let us tar up his mouth;' and they tried to force the tar-paddle into my mouth; I twisted my head around, so that they could not; and they cried out, 'G--d--ye, hold up yer head and let us giv ye some tar.' They then tried to force a vial into my mouth, and broke it in my teeth. All my clothes were torn off me except my shirt collar; and one man fell on me and scratched my body with his nails like a mad cat, and then muttered out: 'G--d--ye, that's the way the Holy Ghost falls on folks!'

They then left me, and I attempted to rise, but fell again; I pulled the tar away from my lips, so that I could breathe more freely, and after a while I began to recover, and raised myself up, whereupon I saw two lights. I made my way towards one of them, and found it was Father Johnson's. When I came to the door I was naked, and the tar made me look as if I were covered with blood, and when my wife saw me she thought I was all crushed to pieces, and fainted. During the affray abroad, the sisters of the neighborhood had collected at my room. I called for a blanket, they threw me one and shut the door; I wrapped it around me and went in.³

When the mob removed Joseph from the house, Carnot Mason assisted others in dragging him out of bed "by the hair of his head."⁴

Later, Joseph showed Levi Hancock a patch of his hair that had been pulled out by the roots leaving the scalp bare.⁵ Furthermore, the vial

³History of the Church, I, pp. 261-263.

⁴Luke Johnson, "History of Luke Johnson," Millennial Star, XXVI, No. 53 (December 31, 1864), pp. 834, 835. Also in 1846 Luke Johnson said, "Carnot was the person who dragged Joseph out of the house by his hair. Dr. Denison prepared the vial for Joseph, supposed to contain Aqua Fortis (nitric acid)." "Journal History," December 13, 1846, p. 2.

⁵Levi Hancock, op. cit., p. 73.

that was thrust into his mouth containing nitric acid resulted in the breakage of one of his teeth. This subsequently caused a whistling sound when he spoke.⁶ A doctor named Dennison, a member of the mob, had been appointed to emasculate the Prophet, but upon seeing Smith's naked body stretched on the plank, weakened in his resolve and refused to operate.⁷ Rigdon who was also removed from his bed was dragged by his heels; and while his head passed over the frozen ground, he received excessive lacerations which left him delirious for days. One of the infants who was being raised by the Prophet and his wife at the request of John Murdock developed a severe cold from the night's exposure and died March 29, 1832. This child was regarded by Church historian George A. Smith as the first martyr of the Mormon faith.⁸

⁶ Benjamin F. Johnson, "Letter to George F. Gibbs," p. 16. Johnson said that at the August, 1844, conference in Nauvoo, Illinois, when Brigham Young began to speak to direct the affairs of the Church after the death of Joseph Smith the previous June, that Brigham Young sounded like Smith himself. Johnson said, ". . . As he /President Sidney Rigdon/ closed his address and sat down, my back was partly turned to the seats occupied by Apostle Brigham Young and other Apostles, when suddenly and as from Heaven, I heard the voice of the Prophet Joseph, that thrilled my whole being, and quickly turning around I saw in the transfiguration, of Brigham Young, the tall, straight and portly form of the Prophet Joseph Smith, clothed in a sheen of light, covering him to his feet; and I heard the real and perfect voice of the prophet, even to the whistle, as in years past caused by the loss of a tooth said to have been broken out by the mob at Hyrum." Italics added.

⁷ Luke Johnson, op. cit., p. 834.

⁸ Journal of Discourses, Vol. XIII, p. 106. B. H. Roberts, however, credits Andrew Barber as being the "first direct martyr" of the Church. History of the Church, I, p. 431. Young Andrew Barber, the son of Oral and Andrew Barber Sr., a resident of the Prairie branch of the Church located approximately twelve miles west of Independence, Missouri, was shot during the Battle of the Big Blue in Jackson County, August 4, 1833, during the Mormon difficulties there and died the next day. Philo Dibble, a participant in the battle described the events,

The public press sympathetically gave notice to the event as "a base transaction, an unlawful act, a work of darkness, a diabolical trick." "But bad as it is," reported the Warren News Letter, "it proves

"Soon after I returned /from a visit to Clay County to buy gun powder/ a mob of about one hundred and fifty came upon us in the dead hours of night, tore down a number of our houses and whipped and abused several of our brethren. I was aroused from my sleep by the noise caused by the falling houses, and had barely time to escape to the woods with my wife and two children when they reached my house and proceeded to break in the door and tear the roof off. I was some distance away from where the whipping occurred, but I heard the blows of heavy ox goads upon the backs of my brethren distinctly. The mob also swore they would tear down our grist mill, which was situated at the Colesville branch, about three miles from the settlement, and lest they should really do so, and as it was the only means we had of getting our grain ground, we were counseled to gather there and defend it. The next day we heard firing down in the Whitmer settlement, and seventeen of our brethren volunteered to go down and see what it meant. Brother George Beebe was one of those volunteers and also one of the men who was whipped the night previous. /When George Beebe's remains were laid out in December, 1881 in Provo, Utah, it was testified that he carried the marks of the whipping to his grave./ When the seventeen men arrived at the Whitmer settlement, the mob came against them and took some prisoners. Brother David Whitmer brought us the news of this and said: 'Every man go, and every man take a man!' We all responded and met the mob in battle, in which I was wounded with an ounce ball and two buck shot, all entering my body just at the right side of my naval. The mob were finally routed, and the brethren chased them a mile away. Several others of the brethren were also shot, and one, named Barber, was mortally wounded. After the battle was over, some of the brethren went to administer to him, but he objected to their praying that he might live, and asked them if they could not see the angels present. He said the room was full of them, and his greatest anxiety was for his friends to see what he saw, until he breathed his last, which occurred at three o'clock in the morning." Philo Dibble, Early Scenes in Church History, Eighth Book of the Faith-Promoting Series (Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor, 1882), pp. 82, 83.

In 1878 Ellis Eames wrote the following to the editor of the Deseret News from Provo, Utah: "The First Martyr, Provo, City, August 9, Mr. Editor:

Sir,--I find it due to the memory of departed friends, to place their name and character in its proper light before the public. I shall refer to the first human sacrifice, the first martyr, that fell a victim to the vengeance of an infuriate set of demons, with no other object in view, but the destruction of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. This one instance I shall record, viz: the death of Andrew Barber, cut down in the morning of his days; scarcely had eighteen summers smiled

one important truth which a very wise man knew before, that is, that Satan hath more power than the pretended prophets of Mormonism."⁹

It may be difficult to place responsibility for conceiving the plot, but Laura L. Kimball, a resident of Hiram at the time of the event stated, "Persecution against the Saints was very strong, and a mob led by some apostates tarred and feathered brother Joseph and Sidney, and left brother Joseph, as they supposed, dead upon the ground."¹⁰ Symonds Ryder, a participant in the mobbing who was said to be one that "did not drift on the current," but rather one who "sets currents in motion,"¹¹ lends some knowledge as to the purpose and persons involved in the Hiram affair. In a letter Ryder, a Mormon apostate, a Campbellite minister, and a resident of Hiram, made the following observation:

In the winter of 1831 Joseph Smith, with others, had an appointment in the south school-house, in Hiram. Such

upon his existence, ere we behold him on his bloody couch, his weeping parents and numerous friends taking a last lingering look, at the noble and bloody sacrifice, that dared to follow where any dared to lead, placed in his rude coffin, to be consigned to its last resting place, there to remain until the trump of God shall call him forth to receive a Martyr's Crown. Peace to his ashes, long may he live in the hearts of the Saints, for there his name deserves a place. The name of Barber is yet dear to the old Jackson County veterans. I look around in vain for my old associates. Time has told a fearful tale; few are left that saw those days of trouble, when hell with all his blackest sins put on seemed intent at one fell swoop to rid the world of the name of Latter Day Saints. . . .

Respectfully, Ellis Eames."

Letter on file in the Office of the Church Historian.

⁹Warren News-Letter and Trumbull County Republican (Warren), IV, No. 8 (April 10, 1832), n. p.

¹⁰Laura L. Kimball, "Autobiography of Sister Laura L. Kimball," Deseret News Weekly, XV, No. 52 (November 28, 1866), p. 413. Italics added.

¹¹B. A. Hindsdale, "Life and Character of Symonds Ryder," cited in Hayden, op. cit., p. 257.

was the apparent piety, sincerity and humility of the speakers, that many of the hearers were greatly affected, and thought it impossible that such preachers should lie in wait to deceive.

During the next spring and summer several converts were made, and their success seemed to indicate an immediate triumph in Hiram. But when they went to Missouri to lay the foundation of the splendid city of Zion, and also of the temple, they left their papers behind. This gave their new converts an opportunity to become acquainted with the internal arrangement of their church, which revealed to them the horrid fact that a plot was laid to take their property from them /under the Law of Consecration/ and place it under the control of Joseph Smith the prophet. This was too much for the Hiramites, and they left the Mormonites faster than they had ever joined them, and by fall the Mormon church in Hiram was a very lean concern.

But some who had been the dupes of this deception, determined not to let it pass with impunity; and, accordingly, a company was formed of citizens from Shalersville, Garrettsville, and Hiram, in March, 1832, and proceeded to headquarters in the darkness of night, and took Smith and Rigdon from their beds, and tarred and feathered them both, and let them go. This had the desired effect, which was to get rid of them. They soon left for Kirtland.¹²

Hartwell Ryder, Symond's son, later corroborated this as the purpose of the mobbing, for "the people did not want Hiram to be a Mormon center."¹³

Another factor contributing to the participation of some in the

¹²Symonds Ryder, "Letter to A. S. Hayden," February 1, 1868, cited in Hayden, op. cit., pp. 220, 221. Besides Rider's reference to the economics of the Hiram Saints as reason for the attack, Henry Howe made the following comment: "in the winter of 1831 Joseph Smith and Sidney came to Hiram, held meetings and made many converts to the then new faith of the Latter-Day Saints, or Mormonism. But after a while it was rumored that they designed eventually to get possession of all the property of their converts. The people became alarmed; among them were some of their dupes, who went to the house of Smith and Rigdon, stripped them, gave them a coat of tar and feathers, and rode them on a rail--whereupon they left the place." Henry Howe, op. cit., Vol. III, p. 111.

¹³Deseret Semi-Weekly News, cited in N. B. Lundwall (comp.), The Fate of the Persecutors of the Prophet Joseph Smith (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1952), p. 75. B. H. Roberts visited Hiram, Ohio, during the latter part of the century and interviewed Hartwell Ryder concerning the mobbing.

mob was to release their resentment against Smith for influences that interfered with their domestic harmony. "There was a man down at Shalersville," said Hartwell Ryder, "whose wife had joined the Mormon Church and was agoing /sic/ with the Mormons to Missouri."¹⁴ This he resented. Inasmuch as participants from Shalersville served in the mob, it is plausible that they were motivated by such personal reasons.

Upon considering the general resentment and fear that was being engendered by the stories that circulated about Smith and his people, it was not difficult to excite those with personal grievances to participate in the mobbing. Ostensively then, there were at least three factors that prompted the vindictiveness released in the early hours of March 25, 1832, in Hiram, Ohio, against the two chief Mormon leaders: (1) objections to the economic order of the Church, the Law of Consecration and Stewardship, which some thought would interfere with the private ownership of property of the new converts in Hiram; (2) some desired to prevent Hiram from becoming a major Mormon center; and (3) there was a resentment for breaking up family solidarity.

The following Wednesday, March 28th, Rigdon moved his family to Kirtland, but learning that a mob was there, he moved to Chardon the following Saturday. Preparations were made for a second trip to Missouri, and the Mormon President accompanied by Newel K. Whitney, Peter Whitmer, and Jesse Gause left Hiram on April 1st. They chose not to go to Kirtland at that time because of the threatening mob forces there. "And indeed,"

¹⁴Idem.

said the Prophet, "the spirit of mobocracy was very prevalent through that whole region of country at the time."¹⁵ Smith had his family move back to Kirtland, and he and his party started their journey by going to Wheeling, Virginia. Some of the members of the mob followed them as far west as Cincinnati.¹⁶

After Smith's return from Missouri, it became increasingly necessary to protect him in order to avoid a recurrence of the Hiram encounter. Matters became so threatening in Kirtland in 1833, that the Saints were afraid their leaders would again be mobbed. In order to guard against an attack, precautionary measures were taken. Concerning these measures George A. Smith wrote,

In consequence of the persecution which raged against the Prophet Joseph and the constant threats to do him violence, it was found necessary to keep continual guard to prevent his being murdered by his enemies, who were headed by Joseph H. Wakefield and Dr. P. Hurlburt, the latter of whom had been expelled from the Church for adultery.¹⁷

Benjamin F. Johnson, who arrived in Kirtland in the fall of 1833, observed that there was "one continual persecution of the Prophet and contempt for the Saints and their religion."¹⁸ This necessitated further precautions. "Much of my time in boyhood," Johnson later reflected, "was spent in assisting to prepare arms for the protection of the Saints. The lower story of my mother's house in Kirtland was at that time used by

¹⁵History of the Church, I, p. 265.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 266.

¹⁷George A. Smith, op. cit., entry near the end of 1833.

¹⁸Benjamin F. Johnson, My Life's Review, p. 24.

Brother M. C. Davis as a gunsmith shop, for the manufacture of defensive weapons for the use of the people."¹⁹

Oliver Huntington, in writing about this early date, described a night scene that occurred while guarding the home of the Mormon Prophet:

At a time when Joseph Smith was guarded day and night by his brethren from mob violence, that he might perform his necessary business labors and get the necessary night's rest and that his life should be safe; he was in a log house at night. Several brethren were with him and were making arrangements as to who should stand guard that night.

Joseph was listening to the prayer of a little boy in the room adjoining. The boy prayed for the Prophet, that he might be secure and safe from his enemies, the mob, that night.

When the boy had done praying, Joseph turned to his brethren and told them all to go to bed and all sleep and rest themselves that night, for God had heard and would answer that boy's prayer. They all went to bed and slept safely until morning undisturbed.²⁰

Apparently from that time until the Prophet left Ohio in 1838, it was necessary to maintain a constant guard upon Smith's and Rigdon's homes to prevent another attack upon these men. The men who were requested to guard both homes made their own ammunition and carried weapons for protection.²¹ Ira Ames, who remained in Kirtland until the winter of 1838, wrote in his diary,

Ever since my arrival in Kirtland, I had stood guard at night in consequence of the Mob and persecutions we endured. Especially this winter of 1835 I frequently taking [sic] my blanket and sleeping in Joseph's house and guarding my portion of the time and continued as

¹⁹Idem.

²⁰Oliver B. Huntington, op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 167, 168.

²¹George A. Smith, op. cit., 1833 entry.

one of Joseph's body guards until I left Kirtland.²²

The winter of 1833 and 1834 was a particularly threatening period of time for the Saints in Kirtland. Shortly after the violence that caused the Jackson County Saints to evacuate their homes in their several branches near Independence, Missouri, Joseph Smith wrote to Bishop Partridge in Missouri saying, "The inhabitants of this country i.e. Ohio² threaten our destruction, and we know not how soon they may be permitted to follow the example of the Missourians."²³ It is unfortunate that more details of the threats were not preserved, but according to Cowdery much of the animosity was stirred up by Hurlburt who was "in the country peddling slander," about the Latter-day Saints.²⁴ Writing of this troubled time, Smith said:

All the Church in Kirtland had to lie every night for a long time upon our arms to keep off mobs, of forties, of eighties, & of hundreds to save our lives and the press, and that we might not be scattered & driven to the four winds!²⁵

The night of January 7, 1834, was an especially threatening one, for a mob assembled near Kirtland and attempted to frighten the inhabitants with the firing of a cannon. In the words of Oliver Cowdery, "They came out on the 8th about 12 o'clock at night, a little west and

²²Ames, op. cit., 1835 entry. He left Kirtland in January, 1838, shortly after the departure of the Prophet.

²³Joseph Smith, "Letter to Edward Partridge," op. cit., December 5, 1833.

²⁴Oliver Cowdery, "Letter to Lyman Cowdery," January 13, 1834. Located in the Huntington Library, San Mateo, California.

²⁵Joseph Smith, "Letter to Edward Partridge and others of the Firm," March 30, 1834. Located on microfilm at Brigham Young University Library.

fired /a/ cannon, we supposed to alarm us, but no one was frightened, but all prepared to defend ourselves if they made a sally upon our houses."²⁶

To this the Prophet Joseph Smith added,

The threats of the mob about Kirtland through the fall and winter had been such as to cause the brethren to be constantly on the lookout, and those who labored on the temple were engaged at night watching to protect the walls they had laid during the day, from threatened violence. On the morning of the 8th of January, about 1 o'clock, the inhabitants of Kirtland were alarmed by the firing of about thirteen rounds of cannon, by the mob, on the hill about half a mile northwest of the village.²⁷

Heber C. Kimball adds further testimony to the threatening conflict that existed in Kirtland during the construction of the temple. During this time he reported,

When I got to Kirtland the brethren were engaged in building the house of the Lord. The commandment to build the house, and also the pattern of it was given in a revelation to Joseph Smith, jr., Sidney Rigdon, and Frederick G. Williams, and was to be erected by a stated time. The church was in a state of poverty and distress, in consequence of which it appeared almost impossible that the commandment would be fulfilled, at the same time our enemies were raging and threatening destruction upon us, and we had to guard ourselves night after night, and for weeks were not permitted to take off our clothes, and were obliged to lay with our fire locks in our arms.²⁸

In the words of Joel Hills Johnson, the Saints had "but very few friends among the world," at this time while they had "thousands of enemies who were holding their secret meetings to devise plans to thwart

²⁶Oliver Cowdery, "Letter to William Phelps and John Whitmer," January 21, 1834. Located in the Huntington Library.

²⁷History of the Church, II, p. 2.

²⁸Heber C. Kimball, Times and Seasons (Illinois), VI, No. 1 (January 15, 1845), p. 77.

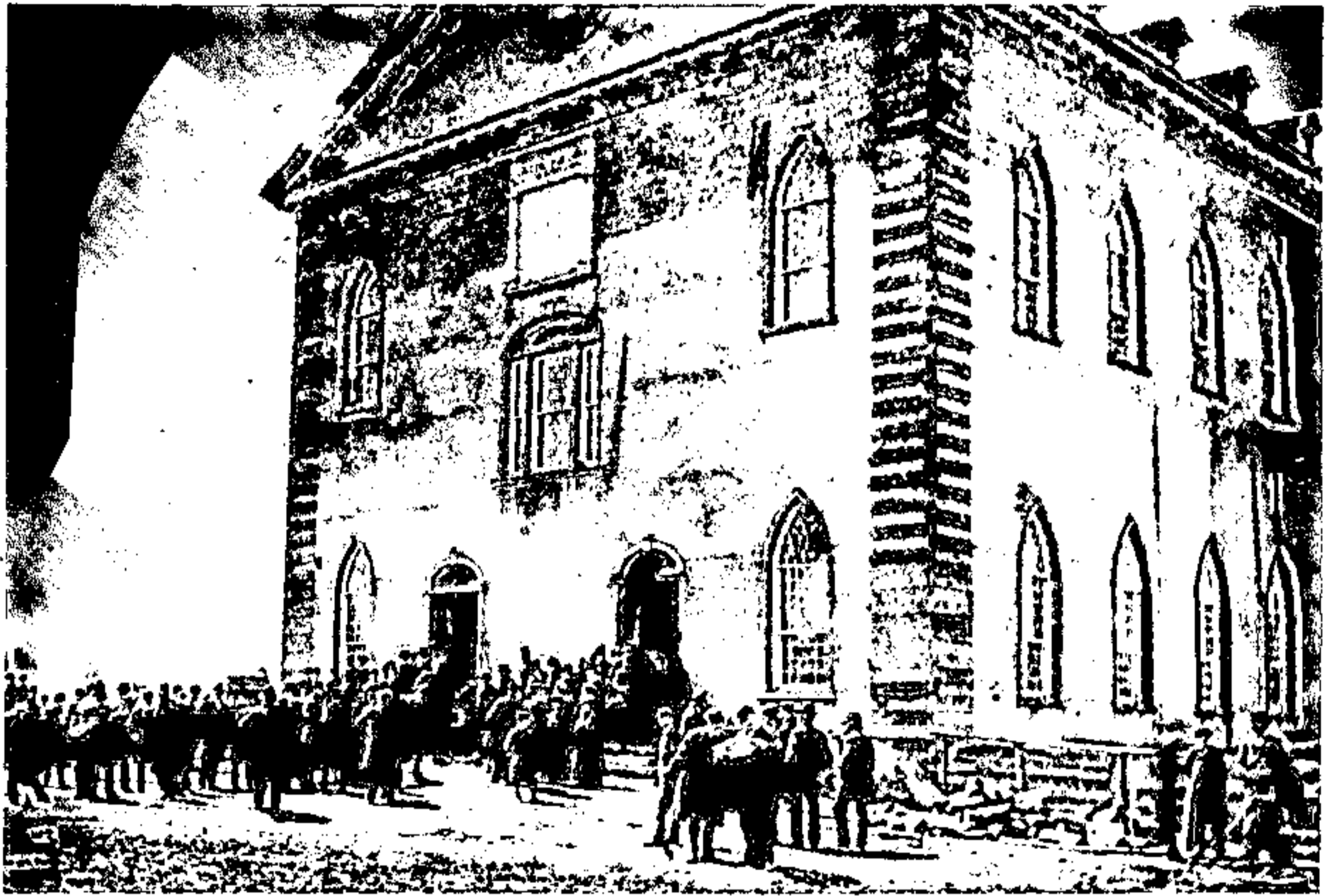


Fig. 8. A view of the Kirtland Temple with a crowd congregated in front of it late in the nineteenth century. (Courtesy of the Church Historian's Library.)



Fig. 9. A general view of Kirtland showing the area near the temple somewhat as it appears today. (Courtesy, the Church Historian's Library.)

and overthrow all our arrangements." Then he added his corroborating testimony of the necessity of defending the newly constructed sections of the temple. "We were obliged," he said, "to keep up night watches to prevent being mobbed, and our work being overthrown."²⁹

Threats of mob attack upon the Kirtland Saints continued to the spring of 1835, when Grandison Newell headed a mob which, rumor declared, was preparing to attack the Mormons in Kirtland. Referring to this period, Newell K. Whitney said, "Many rumors were afloat, which caused us to expect a mob and prepare ourselves for defense."³⁰ This threat, like others, however, never materialized. Nevertheless, such threats served to terrorize the Saints, leaving them in a perpetual state of anxiety. In 1837, Wilford Woodruff indicated that another mob, one composed of the Painesville citizens, was threatening abuse upon the Mormons in Kirtland. Concerning the night of January 24, 1837, he journalized,

We had been threatened by a mob from Painesville to visit us that night and demolish our Bank and take our property but they did not appear but the wrath of our enemies appears to be kindled against us. This in part is the scourge that hath awaited us, but may the Lord show us mercy and deliver us from the hands of our enemies for Christ's sake.³¹

This ominous threat of mobs was a constant terror to the Mormon Prophet and an expectation of a recurrence of the Hiram outrage undoubtedly was indelibly impressed into his memory. It was this terror, in part

²⁹Joel Hills Johnson, "Journal of Joel Hills Johnson," p. 16. A typed copy is located in the Special Collections Library at Brigham Young University.

³⁰Painesville Telegraph, III, No. 23 (June 9, 1837), n. p.

³¹Woodruff, op. cit., p. 80.

that forced him to leave Ohio and settle in Missouri in 1838. As long as he remained in Kirtland, the threat of being attacked by mobs was imminent. Brigham Young declared that men plotted to apprehend Smith "for the purpose of taking his life," when the Prophet was returning from a visit to Monroe, Michigan. "I procured a horse and buggy and took Brother William Smith along to meet Joseph," said Brigham Young. "We met him returning in the stage coach. Joseph requested William to take his seat in the stage and he rode with me in the buggy." Fortunately, Brigham Young concluded, "We arrived in Kirtland in safety."³²

In July of the same year, Anson Call, a past-resident of Painesville, reported an event that occurred when Smith and Rigdon were traveling from Fairport to Kirtland. These men stopped in Painesville at the home of the Prophet's attorney, Benjamin Bissell, for some refreshments. While they were at the table, Esq. Bissell said that a mob had gathered and he was concerned about their safety. He directed his friends through a back alley and out of Painesville and promised them that he would transport their horse and buggy to Kirtland the following morning. After their departure at dusk, Anson Call reported that they "passed the road back and forth several times and the mob kindled fires in front of them in several places on the road."³³ This prevented them from using the public road and forced them to take refuge in and travel

³²Brigham Young, Deseret News Weekly, VII, No. 49 (February 10, 1858), p. 386.

³³"Journal History," July 27, 1837. Also describing the same incident is another document on file by Anson Call dated July 27, 1837, in the Church Historian's Library.

through the Manti Swamps. Rigdon's health was poor and necessitated his being carried through the swamp, a distance of four miles, upon Joseph's back. When they arrived in Kirtland at dawn--the entire night was expended in their journey--they went to the temple where a congregation had previously gathered. At this time, Joseph related the events he and Sidney had experienced that night.

Although violence of the intensity that occurred during the night of March 25, 1832, was never repeated in Ohio against the Mormons, the existence of mobs continued as a constant threat to the peace of many Saints residing in and near Kirtland. This organized resistance has been generally ignored by historians, yet to the Mormons in Ohio during the 1830's the threats of mob interference terrorized them to the extent they felt they were in constant jeopardy of losing their tranquility or their lives.

Vexatious Law Suits

Persecution came upon the Mormons in various forms. In 1836 the Messenger and Advocate editorialized concerning one oft-used method of persecution resorted to by the anti-Mormon community:

Not only are their characters [i.e. the Saints] vilified and slandered by every little two-penny filthy sheet from Maine to Georgia, opposed to the rights of conscience . . . but time and again, are they perplexed and harassed with suits at law, brought by enemies on trivial pretenses.³⁴

These law suits were not only costly in time and money, but were found to be excessively vexatious and distressing to the Saints and particularly

³⁴Messenger and Advocate, II, No. 9 (June, 1836), p. 333.

to their young leader. In 1838, while referring to these years in Kirtland, John Corrill, a defunct bishop's counselor and apostate, wrote,

Smith and Rigdon, with others, complained much of ill treatment they had received from the dissenters and others; they said they had been persecuted from time to time with vexatious lawsuits; that mobs had arisen up against them, time after time; that they had been harassed to death, as it were, for seven or eight years³⁵

The Mormon Prophet had, previous to his move to Ohio, received abuse through the courts in New York; in fact, the accounts of these trials had preceded Joseph to Ohio and prompted Rigdon to investigate them to his satisfaction when he journeyed east to see the Prophet in 1831.³⁶ It was common knowledge among the Saints that Joseph was frequently inconvenienced by legal charges during the years in Kirtland. In 1837, many distressing charges appeared. Heber C. Kimball offers the following description of the inconvenience in which such lawsuits placed the Prophet!

Joseph was sued before a magistrate's court in Painesville on a vexatious suit. I carried him from Kirtland to Painesville, with four or five others, in my wagon every morning for five days, and brought them back in the evening. We were often way-laid, but managed to elude our enemies by rapid driving and taking different roads. Esq. Bissell defended the Prophet.³⁷

Although there may have been legitimate reasons for some of the suits against Smith and his people, it was frankly admitted by E. D.

³⁵Corrill, op. cit., p. 29.

³⁶Painesville Telegraph, II, No. 35 (February 15, 1831), n. p.

³⁷Heber C. Kimball, "History of Brigham Young," Millennial Star, XXVI, No. 34 (August 20, 1864), p. 535.

Howe that this avenue of persecution was resorted to in order to retard the advancing growth of Mormonism in the Western Reserve. He later wrote,

All their [i.e. the Mormons'] vain babblings and pretensions were pretty strongly set forth and noticed in the columns of the TELEGRAPH. In view of all their gaseous pretensions the surrounding country was becoming somewhat sensitive, and many of our citizens thought it advisable to take all the legal means within their reach to counteract the progress of so dangerous an enemy in their midst, and many law suits ensued.³⁸

Brigham Young noted that "few of the vexatious proceedings of the world and the apostates, against Joseph," were recorded in his history.³⁹

Historian George A. Smith estimated that there were approximately fifty law suits against the Prophet during his short life time.⁴⁰ William

³⁸E. D. Howe, Autobiography, p. 45. Italics added.

³⁹Brigham Young, Deseret News Weekly, VII, No. 49 (February 10, 1858), p. 385. The suit that Brigham Young referred to among other things dealt with Joseph's alleged promise that all that traveled to Missouri in Zion's Camp in 1834 would return. Esq. Bissell, again: Joseph's attorney, remarked that although some died, the witnesses had testified that they all did return.

⁴⁰Journal of Discourses, VIII, p. 104. Historian Smith discusses the excessive financial burden the court suits placed upon the President of the Mormon Church. Although he sidesteps the costs during the Ohio period of the Church, he does give some insight into the burdensome expenses the cases amounted to during later periods. Concerning such he said, "Joseph Smith, the Prophet, was subjected, during his short ministerial career of fifteen years, to about fifty vexatious suits. The principal expense was incurred in liquidating lawyers' bills, and the brethren's time and expenditure in attending courts to defend the Prophet from mob violence.

Magistrates' court expenses were generally one hundred dollars. The Prophet paid Generals Doniphan and Atchison for legal services at Richmond, Mo., in 1838-9, sixteen thousand dollars

At the Prophet's trial at Monmouth, Ill., in 1841, before Judge Douglas, the lawyers' fees and expenses amounted to three thousand dollars.

Cyrus Walker charged ten thousand dollars for defending Joseph in his political arrest, or the attempt at kidnapping him at Dixon, Ill.,

E. McLellin said, "At Kirtland there was a wealthy citizen, Grandison Newell, who brought a number of civil suits against Joseph Smith--estimated as high as thirty."⁴¹ A consideration of some of these lawsuits will add substance to the generalized statements.

In 1836, Parley P. Pratt had taken the message of Mormonism to Canada and a number of branches of the Church had been established there. One year later, when Joseph was traveling to this country to visit the Saints, he was delayed in Painesville "by malicious and vexatious law suits." There were in fact six writs served on the Mormon leader on that day in Painesville. On the first two writs he was tried and released with no action taken against him. He was then arrested a third time and on being examined was held over for the trial. A release was available, however, on a five hundred dollar bond if an acceptable signor could be found. The court would not allow any in his party to sign for him or post bail, ostensibly, for fear they were fleeing to Canada and would not return to honor the commitment. As the party was waiting in the doorway of Joseph's attorney, Esquire Benjamin Bissell, Anson Call, a recent convert to Mormonism, passed by the office; he inquired of the difficulty,

in 1843. There were four other lawyers employed for the defense besides Walker. The expenses of the defense in this trial were enormous, involving the amounts incurred by the horse companies who went in pursuit to aid Joseph, and the trip of the steamer Maid of Iowa, from Nauvoo to Ottawa, and may be fairly estimated at one hundred thousand dollars. Ibid., pp. 109, 110.

⁴¹Salt Lake Daily Tribune, IX, No. 147 (October 6, 1875), p. 4. This statement resulted from an interview with McLellin by a correspondent to the Salt Lake newspaper. It may be an exaggeration, but it lends credence to the fact that the Prophet was burdened by an excessive number of law suits initiated by Grandison Newell.

and called for the sheriff in order to sign the release. Fortunately, the sheriff, Abel Kimball, had been an intimate friend of Call's, and finally accepted his signature. Meanwhile, Albert P. Rockwood, one of the Prophet's party, said that Sheriff Kimball and Anson Call discussed the problem and Anson Call reported,

He said he wished to talk with me and we stepped aside. He then told me he did not want me to go for his bail for Joe was making his escape to Canada and I would have to pay the bonds. I told him I was not uneasy about that for he would return before Court set. He asked me if I had sold my farm in Madison. I told him no. Had I mortgaged it? I told him it was perfectly clear. I owed no man. He said, 'Now, Anson, I don't want you to do it, I will push the bonds.' I told him I was willing to run all risks and according to his oath he was under obligation to take me. 'Come ahead,' said he, 'and sign the bonds.' I signed them. Joseph was set at liberty and prosecuted his journey. He arrived at Fairport a distance of 4 miles and engaged his passage on a steam boat. The Sheriff pursued him with another writ. The company went back with him to Painesville /where/ he stood trial and was acquitted.⁴²

Brigham Young observed that the nature of the fourth writ was for an unpaid debt "of a few dollars which was paid forthwith, and the fifth time he was arrested which case was soon disposed of, and he concluded to return to Kirtland for the night" instead of pursuing the trip to Canada.⁴³ As the Mormon Prophet entered into his buggy to return home, the sheriff caught the reins with one hand and placed the other

⁴²Anson Call, A document dated July 27, 1837, bearing no title is on file in the Church Historian's Office. Minor punctuation inclusions are added to the original by the present writer. See also "Journal History," July 27, 1837, for another statement by Anson Call. Albert P. Rockwood also stated that Smith's party journeyed to Fairport during the day, but neither Brigham Young's account nor the Prophet's reference to the incident include that point.

⁴³Brigham Young, "Ms. History of the Great Lakes Mission--Ohio," dated July 27, 1837.

on Joseph's shoulder and said, "Mr. Smith, you are my prisoner."⁴⁴ The writ on this, the sixth and last case for the day, was issued over a complaint of a kitchen-stove salesman who had previously left a new type of stove with the Prophet in Kirtland some time before in anticipation that his use might popularize it. Brigham Young said that Joseph testified, "I never wished to purchase the stove. But the gentleman insisted on putting it in my house."⁴⁵ In summary the Prophet further said,

A man who had a few weeks previously brought a new fashioned cooking stove to Kirtland, and prevailed on me to put it up in my kitchen, saying it would give credit to his stove, wishing to have it tested by our people; and now he thought would be a good time to get pay for it. I gave my watch to the officer for security and we all returned home.⁴⁶

On another occasion, a Baptist minister, who had been acquainted with the Prophet Joseph Smith in New York earlier in his life, visited him in Kirtland and remained as a guest with the Smiths over night. Following breakfast the next morning, the clergyman proceeded to call the Mormon leader "a hypocrite, a liar, an impostor, and a false prophet,"⁴⁷ with the desired effect of chastening Smith to repentance. Joseph became exasperated over his ingratitude and "boxed his ears with both hands, and turning his face towards the door, kicked him into the street," for the man's lack of charity. The minister immediately sought a magistrate

⁴⁴Idem.

⁴⁵Idem.

⁴⁶History of the Church, II, p. 502.

⁴⁷Luke S. Johnson, "History of Luke Johnson," Millennial Star, XXVII, No. 1 (January 7, 1865), p. 5.

and swore out a writ for assault and battery against Smith. Luke S. Johnson, who witnessed the episode, followed the clergyman into the officer's quarters and filed a writ accusing the clergyman of provoking the assault. The clerk wrote up Johnson's writ first, whereupon the minister hurriedly paid for his writ and left the office to avoid any difficulty arising from Johnson's complaint.⁴⁸

Other lawsuits occurred, some of which perhaps had some legal justification, but all were regarded by the Saints as vexatious and designed to distress and inconvenience the Prophet and others involved. Certainly, there can be no doubt that some of them were conceived to give vent to personal animosities entertained against the Mormon people.

Perhaps the most menacing and potentially dangerous charge that was issued against the Mormon Prophet in Ohio was the complaint made in May, 1837, that Joseph Smith was an accessory to a plot to assassinate Grandison Newell. Newell, a wealthy industrialist who lived in Mentor, just two miles from Kirtland, exhibited considerable scorn for both Smith and the Mormon people.⁴⁹ This contempt was derisively expressed in a letter Newell wrote to Sidney Rigdon revealing his accusation against the Prophet. To Rigdon he wrote, "Your bosom associate is the imposture [sic] Smith, the impious fabricator of gold bibles--the blasphemous forger of revelations with which he swindles ignorant people out of their hard-earned property."⁵⁰ This attack on Smith's character insinuated

⁴⁸Idem.

⁴⁹For other considerations of Newell's action against the Mormons see Supra., pp. 206, 261, 279.

⁵⁰Grandison Newell, "Letter to Sidney Rigdon," Painesville Telegraph, III, No. 21 (May 26, 1837), n. p.

Newell's contempt for the Prophet as a religious figure despite the allegations that followed. Newell, then, proceeded to accuse the Mormon Prophet as an accessory to a conspiracy against his life by writing:

Emboldened by success in his wicked schemes, he i.e. Smith/ hesitates not to use his authority as the revelator of the will of Heaven, to incite his followers to remove those who have opposed his treachery and fraud, by assassination. Deluded and frantic by his pretended revelation, that it was the will of God, that I should be destroyed, two of the saints of the latter day, by concert, and under the express direction of their prophet, this high priest of satan, met in the night, at a little distance from my house, with loaded rifles, and pistols, with a determination to kill me. But as they drew near the spot where the bloody deed was to be performed, they trembled under the awful responsibility of committing murder, a little cool reflection in darkness and silence, broke the spell of the false prophet--they were restored to their right minds, and are now rejoicing that they were not left to the power of the devil and co-adjutor Smith, to stain their souls with a crime so horrible. While these scenes were planned by the prophet, and promises of great temporal and spiritual good lavished upon these two men, by him, to stimulate them to assassinate me in my own house, in the midst of my family, and in a moment when I was defenseless and suspecting no danger⁵¹

Newell's accusations were no idle threat, for later in the month he registered a complaint with Justice Flint of Painesville and a warrant was issued by the officer for Smith's arrest. Several individuals in Painesville organized themselves into an unofficial self-appointed committee which proceeded to Kirtland to apprehend the Prophet and carry him to Painesville for trial; but he was not to be found in Kirtland. They demanded the Mormon leaders to surrender the Prophet to them, believing they had hidden him. Upon learning that Smith was not at Kirtland, they

⁵¹Idem.

speculated that he would never return. Following a lapse of days, Joseph did return to Kirtland and was arrested without difficulty. The case was presented before Justice Flint on Tuesday, May 30, 1837, for a preliminary hearing. The Mormon Prophet was accompanied to Painesville with a sizable entourage of witnesses, but the trial was held over until the following Saturday to provide the prosecution sufficient time to procure a state's evidence in the case.

On Saturday, June 3rd, the trial was held in Painesville in the Methodist chapel before a crowd of anxious spectators highly anticipating that they might witness a disclosure of the "murderous projects of the modern prophet," so reported the Ohio Statesman.⁵² The charge against Joseph, as stated by the Telegraph was,

Complaint of Mr. Grandison Newell against the defendant [Smith], charging him with an attempt to take the life of said complainant, by inducing two individuals to lay in wait for said Newell, near his dwelling in order to shoot him. . . .⁵³

The two confederates who were implicated in the alleged conspiracy with Joseph Smith, Jr., were young Solomon H. Denton and a Mr. Davis. It appears that although both men had been Mormons, Davis never wholly committed himself to the rules of the Mormon society, and Denton, who had resided with the Smiths occasionally since 1835 while working in the printing office, was excommunicated from the Church two or three months prior to the June trials.⁵⁴ Newell alleged that although Denton and

⁵²Ohio Statesman (Columbus), I, No. 1 (July 5, 1837), n. p.

⁵³Painesville Telegraph, III, No. 23 (June 9, 1837), n. p.

⁵⁴Idem. See also The Return (Iowa), I, No. 7 (July, 1889), p. 104. Ebenezer Robinson, a member of the printing office staff, refers to Denton.

Davis were to perpetuate the plot, the Mormon Prophet--the defendant in the case--conceived the conspiracy.

The Telegraph reported the case as "THE STATE OF OHIO, VS, JOSEPH SMITH, JR. alias THE PROPHET."⁵⁵ This newspaper offered its readers an abstract of the trial, but only briefly. The testimonies of Orson Hyde, Solomon H. Denton, Newell K. Whitney, Luke S. Johnson, Warren Parrish, Sidney Rigdon, and Hiram Smith were given in the Telegraph account. The prime motive for Smith's conspiracy against Newell, it was alleged, resulted from his raising a mob against the Mormons in Kirtland. It appeared that the most promising witness for the prosecution was Warren Parrish, former scribe of Joseph Smith's who had recently exhibited obvious tendencies of defection. The question was presented to Parrish, "Do you know of anything in the character of Mr. Smith, which is unworthy of his profession as a man of God?" He answered, "I do not." The prosecution was shocked and Newell was visibly shaken. This moment prompted the following succinct observation by the Prophet, "The countenance of Newell fell, and if he had possessed one grain of human feelings, would have gone off with shame, but of this, there is about as much in him as in other beast."⁵⁶

The testimonies that the Telegraph printed seemed to be damaging to Smith; whether this was by design or accident may not be known. Apparently Judge Flint thought that the testimony was sufficiently

⁵⁵Idem.

⁵⁶Elders' Journal, I, No. 4 (August, 1838), p. 58.

incriminating to order Smith to appear before the county court the following week for further execution of the case. Furthermore, he charged Smith five hundred dollars bond for his appearance in court as well as fifty dollars each for Rigdon, Hyde, and Denton who appeared as witnesses.⁵⁷ The Painesville Republican also covered the trial, but reflected an entirely different impression of the defendant's guilt from that of the Painesville Telegraph. In fact, it was expressed in the Republican that the trial readily proved Smith's innocence. Editorially, it observed the following about the trial:

I [i.e. the editor of the Republican] attended the trial and took down the evidence, but was much surprised to find that no testimony appeared, on which, any reliance could be placed, that went in the least degree to criminate the respondent, but rather to raise him in the estimation of men of candor. But the Justice of the Peace who had been selected to try the question, decided otherwise, and Mr. Smith was held to bail in the sum of \$500, to appear at the Court of Common Pleas, at the next term, which commenced the Monday following, being last week. The trial again came on before the County Court, on Friday last⁵⁸

The second trial against the Prophet was held in the county court at Chardon on Friday, June 9th, presided over by Judge Humphrey. After considering the case, Humphrey acquitted the defendant of the charge. Judge Humphrey insinuated that Newell's hatred for Smith induced his action against the defendant rather than his fear of assassination.⁵⁹

⁵⁷Painesville Telegraph, III, No. 23 (June 9, 1837), n. p. No explanation is given as to why the judge did not charge the other witnesses a fee.

⁵⁸Ohio Statesman, I, No. 1 (July 5, 1837), n. p. citing the Painesville Republican.

⁵⁹Painesville Telegraph, III, No. 26 (June 30, 1837), n. p.

The details of this trial were not given in the press, but apparently no new significant evidence was presented against the defendant. The Telegraph made only the following brief note of this trial and acquittal:

It will be recollected that the Mormon Prophet was apprehended a short time since, on a charge of inducing two of his followers to destroy the life of Mr. Newell. He was tried by the County Court last Friday, and acquitted.⁶⁰

Newell was so disappointed over the decision that he presented his case to the readers of the Telegraph in a lengthy letter reviewing the foregoing events in an attempt to win public approval.

His complaint against Smith, he believed, could be well established. In presenting his cardinal point, Newell said, "Denton swore /in testimony/ that Smith urged him and Davis to kill me; and enforced the exhortation by appealing to the Bible, and by declaring that it was the will of God. Is Denton entitled to credit?" he asked. "If he is, the charge is established," he concluded.⁶¹ Further, he said,

But admit, a moment, that suspicions attach to Denton, then is his evidence corroborated by any other witnesses? Sidney Rigdon, however much to be doubted on other occasions is a credible witness when he gives testimony against the prophet. He said, about two years ago, information came to him from some quarter, but from whom he could not remember, that Davis and Denton entertained designs against my life; that he believed this report, and informed Smith of it; and that afterwards Smith told him that through his influence Davis and Denton had laid aside their purpose. Now the fact that Davis and Denton entertained a purpose to kill me, is proved by Rigdon, a 'saint of the latter day,' and by the confession of Smith, as sworn by Rigdon. One point sworn

⁶⁰Painesville Telegraph, III, No. 24 (June 16, 1837), n. p.

⁶¹Painesville Telegraph, III, No. 26 (June 30, 1837), n. p.

to by Denton is thus fully established by the corroborating testimony of Rigdon.⁶²

Reviewing the evidence that Denton and Davis had actually made threats against his life, Newell reasoned, "The only remaining question on which there is any doubt, is--'did Smith instigate this design.'"⁶³ Newell, then, proceeded to implicate Joseph Smith with the conspiracy by circumstantial evidence. His line of reasoning included: (1) Denton's testimony that Smith was involved in the plot. (2) Denton who had lived with the Smith family was amenable to the Prophet and therefore was willing to relinquish "blind obedience to all his commands." (3) The boy Denton would unlikely conceive of the scheme without the aid of some more responsible leader. (4) Denton and Davis were strangers to Newell and had no personal hatred for him. (5) Smith whose "heart is so thoroughly depraved," by conceiving the Mormon fraud would also commit other "atrocious crimes." (6) Then finally, Newell argued, Orson Hyde testified in the trial that if Newell should start any suits for "unlawful banking against any of the Mormons, [Newell] ought to be put where the crows could not find him; that it would be no sin to kill him. . . ."⁶⁴ On the basis of his analysis of the circumstantial evidence, Newell concluded that Smith was guilty as charged and that the court betrayed its duty in not declaring him so.

⁶¹Painesville Telegraph, III, No. 26 (June 30, 1837), n. p.

⁶²Idem. Italics added.

⁶³Idem.

⁶⁴Idem.

The week following Newell's futile attempt to justify his unprofitable action, the Painesville Republican announced its support for the court's decision and defended Smith's innocence. Furthermore, it chastened Newell for his prejudicial action, and criticized him for not supporting the authority of the court and Judge Humphrey's decision. The Republican scornfully accused Newell of offering a "garbled statement of the testimony" and it reviewed the entire affair on the part of Newell as a "projected plan of persecution" of the Mormon Prophet.⁶⁵ In developing its accusation against Newell, the Republican further stated,

Let us look at the very case alluded to in the Telegraph /i.e. Newell's letter of defense/ and bring to view some facts in relation to it. Mr. Newell resides in Mentor, about seven miles from Painesville and within two miles of the Mormon settlement, where Joseph Smith jr., resides. In preferring his complaint against Smith--why did he depart from the common practice, and drag Mr. Smith and his witnesses through his own town a distance of nine miles from home, to Painesville, when there are two Justices of the Peace in Mentor, where he resides. Was it done to harrass /sic/ Mr. Smith and subject him to a greater bill of expense in defending himself? or was it because he could not find one sufficiently subservient to his views, without coming to this place? The complainant, respondent and the witnesses on both sides were most if not all residents in and near Kirtland--who, contrary to the usual practice in legal proceedings, were compelled to travel nine miles to attend the trial before Mr. Justice Flint, although there is a Justice of the Peace within two miles of Mr. Newell's residence, in his own Town. I ask again, why was Mr. Flint selected to sit in judgment in this case. Those who know the circumstances have reason to say, in answer to these questions, that it was done, first the more to harrass the mormons--secondly, that it was desirable to have it before a man whose civil and political associations promised a result favorable to the complainant's views--and thirdly, that it was designed to have a political bearing, and the better to affect this object, one who has hitherto been one of the

⁶⁵Painesville Republican, I, No. 34 (July 6, 1837), n. p. Italics added.

principal leaders of the opposition, was stationed in a conspicuous position during the trial for that purpose.⁶⁶

Thus, the matter ended, but the trial proved to be costly to Smith in time and energy and added to his harassment and sense of being persecuted. Such law suits continued until the threat of one in January, 1838, prompted Joseph Smith, Jr., to leave the state and never return.⁶⁷

Persecution need not be encountered in the form Smith and Rigdon had at Hiram in 1832 to be distressing and vexatious. In fact, a more subtle or indirect form of aggression may have been more difficult to cope with because it was less apparent or detectable by civil authorities who otherwise may be able to ameliorate the prevailing conditions. At any rate, the Hiram mobbing never saw a recurrence in Ohio partly because it was of a nature that the Church members could more readily cope with by placing guards at strategic places and implementing a defense in various ways. Yet, how does one cope with persecution by threats and ridicule? By returning the ridicule? Or how does one cope with persecution by scandalous stories? Certainly not by telling equally scandalous ones. How does one minimize vexatious litigation when one is not disposed to make false accusations just to retaliate? Obviously, precautions can be taken against some types of persecution, but when it becomes less violent, more subtle, and does not intrude upon obvious legal rights, it is far more difficult to prevent or to identify as persecution.

⁶⁶Idem. Italics added.

⁶⁷Infra., p.

The Mormon difficulties emanated from their unique beliefs, religious practices, and social differences; perhaps, time alone could mitigate the resentment felt by their enemies. But until that time, the Mormons had to resign themselves to the fact that they were grossly unpopular, and that they would continue to be the object of the scorn and hatred of their unfriendly neighbors who exploited every possible means to demonstrate their animosity.

CHAPTER X

LATE CONFLICT WITHIN THE CHURCH

The year 1836 was the most favorable year of the Mormons in Ohio for a number of reasons. Much of the anxiety over unsettled conditions in Missouri was ending; the more intense persecution in Ohio was gradually subsiding; and the "great flood of falsehoods so artfully put in circulation" had begun to withdraw by the beginning of the year.¹ Church membership was expanding and signs of economic prosperity were beginning to exhibit a promise of a bright future for the Saints in Ohio.

On January 13, 1836, the various officers of the Church, including the Church Presidency, the Presidencies of the Kirtland and Zion Stakes, the Twelve Apostles, the High Councils of both Kirtland and Zion, the bishops of each place, and other officers met in Kirtland to administer Church business prior to the temple dedication in the spring. The evening following the meetings, the Prophet reflected upon the general good feelings that prevailed:

This has been one of the best days that I ever spent;
there has been an entire union of feeling expressed in all

¹Messenger and Advocate, III, No. 23 (December, 1836), p. 426. After the forced departure of the Saints from Jackson County, Missouri, they received a temporary home just north in Clay County; this proved unsatisfactory, so through the instrumentality of Alexander Doniphan a new county was organized from near virgin prairie land in the north central part of the state. The Missouri Saints proceeded to move into newly-formed Caldwell County, built a seat of government, Far West, and were willing to make that their home until conditions permitted their eventual return to Jackson County.

our proceedings this day; and the spirit of the God of Israel has rested upon us in mighty power, and it has been good for us to be here in this heavenly place in Christ Jesus; and although much fatigued with the labors of the day, yet my spiritual reward has been very great indeed.²

This sense of well being had its crowning event in the dedication of the Kirtland Temple on March 27th that year. "We are now nearly as happy as we can be on earth," stated the Mormon Prophet sometime following the dedication.³

These happy times were soon to end; the year 1837 was to bring failure, discord, and apostasy in place of the hope and success promised in 1836. In fact, before the year 1836 ended, there were signs of a growing arrogance among some of the Saints due to the increasing prosperity and anticipation of their "complete ascendancy" in Kirtland.⁴

The Church paper noted that the Saints in Kirtland were sometimes unwise; "they are not prudent, their deportment towards their enemies is not fraught with that wisdom, that dignity, that nobleness of soul that is . . . of great price," stated the Church paper. Furthermore, word was

²History of the Church, II, p. 368. One reason this unity elated the Prophet was due to recent discord that had existed in the Smith family and among the official members of the Church. A few days before, on January 1, 1836, he journalized, "The devil has made a violent attack on my brother William and Calvin Stoddard, and the powers of darkness seem to lower over their minds, and not only over theirs, but they also cast a gloomy shade over the minds of my brethren and sisters, which prevents them from seeing things as they really are; and the powers of earth and hell seem combined to overthrow us and the Church, by causing division in the family; and indeed the adversary is bringing into requisition all his subtlety to prevent the Saints from being endowed, by causing a division among the Twelve, also among the Seventy, and bickering and jealousies among the Elders and the official members of the Church; and so the leaven of iniquity ferments and spreads among the members of the Church." Ibid., pp. 352, 353.

³Lucy Mack Smith, op. cit., p. 239.

⁴Messenger and Advocate, II, No. 2 (July, 1836), p. 350.

sent abroad to the branches of the Church that those who might choose to gather to Kirtland would not find a "model of perfection and harmony" therefore, unfortunately, all the members were not "actuated by the pure principles of benevolence and love,"⁵ In December, 1836, Wilford Woodruff attended a meeting in the temple where the Church leaders "sharply reproved this stake of Zion" for their "sins and backsliding." The leaders of the Church also warned the Saints to repent in order to "escape the Judgments of God" that otherwise would fall upon them.⁶ The matter was not dropped, and it seemed to occupy much of the leaders' concern. The following month they again warned the Saints of false security and excessive pride. At one meeting early in the winter when the Saints were being reproved Wilford Woodruff reported,

David Whitmer . . . warned us to humble ourselves before God lest this hand rest upon us in anger for our pride and many sins that we were running into in our days of prosperity as the ancient Nephites did and it does now appear evident that a scourge awaits that stake of Zion even Kirtland if there is not great repentance immediately. . . .⁷

In keeping with the above council, Lucy Mack Smith, Joseph Smith's mother, reported that her son said,

But brethren, beware, for I tell you in the name of the Lord, that there is an evil in this congregation which if not repented of will result in setting many of you against me, that you will have a desire to take my life;

⁵Idem.

⁶Wilford Woodruff, "Wilford Woodruff Journal," December 11, 1836 entry. Located in the Office of the Church Historian.

⁷Ibid., January 17, 1837.

and you even would do it; if God should permit the deed.⁸

It was apparent that a domestic crisis was imminent unless the present trend could be diverted by a concerted effort. The factors that contributed to the complexity of the situation were predominantly economic in nature. They included (1) ambitious unprincipled brethren, (2) the prominence of speculation in land sales among the Saints, (3) excessive credit buying, (4) and the failure of the Kirtland Safety Society Anti-Banking Company. This last was the foremost factor that contributed to the domestic turmoil, but all factors were severely effected by the Panic of 1837 and certain unwise policies and unsound judgment fostered by some of the bank's officers.

Ambitious Unprincipled Brethren

After the passing of the year 1836, the Messenger and Advocate noted increased alarm over the conduct of some Church members who were taking unfair financial advantage of their neighbors in business and exchange which in the words of the periodical suggested their "dishonesty and disposition to cheat and defraud."⁹ It further attributed the Saints with the following indecorous conduct:

The innocent and unsuspecting are often made the dupes of wily and the artful, and left in indigence of mendicity, while those long practiced in deception and dissimulation, are rioting, perhaps, in luxury and debasing worldly pleasure, upon their ill-gotten gain. These are no uncommon

⁸Lucy Mack Smith, op. cit., p. 240.

⁹Messenger and Advocate, III, No. 7 (April, 1837), p. 492.

occurrences among us.¹⁰

This deceitful behavior was given considerable attention in the pages of the Advocate during the spring of 1837; a writer in the Church paper accused those who became prosperous in Kirtland of taking advantage of their poor brethren. In May, a lengthy editorial on the theme of the New Testament "Parable of the Net" which was cast into the sea and "gathered of every kind" received consideration. It enumerated three types of Church member "caught in the net" in Kirtland. They were categorized as: (1) those who came with hearts filled with love, obedience, and willingness to sacrifice in all righteousness, (2) others who came with the apparent motive to live on "the labor and alms of their friends or brethren," and disregard the revelations and all words of wisdom, and (3) the honest, yet unsuspecting ones who yielded "to the entreaties and persuasions of the idle and avaricious."¹¹ "The net has truly gathered of every kind," the editorial continued, "and there are some of all classes of people in this place."

Concern for the new converts who were preparing to move to Kirtland was expressed by Warren A. Cowdery and caution was sent to them to be prepared to

Beware of such as attack you as soon as you enter this place, and begin to interrogate you about the amount of money you have, and to importune you for it, with assurances that you shall have it refunded with interest, and that the Lord shall bless you abundantly; yea, and multiply blessings upon you. Of such we say beware. They take advantage of

¹⁰Idem.

¹¹Messenger and Advocate, III, No. 8 (May, 1837), p. 505.

your honest simplicity, obtain your available means, and then desert you.¹²

The William B. and Zina Huntington family, consisting of Chauncy, Dimmick, Presendia, William, Jr., Zina, Oliver, and John, converts from New York, arrived in Kirtland in 1836 and was forced to suffer because of the actions of Jacob Bump, a prosperous member of the Church. After Huntington paid him three thousand dollars for a thirty acre farm with a two story house on it and mortgaged the remainder, an untimely foreclosure occurred. Oliver Huntington's account of the purchase and its distressing consequences were as follows:

Well we all were well satisfied and thought we were doing well if the land was high, and a mortgage on the place; it was in the hands of Brother Bump and we thought all the brethren were honest then, for we did not think that some had come in for the loaves and fishes; in fact never once thought of the possibility of a Mormon being dishonest or even denying the faith. One year had not rolled away and brother Bump had denied the faith and refused to lift the mortgage, and father could not, having bestowed all his surplus money upon the bank and the poor, so when the bank broke we were broken and as poor as the best of the Mormons. . . .¹³

Speculation in Land Sales

While charging some of the Church members with taking unfair and selfish advantage of their trusting fellow brethren, the Messenger and Advocate further stated,

Others have been guilty of wild speculation and visionary dreams of wealth and worldly grandeur, as if

¹²Ibid., p. 506.

¹³Oliver B. Huntington, op. cit., p. 27.

gold and silver were their gods, and houses, farms and merchandise their only bliss or their passport to it. . . .¹⁴

In the Western Reserve (as was typical throughout much of the country during the years 1836 and 1837) there was a highly optimistic evaluation of land and the price of property increased. The Telegraph described the situation in near-by Painesville:

For the last eight or ten days there has been rather an unusual degree of activity in buying and selling real estate at this place and Fairport. We are assured by gentlemen who have the means of knowing, that real estate to the amount of ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY THOUSAND DOLLARS has been sold during the last ten days and at a steady advance in prices from day to day. We would mention one instance among many others, in evidence of the rise. A certain piece of property which sold four or five weeks since for \$10,000 was sold last Monday for \$20,000. The present proprietor has refused \$25,000. A large number of other lots, some of which sold for ten dollars per foot two or three months since are now selling for from \$50 to \$75 per foot.¹⁵

According to this article, the economic advancement resulted from the development of the resources of the country, "the flourishing condition of every branch of business, and a rapid increase of population." The same type of land speculation occurred in Kirtland. "Real estate rose from one to eight hundred per cent and in many cases more," editorialized Warren A. Cowdery.¹⁶

¹⁴Messenger and Advocate, III, No. 8 (May, 1837), p. 509. For a consideration of the destitute conditions in which this imposition placed the Huntingtons in light of the accompanying panic, see Supra., P. 223

¹⁵"Real Estate Speculation," Painesville Telegraph, January 29, 1836. This issue has the appearance of being a half sheet, not included in the regularly numbered issues, and issued in times, perhaps, of a paper shortage to publish the President's Special Message of January 18, 1836.

¹⁶Messenger and Advocate, III, No. 9 (June, 1837), p. 521.

This trend towards making excessive profit from speculation in the buying and selling of lands in Kirtland was indulged in by prominent leaders of the Church as well as others, which became a factor in their dissidence and distrust. These speculators included a number of the apostles, two of whom, Lyman E. Johnson and John F. Boynton, purchased from a non-Mormon, Ariel Hanson, an extensive block of land north of the Kirtland center, but within the city limits. After they gave Hanson a down payment, they mortgaged the remainder. Then they distributed the land to purchasers, often at an enormously high price. Ira Ames, a clerk in Smith's store and a temple recorder, purchased eighteen acres from Johnson and Boynton, paying them fifteen hundred dollars; and he gave them his note for the remaining three hundred. When the 1837 Panic struck, the land values declined. The consequences of this decline were aptly summarized by Ira Ames:

The next Spring [1837], came a universal crash in Kirtland among the speculators. Scarce [ly] one but lost all [sic] he was worth. Boynton and Johnson failed to pay off the mortgage on the farm. And the whole reverted back to Hanson and I lost all I paid and the land too. And further than that Boynton and Johnson tried to get my horses from me on the \$300, but I forseeing that, put them in Daniel Carter's hands who saved them for me¹⁷

This loss due to speculation effected Johnson and Boynton's attitude toward the Church; consequently their loyalty toward their Church

¹⁷Ira Ames, "Ira Ames Journal," listed as the first entry in 1837. Located in the Church Historian's Library. Ames' purchase was located outside the city center but within the city limits of Kirtland. Oliver Olney said, "Farms in the suburbs of the city soon raised, from ten and fifteen [dollars] per acre to one hundred and fifty in some cases." Olney, op. cit., p. 4.

and the Prophet decreased. Apostle Luke S. Johnson, Lyman's brother, also participated in the land speculation and his "mind became darkened." "And I was left to pursue my own course," he admitted, and finally "I lost the Spirit of God and neglected my duty."¹⁸

The spirit of speculation--and the problems caused by it--also had an effect upon Parley P. Pratt, who admitted that a complaining spirit temporarily alienated him from the Prophet Joseph. About this time, the spring of 1837, he wrote,

After I had returned from Canada, there were jarrings and discords in the Church at Kirtland, and many fell away and became enemies and apostates. There were also envyings, lyings, strifes and divisions, which caused much trouble and sorrow. By such spirits I was also accused, misrepresented and abused. And at one time, I also was overcome by the same spirit in a dark measure, and it seemed as if the very powers of darkness which were against the Saints were let loose upon me. But the Lord knew my faith, my zeal, my integrity of purpose, and he gave me the victory.

I went to brother Joseph Smith in tears, and, with a broken heart and contrite spirit, confessed wherein I had erred in spirit, murmured, or done or said amiss. He frankly forgave me, prayed for me and blessed me. Thus, by experience, I learned more fully to discern and to contrast the two spirits, and to resist the one and cleave to the other. And, being tempted in all points, even as others, I learned how to bear with, and excuse, and succor those who are tempted.¹⁹

While in the extreme of his anxiety and distrust on May 23, 1837, Parley wrote a letter to Joseph Smith severely criticizing him for the course he and Rigdon had taken in certain business matters associated with the current speculation in property. The most informative portion of Pratt's letter included:

¹⁸Millennial Star, XXVII, No. 1 (January 7, 1865), p. 6.

¹⁹Parley P. Pratt, op. cit., p. 183.

Having long pondered the path in which we as a people, have been led in regard to our temporal management, I have at length become fully convinced that the whole scheme of speculation in which we have been engaged, is of the devil. I allude to the covetous, extortionary speculating spirit which has reigned in this place for the last season; which has given rise to lying, deceiving and taking advantage of one's neighbor, and in short every evil work. And being as fully convinced that you, and president Rigdon, both by precept and example, have been the principal means in leading this people astray, in these particulars

And you, dear brother, if you are still determined to pursue this wicked cause, until yourself and the church shall sink down to hell. I beseech you at least, to have mercy on me and my family, and others who are bound with me for those three lots /of land/ which you sold to me at the extortionary price of 2000 dollars, which never cost you 100 dollars.²⁰

After his defection from the Church, Warren Parrish sent a copy of Pratt's letter to the editor of Zion's Watchman, a non-Mormon publication, which printed it March 6, 1838. Later, it was printed by others. After this letter was published, Parley Pratt felt that a clarification of his true feelings should be given to exonerate himself

²⁰Parley P. Pratt, "Letter to Joseph Smith," May 23, 1837, cited in Richard Livesey, An Exposure of Mormons, Being a Statement of Facts Relative to the Self Syled LDS and the Origin of the Book of Mormon, (Preston, England: J. Livesey, 1838), p. 9

That Joseph Smith participated in the buying and selling of land in Kirtland there can be no doubt; documentary evidence is presented in some detail in Fielding, op. cit., pp. 215-225. However, the point that is not clear is Smith's motive for doing so. Vinson Knight, a member of the Kirtland bishopric, reflected the following conference decision during the summer of 1837: "More people were coming into the church daily. The Apostles who were in England and other places were sending emigrants to Kirtland and Joseph Smith must prepare for them. So it was agreed in general conference that more land should be bought. Bishop Whitney issued a proclamation to the Saints entreating them to assist all that they could in this undertaking." Vinson Knight, cited in Lola B. Coolbear, "Sketch of the Life of Vinson Knight and Abigail Meade McBride," p. 7. Located in the Special Collections Library, Brigham Young University. It could well be that Smith's land purchases were made for the Church or to provide for the needs of the Saints rather than for personal gain, as Fielding infers.

and apologize for his rash and angry statements. According to this Church leader, his letter which appeared in the Zion's Watchman was "not a true copy" of the one he wrote, but it was "altered, so as to convey a different idea from the original."²¹ Precisely what part was altered and in what manner is not made clear, for Parley candidly admitted that he had written the letter in "great severity and harshness, censuring them i.e. Smith and Rigdon" both."²² He also admitted that his letter "was not calculated to admonish them in the spirit of meekness, to do them good, but rather to injure them and wound their feelings." Yet, he insisted that,

I did not however believe at the time and never have believed at any time before, or since, that these men were dishonest or had wrong motives or intentions, in any of their undertakings, either temporal or spiritual; I have ever esteemed them from my first acquaintance, as men of God

But I considered them like other men, and as the prophets and apostles of old liable to errors, and mistakes, in things which were not inspired from heaven; but managed by their own judgment.²³

It is obvious that Pratt suffered a keen sense of regret over the letter, for in his article of apology in the Elders' Journal he concluded with, "I censure myself for rashness, excitement, imprudence, and many faults which I would to God, that I had avoided."²⁴

The matter, unfortunately, was not closed with this public

²¹Elders' Journal, I, No. 4 (August, 1838), p. 50.

²²Idem.

²³Idem.

²⁴Ibid., pp. 50, 51. For a complete perusal of Livesey's rendition of Pratt's letter and Pratt's letter of apology, consult Appendix E.

apology, for Richard Livesey, a Methodist Episcopal minister of Winchendon, Massachusetts, had the letter reprinted in his anti-Mormon pamphlet in Preston, England, in 1838. Two years later, when Parley P. Pratt was preaching in Manchester, England, a Mr. Newton circulated Livesey's pamphlet which, among other things, contained a copy of Pratt's letter. Parley felt it advisable to notice it in order to again state his disposition concerning the Prophet. Consequently, Pratt wrote, "Messrs. Smith and Rigdon . . . are servants of the Most High God, for whom I would lay down my life if necessary. These letters from apostates and dissenters are wicked lies and misrepresentations."²⁵ Pratt continued faithful to the Church, but the speculating spirit was responsible for his temporary problems as it was for the disaffection of others who never returned to the faith.

Extensive Credit Buying

In 1836, prosperity was beginning among the Latter-day Saints in Kirtland. In addition to entering into large contracts for real estate, "large debts had been contracted for merchandise in New York and other cities."²⁶ Because of the increased demand for consumer's goods in Kirtland, an organization was established during the winter of 1836 known informally as the "building committee" comprising Joseph and Hyrum Smith, Oliver Cowdery, Reynolds Cahoon, Jared Carter and William

²⁵ Parley P. Pratt, A Reply to Mr. Thomas Taylor's "Complete Failure" &C and Mr. Richard Livesey's "Mormonism Exposed" (Manchester, England: 1840), n. p.

²⁶ Messenger and Advocate, III, No. (July, 1837), p. 537.

Smith.²⁷ Oliver and Hyrum were dispatched to Buffalo and bought large amounts of goods on credit. They arrived in Kirtland in the Spring of 1836, and apparently, the goods were sold in the store. Later in the year, because of the "honorable conduct of the 'building committee' in paying up the merchants of Buffalo," said Ira Ames, a clerk in the store, "Hyrum and Oliver received a recommendation from the merchants in Buffalo to the merchants in New York and bought forty thousand dollars worth of goods." Likewise, John F. Boynton and Lyman E. Johnson purchased from the New York dealers, for they "in some unaccountable manner," wrote Ames, "had got many thousand dollars worth of goods on credit."²⁸

John Corrill, likewise, noted the indebtedness of the Mormon merchants in Kirtland, but he did not specify any names. Concerning this he said,

Notwithstanding they [the Church leaders] were deeply in debt [\\$15,000-\$20,000 for the temple], they had so managed as to keep up their credit, so they concluded to try mercantile business. Accordingly, they ran in debt in New York, and elsewhere, some thirty thousand dollars, for goods, and shortly after, some fifty or sixty thousand more, as I was informed; but they did not fully understand the mercantile business, and, withal, they suffered pride to arise in their hearts, and became desirous of fine houses, and fine clothes, and indulged too much in these things, supposing for a few months that they were very rich.²⁹

Cyrus Smalling said that when Hyrum and Oliver made their trip to New York they purchased some sixty or seventy thousand dollars worth of

²⁷Ames, op. cit., 1836. Cyrus Smalling called this firm "Smith, Rigdon & Co.," cited in John A. Clark, Gleanings by the Way (Philadelphia: W. I. and I. K. Simon, 1842), p. 331.

²⁸Ames, op. cit., 1837.

²⁹Corrill, op. cit., pp. 26, 27.

merchandise for the Church on credit. Then Smalling added,

At this time the first debt became due and not any thing to pay it with, for they had sold to their poor brethren, who were strutting about the streets in the finest broadcloth, and imagining themselves rich, but could pay nothing. . . .³⁰

Joseph had trouble with the Saints in his store wanting to receive the merchandise without paying for it simply because he was a Prophet and therefore assumed to be a generous Christian. Years later Brigham Young said that this was one of the problems that plagued the Church and made the mercantile business a failure. He gave the following descriptive account:

Let me give you a few reasons, and there are men who know how matters went in those days. Joseph goes to New York and buys 20,000 dollars worth of goods, comes into Kirtland and commences to trade. In comes one of the brethren, "Brother Joseph, let me have a frock pattern for my wife." What if Joseph says, 'No, I cannot without the money.' The consequence would be, 'He is no prophet,' says James. Pretty soon Thomas walks in. 'Brother Joseph, will you trust me for a pair of boots?' 'No, I cannot let them go without the money.' 'Well,' says Thomas, 'Brother Joseph is no Prophet; I have found that out, and I am glad of it.' After a while, in comes Bill and sister Susan. Says Bill, 'Brother Joseph, I want a shawl, I have not got the money, but I wish you to trust me a week or a fortnight.' Well, brother Joseph thinks the others have gone and apostatized, and he don't know but these goods will make the whole Church do the same, so he lets Bill have a shawl. Bill walks off with it and meets a brother. 'Well,' says he, 'What do you think of Brother Joseph?' 'O he is a first-rate man, and I fully believe he is a Prophet. See here, he has trusted me this shawl.' Richard says, 'I think I will go down and see if he won't trust me some.' In walks Richard. 'Brother Joseph, I want to trade about 20 dollars.' 'Well,' says Joseph, 'these goods will make the people

³⁰Cyrus Smalling, cited in Clark, op. cit., p. 333.

apostatize; so over they go, they are of less value than the people.' Richard gets his goods. Another comes in the same way to make a trade of 25 dollars, and so it goes. Joseph was a first-rate fellow with them all the time, provided he never would ask them to pay him. In this way it is easy for us to trade away a first-rate store of goods and be in debt for them.

And so you may trace it down through the history of this people. If any brethren came into the midst of them as merchants, I never knew one of them go into their store and go out again satisfied, neither did you. If I had 100,000 dollars worth of goods in that store, owned by myself, or held by a 'Mormon' company, in six months the goods would be gone, and we should not have 100 dollars to pay the debt.³¹

Eliza R. Snow indicated that this false prosperity caused the Saints to become "haughty in their spirits, and lifted up in the pride of their hearts."³² Heber C. Kimball's observations were similarly stated. "In fact, everything in the place seemed to be moving in great prosperity, and all seemed determined to become rich; in my feelings they were artificial or imaginary riches."³³

After the Kirtland Safety Society issued its bills in January, 1837, there was an abundance of money circulated among the Saints in Kirtland. In fact, it appeared to Oliver Olney that nearly every man had a roll of bills with which to do business.³⁴ In the summer of 1837, Warren A. Cowdery reviewed the financial crisis of the Saints and certain factors that contributed to it:

³¹Journal of Discourses, Vol. I, pp. 215, 216.

³²Eliza R. Snow Smith, op. cit., p. 21.

³³Heber C. Kimball, "Heber C. Kimball Journal," cited in Woman's Exponent, Vol. IX, No. 23 (May 1, 1881), p. 178.

³⁴Olney, op. cit., p. 4.

A great amount of merchandise was purchased on credit, and sold in this town during the summer, fall, and winter past. Lumber and every kind of building material bore a high price; and much of it, as there was much used, was necessarily bought on credit. Real estate rose from one to eight hundred per cent, and in many cases more. Men who were not thought worth fifty or an hundred dollars became purchasers to the amount of thousands. Notes (some cash), deeds, and mortgages passed and repassed, till all, or nearly all, vainly supposed they had become wealthy, or at least had acquired a competence. With the consciousness of having suddenly and without much effort enhanced the amount of his worldly fortune, every one thought he must clothe himself and family according to his circumstances and present prospects, he therefore made large bills with the merchants, and promised to pay in a few short months, or when the bank should open and begin to discount.

Time rolled on with its usual rapidity. All the necessaries of life rose in value, while the demand continued the same or rather increased, and the supply rather diminished. The time of payment on many large contracts had already come. The merchant, the mechanic, and the wholesale dealer began to call; the laborer who is ever worthy of his hire, began to feel the pressure. The effects of overtrading were visible daily. Almost every man had given his notes for more than he could raise; contracts were expiring, where hundreds, yea, thousands were at stake. Some made exertions to extricate themselves by their own economy or the assistance of friends. Some sacrificed what they had paid, and gave up their contract. Some appeared to almost sink in despair, on viewing the prospect before them. While there were still another class, who reckless of all consequences, rushed blindly on, till ruin stared them full in the face.

This being a simple statement of facts, it is easy to see that overtrading is one of the principal remote causes of distress in our community. 2d. An inordinate desire to become suddenly and vastly rich. 3d. The deranged state of the money market abroad, and an inflated paper circulation at home, together with every article of food rising nearly one hundred per cent above the prices of last year. The laborer found less employ and still less pay, than formerly. The influx of inhabitants from abroad, in consequence of the general pressure, was less, and the few who did arrive felt little inclined to part with their disposable means. The day of speculation, we mean local speculation in real estate, appears to have gone by for the present, and the hour of adversity--the time of trial has come; payments

are due, money scarce, credit impaired, and confidence gone!³⁵

These financial problems brought with them domestic discord and criticism by the Church members directed at the President of the Church. Because of mounting difficulties, when the Prophet left Kirtland the following winter, he left behind some unpaid bills resulting from his mercantile business for which he had not received sufficient income to liquidate the purchasing costs. Some of the faithful Saints assisted him, but insufficient funds were raised, and he was forced to leave without clearing up all his outstanding debts.³⁶ When he arrived in Missouri he wrote back to Kirtland the following intention to clear his indebtedness:

Having been under the hands of wicked and vexatious law suits for seven years past, my business /in Kirtland/ was so deranged that I was not able to leave it in so good a situation as I had anticipated; but if there are any wrongs, they shall all be noticed, so far as the Lord gives me ability and power to do so.³⁷

Internal Conflict Arising from the Kirtland Safety Society

The confidence that the Saints had in the Kirtland Safety Society

³⁵Messenger and Advocate, III, No. 2 (June, 1837), p. 521.

³⁶Concerning the fact that some members aided Joseph financially, Stephen C. Perry later wrote, "In the spring of 1838 my father turned out his farm which he had bought in Kirtland selling it for the sum of \$3400.00 receiving only \$200.00 of the money--the rest going to settle a debt against the Church in the city of New York. The names of Joseph Smith, Jr., Hyrum Smith, and Sidney Rigdon being signed to this obligation and held for payment of the same." Stephen C. Perry, "Letter to Wilford Woodruff, November 21, 1884. Letter on file in the Church Historian's Office.

³⁷History of the Church, III, p. 11.

Anti-Banking Company resulting from the solicitation of Joseph Smith and other leaders, no doubt prompted many to invest in it. The Saints demonstrated considerable optimism in the future of the bank and believed it would eventually become a great financial institution. The fact that this confidence was principally derived from the Prophet Joseph, unfortunately, led some Saints to make the unfounded conclusion that the bank could not fail because of its divine approbation.

On the morning of January 6, 1837, the first bank money was issued by the treasurer to Jacob Bump, the first one to receive the bank bills following its official opening. The bills were given to Bump, a Mormon merchant, in exchange for other notes. The Prophet Joseph conveyed the impression to the witnesses in the bank that the organization had the approval of the Lord. Wilford Woodruff, who was present on that occasion, testified that,

I also herd /sic/ President Joseph Smith, jr., declare in the presence of F. Williams, D. Whitmer, S. Smith, W. Parrish, and others in the Deposit office that he had received that morning the word of the Lord upon the subject of the Kirtland Safety Society. He was alone in a room by himself and he had not only /heard/ the voice of the Spirit upon the Subject but even an audible voice. He did not tell us at that time what the Lord said upon the subject but remarked that if we would give heed to the commandments the Lord had given this morning all would be well,³⁸

Although Woodruff could not record all that was understood by the Prophet, he reflected considerable confidence in the bank following the Prophet Joseph's announcement. In fact, Wilford Woodruff's understanding prompted him to make the following expectant declaration:

³⁸Woodruff, op. cit., dated January 6, 1837. Italics added.

May the Lord bless Brother Joseph with all the Saints and support the above named institution and protect it so that every weapon formed against it may be broken /sic/ and come to nought while the Kirtland Safety Society shall become the greatest of all institutions on EARTH.³⁹

The belief that this bank could become a prominent financial organization began to circulate among the Saints and apparently was the cause for increased confidence in it. Likewise, early in the year, word began to circulate that the bank was established by divine revelation.⁴⁰ All of the Saints were encouraged to participate in it either by way of investment or by circulating its bills once they received them. After the bank failed, however, Warren Parrish, one of the bank's officers who apostatized, justified his withdrawal from the Church in part because of his ill-placed confidence in the bank, for he wrote,

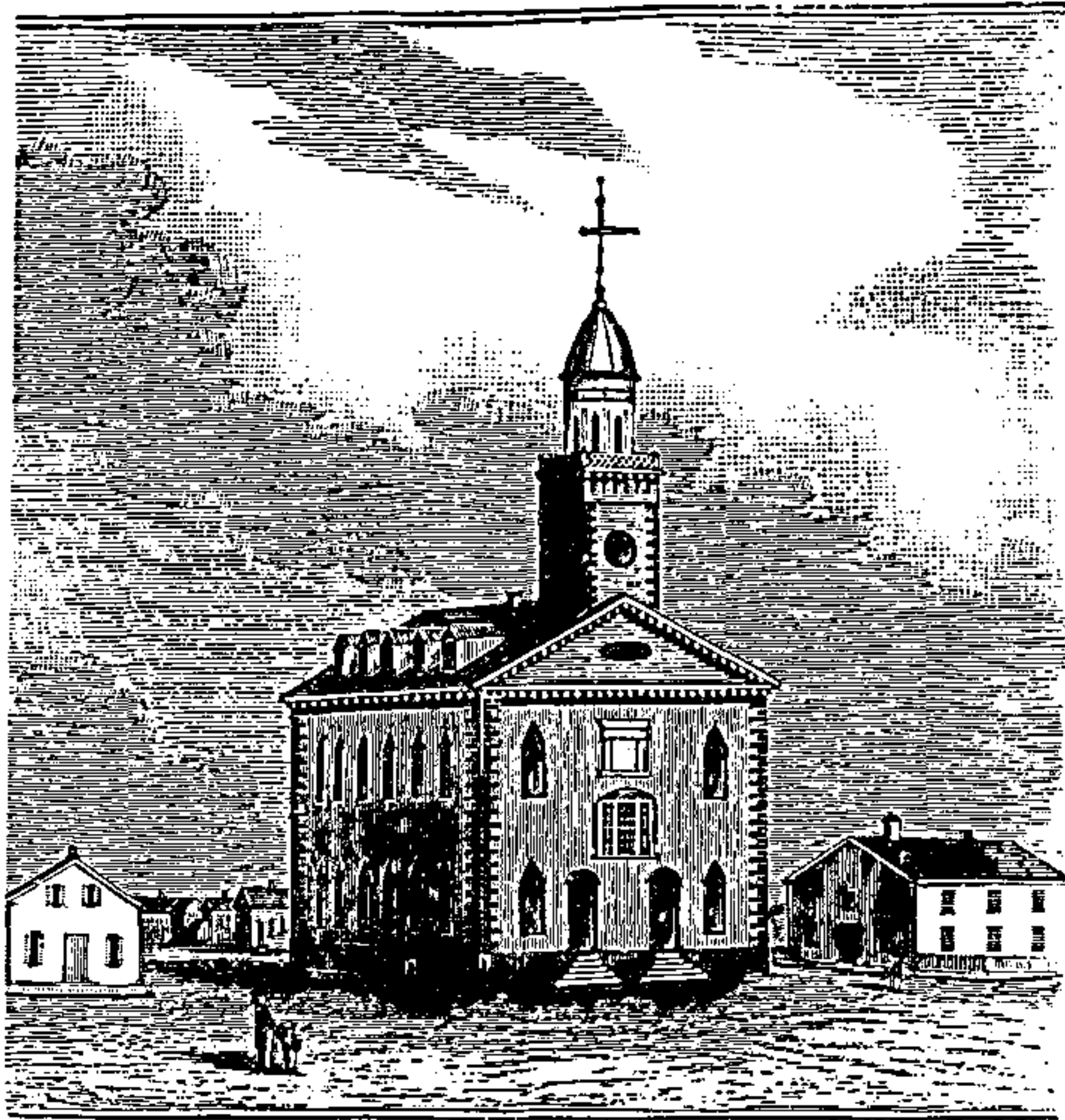
I have listened to him /i.e. Smith/ with feelings of no ordinary kind, when he declared that the audible voice of God, instructed him to establish a Banking-Anti Banking institution, who like Aaron's rod shall swallow up all other Banks (the Bank of Monroe excepted,) and grow and flourish and spread from the rivers to the ends of the earth, and survive when all others should be laid in ruins.⁴¹

Both Parrish and Woodruff believed that the bank had the promise of becoming a great financial institution whose influence would be felt nationally and internationally. That this optimistic concept was viewed

³⁹Idem. Italics added.

⁴⁰On January 27th the Painesville Telegraph printed a letter over the unidentified signature of "Servantes" to the effect that the Kirtland bank was established by revelation. In part, the letter said that their "prophet and leader had a revelation from God pointing out the modus operandi, of this great swindling machine /alluding to the bank/." Cited in the Painesville Republican, I, No. 13 (February 9, 1837), n. p. See the same idea in Olney, op. cit., p. 4.

⁴¹Painesville Republican, II, No. 15 (February 22, 1838), n. p.



Drawn by Henry Howe in 1846.

MORMON TEMPLE AT KIRTLAND.

Fig. 10. The Kirtland Temple and the Mormon Bank. Henry Howe, who visited Kirtland in 1846, noted that the building on the left paralleling the temple was the office of the Kirtland Safety Society Bank. He identified the building on the right facing the side of the temple as the Kirtland Seminary.

by others is confirmed in George A. Smith's statement,

It was the cursed apostates--their stealing and robberies, and their infernal villainies /sic/ that prevented that bank being conducted as the Prophet designed. If they had followed the counsel of Joseph, there is not a doubt but that it would have been the leading bank in Ohio, probably of the nation.⁴²

Joel Hills Johnson confirmed this opinion by writing, "This institution would have proved the salvation of the nation if it had been left to carry out its own measures, but the enemies of the Church crushed it in its bed."⁴³

John F. Boynton, also, attributed much of his difficulty in the Church to the failure of the bank, stating that he had been told that it would never fail.⁴⁴ According to the minutes of the meeting in which this statement was made,

President Smith then arose and stated that if this had been declared no one had authority from him for so doing, for he had always said that unless the institution was

⁴²Journal of Discourses, Vol. XI, p. 11.

⁴³Joel Hills Johnson, op. cit., p. 17. It is often viewed by writers that the Kirtland Bank was heading for disaster from the beginning. In fact this idea is conveyed by the editor of the Messenger and Advocate, Warren A. Cowdery, in the July, 1837, issue of the paper. He wrote, "Our enemies foresaw, and every man might foresee without the gift of prophecy, the downfall of the institution." Messenger and Advocate, III, No. 10 (July, 1837), p. 536. Cowdery gave the details of the history of the bank and the factors in its destruction, but Jacob K. Butterfield writing home to his mother that month questioned the accuracy of Cowdery's article by writing, "There is a piece in the July paper /that/ is upon the Bank that is not altogether correct." Butterfield, op. cit., July 24, 1837. Cowdery later became disaffected and, perhaps, his analysis of the bank's causes for failure were colored by his own critical viewing.

⁴⁴History of the Church, II, p. 510.

conducted on righteous principles it would not stand.⁴⁵

In responding to Boynton's statement, Joseph Smith denied the faulty assumption that the bank could not fail as Boynton had expressed, but the Prophet did not necessarily deny the belief that the bank was directed by revelation.

There can be no doubt that the Prophet and others encouraged the Saints to have confidence in the bank. Sidney Rigdon considered the Saints who refused to accept the bank currency as "covenant breakers," who by refusing "Kirtland Currency which was their temporal salvation" had put strength into the hands of their enemies.⁴⁶ On the same occasion, (April 9th) Joseph added that those "who had turned traitors, and opposed the currency and consequently the prosperity of Kirtland," would be severely dealt with by the Lord.⁴⁷

During the years of Joseph Smith's leadership of the Church, he introduced a number of innovations to modern religious practice and thought. For instance, it was his conception that the Church was to have a greater role than to be confined to religious or theological tenets. In addition to preparing mankind for the advent of Christ's second coming, the Prophet taught that the Church should develop an economic, political, and social system. The economic system was to have its basis in the Law of Consecration and Stewardship while the Kirtland Safety Society Bank would

⁴⁵Idem.

⁴⁶Woodruff, op. cit., April 9, 1837.

⁴⁷Idem.

provide financial strength and cohesiveness to the entire system.⁴⁸ At the time of the bank's inception, it was capitalized at four million dollars. Critics have found fault with this enormous figure because the capitalization of all the banks in the state of Ohio at that time was only nine and one third million.⁴⁹ Yet, if the capitalization of the bank at four million dollars is viewed with the concept that the Kirtland Safety Society was to be the parent of a national and, perhaps, an international financial system, the high capitalization figure would seem realistic.

Plans to expand the financial arm of the Church were apparent from other measures taken by its leaders. Oliver Olney said the Church formed a "union with the Monroe Bank of Michigan Territory that added to their circulation of currency."⁵⁰ According to Wilford Woodruff, during a meeting in the temple on January 31, 1837, Joseph Smith announced that he had "bought the Monroe Bank charter and we all lent a hand in establishing it, that it might be beneficial to us in forwarding the building of the Temporal Kingdom."⁵¹ In February, Oliver Cowdery was

⁴⁸Joseph Smith maintained down to his death that his movement was to have lasting effect upon the world, and these programs in Ohio were initiatory steps to that end. In 1844, the year of his death, he stated, "I calculate to be one of the instruments of setting up the kingdom of Daniel by the word of the Lord, and I intend to lay a foundation that will revolutionize the whole world." History of the Church, VI, p. 365.

⁴⁹R. Kent Fielding, "The Mormon Economy in Kirtland, Ohio," Utah Historical Quarterly, XXVII, No. 4 (October, 1959), p. 348.

⁵⁰Olney, op. cit., p. 4.

⁵¹Woodruff, op. cit., January 31, 1837.

appointed a director and vice president of the Monroe banking firm. Following this, there were frequent newspaper references to the Mormons and their affiliation with the bank at Monroe, Michigan.⁵²

The details of administering the Kirtland Safety Society are not available, but it is known that there existed problems among the officers which resulted in noncompliance with the policies recommended by the Prophet. Whether it was these problems or the effect of the 1837 Panic that eventually led the firm to bankruptcy is not known. There were, however, those who suffered from the bank's failure who maintained the cause of failure was neither due to Smith's administration nor the instability of the time, but, rather, to the infidelity of other members of the administrative staff. Some of the Saints attempted to follow counsel and abide by the recommendations of the leading brethren concerning the bank; however, due to economic discontent others were prompted to withdraw. Jonathan Crosby lends some insight to the problem in describing his situation. He wrote,

In the spring /1837/ I went to work on a house for the Prophet Smith, there was several hands at work on the same building, we took Kirtland money for pay, but it would not pass only for a short time, and hard times came on, provisions high and the money would not bye /sic/ it and the workmen all left, but myself, they went off in the country to get work, but I stayed and helped to work until every thing was gone and we had nothing to eat. I then spent a day running about trying /to/ bye with Kirtland money, but could get nothing. /I/ went home sorrowful /and/ sat down with my wife. Now

⁵²Monroe Times, cited in the Painesville Republican, I, No. 15 (February 23, 1837), n. p. See also Painesville Republican, I, No. 19 (March 23, 1837), n. p., Painesville Telegraph III, No. 8 (February 24, 1837), n. p., and Cleveland Weekly Gazette, I, No. 5 (February 1, 1837), n. p. The Monroe Bank was a state chartered bank, unlike the Kirtland Safety Society.

what shall we do? Well, I said, in the morning I will go tell Sister Emma (the Prophet Joseph was gone) how it is with us, and we won't starve in one night. It was then night.

Just at that time Pres. Joseph Young and Wm. Cahoon came in and learning our poverty offered to lend us some flower /sic/ and potatoes for supper and breakfast, it was very thankfully received. The next morning I went back to work with a resolution to tell sister Emma of our poverty and see if she would let us have some provision; well I went to work and did not go in to see her, but in about 2 or 3 hours she came in a brought a nice ham of bacon, and said I do not know how you are oft for provision, but you have stopped and worked, while the others are all gone therefore I thought I would make a present of a ham of bacon. I thanked /her/ very much, and told her of our destitute situation, well she said, I will let you have some flower; so she gave me some, over 40 lbs /of/ flower. Then, at night a company of 5 or 6 of the brethren with myself went down the Shagreen /sic/ river 2 or 3 miles a fishing gone all night, caught a nice lot of fish, so we lived well again⁵³

After the Panic hit Kirtland in the early spring of 1837, the large land speculators were unable to pay their creditors; the merchants that bought on credit were insolvent; the consumers were unable to pay their bills or buy with the Kirtland Safety Society money; jobs were hard to find; and in general difficult times had arrived for the Saints once more. Because the Mormon President was not only the people's spiritual leader but also their economic counselor many of the Saints held him responsible for the depressed economic conditions. In May the Prophet recorded the following:

At this time the spirit of speculation in lands and property of all kinds, which was so prevalent throughout the whole nation, was taking deep root in the Church. As the fruits of this spirit, evil surmisings, fault-finding, disunion, dissension, and apostasy followed in quick succession, and it seemed as though all the powers of

⁵³Jonathan Crosby, "Jonathan Crosby's Autobiography," pp. 15, 16. Located in the library of the Church Historian.

earth and hell were combining their influence in an especial manner to overthrow the Church at once, and make a final end. Other banking institutions refused the 'Kirtland Safety Society's' notes. The enemy abroad, and apostates in our midst, united in their schemes, flour and provisions were turned towards other markets, and many became disaffected toward me as though I were the sole cause of those very evils I was most strenuously striving against, and which were actually brought upon us by the brethren not giving heed to my counsel.⁵⁴

Following Warren Parrish's illicit affair with Mrs. Zerah Cole,⁵⁵ he received forgiveness from the Church, but a train of circumstances occurred that caused him to emerge as one of the chief antagonists and maligning apostates during the concluding months of the Mormons in Ohio. While he was serving the Kirtland Safety Society as a teller, it was reported that Parrish took the occasion to embezzle bank funds. The Prophet believed that the theft could be traced to Parrish and asked his counselor, Frederick G. Williams, a Justice of the Peace, for a warrant to search Parrish's trunk. Williams, however, refused. "I insist upon a warrant," said the Prophet, "for if you will give me one, I can get the money, and if you do not, I will break you of your office in the Presidency," he threatened. "Well, break it is, then," said his counselor. The two men struck hands on the bargain and Williams was dropped from the first Presidency.⁵⁶ Concerning this theft, George A. Smith reported the following:

Warren Parrish was the teller of the bank, and a number of other men who apostatized were officers. They took out

⁵⁴History of the Church, II, pp. 487, 488.

⁵⁵For a consideration of Parrish's intimacies see *Supra.*, p. 168.

⁵⁶Lucy Mack Smith, op. cit., pp. 240, 241.

of its vault, unknown to the President or Cashier, a hundred thousand dollars, and sent their agents around among the brethren to purchase their farms, wagons, cattle, horses, and everything they could get hold of. The brethren would gather up this money put it into the bank, and those traitors would steal it and send it out to buy again, and they continued to do so until the plot was discovered and the payment stopped.⁵⁷

Such a venture was observed in Dresden in April, and a correspondent gave the following public notice to it:

Permit me to inform you that the Mormon institution at Kirtland has its runners through this quarter of the country endeavoring to palm on the public their trash They are ransacking our country, buying up all the horses they can get, and paying for them with this trash, which I do not believe to be worth a straw. Many who have sold their horses, have pursued and taken them by force from buyers and paid back the trash.⁵⁸

Meanwhile, Parrish was publicly criticizing the Prophet; and at the same time, Grandison Newell preferred charges against Joseph Smith for the attempt on his life. Newell expected Parrish to serve as a witness against the defendant. When Parrish, however, gave his testimony under oath, his words helped acquit the Prophet. Following this case, Parrish continued to speak against the Church and was subsequently excommunicated. Because of his alleged repentance, shortly thereafter he was reinstated. Joseph Smith said that he attempted to counsel the officers of the bank regarding sound policy, but the officers refused his direction; consequently Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon resigned from their positions in the bank. On July 7th the Mormon leader commented

⁵⁷Journal of Discourses, Vol. XI, p. 11.

⁵⁸Cleveland Herald and Gazette, (Herald), XVIII, No. 50, (Gazette), I, No. 10 (May 6, 1837), n. p.

about this situation:

Some time previous to this I resigned my office in the 'Kirtland Safety Society,' disposed of my interest therein, and withdrew from the institution; being fully aware, after so long an experiment, that no institution of the kind, established upon just and righteous principles for a blessing not only to the Church but the whole nation, would be suffered to continue its operations in such an age of darkness, speculation and wickedness.⁵⁹

Subsequently, Frederick G. Williams was appointed president and Warren Parrish cashier of the Bank. Then again, Parrish was accused of defrauding the bank of funds and becoming involved in the counterfeit coin traffic.⁶⁰ Early in July, sometime after Williams and Parrish took the helm of the bank, it was decided to make an additional and larger issue of new bills from the Kirtland Safety Society which served to flood the market and to further depreciate the decreasing value of the present bills. The Cleveland Herald announced with anxious concern,

LOOK OUT. We learn by the Painesville Telegraph of yesterday, that the 'Mormon Banking Company' is about making a new emission of their worthless trash, 'using old paper and signed by Williams and one Parish /sic/, by the redemption of a few dollars of which they expect to get the old emission as well as the new, again into circulation.'⁶¹

At this time the Prophet was on a trip to Canada, and was unable to interfere with the proceedings of the officers or to extend unofficial direction to others. Daniel Allen, a share holder in the bank, later testified,

⁵⁹History of the Church, II, p. 497. Italics added.

⁶⁰Elders' Journal, I, No. 4 (August, 1838), p. 58.

⁶¹Cleveland Herald and Gazette, (Herald), XIX, No. 8, (Gazette), I, No. 29 (July 15), 1837), n. p.

No bank in the United States was ever established upon a better foundation than the Kirtland Safety Society's Bank. Warren Parrish was the cashier, and when the Prophet Joseph, who was the president of the bank /i.e. had been president/, went to Canada to raise some money, he instructed Parrish not to issue a dollar in notes, while he was gone. But Parrish fraudulently issued notes as fast as he could and thus broke the bank.⁶²

In August this action of Parrish's prompted a strong notice from the Prophet. Upon his return from Canada, Joseph Smith denounced the new bills in no uncertain terms:

CAUTION

To the brethren and friends of the church of Latter Day Saints, I am disposed to say a word relative to the bills of the Kirtland Safety Society Bank. I hereby warn them to beware of speculators, renegades and gamblers, who are duping the unsuspecting and the unwary, by palming upon them, those bills, which are of no worth, here, I dis- countenance and disapprove of any and all such practices. I know them to be detrimental to the best interests of society, as well as to the principles of religion.

JOSEPH SMITH Jun.⁶³

That much of the bank's operation was confusing to some of the Saints was apparent, and thus certain conflicting reports originated.⁶⁴

⁶²Daniel Allen, "Minutes of School of the Prophets, Parowan, Utah," August 10, 1872, p. 168. Typed copy is located in the Special Collections Library at the Brigham Young University.

⁶³Messenger and Advocate, III, No. 11 (August, 1837), p. 560.

⁶⁴Cyrus Smalling wrote an extensive letter concerning some of the problems of the Kirtland Bank which included the allegation that Joseph Smith had "One or two hundred boxes made, and gathered all the lead and shot that the village had or that part of it that he controlled, and filled the boxes with lead, shot, &c., and marked them, one thousand dollars, each. Then, when they went to examine the vault, he had one box on a table partly filled for them to see, and when they proceeded to the vault, Smith told them that the church had two hundred thousand dollars in specie, and he opened one box and they saw that it was silver, and they hefted a number and Smith told them that they contained specie." "Letter to Mr. Lee," March 10, 1841, cited in Clark, op. cit., p. 334. Oliver Olney gave a similar story. Olney, op. cit., pp. 4, 5. However, Warren Parrish failed to mention it in his extensive letter

Much criticism was hurled against Joseph Smith. Some members apostatized; while others, with losses devastating to them, remained faithful to the Church and its president.⁶⁵

The Nature of the Internal Conflict

The internal opposition toward the President of the Church became manifested as early as February 19th. After the Prophet returned from a business trip for the Church, he appeared at a meeting in the temple and spoke for "several hours" to suppress the rising storm. "Although he had not been away half as long as Moses was on the Mount," wrote Wilford Woodruff, "yet many were stirred up in their hearts and some were against him."⁶⁶

By the month of May the murmuring and complaining within the Church against the Prophet for the causes previously considered had become bitter, indeed. Many complaints "had been brewing in the family circle, in the secret chamber, and in the street," said Wilford Woodruff, "until many, and some in high places, had risen up against Joseph, whom God raised up to lead Israel, and they were striving to overthrow his

of criticism against Smith and the bank in the Painesville Republican, II, No. 15 (February 15, 1838), n. p.

⁶⁵Oliver B. Huntington wrote concerning his family, "In the midst of our poverty in Kirtland none of us complained nor murmured against any of the authorities of the Church or against God; neither was the faith of any one lessened; but as to the work of God, all was joy and content and satisfaction. When I say this I say and tell the unbiassed truth before God. In ten years travel with the Church I never heard father or mother utter the first expression of doubt or show the least wavering of mind or lack of unlimited confidence in the prophet." Huntington, op. cit., p. 28.

⁶⁶Woodruff, op. cit., February 19, 1837.

influence and cast him down."⁶⁷

About this time, while the Prophet was away at Cleveland to transact banking business, a meeting was held in the temple, at which time Joseph Smit^h, Sr., was speaking concerning the bank affair while alluding sharply to Warren Parrish's conduct therein. Parrish, who was present and resented the insinuations, attempted to remove Joseph Smith, Sr., from the stand. An appeal from him for assistance from Oliver Cowdery, a justice of the peace, to have Parrish brought to order was ignored. Hence, William Smith proceeded to assist his father; then, John F. Boynton drew a sword and held it against William's breast arresting his interference. Others came to Parrish's aid and threatened William if he continue to interfere.⁶⁸ In May, Wilford Woodruff reported concerning the growing disharmony as follows:

It grieved the spirit of the Prophet to find such perils among false brethren. But notwithstanding this thick cloud of darkness standing over Kirtland, Joseph, being unmoved in the cause, entered the congregations of the Saints and arose and spake to the people in the name of the Lord in his own defense.⁶⁹

By the latter part of May, a number of the offending brethren were summoned before a High Council to be tried for their offenses. The complaint was registered against David Whitmer, Frederick G. Williams, Lyman E. Johnson, Parley P. Pratt, and Warren Parrish "believing that their course for some time past has been injurious to the Church of God,"

⁶⁷Ibid., May 28, 1837.

⁶⁸Lucy Mack Smith, op. cit., p. 241.

⁶⁹Woodruff, op. cit., May 28, 1837.

stated the summons.⁷⁰ On May 29th, the trial was held and considerable testimony was heard, but the Council ended in a state of confusion without any convictions; yet, the nucleus of a body of dissenters was being identified as critical and disloyal to Joseph Smith and to the Church. Although Parley P. Pratt reconciled his differences with the Prophet, within a year, all of the other men were excommunicated from the Church.

Because of increased persecution, in the spring of 1837, Joseph left Kirtland to seek temporary refuge elsewhere. Lorenzo Brown, writing of this period, said that his family was "visited by Presidents Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon, who on account of persecution heaped upon them often stayed three days and nights in the woods concealed," but then they found it necessary to leave "Kirtland for a season and were directed to our house."⁷¹ On April 13, 1837, Wilford Woodruff prepared to marry Phebe W. Carter in Kirtland. President Smith prepared to solemnize the marriage at his residence, but "his life was so beset and sought for" by his persecutors that he was forced to flee from his home. The ceremony, instead, was solemnized by Frederick G. Williams.⁷²

Animosity towards the Church in general and Joseph in particular, continued to grow. However, Levi Hancock left no question in asserting that much of the conflict was from the dissidents. "My heart would ache for him," wrote Hancock about the Prophet. "It was terrible the abuse he suffered

⁷⁰History of the Church, II, p. 485.

⁷¹Lorenzo Brown, "Lorenzo Brown Journal," p. 3. Typed copy is located in the Special Collections Library at Brigham Young University.

⁷²Woodruff, op. cit., April 13, 1837.

from thousands of his pretended friends.⁷³

The disgruntled dissenters were anxious to make some changes in the Church. Late in the spring they conceived a plot to depose Joseph Smith from Church leadership and replace him with David Whitmer.⁷⁴ Brigham Young described an event that occurred about the first of June to materialize the scheme as follows:

At this time the spirit of speculation, disaffection and apostacy imbibed by many of the Twelve, and which ran through all the quorums of the Church, prevailed so extensively that it was difficult for any to see the path to pursue.

On a certain occasion several of the Twelve, the witnesses to the Book of Mormon, and others of the authorities of the Church, held a council in the upper room of the Temple. The question before them was to ascertain how the Prophet Joseph could be deposed and David Whitmer appointed President of the Church. Father John Smith, Brother Heber C. Kimball, and others were present, who were opposed to such measures. I rose up, and in a plain and forcible manner told them that Joseph was a Prophet and I knew it, and that they might rail and slander him as much as they pleased, they could not destroy the appointment of the Prophet of God; they could only destroy their own authority, cut the threads that bound them to the Prophet and to God and sink themselves to hell. Many were highly enraged at my decided opposition to their measures and Jacob Bump, an old pugilist, was so exasperated that he could not be still. Some of the

⁷³Levi Hancock, op. cit., p. 74.

⁷⁴It is possible that David Whitmer was selected to be Smith's replacement by this dissenting group due to an earlier ordination he had received in Missouri in July, 1834, by the Prophet Joseph. On the 15th of March, 1838, in Far West, Missouri, the minutes of a meeting attended by Joseph Smith gives the following details: "President Joseph Smith, Jun., gave a history of the ordination of David Whitmer which took place in July, 1834, to be a leader or a Prophet to this Church, which [ordina-tion] was on conditions that he [i.e., Joseph Smith, Jun.,] did not live to God himself." "Far West Record," p. 108. John Whitmer in his history of the Church stated that Joseph ordained "David Whitmer Prophet, Seer, and Revelator and Translator" at the time he ordained him President of the Missouri Stake of Zion. John Whitmer, op.cit., Chapter XXI.

brethren near him put their hands on him and requested him to be quiet; but he withered and twisted his arms and body, saying 'how can I keep my hands off this man?' I told him, if he thought it might give him any relief, he might lay them on. This meeting was broken up without the apostates being able to unite on any decided measures of opposition. This was a crisis when earth and hell seemed leagued to overthrow the Prophet and Church of God. The knees of many of the strongest of men in the Church faltered.

During this seige of darkness I stood close by Joseph, and with all the wisdom and power God bestowed upon me put forth my utmost energies to sustain the servant of God and unite the Quorums of the Church.⁷⁵

Shortly after this event, Joseph called a number of the brethren to establish a mission of the Church in England, at which time he was plagued with serious illness which took him to "the borders of the grave."⁷⁶

Joseph was so ill on June 13th, the day four of the elders--Heber C. Kimball, Orson Hyde, Willard Richards, and Joseph Fielding, a priest--left on their journey to England, that he was unable to raise his head from his pillow.

The apostates generally were reporting that this affliction was a result of his transgressions for leading the Church into their desperate financial state. While Heber C. Kimball was preparing to leave on his new assignment, John F. Boynton said to him, "If you are such a d__d fool as to go at the call of the fallen Prophet, Joseph Smith, I will not help you a dime."⁷⁷

Heber C. Kimball further attested that at this time there "were not twenty persons on the earth that would declare that Joseph Smith was a Prophet of God."⁷⁸

⁷⁵Deseret News Weekly, VII, No. 49 (February 10, 1858), p. 386.

⁷⁶History of the Church, II, p. 493.

⁷⁷Kimball, op. cit., cited in Woman's Exponent, IX, No. 24 (May 15, 1881), p. 186.

⁷⁸Journal of Discourses, Vol. IV, p. 108. Although this statement is an apparent exaggeration, it characterized his feelings of the general disloyalty and complaining attitude demonstrated by many Church members during this period.

During this summer, the Prophet Joseph was troubled exceedingly by many lawsuits and spent much of the time away from Kirtland. On the 28th of July, he traveled to Canada to visit the Saints and stayed approximately a month, returning about the last of August. Upon his return from Canada, a conference of the Church was held September 3, 1837. Brigham Young expressed some apprehension about the Prophet receiving a sustaining vote from the body of the Church at the conference. By Brigham Young's contacting the faithful members and encouraging their attendance at the conference, Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon were sustained in their offices, but second counselor Frederick G. Williams was rejected. The troublesome apostles Luke S. Johnson, Lyman E. Johnson, and John F. Boynton, were also rejected and disfellowshipped from the Church.⁷⁹ Other officers of the Church, John Johnson, Joseph Coe, Joseph C. Kingsbury, and Martin Harris, were also rejected. Of these proceedings Brigham Young noted, "the apostates and disaffected, not being united, were compelled to endure the chagrin of witnessing the accomplishment of the will of God and his Prophet."⁸⁰ Thomas B. Marsh, who was visiting Kirtland at this time, said that eventually the difficulties were all apparently settled, and even Warren Parrish again repented and appeared "satisfied with Brother Joseph and the Church."⁸¹ The support that the Prophet received from

⁷⁹History of the Church, II, p. 509. By this time Oliver Cowdery also was found to be in transgression, but due to his being chosen as one of the counselors in the Presidency, he was not dropped. Ibid., p. 510.

⁸⁰"Journal History," September 3, 1837.

⁸¹Elders' Journal, I, No. 3 (July, 1838), p. 38.

the Church at this time undoubtedly gratified him and gave him some hope that the schism might be bridged and eventually forgotten.

The Prophet, perhaps, due to this fortunate turn of events, felt sufficiently secure to leave Ohio at this time for a trip to Missouri to hold a conference and enlist the continued support of the Saints in Zion. This conference was held in Far West, November 7, 1837, at which time Smith and Rigdon were again sustained, but Frederick G. Williams was replaced by Hyrum Smith as second counselor in the Presidency. Other matters were settled, and Joseph and his party returned to Kirtland.

The dissenters, however, were not idle in Kirtland during Smith's absence and proved to be insincere in their repentance and feigned reconciliation at the September conference. Joseph arrived back at Kirtland about the 10th of December to find the Church in a state of confusion and frustration. Warren Parrish, John F. Boynton, Luke S. Johnson, and others, had united as a body to destroy the Church. They publicly repudiated Smith and the Church, claiming to be the "old standard." They renounced the presiding leaders as heretics and established a new organization, the Church of Christ.⁸² There were approximately thirty men in the "Parish Party" or "Parrish Gang" as they were known, including some of the most prominent men of the Church.⁸³ "Those were some of the nicest neighbors and friends," lamented Caroline Barnes Crosby. "We had taken sweet counsel together, and walked to the house of God as friends," she continued. "They

⁸²Elder's Journal, I, No. 3 (July, 1838), p. 37. See also History of the Church, Vol. II, p. 528.

⁸³In referring to the apostates, George A. Smith said they included, "One of the First Presidency, several of the Twelve Apostles, High Council, Presidents of Seventies, the witnesses of the Book of Mormon, Presidents of

came out boldly against the prophet, and signed an instrument got up as I understood by W. Parrish and others, renouncing all their alliance with the church.⁸⁴ These problems with the dissenters no doubt weighed heavily upon the minds of the believing Saints, for as Caroline Crosby concluded, "As to poverty we could endure that patiently, but trials among false brethren, who could endure with patience?"⁸⁵

The plans of the "Parrish Party" were to take over the temple, retain much of the doctrine of Mormonism, and attempt to unify all of Christianity. On one occasion, an attempt to seize control of the meetings in the temple resulted in a fiasco contrived by the new group to usurp Church leadership.

A description of the uproar given by Eliza R. Snow is the following:

Warren Parrish, who had been a humble, successful member of the Gospel, was the ringleader of this apostate party. One Sabbath morning, he, with several of his party, came into the Temple armed with pistols and bowie-knives, and seated themselves together in the Aaronic pulpits, on the east of the Temple, while Father Smith and others, as usual, occupied those of the Melchizedek Priesthood on the west. Soon after the usual opening services, one of the brethren on the west stand arose, and just after he commenced to speak, one on the east interrupted him. Father Smith, presiding, called to order--he told the apostate brother that he should have all the time he wanted, but he must wait his turn--as the brother

Far West, and a number of others standing high in the Church were all carried away in this apostasy; and they thought there was enough of them to establish a pure religion that would become universal. This attempted organization was under the direction of Warren Parrish He undertook to organize those elements into a church and I was told by them that all the talented men among the Elders were ready to join them.

"They named, for instance, Lyman Johnson, John F. Boynton, William E. McLellan, Hazen Aldrich, Sylvester Smith, Joseph Coe, Orson Johnson, W. A. Cowdery, M. F. Cowdery, and others, amounting to something like thirty, who had been prominent Elders in the Church." Journal of Discourses, Vol. VII, p. 115. See also Elder's Journal, I, No. 4 (August 1838), p. 59.

⁸⁴Caroline Barnes Crosby, op. cit., 1837 entry. ⁸⁵Idem.

on the west took the floor and commenced to speak, he must not be interrupted. A fearful scene ensued--the apostate speaker became so clamorous, that Father Smith called for the police to take that man out of the house, when Parrish, John Boynton, and others, drew their pistols and bowie-knives, and rushed down from the stand into the congregation; J. Boynton saying he would blow out the brains of the first man who dared to lay hands on him. Many in the congregation, especially women and children, were terribly frightened--some tried to escape from the confusion by jumping out of the windows. Amid screams and shrieks, the policemen, in ejecting the belligerents, knocked down a stove-pipe, which fell helter-skelter among the people; but, although bowie-knives and pistols were wrested from their owners, and thrown hither and thither to prevent disastrous results, no one was hurt, and after a short, but terrible scene to be enacted in a Temple of God, order was restored, and the services of the day proceeded as usual.⁸⁶

Oliver Huntington, an eye witness to some of the disorderly events in Kirtland, stated that the apostates attempted to make a disturbance among the faithful brethren "every day of the week, Sunday not excepted."⁸⁷ He made the following observation about this same disorderly scene in the temple:

I remember on Sunday of seeing men jumping out of the windows [of the temple]. I ran to see what the fuss was, and found the apostates had tried to make a real mess, as they had frequently tried before, but on this occasion I saw a dagger, the door keeper held, that was wrenched from one of their hands whilst making his way to the stand. I heard the women scream and saw the men jump out of the windows, them [sic] that had chickens hearts and I shall always remember the sensation that came over me.⁸⁸

During a meeting at which the Prophet presided, one of the Parrish Party situated in the rear of the temple, was determined to eject Joseph

⁸⁶ Eliza R. Snow, op. cit., pp. 20, 21.

⁸⁷ Oliver B. Huntington, op. cit., p. 28.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 29.

Smith from the building. Since the meeting was so well attended that the aisles were filled with people, an excited belligerent proceeded forward by stepping on the back of the benches, row by row, passing between the heads of those sitting in their seats. The Prophet turned to Vinson Knight, a member of the Kirtland Bishopric, and exclaimed, "Brother Knight, take this man out." Vinson proceeded to fill the assignment by catching the intruder by the legs and tossing him over his shoulders, head downward, and carried him "struggling and bawling out of the building."⁸⁹

Conditions so intensified following the Prophet's return from Missouri in December, and "persecution finally became so violent," to use the words of Lucy Mack Smith, "that Joseph regarded it as unsafe to remain any longer in Kirtland."⁹⁰ Thus, he began to direct his thoughts toward a permanent evacuation from Kirtland to the Church center in Missouri. Yet, his plans for a departure met an untimely climax, for at ten o'clock on the evening of January 12, 1838, Joseph Smith and his party left Kirtland. This unexpected flight was to escape what the Prophet believed was "mob violence" which was about to come upon him "under the color of legal process."⁹¹ This legal process was a charge of illegal banking, the papers for which Sheriff Kimball was about to serve on the Prophet to take him into custody. When Luke Johnson learned of the sheriff's intention, he immediately went to Joseph's home on the old Peter French farm, and arrested him for another

⁸⁹Cited in Coolbear, op. cit., pp. 7, 8.

⁹⁰Lucy Mack Smith, op. cit., p. 247.

⁹¹History of the Church, III, p. 1.

judgment amounting to a \$50.00 charge. This action was taken, Johnson informs us, to prevent the sheriff from making his arrest on a more serious and vexatious charge.⁹² Hence, Smith and Rigdon left that evening for Missouri.

After their departure from Kirtland, they traveled to Norton township in Medina County, some sixty miles from Kirtland where they were joined by their families. Although the weather was bitter and uncomfortable, Joseph's enemies, armed with pistols and guns, followed him for 200 miles. Concerning their pursuit, the Mormon Prophet stated,

[The mob] frequently crossed our track, twice they were in the houses where we stopped, once we tarried all night in the same house with them, with only a partition between us and them; and heard their oaths and imprecations, and threats concerning us, if they could catch us; and late in the evening they came into our room and examined us, but decided we were not the men. At other times we passed them in the streets, and gazed upon them, and they on us, but they knew us not. One Lyons was one of our pursuers.⁹³

⁹²Millennial Star, XXVII, No. 1 (January 7, 1865), p. 5. Zerah Pulsipher journalized that at that time there "arose a great persecution, the Saints were able to escape in the best manner they could. Joseph was carried away in a box [i.e. presumably in a wagon box] nailed on an ox sled to save his life." Zerah Pulsipher, "Zerah Pulsipher Journal," p. 8. Typed copy is located in the Special Collections Library at Brigham Young University.

⁹³History of the Church, III, p. 3. Smith continued his journey until he arrived in Far West, Missouri, in March, 1838, only to learn that the Far West Presidency, consisting of David Whitmer, William W. Phelps, and John Whitmer, had been released from their positions and the latter two excommunicated from the Church. The trials of David Whitmer, Oliver Cowdery, and Lyman Johnson were held the month following at which time they, too, were excommunicated from Church membership. Much of Whitmer's and Cowdery's problems were caused by a union of the dissenters in Kirtland, and their problems may have an origin with the Kirtland dissidents, for they had spent the previous years in Kirtland. A fuller consideration of their trials and the complaints the Church registered against them may be found in the History of the Church, III, pp. 13-20.

During this period of opposition, conditions in Kirtland appeared gloomy for the faithful Church member. "I called the High Council together last week," wrote Stake President John Smith to his son, George A., while serving in the mission field in Virginia;

. . . and laid before them the case of the Dissenters; 28 persons were, upon mature discussion, cut off from the Church. The leaders are Cyrus Smalling, Joseph Coe, Martin Harris, Luke S. Johnson, John F. Boynton, and W. W. Parrish. We have cut off between forty and fifty from the Church since you left. Thus you see the Church has taken a high and mighty pruning, and we think she will soon rise in the greatness of her strength.⁹⁴

On the 13th of January, the day following the Prophet's departure, another distressing writ was sworn out, this time against Joseph Smith, Sr., on the charge of solemnizing marriages unlawfully. Once again the apostate Luke Johnson intervened by assisting a Church member in trouble. Johnson arrested Joseph Smith, Sr., and took him, accompanied by his son, Hyrum, to a small room adjoining the magistrate's office while waiting for the court to convene. After entering their room, Johnson removed a nail from the window sash in order for the two men to escape. He left the room, locked the door, and commenced relating stories to raise laughter and conceal any noise caused by the prisoner's escape through the window. When the court requested the admittance of the prisoner, Johnson returned to the room, replaced the nail, and returned to inform the court of the absence of the prisoner. John C. White, who had sworn the suit against Joseph Smith, Sr., and others, rushed into the room. After the fastenings were examined the observers expressed much surprise over the developments.⁹⁵

⁹⁴John Smith, "Letter to George A. Smith," January 1, 1838. Original on file in the Church Historian's Office.

⁹⁵Millennial Star, XXVII, No. 1 (January 7, 1865), p. 6. See also Eliza R. Snow Smith, op. cit., pp. 23, 24.

The matter puzzled the court, and the constable who seemed to manifest the greatest astonishment concluded it to be "another Mormon miracle." That night Joseph Smith, Sr., hid in the home of Oliver Snow--the father of Eliza and Lorenzo--about a mile and a quarter from the court scene. The following day, Eliza met Luke Johnson, who inquired as to the condition of Father Smith, retorting that he "will bless me for it, all the days of his life." Father Smith's condition, however, was a threatening one. He remained concealed in the Snow home between two and three weeks, and then he was taken to the William Huntington household prior to his departure for Missouri. On one occasion the family lost contact with him and handbills were circulated offering a reward for his apprehension by the "anti" element, and the family feared for his life.⁹⁶

The Saints felt that the pressure from the dissenters and the anti-Mormon community was severe and unpleasant to bear. "The real Mormons," said Oliver B. Huntington, "were designated by the appellation of Lick skillets, and every Lick skillet had to suffer," he said.⁹⁷ During the winter months, the persecution seemed to be more severe. George A. Smith considered the events of this season as "the time that tried men's souls; for a man that would stand up in the streets and say he was Joseph's friend, could not get a greater compliment than being called a lick skillet."⁹⁸ The principal members of the Church, however, following Smith and Rigdon's

⁹⁶Lucy Mack Smith, op. cit., p. 249.

⁹⁷Oliver B. Huntington, op. cit., p. 29.

⁹⁸Journal of Discourses, Vol. XI, p. 11. The precise meaning of the derogatory appellation "lick skillet" is not known, but the fact that the Saints were very poor and were forced to lick their skillets clean to economize may have a bearing on it.

departure dared not show themselves, for they were "hunted like rabbits and foxes who sculk and hide in holes," again wrote Oliver B. Huntington.⁹⁹ "Numbers [of the principal brethren] lay concealed in our house day after day," he continued, "until their families could be got [sic] out of the place, one after another would come and go until we had served a variety with the best we had, and was glad of [the] privilege. Among those concealed by the Huntingtons were Joseph Smith, Sr., Samuel and Don Carlos Smith, Benjamin Wilber, and Simon Sherman.

Besides hunting for certain Church leaders, the mob, likewise, was determined to find the Egyptian mummies that had previously been acquired by the Saints. The mob's object was to burn them according to Lucy Mack Smith, and a judgment for an unpaid debt of \$50.00 was placed upon them. Fortunately, the mummies were placed in the Huntington household where they, too, found protection and were preserved.¹⁰⁰

The absence of the Mormon leader brought little relief to the faithful Latter-day Saints, for strained relations between them and the apostates continued. "You had an opportunity to learn something of the spirit which was beginning to prevail here last spring," wrote Hepzubah Richards to her brother, Willard, on a mission in England. "That spirit has continued to increase." She further stated,

If at any time it has appeared to be quelled, it now appears that it was only preparing to operate with greater virulence, until it is generally believed that this place will soon be

⁹⁹Huntington, op. cit., p. 29.

¹⁰⁰Idem. Oliver's statement concerning the mummies was that "even the mummies were secreted there [to his father's house] to keep them from being destroyed.

trodden down by the enemies of the Gospel which you preach. For some days past the spirit of things has been rapidly changing, and to the view of all appears to be gathering blackness. A large number have dissented from the body of the Church and are very violent in their opposition to the President and all who uphold him. They have organized a Church and appointed a meeting in the house (the Temple) next Sabbath; they say they will have it, if it is by the shedding of blood. They have the keys of the House already.¹⁰¹

Perhaps the most dramatic event of the winter occurred shortly after the departure of Smith and Rigdon. On the 15th of January, Grandison Newell pressed a charge against the Presidency of the Church for indebtedness. The Church printing office was attacked to pay the debt. Consequently, the press was sold at public auction to an apostate named Mr. Million, and, unfortunately, shortly after midnight on January 16th, the community of Kirtland was awakened by the confusion caused by the flames of the burning printing house. "The Temple and other buildings were badly scorched," and all of the contents of the printing establishment were burned including "many Books of Mormon belonging to the brethren."¹⁰²

The apostates naturally accused the Church members of firing the building because they had lost it; conversely, the Church members felt that the dissenters had burned it because it had been taken from the

¹⁰¹"Ms. History of the Great Lakes Mission--Ohio," January 18, 1838.

¹⁰²Idem. See also John Smith, "Letter to George A. Smith," January 15, 17, 1838. Original is located in the Office of the Church Historian.

Caroline Barnes Crosby gave the following brief eye-witness account of the fire: "About the 15th of Jan., I was awakened one night near the middle of the night, by sister Sherwood calling to me and Jane, crying fire. I awoke and as I lay near the window I looked out, and beheld the ground as light as day, while the sky was as black as a thundercloud. A deep solemnity pervaded my mind, and a very strange sensation ran through my whole system. We arose immediately, and opened the door, and beheld the printing office all in flames, and men assembling from every direction in great haste. But they were all too late, they merely threw out a few books, and some of them were scorched. The sparks and shingles were carried to an immense distance. It was the nearest building to the temple but the wind was favorable in protecting it from the flames. Caroline Barnes Crosby, op. cit., 1838 entry.

Church unjustly and they "could not hold it," so they burned it.¹⁰³ At any rate, on Tuesday evening--the following day--a meeting was held by the community and a "patrol consisting of 21 men was chosen to guard the city during the week, to prevent further destruction by fire."¹⁰⁴ Because of the mutual distrust, the patrol was made up of part members and part dissenters, each keeping guard upon the other. The mysterious cause of the fire was never solved.

Despite the events of the previous year and the current agitation, conditions in the Church began to show some improvement during the winter months. Don Carlos Smith expressed his reaction to the increasing harmony among the faithful members and the persistence of the dissenters:

Notwithstanding the great opposition and persecution in this place the work of the Lord is gaining ground, because every man of influence that professes to have any kind of principle is disgusted with the proceedings of those that dissented from this Church. Those that have dissented still profess to have a belief in the Book of Mormon, the Bible and the Doctrine and Covenants, but they pretend that the Church has gone astray and left the foundation, and they count them [*i.e.* the Church] as heretics. The Prophet also has transgressed, according to their idea of things, and finally, after summing the whole matter up, he was a liar from the beginning, and yet, they say, the Book of Mormon is true, the revelations that come through him are from God, etc., and many other things that are fully as [*in*] consistent.¹⁰⁵

This vacillating position taken by some of the dissenters later materialized into a division among them. "The Warren Parrish Party has become divided," wrote George A. Smith, following his return from Virginia in the spring,

¹⁰³Elders' Journal, I, No. 3 (July, 1838), p. 34.

¹⁰⁴Hepzibah Richards, op. cit., letter dated January 18, 1838.

¹⁰⁵"Journal History," January 18, 1838.

"three against two, and two against three, and they are entering into a long debate upon the Book of Mormon and the revelations." Some of the dissenters seemed to have lost faith in any and all religion and disagreement in general existed among them. George A. Smith wrote the following concerning their schism:

Last Sabbath a division arose amongst the Parrish party about the Book of Mormon. John F. Boynton, Warren Parrish, Luke S. Johnson and others said that it was nonsense. Martin Harris then bore testimony of its truth and said all would be damned, if they rejected it. Smalling, Joseph Coe, and others declared his testimony was true. In this way a division arose to bring about the above mentioned debate, and thus the enemies of truth are divided, while the Saints are growing in grace and union and in knowledge and increasing in number. Baptisms are frequent and truth will prevail, let men or devils oppose.¹⁰⁶

About this time, Thomas B. Marsh wrote from Missouri to Wilford Woodruff on a mission in the Fox Islands, that the Saints in Missouri "have of late learned, that Parrish, and the most of this combination, have openly renounced the book of Mormon, and become deists."¹⁰⁷

During the winter and spring of 1838, relations between the two forces--the faithful Church members and the anti-Mormons including the dissenters--continued to deteriorate; the unbelieving were being aroused against the faithful, and those that had abandoned the Church were striving to destroy it "with a great deal more zeal than they ever did to build it

¹⁰⁶"Journal History," March 30, 1838.

¹⁰⁷Elders' Journal, I, No. 3 (July, 1838), p. 37. If some of the dissenters embraced the diestic philosophy, not all of them did permanently, for Warren Parrish, Martin Harris, and Luke S. Johnson, later became responsible Christians. The latter two rejoined the Mormon faith and Parrish became a Baptist minister. Journal of Discourses, VII, p. 115.

up."¹⁰⁸ The dissenters not only joined with the enemy to employ violent means to terrorize the Saints, but also delivered stories to the clergy to increase the agitation from that quarter.¹⁰⁹

The problem that arose in the Church during the final year of the Kirtland headquarters were keenly felt by the Saints, causing some to lose faith and apostatize. The economic measures the Church employed to give assistance to their economy had a reverse effect upon the spiritual welfare of the Church members. Many of those who were personally effected or the ones weaker in the faith faltered or sank into apostasy. The year ended in an attempt by the dissidents to salvage parts of Mormonism into a short-lived "old standard." Likewise, the year ended in confusion, bankruptcy, apostasy, and excommunications, so as to leave little promise for the future of the Saints in Kirtland. Many Church members in the Western Reserve began to give attention to leaving Ohio and journeying to Missouri.

¹⁰⁸ John Smith, "Letter to George A. Smith," January 15 and 17, 1838.

¹⁰⁹ Elders' Journal, I, No. 4 (August, 1838), pp. 56, 59.

CHAPTER XI

THE SAINTS EVACUATE KIRTLAND

Persecution Increases--A Need To Get Away

Shortly after the departure of the Mormon Prophet and other leaders from Kirtland, general consideration was given by the Mormon people for the withdrawal of many other families from Ohio. While arrangements were being made for this move to Missouri, some of the leaders remained in hiding a short distance from the city. Meanwhile, unsuccessful attempts were made upon the lives of some of the Kirtland High Council members, and others of the Saints feared that their lives were "in jeopardy every hour" they remained in Kirtland.¹ "All our friends design leaving this place as soon as possible," wrote Hepzibah Richards in January, 1838. "The feeling seems to be that Kirtland must be trodden down by the wicked for a season," she continued. "Probably several hundred families will leave within a few weeks."²

The Latter-day Saints planned to move to northern Missouri and join ranks with the Saints in the new western settlements. In February, many additional Church members emigrated.³ Hepzibah Richards undoubtedly believed

¹Hepzibah Richards, "Letter to Willard Richards," January 18, and January 29, 1838, cited in the "Ms. History of the Great Lakes Mission--Ohio."

²Ibid., January 22, 1838.

³Ibid., February 19, 1838.

that the departure was a forced one, for in February she further stated,

They are driven out of this place as truly as the Saints were driven out of Jackson county four years ago, though in a different manner. There they were driven by force of arms, here by persecution, chiefly from the dissenters.⁴

Early that year, Luman A. Shurtliff returned to Kirtland from a mission to the northwest and found his wife anxious to leave the area which he called "a hell to all [the] Saints." He observed that the apostates and mobocrats had control of the law in Kirtland and reported that Church members were accused of many "crimes and thefts that they never committed." Their enemies, he added, placed articles of clothing owned by mob members in the stables of the Saints after which they accused the Saints of robbery. Those who were convicted were forced to pay substantial fines or leave Kirtland. Furthermore, he testified that mobbers broke into homes, shattered windows, and set fires "by the dozens" in the basements of homes of Latter-day Saints in order to persuade them to withdraw from the area.⁵ In March, Hepzibah Richards described some of the harassments imposed upon her people at that time:

I have been wading in a sea of tribulation ever since I came here. For the last three months we, as a people, have been tempest-tossed, and at times the waves have well nigh over-whelmed us, but we believe there will yet be a way of escape A dreadful spirit reigns in the breasts of those who are opposed to this Church. They are above the law and beneath whatever is laudable. Their leading object seems to be to get all the property of the Church for little or nothing and drive the Saints out of the place. The house of our nearest neighbor has been entered by a mob and ransacked from the top to the bottom on the pretense of finding goods which it is thought they had stolen themselves. An attempt has since been made to set the same house on fire while the family were sleeping in bed.⁶

⁴ Idem.

⁵ Luman Andrus Shurtliff, op. cit., p. 29.

⁶ Hepzibah Richards, op. cit., letter of March 23, 1838.

During the winter months some families left before they sold their property. "We turned the key and locked the door of our homes," said William F. Cahoon, "leaving our property and all we possessed in the hands of enemies and strangers, never receiving a cent for anything we owned."⁷

Kirtland Camp--Its Preparation

The Kirtland High Council and the High Priest Quorum considered an organized departure of the Mormon people from the state; however, their intention to utilize the Ohio River and canal system was eventually abandoned. To make plans for a departure the Seventies held a series of meetings, beginning March 6th, in the attic of the temple. Because the Saints who were adequately equipped to execute the journey to Missouri had left or were preparing to leave immediately, it left only those Saints behind who were unable to equip themselves properly. The poverty of the Saints seemed to present an unsurmountable burden to any organized withdrawal of the Church members from Kirtland.

During the second meeting of the Seventies Quorum in the temple, March 10th, Elias Smith, the quorum clerk and historian, reported that a number of spiritual manifestations occurred which indicated to the Saints that they should move West as a body. "The Spirit of the Lord came down in mighty power, and some of the Elders began to prophesy," he wrote, "that if the quorum would go up in a body together . . . they should not want

⁷William F. Cahoon, cited in Reynolds Cahoon and His Stalwart Sons, Utah Pioneer, comp. Stella Cahoon Shurtleff and Brent Farrington Cahoon (No city and publisher given, 1960), p. 28. George A. Smith said concerning the Saints, "the loss sustained through this persecution was probably no less than one million dollars." Journal of Discourses, Vol. XIII, p. 107.

for anything on the journey that would be necessary for them to have.⁸ James Foster, one of the Presidents of the Seventy, said he had received a vision of the future departure of the organized company leaving Kirtland for Missouri, and Zerah Pulsipher, another President, gave a recital of his observation of the dramatic events during that meeting. He wrote:

One evening, while we were in the attic story of the Lord's House, and while Joseph Young, I think, was at prayer, I saw a Heavenly messenger, who appeared to be a very tall man dressed in a white robe from head to foot. He cast his eyes on me and on the rest of the Council and said, 'Be one, and you shall have enough,' and soon after the way was opened before us, so that we received money and means for clothing for the poor and to prepare for our removal. James Foster and Jonathan Dunham also saw the angel at the same time I did.⁹

This experience seemed to crystallize the plans of the Seventies Quorum to journey up to Missouri in a group and invite any of the poor families not of that quorum, who could not otherwise afford the trip to Zion, to join with them. All the poor brethren would be permitted to participate with the Seventy providing they would abide by the rules included in the Constitution of the Camp. Zerah Pulsipher said that when the poor brethren learned that "we were going together and would help one another, they wanted to join us and get out of that Hell of persecution." "Therefore," said he, "we could not neglect them for all there was against them was that they were poor and could not help themselves."¹⁰

The decision to leave as a group involved some objectionable factors. The Saints were threatened by a mob, whether they moved in a body or in small

⁸Ibid., p. 88.

⁹Zerah Pulsipher, Document on file in the Office of the Church Historian. Also see "Zerah Pulsipher Journal," p. 8, located at Brigham Young University Special Collection's Library, and "Journal History," July 6, 1838.

¹⁰Pulsipher Journal, op. cit., p. 8.

groups. That these were the "poorest of the poor" is evidenced by the fact that only about ten teams were owned by a group of from five to six hundred persons.¹¹ The Presidents of the Seventy, therefore, instructed all who had signed to migrate to Missouri in the community camp to secure work in nearby communities for a few months. They were then to purchase horses, cattle, wagons, harnesses, and supplies that would assist them on their forthcoming trek of nearly a thousand miles.¹² Some worked in the fields, others on the canal construction for fifty cents a day,¹³ while others went to manufacture stoves to sell on the lake shore.¹⁴

As they were preparing for their journey later in the year, apprehension and anxiety existed among the remaining Saints. Apostasy from within, accusations against their departed Prophet, persecution, the effects of the financial depression, and their general demoralized condition, were conducive of considerable discouragement and despair. During this period of preparation, a number of divine manifestations were reported by some of the men working near Kirtland. "They worked and prayed, and the Lord worked with them," said young John Pulsipher. "Signs and wonders were seen and heard which caused the Saints to rejoice," he continued.¹⁵ Describing, perhaps, the most dramatic

¹¹Pulsipher Journal, op. cit., p. 1.

¹²Ibid., p. 2.

¹³Daniel Allen, "Daniel Allen Journal," 1838 entry. Typed copy in the possession of the author.

¹⁴Pulsipher Journal, op. cit., p. 9.

¹⁵Ibid.

event that was reported, he said:

One pleasant day in March, while I was at work in the woods, about one mile from the Temple, with father [i.e. Zerah Pulsipher], Elias Pulsipher and Jesse Baker, there was a Steamboat past over Kirtland in the air! It was a clear, sunshine day. When we first heard the distant noise, we all stopt [sic] work. We listened and wondered what it could be. As it drew nearer, we heard the puffing of a steamboat, intermingled with the sound of many wagons rattling over a rough stony road. We all listened with wonder--but could not see what it was. It seemed to pass right over our heads--we all heard the sound of a steamboat as plain as we ever did in our lives. It passed right along and soon went out of our hearing. When it got down to the city it was seen by a number of persons. It was a large fine and beautiful boat, painted in the finest style. It was filled with people. All seemed full of joy. Old Elder Beamon, who had died a few months before was seen standing in the bow of the Boat swinging his hat and singing a well known hymn. The boat went steady along over the city passed right over the Temple and went out of sight to the west! This wonderful sight, encouraged the Saints because they knew the Lord had not forgotten them.

The people of Kirtland that saw the steamboat in the air said it arrived over the Temple, a part of it broke off and turned black and went north and was soon out of sight. While the boat, all in perfect shape went to the W[est] more beautiful and pure than before.¹⁶

John's father, Zerah, also described the event in his journal, and said that "the explanation of the phenomenon we saw with much clearness."¹⁷ Zerah wrote that the part of the vessel that went west was white whereas the part that passed toward the north was black. He further explained that the separation of the boat was symbolic of the division of the Church authorities a few months before, and the pure and faithful leaders, like the white part of the vessel, went west. He said, "A number of the Twelve and First Presidents of Seventies descended [i.e. dissented] and led many after them, but the pure in heart went west."¹⁸ This experience seemed to encourage

¹⁶Idem.

¹⁷Zerah Pulsipher, op. cit., p. 9. He also described the event in a special document on file in the Church Historian's Office. See also "Journal History," July 6, 1838.

¹⁸Idem.

the preparing Saints and gave them confidence in their proposed journey to the West.

Preparations for the expedition were made, yet, some of the members had expressed doubt concerning the success of the organized exodus. "It would be the greatest thing ever accomplished," said Oliver Granger, "since the organization of the Church or even since the exodus of Israel from Egypt if the Saints in Kirtland, considering their poverty, should succeed in going from that place in a body."¹⁹ According to Hepzibah Richards, by the latter part of March preparations for the camp were being made.

They design to start the first of May, but not before the 10th or later. Probably a hundred and twenty-five families or more remain. They will go in large wagons covered square on the top with canvas or with something that will turn water. They will take their clothing, beds, and cooking utensils and camp by the way. Fifty yards of common sheeting will make a tent that will accommodate 18 persons. Women and children will sleep in the wagons. Some will take along light crick bedsteads, and other measures will be taken to prevent sleeping on the ground as much as possible. They will have runners to go before and lay up provisions that the inhabitants may not take advantage of their necessities to increase their prices. They will travel 5 days in the week, stop on Saturdays to make and wash. On the Sabbath they will hold meetings. They will be 8 or 10 weeks on the road. They design to take along the poor and the lame, deeming it wrong to leave those who have a desire to go, but have no means. This will be accomplished, but it must be by mighty effort. Duck will be preferred for tent cloth, as it will turn the rain better. The camp will move but slowly. The men will walk much of the way.²⁰

During the period of preparation, specifically May 22, 1838, the Methodist chapel, which was located a few rods from the temple, was burned. This was undoubtedly the work of an arsonist, for the rope attached to the well had been cut and the bucket removed and hidden. Likewise, the bolt

¹⁹History of the Church, III, p. 96.

²⁰Hepzibah Richards, op. cit., letter dated March 23, 1838.

from the pump of another nearby well had also been removed so as to prevent the extinguishing of the blaze in the event it was discovered in its infancy. Moreover, the night was marked by a stillness which had followed a recent heavy rain, which served to prevent the fire from spreading to other buildings. An attempt to burn the Kirtland Temple the same night was also apparent by evidence later discovered. The arsonist placed a small bundle of straw, a few shavings, and a hot coal inside the temple, by breaking a window to gain entrance. Only a few straws which came in contact with the hot coals were burned, however, and a blaze was not started.²¹

Incriminations concerning the burning of the Methodist chapel circulated freely. "The mob laid the charge of burning the Methodist house to the Council of Seventies." said Zerah Pulsipher. "There was no doubt but they fired it themselves," he insisted, "hoping by that means to get a pretext for our destruction, but we knew we were innocent."²² Pulsipher further maintained that the mob was determined to prevent the departure of the emigrant camp, and therefore, "had a deep plot laid for our destruction."²³

Although the person or persons responsible for the fire remained unknown, the mob held the Seventies responsible. Their plot, however, did not materialize according to Pulsipher, because of the interference of Jacob Bump, an apostate Mormon and a mob leader. Pulsipher gives the details of Bump's assistance as follows:

²¹Painesville Republican, II, No. 29 (May 31, 1838), n. p.

²²Zerah Pulsipher, op. cit., p. 10.

²³Idem.

But as I related to the burning of that house [i.e. the Methodist chapel], they raged to a great extent because most of them supposed that we had actually done it. But as the Lord dictated to the great leader of the mob [Jacob Bump] who had once been a Mormon and well calculated to carry out his devilish designs--was held by the power of God so that he had a vision and saw those that fired the home and seemed to be greatly astonished for a while and then met with the mob and informed them that it was not the Council that burned the house and he knew who it was but dared not tell on account of the law because he could prove only by vision, which they would not believe and still swore vengeance on us. But he swore by all the Gods that lived that he would have revenge on them if they lost a hair of our heads. He had a large store of goods and could swear and get drunk. He had some influence with them so that we were preserved by the hand of God.²⁴

What the mob intended to do is not recorded, but credit for preventing any serious interference by the mob was due to the actions of Jacob Bump.

The Journey of Kirtland Camp

Delays prevented the departure of the camp until later in the summer than previously planned, but by the 5th of July the Saints were duly organized and rendezvoused at a field in the rear of Mayhew Hillman's former home just a hundred rods south of the temple. It was a beautiful day, and many spectators from the towns in the area came to watch the scene of preparation. Between four and five hundred members of the camp remained on the grounds over night. No trouble was exhibited that night and no apparent intention to delay or interfere with a peaceful departure of the Saints was encountered. Zerah Pulsipher wrote with some satisfaction,

Our enemies had threatened never to let us go out of Kirtland two waggons [sic] together--but when we got ready to start, the largest company of Saints that had ever traveled together in this generation, started out in good order without an enemy to oppose us.²⁵

²⁴Idem.

²⁵John Pulsipher, op. cit., p. 4.

At twelve o'clock noon, on July 6th, the emigrants, formally designated as Kirtland Camp, began to move from their camping place; and within a half hour, the grounds were left deserted. The official account written by Elias Smith, the camp historian, listed 529 persons present in the departing company of which 256 were males, 273 were females, comprising 105 families.²⁶ John Pulsipher listed a slightly different figure and added some other details. He said the company consisted of 515 souls, 249 males, 266 females, with equipment and supplies comprising 27 tents, 59 wagons, 97 horses, 22 oxen, 69 cows, and one bull. The discrepancy may be accounted for by the fact that a few stragglers joined the Camp within a few days. At one time in the Camp's journey its membership increased to six hundred and twenty.²⁷

The camp had been organized into "tents" with an overseer for each tent to function as the line officer. Each tent accommodated approximately eighteen persons with the head of the family being responsible for the conduct of his family within the tent. The Camp was divided into four divisions (that traveled together) with a captain over each. The seven Presidents of the Seventy formed the governing Council of the company consisting of Joseph Young, James Foster, Josiah Butterfield, Henry Harriman, and Zerah Pulsipher, as permanent members of the President of Seventy, and Benjamin Wilber and Elias Smith acting pro. tem. in place of Levi Hancock and Daniel S. Miles who had moved to Missouri sometime previously. President Hyrum Smith journeyed with the Camp, but submitted himself to the authority of the governing council.

²⁶History of the Church, III, p. 100.

²⁷John Pulsipher, op. cit., p. 4. Although the History of the Church contains Elias Smith's account of the number in the Camp, the "Journal History" contains that of John Pulsipher. History of the Church, III p. 114.

Jonathan H. Hales was appointed in charge of commissary, and Jonathan Dunham was the Camp Engineer. The duties of the commissary included passing through the communities and settlements along the route to buy provisions as cheaply as possible and delivering a wagon load to the Camp each night. The rations, then, were issued once a day to the several families according to their number. Those who had money were expected to pay for the goods received, while the others were expected to pay the Camp upon arriving in Missouri or shortly thereafter. The Camp Engineer's task entailed the locating of camping sites, buying food, or locating forage for the animals and caring for other necessary camp duties.²⁸ During the first night of this journey, the members of Kirtland Camp rested at Chester, located seven miles south of Kirtland. There they pitched their tents in a square formed by the wagons.

The activities for each day were regulated by the provisions in the Camp's constitution. All arose at the sound of the bugle at four a.m., participated in prayers, ate their breakfast, and departed for the day's journey, which consisted of approximately fifteen miles. Each division traveled independent of the others. The Camp journeyed in a southwest direction through the State of Ohio. They traveled through several counties, including Geauga, Portage, Wayne, Richland, Crawford, Marion, Logan, Hardin, Champaign, Clark, Montgomery, and Preble. Their route generally followed the available public roads, and on one occasion the Camp used the National Road. However, most of their journey took them through hilly, difficult terrain; and they often traveled on poor roads. Since the weather was very hot and dry, they traveled during a period of severe drouth.

²⁸Idem.

KIRTLAND CAMP

1838



Fig. 11. The Route of Kirtland Camp through Ohio.

The non-Mormon reaction to their passage through the counties occasionally included cryptic statements about the "fallacy of Jo Smith's prophecies," and others "expressed pity for the deluded believers in modern revelation."²⁹ On the 16th of July, in Richland County near Mansfield, the sheriff met the company and arrested and jailed three of the brethren because of Kirtland Safety Society money.³⁰ Later in the afternoon of the same day, the Camp passed through Mansfield, the county seat, contrary to claims that they should never do so. Except for a repeated discharge of a cannon in front of the court house, they passed through the town undisturbed.³¹

Remarks of ridicule were reinforced by a barrage of eggs thrown at them by observers who lived near the public road in Logan County. This action prompted some to stop and brandish their bayonets to assure the spectators of their willingness to defend themselves in the case of attack or assault.³²

Elder Dunham, who attempted to buy forage for the teams on the 27th of July, was driven from a farmer's property at gun point because he was a Mormon.³³ The same day a stage passed them on the road and the "passengers behaved more like the savages of the west than anything we had seen since the commencement of our journey,"³⁴ wrote Elias Smith.

²⁹History of the Church, III p. 106.

³⁰A similar threat occurred again on the 23rd in Logan County. These bills were apparently the new ones issued by Parrish, for they were signed by F. G. Williams, president, and Warren Parrish, cashier. History of the Church, III, p. 113.

³¹"Ms. History of the Great Lakes Mission--Ohio," July 16, 1838.

³²History of the Church, III, pp. 112, 113.

³³"Ms. History of the Great Lakes Mission--Ohio," July 16, 1838.

³⁴History of the Church, III, p. 116.

Passage through the state was long, hot, and dusty. Sickness often plagued the Camp and took the lives of six children in Ohio while they were traveling. Considering the nature of travel and the number involved in accidents and breakdowns, remarkably few were hurt; and in at least one case, an injury was reportedly healed by the assistance of the prayers of the faithful.³⁵

Although their problems were severe, the most difficult element the Camp faced was internal discontent and strife. On occasion, certain families were discharged from the Camp because of breach of the constitution, unchristian-like conduct, murmurings against the council and other camp officers, breaking the Word of Wisdom, and not keeping one's family in control and in proper order in the Camp.³⁶ The presiding Council of Seventy found the handling of such recalcitrants so time-consuming that they appointed an "Assistant Council" of three judges to handle any further disciplinary matters. And like the ancient Israelites, some expressed the feeling that they wished they had remained in Kirtland.

Because the company had to buy much of their supplies on the road and in order to pay for their camping grounds, some of the men secured jobs while they were migrating. Upon arriving at Dayton, located in the western part of the state, an opportunity presented itself to the needy travelers in the form of an offer from a turnpike contractor who employed them to build a half mile of highway in Montgomery County.

On the last day of July, they set up a temporary camp in a beautiful

³⁵Ibid., p. 113.

³⁶Ibid., pp. 111, 128, 131.

grove outside Dayton, built a fence around their encampment, and prepared to engage in their new-found work. On the first day of August, the fence was finished; and the men prepared to start on the road. Since some of them were finishing a levee elsewhere, work on the turnpike began slowly. Certain problems were overcome and the road construction moved ahead rapidly until the contract was finished on the 22nd of August. The treasury of the Camp was reinforced with the twelve hundred dollars for their labors on the turnpike, and the contractor requested them to agree to build another segment for him. Zerah Pulsipher reported the decision of the council regarding this officer.

He then wanted us to do another job, it was then very dry and the wells so low that it was difficult to get water for our animals in the dry part of the country if we should go on. But we inquired of the Lord for what was best and we were impressed to go on, not knowing what we should do for drink but the day following there fell such a flood of water that the low places in the country were full and we got along very well.³⁷

Finally, on August 29th, the Camp left their summer encampment, traveled through the city of Dayton, and on the 31st of August passed over the state line into Indiana. Approximately one month later, the immigrants arrived at their destination in Missouri. They arrived at Far West, Caldwell County, the headquarters of the Church, on October 2nd and at Adam-ondi-Ahman, a newly settled Mormon community in Daviess County, on the 4th of the month. This was a momentous occasion for the weary travelers, and upon arriving at their destination they were greeted thusly:

Brethren, your long and tedious journey is now ended;
you are now on the public square of Adam-ondi-Ahman. This
is the place where Adam blessed his posterity, when they

³⁷Zerah Pulsipher, op. cit., p. 11.



"THE KIRTLAND CAMP."

Fig. 12. The Kirtland Camp. (By an unknown artist. Courtesy, Church Historian's Library.)

rose up and called him Michael, the Prince, the Arch-angel, and he being full of the Holy Ghost predicted what should befall his posterity to the latest generation.³⁸

The Saints of the Kirtland Camp remained at Adam-ondi-Ahman and other parts of Missouri for only a few months. In the fall of 1838, the Mormons were ordered from the state by Governor Lilburn Boggs. Under the direction of Brigham Young and other leaders, they proceeded eastward to Illinois and to the Iowa Territory in search of a new home.

Following the evacuation of the Kirtland Camp from Ohio, Kirtland was left largely uninhabited and fell into decay and ruin, but it was not entirely forgotten by the leaders of the Church. In 1838, Jesse W. Crosby joined the Church in western New York, and started for the West to live with the Saints in Missouri. After leaving New York, he learned of the expulsion of the Mormons from Missouri and the imprisonment of Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon and other Church leaders; consequently, he decided to go to Kirtland. He arrived there in the spring of 1839, and observed the declining conditions of the town generally. Upon seeing the temple, he wrote, "It is now unoccupied, together with most of the private dwellings of the town."³⁹ Finding the place uninviting, he continued his trip west and arrived in Commerce, Illinois, June 6th. On May 4, 1839, the Church leaders appointed Elder Oliver Granger to visit Kirtland to take "the charge and oversight of the House of the Lord and preside over the general affairs of the Church in that place."⁴⁰ The Church leaders also advised the Saints living in the eastern

³⁸History of the Church, III, pp. 147, 148.

³⁹Jesse W. Crosby, "History and Journal of Jesse W. Crosby," p. 5. Located in the Utah Historical Society.

⁴⁰"Journal History," May 4, 1839.

states to settle in Kirtland and nearby communities and establish a Stake of Zion or, if they preferred, to settle farther west. During that year there were sufficient members of the Church in Kirtland to hold services in the temple. On November 17, 1839, Brigham Young preached in the temple, and John Taylor and Daniel S. Miles anointed Theodore Turley during another meeting held in that building.⁴¹

Kirtland, however, did not remain a Stake of Zion, nor did it again become an important gathering place for the Mormon people. The community continued to fall into decay. Henry Howe visited Kirtland in 1846, and found many of the buildings in a state of deterioration. Referring to the Mormons and their city, he said, "On their abandoning it, most of the dwellings went to decay, and it now has somewhat the appearance of a depopulated and broken down place."⁴²

A few years before Henry Howe's visit, the census records of 1840 indicated 1,777 inhabitants for Kirtland, whereas the Mormon population figured at "nearly 3,000 in their height,"⁴³ and S. A. Davis, who visited the city in 1837, said it had "increased to the number of about 4,000."⁴⁴ As long as the temple stands in Kirtland, that place will remain a site to be revered, but Kirtland probably will never again be a general gathering place for the Latter-day Saints.

⁴¹"Ms. History of the Great Lakes Mission--Ohio," November 17, 1839.

⁴²Henry Howe, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 34.

⁴³Ibid., p. 282.

⁴⁴Messenger and Advocate, III, No. 7 (April, 1837), p. 490.

CHAPTER XII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

During the Second Great Awakening which began in 1799, many new religious societies appeared in America and church membership increased significantly. Religious reformers adopted techniques that produced excitement and often aroused emotions to hysterical heights. Although organized religion lost some of its former dignity, religious activities during the early part of the nineteenth century moved America to an increased interest in religion.

In the early nineteenth century, Ohio, characteristic of other sections of the West, emerged from a frontier condition to a more settled state. Public buildings were constructed, transportation facilities slowly improved, and civil liberties continued to be jealously guarded. At the same time, lawless mobs periodically emerged to disturb and to harass.

While this region was being settled, religious reformers, inspired by Alexander Campbell, entered Ohio, and established "Reformed Baptist" societies in the Western Reserve. One of the early converts to this restorationist movement was Parley P. Pratt, who in 1830, traveled as a missionary to the east to spread its doctrine. Upon arriving in New York, Pratt was introduced to Mormonism, and soon became a convert. Joseph Smith, the founder of Mormonism, commissioned Pratt and three others to visit Indian lands west of the Missouri River and to convert the Lamanites to the Mormon faith. After this small group of missionaries left New York in the fall of 1830, they

journeyed to Ohio and visited Sidney Rigdon, a prominent Campbellite minister. Rigdon and many of his followers in Mentor and Kirtland were converted. The four missionaries continued their journey West, but the new Church in Kirtland grew with unrelenting success.

In due time, under the direction of the Prophet Joseph Smith, the headquarters of the Mormon Church was transferred to Kirtland. Soon other New York members followed. Although conversions continued in increasing numbers, Mormonism proved to be unpopular with the masses in Ohio. The religious beliefs of this people set them apart from Christian orthodoxy. Their belief in active revelation, spiritual gifts, the Book of Mormon, a gathering to Zion, and the imminent second coming of Christ preceded by disastrous events, caused others to ridicule members of the Church.

At the outset, the Mormons in Ohio had trouble with some of their members who did not understand the doctrines of the Church, and with some who engaged in spiritual and hysterical excesses. Outlandish practices of some of the early converts became the subject of scorn and ridicule. Such unseemly conduct and undisciplined zeal, coupled with Joseph Smith's claim to a divine calling, was responsible for much of the negative public opinion of Mormonism. Hence, sensational stories about Joseph Smith and the Mormons were circulated throughout the Western Reserve and beyond. Likewise, events that could be even remotely identified with the Saints or their practices were often publicized as "Mormonism."

The Latter-day Saints, however, did not shun what they believed were legitimate spiritual manifestations, for they believed that some manifestations were signs of faithfulness from a loving God. Smith, particularly, was criticized for his claims of revelation and he was often called a deluder and

deceiver. The disbelieving public, therefore, was not inclined to place great confidence in the Mormons.

Thus, in the 1830's, Mormonism was an emerging religion; it was in a developmental stage. The communication of new ideas from Joseph Smith to his people resulted in the apostasy of some early converts. Excuses for apostasy resulted from various objections: the inception and administration of a new church economic law--Consecration and Stewardship; the failings of some to invoke the new Church law of health prompted others to react negatively to the new faith; disappointments emerging as a result of the personal weaknesses of Church leaders, and a host of individual reasons that spread doubt, discord, and disbelief on the part of many, caused others to apostatize.

Among the early dissidents from the faith, who became cardinal opponents to its cause, were Ezra Booth, Symonds Rider, Joseph Wakefield, and Philastus Hurlburt. These men associated with anti-Mormon elements in Kirtland or in their own respective communities after their apostasy and alerted the public mind to what they called "deceptions" and "delusions" of the growing faith. In addition to writing and speaking, they organized or influenced the organization of mobs and committees to take concerted action against what they believed was the increasing menace of Mormonism. Many others who opposed Joseph Smith's restoration movement added to the growing contempt for the Latter-day Saints.

The defensive and aggressive action taken by Alexander Campbell and the clergy of his church, also contributed to the increasing anti-Mormon sentiment. Likewise, the role of Eber D. Howe, editor of the Painesville Telegraph, was an important element in perpetuating the anti-Mormon feeling in Geauga County and elsewhere. Countless others entered the arena of opposition

to the Church for economic, political, and social reasons.

By the end of 1833, conditions gravitated to an all-time low for the Church. The Mormons in Missouri, where a center for the New Jerusalem had been established, were forced to flee from their settlements in Jackson County. Due to the efforts of the dissenters and the Ohio anti-Mormon community, the Saints in Kirtland were also facing a threat which they feared might force them to withdraw as well. At the beginning of 1834, the Saints were the object of a decidedly unpopular public image. After the attack on Smith and Rigdon in Portage County in 1832, guards were frequently placed near the homes of these leaders. Mob elements threatened attacks against the Mormons in Kirtland and, on one occasion, fired a cannon over the community to terrorize the inhabitants. In 1833, the Saints had begun the building of a large stone temple in Kirtland which mob forces threatened to destroy. Defense of the newly constructed parts of the temple was necessary to insure its safety. Such terrorizing continued through the year 1835.

In addition to the peculiar religious views held by Latter-day Saints, other factors influenced the actions of the anti-Mormons. The practice of gathering new converts to Kirtland was viewed as an economic hazard to the residents of the township. Economic resistance followed. Some Saints were ordered out of the township. Some were denied employment, while others were prevented by local merchants from purchasing various goods. The Saints, however, attempted to improve their economic welfare in Kirtland through the construction of buildings and the establishment of a mercantile center.

Since the Latter-day Saints did not confine their interests and activities to theological matters, conflict also arose in the Western Reserve between the Whigs and the Mormons, due to the Mormon support of the Democratic party. Since the Mormons believed that the Whigs were challenging their loyalty to the national government, they strengthened their ties with the Democrats; published a weekly political newspaper, the Northern Times; and issued an official statement upholding governments in general. The Mormons were avid adherents of a free society supported by an unburdening federal facility. Local Whigs resented the Mormon political growth and foresaw a significant potential Mormon power in Geauga County which might spread throughout the Reserve. The Whig press, therefore, spoke against the Mormons, and possibly individuals, such as Grandison Newell, took action against Joseph Smith partially for political reasons.

Other factors influenced the antagonists. Rumors were circulating concerning a curious Mormon marriage experiment. Moreover, Mormons were criticized for solemnizing civil marriages without the proper license, and were incorrectly identified during this period with the Masons, who were grossly unpopular in the Western Reserve.

Conditions had improved by ⁸1836, however, both from within and from without the Church. By this time, adversities created by an enemy and by dire economic conditions had declined. It appeared that a greater day was about to dawn upon the Mormon community.

In the latter part of 1836, Church leaders planned to establish a Mormon bank, pending the authorization by the state legislature. Since the legislature did not grant a bank charter, a stock company, the Kirtland Anti-Banking Company, was established in January, 1837. Joseph Smith and

Sidney Rigdon, as its chief officers, anticipated a great future for the firm in strengthening the economy of the Kirtland people, as well as the Church in general. The public press was antagonistic to the Mormon operation and cautioned the public against it. Some newspapers in the Western Reserve alleged that deceivers in religion would also resort to deception and dishonesty in banking matters. At the same time that this financial institution issued bank bills, there was an increase of land values and unemployment declined. A general air of prosperity caused a false sense of security to overcome many of the Saints. This false prosperity motivated some to reach for greater wealth. Expediency governed the actions of some, instead of Christian brotherhood. An unwarranted pride coupled with extensive credit buying placed many of the Mormons in an unsound financial situation. By the spring of 1837, the effects of a devastating financial panic crippled the Kirtland economy.

The Prophet, who had lead some to believe that the bank could grow into a significant national institution, was held responsible for much of the economic discontent. The bank, instead of expanding and growing strong, refused specie payment and was in jeopardy of ruin. Meanwhile, an accusation of embezzlement was made by the Prophet against Warren Parrish, a teller in the bank. Finally, when officials ignored recommended administrative policies, Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon resigned, and the bank became a financial failure. Considerable animosity toward Joseph Smith developed among the Saints, including a number of the most prominent leaders in the Church, such as President Frederick G. Williams, Apostles Lyman E. Johnson, Luke S. Johnson, John F. Boynton, and the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon.

Although vexatious legal proceedings had plagued the Prophet Joseph throughout his years in Kirtland, law suits involving the Mormon leader increased in 1837. His antagonists summoned him into court on various charges. Usually he was acquitted, but occasionally he was fined nominal fees on trivial matters. Yet, the expense in time and attorney's fees added to his burden. The most dramatic of these distressing suits was the accusation of Grandison Newell that Smith was an accomplice in an attempt on his life. The Mormons disliked Newell for uttering threats against them in 1835; and Newell detested the Mormon leader because Joseph advocated peculiar religious concepts and advanced political and economic programs that conflicted with Newell's interests.

These conflicts, however, were less disturbing than those caused by the disloyalty of the Church members. Attempts were made from within to overthrow Smith from his Church leadership. Struggles in the temple were witnessed, and slander and accusations by the Church members in the homes and on the streets against their Prophet were observed. Upon his return from a trip to Missouri in the fall of 1837, Smith found conditions in Kirtland unbearable. Warren Parrish and a group of fellow dissenters who had withdrawn from the Church established an organization representing the "old standard" and alleged that Joseph Smith, Jr., was a fallen prophet. In January, 1838, after members of the Parrish group contended against the Prophet, Joseph fled permanently from Kirtland.

When persecution in the form of law suits, attempted home burnings, and plots to incriminate innocent people intensified, many Saints prepared to leave. During the winter and early spring of 1838, many families and small parties left Kirtland for more promising homes among the Saints in Missouri. Many of the poorer Church members, however, remained in Kirtland

unable to equip themselves to leave. Their state of poverty was reviewed by the Quorum of Seventy which resolved to travel to Missouri as a quorum, assisting all needy Church members remaining in Kirtland.

Extensive arrangements were made by the Seventies Quorum during the spring; finally on July 6, 1838, a company of Mormon emigrants consisting of over five hundred Saints--known as the Kirtland Camp--departed from their homes and property in Kirtland. The Camp was plagued by many of the same factors that distressed the Church in Kirtland--ridicule from without and discord from within. Eventually, after spending three months on the road, the Camp arrived at Adam-ondi-Ahman, Missouri, in October. Other emigrants from Ohio had preceded them, and when members of this Camp arrived at their destination, seeds of discord between the Mormons and the Missourians had been sown.

If certain measures taken by the Mormons in Missouri were unwise, they, at least, were more understandable in light of the events in Kirtland. Some of the Ohio dissenters carried their resentments and animosities to Missouri. The memory of abuse and mistreatment of the Church officials during the Kirtland era thus undoubtedly prompted some unwise actions in Missouri. Therefore, the events which occurred in Kirtland served as a prelude to a more intense persecution. That historical prelude is another justification for this study; for shortly after the emigrants from Kirtland arrived in Missouri, the great Missouri conflict commenced.

APPENDIX A

ADDRESS

"That our principles may be fully known we here state them briefly:

We believe in God, and his Son Jesus Christ. We believe that God, from the beginning, revealed himself to man; and that whenever he has had a people on earth, he always had revealed himself to them by the Holy Ghost, the ministering of angels, or his own voice.

We do not believe that he ever had a church on earth without revealing himself to that church: consequently, there were apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, in the same.

We believe that God is the same in all ages; and that it requires the same holiness, purity, and religion, to save a man now, as it did anciently; and that He is no respecter of persons, always has, and always will reveal himself to men when they call upon him:

We believe that God has revealed himself to men in this age, and commenced to raise up a church preparatory to his second advent, when he will come in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

We believe that the popular religious theories of the day are incorrect; that they are without parallel in the revelations of God, as sanctioned by him; and that however faithfully they may be adhered to, or however zealously and warmly they may be defended, they will never stand the strict scrutiny of the word of life.

We believe that all men are born free and equal, that no man, combination of men, or government of men, have power or authority to compel or force others to embrace any system of religion, or religious creed, or to use force or violence to prevent others from enjoying their own opinions, or practicing the same, so long as they do not molest or disturb others in theirs, in a manner to deprive them of their privileges as free citizens-- or of worshiping God as they choose, and that any attempt to the contrary is an assumption unwarrantable in the revelations of heaven, and strikes at the root of civil liberty, and is a subversion of all equitable principles between man and man.

We believe that God has set his hand the second time to recover the remnant of his people Israel; and that the time is near when he will bring them from the four winds, with songs of everlasting joy, and reinstate them upon their own lands which he gave their fathers by covenants.

And further: We believe in embracing good wherever it may be found; of proving all things, and holding fast that which is righteous.

This in short, is our belief, and we stand ready to defend it upon its own foundation, when ever it is assailed by men of character and respectability. And while we act upon these broad principles, we trust in God that we shall never be confounded.

Neither shall we wait for opposition; but with a firm reliance upon the justice of such a course, and the propriety of disseminating a knowledge of the same, we shall endeavor to persuade men to turn from error and vain speculation; investigate the plan which was devised for our salvation; prepare for the year of recompense, and the day of vengeance which are near, and thusly be ready to meet the Bridegroom."¹

¹Oliver Cowdery, "Address," Messenger and Advocate, I, No. 1 (October, 1834), pp. 1-2.

APPENDIX B

Nancy Towle, a free-lance evangelist, who had experience in both Europe and America visited Kirtland, Ohio, in September, 1831, from Boston with the designed intention of observing the Mormons and their beliefs. She published the following year an account of her experiences and reactions which are herein quoted.

"To the State of Ohio, I desired to go, however: from other considerations than this her poor health. A very singular people (both of origin and practice,) had attracted my attention: whose particular place of gathering, at this time, was there. I had heard much of the people: and in many places, the excitement I found considerable in their favor; but many were halting between two opinions, respecting them; and wishing to be informed. What I had learned, I imagined, if real, was of no small moment, either to myself or others. But if not, the things should be duly investigated, (even of such as were skillful to discern,) and exposed as a warning to those, who were liable to founder, upon the same quicksands. My first impression of them, was, that they were a deluded people; and their writings, were a long time at my side, before I thought them worthy of my notice.-- Wherefore, on seeing some of my acquaintance, if an error, carried away of that error; I began to think it high time, to look into the things, and to know for myself, what that error was.

Accordingly I took the steam-boat in company with Elizabeth, and we travelled down the Lake, and landed at Painesville, (Ohio). From thence we went directly to Kirtland, where we met with the people, referred to above; and were entertained of E. Marsh, from the city of Boston. Just as we reached the place, (which appeared providential), all of their chief Elders arrived home: so that we had every opportunity of informing ourselves respecting them, which was desirable. As there are few, comparatively, who have had any knowledge of the Sect, so recently arisen, I will here take the liberty to subjoin some brief hints, in regard to, both them, and their persuasion. The following three pages contains an account of the origin and teachings of the Book of Mormon, which is not included here. The text continues near the end of that account.

They believe, according to the Book: 'That a day of great wrath, is bursting upon all the kindreds of the earth; and that, in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, alone, shall be deliverance in that day,' (even in the land, which the Lord Jesus had given to them, for a dwelling-place, and an everlasting possession.) The place where they then had their stay, was not the 'Land of Promise;' but that, lay, on the western boundary of the State Missouri. In which place, they were then assembling; and where they believed

that in process of time, they should have a temple; and a city, of great magnificence, and wealth; and that shortly, they should increase, and tread down all their enemies, and bruise them beneath their feet. After which period, Christ Jesus should descend, and reign with them, personally, 1000 years upon the earth. And then their enemies should be loosed for a season, for, as one said to me, for the space of three months, when, should take place, the General Judgment; and the final consummation of all created things.'

These things, accordingly, they had prevailed on some thousands to believe. Of their numbers, I found, ministers, of different persuasions; and some, it appeared, who had once been eminent for piety. I found, also, many men, of both influence and wealth. Husbands, who had left their wives; and wives, that had left their husbands.-- Children, that had left their parents; and parents, their children,--that they might be 'accounted worthy,' as they said, 'to escape all the things that should come to pass; and to stand before the Son of Man.'

On the evening that we arrived, they had a meeting for searching hearts; which we, were too weary, to attend. The next day, which was the Sabbath, we had the privilege of going to hear them; but they allowed us to say nothing. We were present, at their communion season; also by the river side, where the ordinance of baptism, was administered. Thus, through all their exercises, I had followed them for one day, with the strictest scrutiny, and I wished to be away. I had travelled the world extensively; and had a chance of visiting some, of almost every religious fraternity; (at least within the bounds, of the United States) and I now, thought myself prepared to say to Mormonism, 'That it was one of the most deep-concerted-plots of Hell, to deceive the hearts of the simple that had ever come, within the limits of my acquaintance.'

As a people, howbeit, in common with the world, I will do them the justice to say, I saw nothing indecorous; nor had I, any apprehension, of anything of the kind. But in their public performances, I no more looked upon them, as sanctioned by the Lord of Hosts, than if, they had merely intended, to mimic the work of the Lord. Rather, to the contrary, I viewed the whole, with the utmost indignation and disgust; and as a mere profanation and sacrilege of all religious things.

I really viewed it strange that so many men of skill; should be thus duped of them. I pitied, and loved them too; believing that many, had actually intended, forsaking all for Christ. 'But, if Christians,' is the question, 'how came they to be the votaries of such 'cunningly devised fables' as these.' I answer 'By not adhering strictly, to the rule-of-life, which God had given; as they should have done: thus, in the hour of temptation, they were left to believe a lie; although I believe, they may be saved at last--yet so, as by fire.'

Having, by this time understood, that they could neither flatter, nor frighten us to their belief; they then undertook by threats, if possible to drive us thereto: and said, one

Phelps. 'You are in the gall of bitterness, and the strong bonds of iniquity: and I have authority to say to you; 'You shall not be saved, unless you believe that Book.'

Ans. 'If I had the Book Sir, I would burn it!'

And permit me, in return to prophecy respecting yourself. You will go away, into your Zion; (as you term it) and you will very shortly find, your faith to fail you. Then, you will reel and stagger as a drunken man; and as a bullock, unaccustomed to the yoke, you will run to and fro: your substance, at length, is wasted: your System of Doctrine, has come to the ground: your family is in wretchedness; and your children around you, crying for bread! Then you will be glad, though in disgrace, to return to the place, from whence you had come out.

Harris. 'I, have authority to say to you--You shall not enjoy, the comforts of God's grace, until you believe that book!'

Ans. 'You look like an artful, designing, man: and I think you mischievous enough, to be the inventor, of that plot!'

Har. 'I should be willing to bear, all the sins of the human family, beyond the grave--if these things, are not so!'

Rigdon. 'You are in the gall of bitterness, and the bond of iniquity. You never were, 'born again' You never were called, to preach the Gospel. And all, that you have ever done in the world, was mischief.'

Ans. 'The Lord of Heaven, knows the man, to be a liar!'

Ques. 'Mr. Smith,--Can you, in the presence of Almighty God, give your word upon oath--that, an Angel from Heaven, shewed you the place, of those Plates;--and that, you took the things, contained in that Book, from those plates: and at the direction of the Angel, you returned the Plates, to the place, from whence you had taken them?'

Ans. 'I will not swear at all!'

Upon this, being about to leave the place, he turned to some women and children in the room; and lay his hands upon their heads; (that they might be baptized of the Holy Ghost;) when, Oh! cried one, to me, 'What blessings, you do lose!--No sooner, his hands fell upon my head, than I felt the Holy Ghost, as warm water, to go over me!'

But I was not such a stranger, to the spirit of God, as she imagined; that I did not know its effects, from that of warm water! and I turned to Smith, and said, 'Are you not ashamed, of such pretensions? You, who are no more, than any ignorant, plough-boy of our land! Oh! blush, at such abominations! and let shame, cover your face!'

He only replied by saying, 'The gift, has returned back again, as in former times, to illiterate fishermen.' So he be got off, as quick as he could. He recollected himself, wherefore, and returned to pass the compliment of 'Good-by.' A good-natured, low-bred, sort of a chap; and that seemed to have force enough, to do no one, any harm. Another, of their Elders threatened, to put us off the ground; and that he would have no more such blasphemy there. I said, 'Sir, you need not trouble yourself to do that; we will go without: we were invited to this place, by the woman of the house; and did not think of being carried out, by any other person.'

We attended a meeting of Presbyterians, on Monday evening; and were invited to join them, in prayer and exhortation: that we accordingly did, with a degree of satisfaction. Two, christian people came in, the next morning, and invited us to Perry; to which place we rejoiced to go, believing that God had sent them.

As we left the Mormonites, (for so they are called,) a number of families, started for the 'Promised-Land.' One turned to us, with much apparent animation, and said, 'We are now going to that Land, which is to be our dwelling-place, forever-more!' And they renewed their charge to us; that if we could not see with them; to be careful, and not to oppose them. I returned, 'I shall think it duty, to speak and write against you, wherever I may go!'

At Perry, I spoke in a school-house, where all seemed to hear with much surprise. Next night, I spoke at the Methodist Chapel in Painesville. There we found some husbands and wives at variance, about Mormonism: the one, detesting such a mass of absurdities--(or rather the evils resulting therefrom;) had burned the Book; while the other, wished to unite with the people, and held the same as sacred. I now rejoiced that I could give them such advice--if heeded, as would prevent the unhappy division; (if not the ruin of themselves,) before it was too late: and I now understood more especially, why duty had led me hither. Because, as I found, here were many staggered at these things; that dared not for their lives oppose them; neither did they dare embrace them. While they were threatened with destruction, in case they did not: for example as myself had been, and that were rejoiced, to meet with any one, from whom they could hear, the right side of the question.

From the consideration, that not only these, but many others over the world, (even as far as they, or their writings might have extended,) were liable to be carried away of the same delusion; I therefore, have been the more particular here, in my remarks respecting them. So I now, leave my friendly reader, to think and act for himself: and I proceed with the account of my journeyings still, among many others, (though not to the same extent;) in divers ways 'deceiving and deceived.'¹

¹Nancy Towle, Vicissitudes Illustrated, (Charleston: James L. Burges, 1832), pp. 137-147.

APPENDIX C

Although Ezra Booth defected from the Mormon faith early in its history, he was an eye and ear witness to many things that occurred prior to his apostasy. Much of which he reported is corroborated by people in and out of the Church; it seems of value to record here his recital of some of the abnormal spiritual events of 1831 reviewed in his Letter III to Reverend Ira Eddy; the events during the June, 1831, conference which he attended reviewed in Letter IV; and his 1831 journey to Missouri reviewed in Letter VII.

Part I

EZRA BOOTH'S LETTER ON MORMONISM NO. III

Nelson, Portage Co. October 24, 1831.
Rev. and Dear Sir--

Mormonism has in part changed its character, and assumed a different dress, from that under which it first made its appearance on the Western Reserve. Many extraordinary circumstances which then existed, have vanished out of sight; and the Mormonites desire, not only to forget them, but wish to have forgotten, stand as the principal foundation of the faith of several hundred of the members of their church.

With the Wonders of Mormonism, or some of them, I design to occupy your attention in this letter; and I wish you to observe here, and hereafter remember, that the evidence by which all my statements are supported, is derived from my own experience and observation, or from the testimony of persons, who still adhere to Mormonism; and I hold myself responsible to any tribunal, whether on Earth or in Heaven, for the truth of what I write, or at least for an intention to write the truth, and nothing but the truth.

'Being carried away in the spirit,' and 'I know it to be so by the spirit,' are well known phrases, and in common use in the Mormonite church. We will first notice the gift of tongues, exercised by some when carried away in the spirit. These persons were apparently lost to all surrounding circumstances, and wrapt up in the contemplation of things, and in communicating with person /sic/ not present. They articulated sounds, which but few present professed to understand; and those few, declared them to be the Indian language. A merchant, who had formerly been a member of the Methodist society, observed, he had formerly traded with the Indians, and he knew it to be their dialect. Being myself present on some of these occasions, a person proffered his services as my interpreter, and translated these

sounds to me which were unintelligible, into the English language. One individual could read any chapter of the Old or New Testament in several different languages. This was known to be the case by a person who professed to understand those languages. In the midst of this delirium, they would, at times, fancy themselves addressing a congregation of their red brethren; mounted on a stump, or the fence, or from some elevated situation, would harrangue their assembly, until they had convinced and converted them. They would then lead them into the water, and baptize them, and pronounce their sins forgiven. In this exercise, some of them actually went into the water; and in the water, performed the ceremony used in baptizing. These actors assumed the visage of the savage, and so nearly imitated him, not only in language, but in gestures and actions, that it seemed the soul and body were completely metamorphosed into the Indians. No doubt was then entertained but that was an extraordinary work of the Lord, designed to prepare those young men for the Indian mission; and many who are still leaders of the church, could say, "they know it is the work of the Devil." Most of those who were the principal actors, have since apostatized, and the work is unanimously discarded by the church. The limits, which my want of time to write, as well as your want of patience to read compel me to prescribe for myself, will allow me only to touch on some of the most prominent parts of this newly-invented, and heterogeneous system.

A new method for obtaining authority to preach the Gospel was introduced into the church. One declared he had received a commission, directly from Heaven, written upon parchment. Another, that it was written upon the palm of his hand, and upon the lid of his Bible, 'c. Three witnesses, and they were formerly considered persons of veracity, testified, that they saw the parchment, or something like it, when put into the hands of the candidate. These commissions, when transcribed upon a piece of paper, were read to the church, and the persons who had received them, were ordained to the Elder's office, and sent out into the world to preach. But this also sunk into discredit, and experienced the fate of the former.

Visions, also, were in high credit, and sounded abroad as an infallible testimony in favor of Mormonism. The visionary, at times, imagined he saw the City of the new Jerusalem; unlocked its gate, and entered within the walls; passed through its various apartments, and then returned, locked the gate, and put the key into his pocket. When this tour was finished, he would entertain his admiring friends, with a detailed description of the Heavenly City.

The condition of the ten tribes of Israel since their captivity, unto the present time, has excited considerable anxiety, and given rise to much speculation among the learned. But after all the researches which have been made, the place of their residence has never been satisfactorily ascertained. But these visionaries have discovered their place of residence to be contiguous to the north pole; separated from the rest of the world, by impassable mountains of ice and snow. In this sequestered

residence they enjoy the society of Elijah the Prophet, and John the Revelator, and perhaps the three immortalized Nephites. By and by the mountains of ice and snow are to give way, and open a passage for the return of these tribes, to the land of Palestine.

About this time, the ministration of angels was supposed to be frequent in the church. The Heavenly visitants made their appearance to certain individuals; they seldom made any communication, but to gaze upon, with silent admiration.

Smith is the only one at present, to my knowledge, who pretends to hold converse with the inhabitants of the celestial world. It seems from his statements, that he can have access to them, when and where he pleases. He does not pretend that he sees them with his natural, but with his spiritual eyes; and he says he can see them as well with his eyes shut, as with, them open. So also in translating--the subject stands before his eyes in print, but it matters not whether his eyes are open or shut; he can see as well one way as the other.

You have probably read the testimony of the three witnesses appended to the Book of Mormon. These witnesses testify, that an angel appeared to them, and presented them the golden plates, and the voice of God declared it to be a Divine Record. To this they frequently testify, in the presence of large congregations. When in Missouri, I had an opportunity to examine a commandment given to these witnesses, previous to their seeing the plates. They were informed that they should see and hear these things by faith, and then they should testify to the world, as though they had seen and heard, as I see a man, and hear his voice: but after all, it amounts simply to this: that by faith or imagination, they heard the voice of the Lord.

Smith describes an angel, as having the appearance of 'a tall, slim, well built, handsome man, with a bright pillar upon his head.' The Devil once, he says, appeared to him in the same form, excepting upon his head he had a 'black pillar,' and by this mark, he was able to distinguish him from the former.

It passes for a current fact in the Mormon church, that there are immense treasures in the earth, especially in those places in the State of N. Y. from whence many of the Mormonites emigrated last spring; and when they came sufficiently purified, these treasures are to be poured into the lap of their church; to use their own language, they are to be the richest people in the world. These treasures were discovered several years since, by means of the dark glass, the same with which Smith says he translated most of the Book of Mormon. Several of these persons, together with Smith; who were unsuccessfully engaged in digging and searching for these treasures, now reside in this county, and from themselves I received this information.

Yours, affectionately,
EZRA BOOTH

Rev. I. Eddy.

Italics are mine, they were not in the original.

Part II

EZRA BOOTH'S LETTER ON MORMONISM NO. IV

Nelson, Portage Co. October 31, 1831.

Rev. and Dear Sir--

From the time that Mormonism first made its appearance upon the stage, until the grand tour to the Missouri, an expectation universally pervaded the Church, that the time was not far distant, when the deaf, the dumb, the maimed, the blind, &c, would become the subjects of the miraculous power of God, so that every defect in their systems would be entirely removed.

This expectation originated from, and was grounded upon a variety of premises, included in a number of commandments, or verbal revelations from Smith, or, as he is styled, 'the head of the Church.' As the 4th of June last, was appointed for the sessions of the conference, it was ascertained, that that was the time specified, when the great and mighty work was to be commenced, and such was the confidence of some, that knowledge superceded their faith, and they did not hesitate to declare themselves perfectly assured, that the work of miracles would commence at the ensuing conference. With such strong assurances, and with the most elevated expectations the conference assembled at the time appointed. To give if possible, energy to expectation, Smith, the day before the conference, professing to be filled with the spirit of Prophecy, declared that 'not three days should pass away, before some should see their Savior face to face.' Soon after the session commenced, Smith arose to harangue the conference. He reminded those present of the Prophecy, which he said 'was given by the spirit yesterday.' He wished them not to be overcome with surprise, when that event ushered in. He continued until by long speaking, himself and some others became much excited. He then laid his hands on the head of Elder White /sic/, who had participated largely in the warm feeling of his leader, and ordained him to the High Priesthood. He was set apart for the service of the Indians, and was ordained to the gift of tongues, healing the sick, casting out Devils, and discerning spirits; and in like manner he ordained several others; and these called upon White /sic/ to take the floor. White arose, and presented a pale countenance, a fierce look, with his arms extended, and his hands cramped backwards, the whole system agitated, and a very unpleasant object to look upon. He exhibited himself as an instance of the great power of God, and called upon those around him, 'If you want to see a sign, look at me.' He then stepped upon a bench, and declared, with a loud voice, he saw the Savior; and thereby, for the time being, rescued Smith's prophecy from merited contempt. It, however, procured White the authority to ordain the rest. So said the spirit, and so said Smith. The spirit in Smith selected those to be ordained, and the spirit in White ordained them. But the spirit in White proved an erring and a forgetful dictator; so much so, that some of the candidates felt the weight of his hands thrice, before the work was

rightly done. An other Elder, who had been ordained to the same office as White, at the bidding of Smith, stepped upon the floor. Then ensued a scene, of which you can form no adequate conception; and which, I would forbear relating, did not truth require it. The Elder moved upon the floor, his legs inclining to a bend; one shoulder elevated above the other, upon which the head seemed disposed to recline, his arms partly extended; his hands partly clenched; his mouth partly open, and contracted in shape of an italic O; his eyes assumed a wild and ferocious case, and his whole appearance presented a frightful object to the view of the beholder. 'Speak, brother Harvey' said Smith. But Harvey intimated by signs, that his power of articulation was in a state of suspense, and that he was unable to speak. Some conjectured that Harvey was possessed of the Devil, but Smith said, 'the Lord binds in order to set at liberty.' After different opinions had been given, and there had been much confusion, Smith learnt by the spirit, that Harvey was under a diabolical influence, and that Satan had bound him; and he commanded the unclean spirit to come out of him.

It now became clearly manifest, that 'the man of sin was revealed,' for the express purpose that the Elders should become acquainted with the devices of Satan; and after that they would possess knowledge sufficient to manage him. This, Smith declared to be a miracle, and his success in this case, encouraged him to work other, and different miracles. Taking the hand of one of the elders in his own, a hand which by accident had been rendered defective, he said, 'Brother Murdock, I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to straighten your hand;' in the mean while, endeavoring to accomplish the work by using his own hand to open the hand of the other. The effort proved unsuccessful; but he again articulated the same commandment, in a more authoritative and louder tone of voice; and while uttering with his tongue, his hands were at work; but after all the exertion of his power, both natural, and supernatural, the deficient hand returned to its former position, where it still remains. But ill success in this case, did not discourage him from undertaking another. One of the Elders, who was decripp'd in one of his legs, was set upon the floor, and commanded, in the name of Jesus Christ to walk. He walked a step or two, his faith failed, and he was again compelled to have recourse to his former assistant, and he has had occasion to use it ever since.

A dead body, which had been retained above ground two or three days, under the expectation that the dead would be raised, was insensible to the voice of those who commanded it to wake into life, and is destined to sleep in the grave, till the last trump shall sound, and the power of God easily accomplishes the work, which frustrated the attempts, and bid defiance to the puny efforts of the Mormonites.

Under these discouraging circumstances, the horizon of Mormonism gathered darkness and a storm seemed to hang impending over the church. The gloom of disappointed expectation, overspread the countenance of many, while they labored to investigate the cause of this failure. To add, if possible, to their mortification, a large assembly collected on the

Sabbath, in order to hear preaching. In the midst of the meeting, the congregation was dismissed by Rigdon, and the people sent to their homes. He was directed to do this, he said by the spirit. But it was generally believed, that he was directed solely by fear; and that he had mistaken the spirit of cowardice, for the spirit of the Lord. Several of the Elders stated that they 'felt the spirit to preach' to the congregation; and Rigdon felt the spirit to send the people home; such was the unity, which then prevailed among them.

You will doubtless say, can it be possible that the minds of men, and men who possess the appearance of honesty, can be so strangely infatuated, as still to adhere to a system, after it had occasioned so much agitation, and so much disappointment. One reason which can be assigned for this, is the adherents are generally inclined to consider the system so perfect, as to admit of no suspicion; and the confusion, and disappointment, are attributed to some other cause. Another, and principal reason is, delusion always affects the mind with a species of delirium, and this delirium arises in a degree, proportionate to the magnitude of the delusion. These men, upon other subjects, will converse like other men; but when their favorite system is brought in to view, its inconsistencies and contradictions are resolved into inexplicable mystery; and this will not only apply to the delusions now under consideration, but in my view, to every delusion from the highest to the lowest; and it matters not whether it carries the stamp of popularity, or its opposite.

Yours affectionately,
EZRA BOOTH.

Rev. I. Eddy.

Part III

Letter VII is the largest of Booth's letters printed in the Ohio Star because it contains an extensive letter he wrote to Bishop Edward Partridge in Missouri attempting to dissuade Partridge from Mormonism. In it Booth reviewed a number of the events the two of them experienced during their trip to Missouri with the Prophet Joseph and other elders during the summer of 1831. Accordingly, it would seem that Booth could only benefit by a correct review of those events with Partridge; this fact would lend credibility to his letter. Naturally, Booth's interpretation of the events were personal and were not necessarily the conclusions drawn by others who observed the same set of circumstances.

EZRA BOOTH'S LETTER ON MORMONISM NO. VII

Nelson, Portage Co. November 21, 1831.
Rev. and Dear Sir--

The following, with but little variation, is the copy of a letter which was written to the Bishop of the Mormonite Church, who, by commandment, has received his station, and now resides in Missouri. His business is to superintend the secular concerns of the church. He holds a deed of the lands, and the members receive a writing from him, signifying, that they are to possess the land as their own, so long as they are obedient to Smith's commandments. The Bishop is, in reality, the Vicegerent of Smith, and those in collusion with him; and holds his office during their will and pleasure. I think him to be an honest man as yet, but there is a point beyond which he cannot go, unless he prostitutes his conscience to the vilest of purposes. He has frequently staggered and been ready to fall. The Conference last year gave him a tremendous shock, from which, with difficulty, he recovered. The law of the Church enjoins, that no debt with the world shall be contracted. But a thousand acres of land in the town of Thompson, could be purchased for one half its value, and he was commanded to secure it; and in order to do it, he was under the necessity to contract a debt with the world, to the amount of several hundred dollars. He hesitated but the command was repeated, 'you must secure the land.' He was one of the number, who was ordained to the gift of discerning spirits; and in a commandment, a pattern was given by which the good spirit might be distinguished from the bad, which rendered the gift of spiritual discernment useless; for the division was to be made from external appearances, and not from any thing discovered internally. He saw the impropriety, and it shook his faith. I am suspicious the time is not far distant, when by commandment, this office will be bestowed upon a more trusty and confidential person; perhaps Smith's brother or father, or some one who has been disciplined in the State of N. Y. Then it will become his business, to make over the whole property, by deed of conveyance, to the person appointed by commandment to supercede him. The Mormonites will tell you, that business of this nature is done by the voice of the church. It is like

this: a Sovereign issues his decrees, and then says to his subjects, hold up your right hands, in favor of my decrees being carried into effect. Should any refuse, they are sure to be hung for rebellion.

Sept. 20, 1831.

Mr. PARTRIDGE:

SIR: From a sense of duty, I take up my pen, to communicate to you the present impressions of my mind, which originated from facts, which occurred during my stay there, and while returning home. I arrived safely at my home on the 1st inst. after having passed thro a variety of scenes, some of which, I design to disclose to you in this letter. You will probably be surprised, when you learn, that I am no longer a member of the Mormonite church. The circumstances which led to this are numerous and of such a character, that I should have been compelled to sacrifice every principle of honesty, or cease to support a system, which I conceive to be grossly inconsistent, and in opposition to the best interests of human society. The first thing that materially affected my mind, so as to weaken my confidence, was the falsehood of Joseph's vision. You know perfectly well that Joseph had, or said he had, a vision, or revelation, in which it was made known to him by the spirit, that Oliver had raised up a large Church in Missouri.

The great Church was found to consist of three or four females. The night we took lodgings in the school-house, and the morning which succeeded it, presented circumstances which I had not anticipated. When you intimated to Joseph that the land which he and Oliver had selected, was inferior in point of quality to other lands adjoining, had you seen the same spirit manifested in me, which you saw in him, would you not have concluded me to be under the influence of violent passions, bordering on madness, rather than the meek and gentle spirit which the Gospel inculcates. When you complained that he had abused you, and observed to him, 'I wish you not to tell us any more, that you know these by the spirit when you do not; you told us, that Oliver had raised up a large Church here, and there is no such thing,' he replied, 'I see it, and it will be so.' This appeared to me, to be a shift, better suited to an imposter, than a true Prophet of the Lord. And from that time I resolved to weigh, well every circumstance; and I can assure you, that no one that has bearing on the subject, escaped my notice. But the spirit considered your insolence to Joseph too intolerable to be passed over unnoticed. Hence the commandment: 'If he repent not of his sins, which are unbelief and blindness of heart, let him take heed lest he fall. Behold his mission is given unto him, and it shall not be given again.' You are to be careful, to submit patiently to all the abuse which Joseph sees fit to pour upon you; and to swallow passively, all the spurious visions and false prophecies, that he in his erency thinks proper to bestow upon you, lest you fall from your Bishopric, never to regain it. These men under whose influence you act, were entire strangers to you, until you embraced this new system of faith. Now, permit me to

inquire, have you not frequently observed in Joseph, a want of the sobriety, prudence, and stability, which are some of the most prominent traits in the christian character? Have you not often discovered in him, a spirit of lightness and levity, a temper of mind easily irritated, and an habitual proneness to jesting and joking? Have you not repeatedly proven to your satisfaction, that he says he knows things to be so by the spirit, when they are not so? You most certainly have. Have you not reason then to believe, or at least to suspect, that the revelations which come from him, are something short of infallible, and instead of being the production of divine wisdom, emanate from his own weak mind? Some suppose his weakness, nay his wickedness, can form no reasonable objection to his revelations; and 'were he to get another man's wife, and seek to kill her husband, it could be no reason why we should not believe revelations through him, for David did the same.' So Sidney asserted, and many others concur with him in sentiment. The commandment we received to purchase, or make a water craft, directed us to proceed down the river in it as far as St. Louis, and from thence, with the exception of Joseph and his two scribes, we were to proceed on our journey home two by two. The means of conveyance being procured, we embarked for St. Louis, but unpropitious events rolled on, superceded the commandment, frustrated our plans, and we had separated before we had accomplished one half of the voyage. The cause which produced this disastrous result, was a spirit of animosity and discord, which made its appearance on board, the morning after we left Independence. The conduct of some of the Elders became very displeasing to Oliver, who, in the greatness of his power, uttered this malediction: 'as the Lord God liveth, if you do not behave better, some accident will befall you.' The manner in which this was handed out, evinced it to be the ebilution of a spirit, similar to that which influenced Joseph in the school-house. No accident however befell them until Joseph in the afternoon of the third day, assumed the direction of affairs on board of that canoe, which, with other matters of difference, together with Oliver's curse, increased the irritation of the crew, who, in time of danger, refused to exert their physical powers, in consequence of which, they ran foul of a sawyer, and were in danger of upsetting. This was sufficient to flutter the timid spirit of the Prophet and his scribe, who had accompanied him on board that canoe, and like the sea-tossed mariner, when threatened with a watery grave, they unanimously desired, to set their feet once more upon something more firm than a liquid surface; therefore, by the persuasion of Joseph, we landed before sunset, intending to pass the night upon the bank of the river. Preparations were made to spend the night as comfortably as existing circumstances would admit, and then an attempt was made, to affect a reconciliation betwixt the contending parties. The business of settlement commenced which elicited much conversation, and excited considerable feeling on both sides. Oliver's denunciation was brot' into view; his conduct and equipage, were compared to 'a fop of a sportsman;' he and Joseph were represented, as highly imperious and quite dictatorial; and Joseph and Sidney, were reprimanded for their excessive cowardice. Joseph seemed inclined to arm himself according to his usual custom, in case of opposition, with the judgment of God, for

the purpose of pouring them, like a thunder bolt upon the rebellious Elders; but one or two retorted, 'none of your threats!' which completely disarmed him and he reserved his judgment for a more suitable occasion. Finding myself but little interested, in the settlement, believing the principle of discord too deeply rooted to be easily eradicated, I laid myself down upon the ground, and in silence contemplated while the events of the evening, as they passed before me. These are the men to whom the Lord has intrusted the mysteries, and the keys of his kingdom; whom he has authorized to bind or loose on earth, and their decision shall be ratified in heaven. These are the men sent forth, to promulgate a new revelation, and to usher in a new dispensation--at whose presence the 'Heavens are to shake, the hills tremble, the mountains quake, and the earth open and swallow up their enemies.' These are the leaders of the Church and the only Church on earth the Lord beholds with approbation. Surely, I never witnessed so much confusion and discord, among the Elders of any other Church; nevertheless they are all doomed to a perpetual curse, except they receive the doctrines and precepts which Mormonism inculcates, and place themselves under the tuition of men, more ignorant and unholy than themselves. In the midst of meditations like these, I sunk into the arms of sleep, but was awakened at a late hour, to witness and consent to a reconciliation between the parties. The next morning, Joseph manifested an aversion to risk his person any more, upon the rough and angry current of the Missouri, and in fact, upon any other river; and he again had recourse to his usual method, of freeing himself from the embarrassments of a former commandment, by obtaining another in opposition to it. He succeeded according to his desires. A new commandment was issued, in which a great curse was pronounced against the waters, navigating them, was to be attended with extreme danger; and all the saints in general, were prohibited in journeying upon them, to the promised land. From this circumstance, the Missouri River was named the river of Destruction. It was decreed, that we should proceed on our journey by land, and preach by the way as we passed along. Joseph, Sidney, and Oliver, were to press their way forward with all possible speed, and to preach only in Cincinnati, and there they were to lift up their voices, and proclaim against the whole of that wicked city. The method by which Joseph and Co. designed to proceed home, it was discovered, would be very expensive. 'The Lord don't care how much money it takes to get us home' said Sidney. Not satisfied with the money they received from you, they used their best endeavors to exact money from others, who had but little compared with what they had; telling them in substance, 'you can beg your passage on foot, but as we are to travel in the stage, we must have money.' You will find sir, that the expense of these three men, was 1 hundred dollars more than three of our company expended, while on our journey home; and for the sake of truth and honesty let these men never again open their mouths, to insult the common sense of mankind, by contending for equality, and the community of goods in society, until there is a thorough alteration in their method of proceeding. It seems, however, they had drained their pockets, when they arrived at Cincinnati, for there they were under the necessity of pawning their trunk, in order to continue their journey home. Here they violated the commandment, by

not preaching; and when an inquiry was made respecting the cause of that neglect, at one time they said, they could get no house to preach in; at another time they stated, that they could have had the court-house, had they staid a day or two longer, but the Lord made it known to them, that they should go on; and other similar excuses, involving like contradictions. Thus they turn and twist the commandments, to suit their whims, and they violate them when they please with perfect impunity. They can at any time obtain a commandment suited to their desires, and as their desires fluctuate and become reversed, they get a new one to supercede the other, and hence the contradictions which abound in this species of revelation. The next day after we were cast upon the shore, and had commenced our journey by land, myself and three others went on board of a canoe, and re-commenced our voyage down the river. From this time a constant gale of prosperity wafted us forward, and not an event transpired, but what to our advance, until we arrived at our much desired homes. At St. Louis, we took passage in a steam-boat, and came to Wellsville; and from thence in the stage home. We travelled about eight hundred miles farther than the three who took their passage in the stage, and arrived at our homes but a few days later. It is true we violated the commandment by not preaching by the way, and so did they by not preaching at Cincinnati, but it seems that none of us considered the commandment worthy of much notice.

In this voyage upon the waters, we demonstrated that the great dangers existed only in imagination, and the commandment to be the offspring of a pusillanimous spirit. The spirit also revealed to Joseph, that 'on the steamboats, plots were already laid for our destruction.' This too we proved to be false. While descending the Missouri river, Peter and Frederick, two of my company, divulged a secret respecting Oliver, which placed his conduct on a parallel with Ziba's for which Ziba was deprived of his Elder and Apostleship: 'Let that which was bestowed upon Ziba, be taken from him, and let him stand as a member in the Church and let him labor with his own hands with the brethren.' And thus by commandment, poor Ziba, one of the twelve Apostles, is thrust down; while Oliver the scribe, also an Apostle, who had been guilty of similar conduct, is set on high, to prepare work for the press; and no commandment touches him, only to exalt him higher. These two persons stated, that had they known previous to their journey to Missouri, what they then knew, they never should have accompanied Oliver thither.

Sidney, since his return, has written a description of the land of Zion. But it differs essentially from that which you wrote; so much so, that either yours or his must be false. Knowing him to be constitutionally inclined to exaggerate, and suspecting that this habit would be as likely to preponderate, in his written as in his oral communications, you cautioned him against it. 'What I write will be written by the most infallible inspiration of the Holy Spirit,' said he, with an air of contempt. You must be careful sir, or it will again sound in your ears, 'if he repent not' for giving a false description of the land of Zion, let him take heed lest he fall from his office. This, Sidney said, was

one reason why you were not permitted to return to the State of Ohio. The want of time and paper notify me to bring this letter to a close. And now permit me to intreat you, to candidly view the whole matter, from the commencement unto the present time. Look at it with your own eyes, and no longer suffer these strangers to blind your eyes, and daub you over with their untempered mortar. Think how often you have been stumbled by these discordant revelations, false visions, and lying prophecies. Put into practice the resolutions you expressed to me the morning after the collision in the school-house, that you would go home, and attend to your own business. Transfer the lands you hold in your hands, to the persons whose money paid for it. Place yourself from under the influence of the men who have deceived you; burst asunder the bands of delusion; and fly for your life, fly from the habitations haunted by imposters; and having done this, you most surely will be glad and rejoice, and prove to your own satisfaction, as I have done, the falsity of Joseph's prophetic declaration, 'if you turn against us you will enjoy no more satisfaction in the world.' E. B.

Some things are intimated in the foregoing letter, which more properly belongs to Cowdery's mission to the Indians; and when I come to notice that mission, those things will, probably, be more fully exhibited.

It is also indirectly stated, that Rigdon has acquired the habit of exaggeration. The truth of this statement, I presume, will be doubted but by few, who have been long acquainted with him. Most of his communications carry the appearance of high and false coloring; and I am persuaded, that truth by his embellishing touch, often degenerates into fiction. I have heard him several different times, give a representation of the interview between himself, and to use his own phraseology, 'the far-famed Alexander Campbell. This man's wonted shrewdness and presence of mind forsook him when in the presence of this gigantic Mormonite; so much so, that 'he was quite confused and silly.' I will give you a specimen of the language, with which Rigdon said he assailed him: 'You have lied Alexander. Alexander you have lied. If you do not receive the Book of Mormon you will be damned.' With such like arguments he brow-beat his antagonist, until he had silenced and set him down, like the pusillanimous cur at the feet of his chastising master. 'You are a liar, you are a child of the Devil, you are an enemy to all righteousness, and the spirit of the Devil is in you,' and the like is dealt out profusely against an obstinate opponent, and especially, one whom they are pleased to nickname apostate. I regret the necessity I am under of making such statements, and could wish there had been no occasion for them. But truth compels me to it, and the good of society demands it.

Yours &c.
EZRA BOOTH

Rev. I. Eddy.

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- "Letter Number III," Ohio Star, II, No. 43 (October 27, 1831), n.p.
 "Letter Number IV," Ohio Star, II, No. 44 (November 3, 1831), n.p.
 "Letter Number VII," Ohio Star, II, No. 47 (November 24, 1831), n.p.

APPENDIX D

Letter of Joseph Smith, Jr., concerning the efforts of Alexander Campbell and his associates to impede the growth of Mormonism

"Kirtland, Ohio, September 24, 1834.

Dear Brother, -- Oliver Cowdery, editor of the Kirtland Evening and Morning Star

I have, of late, been perusing Mr. A. Campbell's 'Millennial Harbinger.' I never have rejoiced to see men of corrupt hearts step forward and assume the authority and pretend to teach the ways of God-- this is, and always has been a matter of grief; therefore I cannot but be thankful, that I have been instrumental in the providence of our heavenly Father in drawing forth, before the eyes of the world, the spirits by which certain ones, who profess to be 'Reformers, and Restorers of ancient principles,' are actuated! I have always had the satisfaction of seeing the truth triumph over error, and darkness give way before light, when such men were provoked to expose the corruption of their own hearts, by crying delusion, deception, and false prophets, accusing the innocent, and condemning the guiltless, and exalting themselves to the stations of gods, to lead blind fold men to perdition!

I have never been blessed, (if it may be called such,) with a personal acquaintance with Mr. Campbell, neither a personal interview; but the GREAT MAN, not unfrequently condescends to notice an individual of as obscure birth as myself, if I am at liberty to interpret the language of his 'Harbinger,' where he says, 'Joe Smith! Joe Smith! imposture! imposture!' I have noticed a strange thing. I will inform you of my meaning, though I presume you have seen the same ere this. Mr. Campbell was very layish, of his expositions of the falsity and incorrectness of the book of Mormon, some time since, but of late, since the publication of the Evening and Morning Star, has said little or nothing, except some of his back-handed cants. He did, to be sure, about the time the church of Christ was established in Ohio, come out with a lengthy article, in which he undertook to prove that it was incorrect and contrary to the former revelations of the Lord. Perhaps, he is of opinion that he so completely overthrew the foundation on which it was based, that all that is now wanting to effect an utter downfall of those who have embraced its principles is, to continue to bark and howl, and cry, Joe Smith! false prophet! and ridicule every man who may be disposed to examining the evidences which God has given to the world of its truth!

I have never written Mr. Campbell, nor received a communication from him but a public notice in his paper:--If you will give this short note a place in the Star you will do me a kindness, as I take this course

to inform the gentleman, that while he is breathing out scurrility he is effectually showing the honest, the motives and principles by which he is governed, and often causes men to investigate and embrace the book of Mormon, who might otherwise never have perused it. I am satisfied, therefore he should continue his scurrility; indeed, I am more than gratified, because his cry of Joe Smith! Joe Smith! false prophet, false prophet! must manifest to all men the spirit he is of, and serves to open the eyes of the people.

I wish to inform him further, that as he has, for a length of time, smitten me upon one cheek, and I have offered no resistance, I have turned the other also, to obey the commandment of our Savior; and am content to sit awhile longer in silence and see the great work of God roll on, amid the opposition of this world in the face of every scandal and falsehood which may be invented and put in circulation.

I am your brother in the testimony of the book of Mormon and shall ever remain

JOSEPH SMITH jr.

To Oliver Cowdery."

APPENDIX E

Richard Livesey, Methodist Episcopal minister of Winchendon, Massachusetts, in his pamphlet, Expose of Mormonism Being a Statement of Facts Relating to the Self-Styled "Latter Day Saints," and the Origin of the Book of Mormon maintained that Warren Parrish wrote to the Zion's Watchman March 6, 1838, and enclosed a copy of the letter Parley P. Pratt wrote to Joseph Smith May 23, 1837 for their publication. Livesey gives Warren Parrish's rendition of Parley P. Pratt's letter as follows: /

"The following is a true copy of the original:--Warren Parrish.
Kirtland, May 23rd, 1837

Pres. J. Smith, Jr.

Dear Brother,--As it is difficult to obtain a personal interview with you at all times, by reason of the multitude of business in which you are engaged, you will excuse my saying in writing what I would otherwise say by word of mouth.

Having long pondered the path in which we as a people, have been led in regard to our temporal management, I have at length become fully convinced that the whole scheme of speculation in which we have been engaged, is of the devil. I allude to the covetous, extortionary speculating spirit which has reigned in this place for the last season: which has given rise to lying, deceiving and taking advantage of one's neighbor, and in short, every evil work.

And being as fully convinced that you, and president Rigdon, both by precept and example, have been the principle means in leading this people astray, in these particulars, and having myself been led astray and caught in the same snare by your example, and by false prophesying and preaching, from your own mouths, yea, having done many things wrong and plunged myself and family, and others, well nigh into destruction, I have awoke to an awful sense of my situation, and now resolve to retrace my steps and get out of the snare, and make restitution as far as I can.

And now dear brother, if you are still determined to pursue this wicked course, until yourself and the church shall sink down to hell, I beseech you at least, to have mercy on me and my family, and others who are bound with me for those three lots (of land) which you sold to me at the extortionary price of 2000 dollars, which never cost you 100 dollars. For if it stands against me it will ruin me and my helpless family, as well as those bound with me: for yesterday president Rigdon came to me and informed me, that you had drawn the money from the bank, on the obligations which you held against me, and that you had left it to the mercy

of the bank, and could not help whatever course they might take to collect it; notwithstanding the most SACRED PROMISE on your part, that I should not be injured by those writings. I offered the three lots for the writings; but he wanted my house and home also.

Now, dear brother, will you take those lots and give me up the writings, and pay me the 75 dollars, which I paid you on the same? Or will you take the advantage of the neighbor because he is in your power? If you will receive this admonition of one who loves your soul, and repent of your extortion and covetousness in this thing, and make restitution, you have my fellowship and esteem, as far as it respects our dealings between ourselves.

But if not, I shall be under the painful necessity of preferring charges against you for extortion, covetousness, and taking advantage of your brother by an undue religious influence. For it is this kind of influence which led us to make this kind of trades in this society. Such as saying it was the will of God that lands should bear with such a price; and many other prophesyings, preachings and statements of a like nature.

Yours with respect,
P. P. Pratt"

Upon the foregoing letter receiving publicity in the Zion's Watchman Parley P. Pratt presented the following letter of apology in the Elders' Journal in behalf of his impetuous letter to Joseph Smith of May 23, 1837.

"Far West, Mo., August, 1838.

TO THE PUBLIC.

Whereas a certain letter has been published in the Zions Watchman, (and perhaps in other prints) derogatory of the character of Presidents J. Smith Jr., and S. Rigdon, purporting to come from me, I take this opportunity to correct the public mind concerning the matter.

Firstly, the letter as it stands in print, is not a true copy of the one I wrote; but is altered, so as to convey a different idea from the original.

But this much I acknowledge freely; that I did write a letter in great severity and harshness, censuring them both, in regard to certain business transactions but at the same time expressing my entire confidence in the faith of the church of Latter Day Saints the book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants; this letter was written under feelings of excitement, and during the most peculiar trials. I did not however believe at the time and never have believed at any time before, or since, that these men were dishonest or had wrong motives or intentions, in any of their

undertakings, either temporal or spiritual; I have ever esteemed them from my first acquaintance, as men of God, and as mighty instruments in his hands to bring forth, establish, and roll on the kingdom of God. But I considered them like other men, and as the prophets and apostles of old liable to errors, and mistakes, in things which were not inspired from heaven; but managed by their own judgment.

This letter was intended as a private admonition, it was never intended to be made public. But I have been long convinced, and have freely acknowledged both to these men and the public, that it was not calculated to admonish them in the spirit of meekness, to do them good, but rather to injure them and wound their feelings, and that I much regretted having written it, I have asked their forgiveness, and I hereby do it again. I no longer censure them for any thing that is past, but I censure myself for rashness, excitement, imprudence, and many faults which I would to God, that I had avoided. But this much I can say that the time past can only teach us to be more wise for the future. I close this communication by saying that from 1830 until now, I have had full confidence in the book of Mormon, the Revelations of God to Joseph Smith Jr., and I still esteem both him and President Rigdon, as men of the highest integrity, the most exalted principles of virtue and honor, and men who will yet be instruments in the Lord's hand to accomplish a work in which I shall esteem it the highest honor and the greatest blessing to bear some humble part.

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THE NATURE AND CAUSE OF INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL CONFLICT
OF THE MORMONS IN OHIO BETWEEN 1830 AND 1838

An Abstract of a Thesis

Submitted to

The Department of Graduate Studies in

The College of Religious Instruction

Brigham Young University

Provo, Utah

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Max H. Parkin

May, 1966

ABSTRACT

This study is designed to describe some of the causes of resistance to and internal conflicts in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Ohio during the period 1830 to 1838. It is also intended to specify some of the ways the anti-Mormon elements executed their disapproval of the Church and its members in Ohio during that time.

After the establishment of the Church by Joseph Smith, Jr., in New York in 1830, and its removal to Ohio in 1831, Mormonism was a ready subject of criticism and discord. Some of Mormonism's religious tenets--an active belief in revelation, in spiritual gifts, and the imminent advent of Christ--which invited expressions in radical extremes as well as in wholesome spiritual ways, soon became the fountainhead of slanderous stories, ridicule and fear. These expressions of extreme religious behavior were readily added to the primary objection to Mormonism--Joseph Smith's claim of being a modern prophet and his instrumentality in the restoration of the ancient order of Christianity. The zeal of its adherents and their determination to extend a voice of warning of forthcoming destructions spirited the proselyting elders to carry their beliefs to the towns and villages of the state with dispatch and sincerity, yet sometimes with intemperate fervor.

In addition to the peculiar religious differences that separated the Saints and Gentiles in Ohio, strife resulted from political and social factors. Mounting political discord was a significant factor in their conflict resulting in a Church political paper established to project the views

of the Democratic Mormons and defend themselves against the criticism of the Whig political party. Furthermore, the non-Mormon community complained against the burden of poverty the Saints inadvertently thrust upon them due to their immigration to Kirtland. Other objections existed, including reaction to a Mormon experiment in a modified economic communitarianism; the unlawful solemnizing of marriages; an accused Masonic affiliation; a rejection of the abolition movement; the threat of becoming an expanding political power in Geauga County; and an establishment of a Mormon bank, all of which influenced the conflict between Mormon and non-Mormon.

Not all who entered the new Church remained faithful to it. Many of the early converts readily found objections to its teachings, practices, or to the character and personality of its leaders. New converts left the Church and served as a nucleus to expose the alleged frauds and deceptions they observed in the new religion. The anti-Mormon element joined them, and a multiplicity of stories, articles, and books resounded through the country attempting to put a stop to Mormonism.

During 1837, internal conflict resulting from whisperings of a new marriage system, coupled with an abundance of accusations hurled at Joseph Smith resulting from the economic failings of the year, nearly destroyed the Church. The economic conflict resulted from speculation in lands, excessive credit buying, the failure of the Kirtland Bank, and the advent of the national economic panic that struck early that year. An attempt to overthrow Joseph Smith followed.

Resistance to the Mormons appeared in various forms, including economic boycotts, mob attacks, threatened mob interference on persons and property, vexatious law suits, neighborhood taunts and ridiculings, circulation of outlandish tales of intrigue and deception, identification of Joseph Smith and

the Mormons with those located on the religious lunatic fringe, and burning and attempted destruction of homes and property. As a result of the foregoing events, Joseph Smith and the Mormon people were forced to depart from Ohio during the first half of the year 1838.

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