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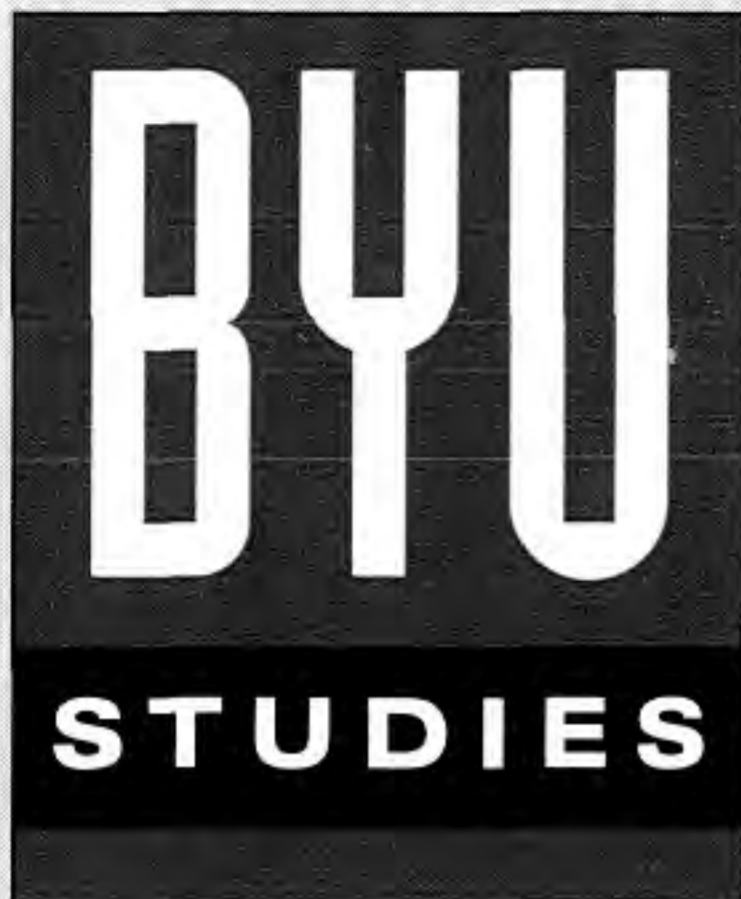
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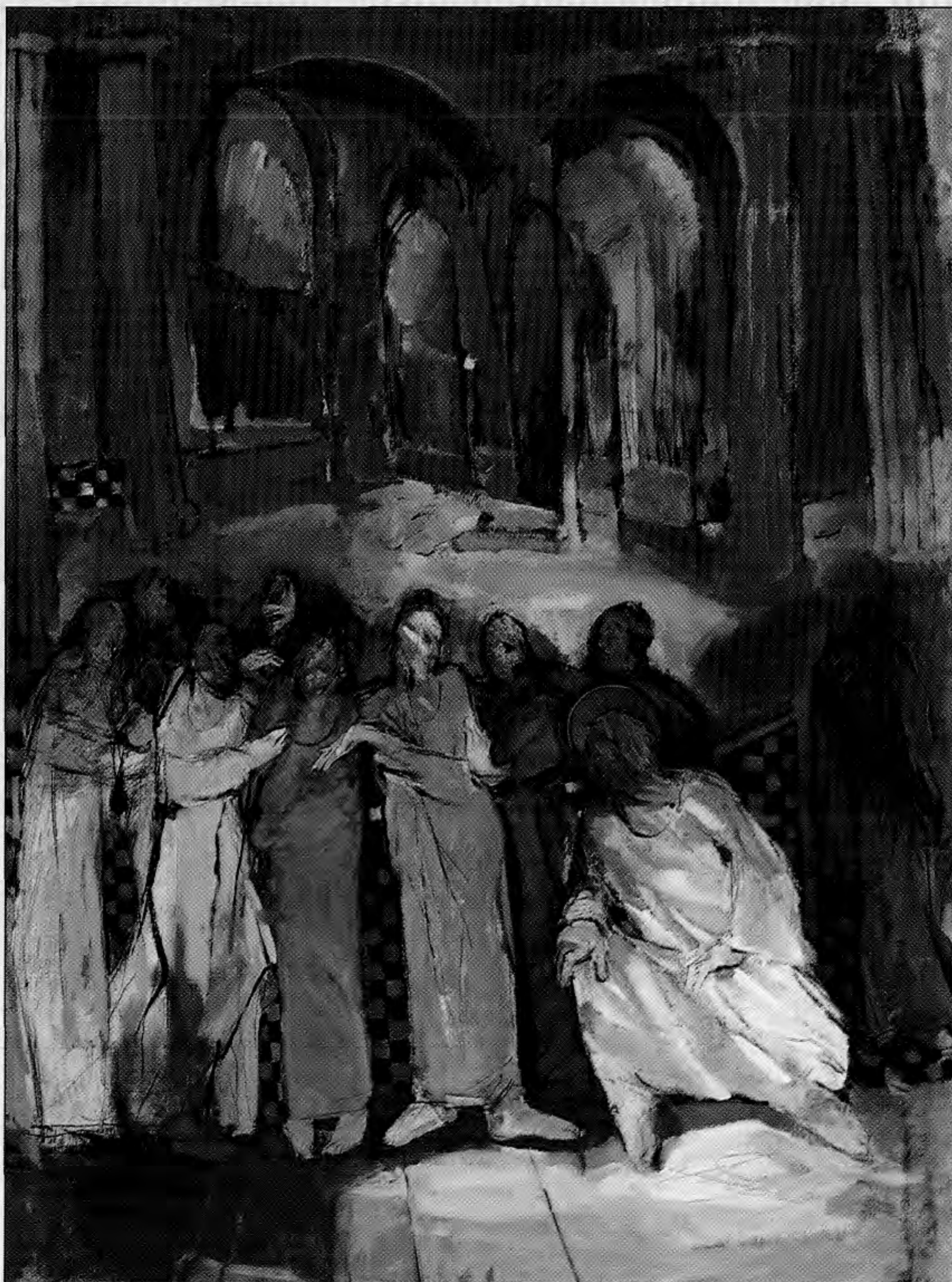
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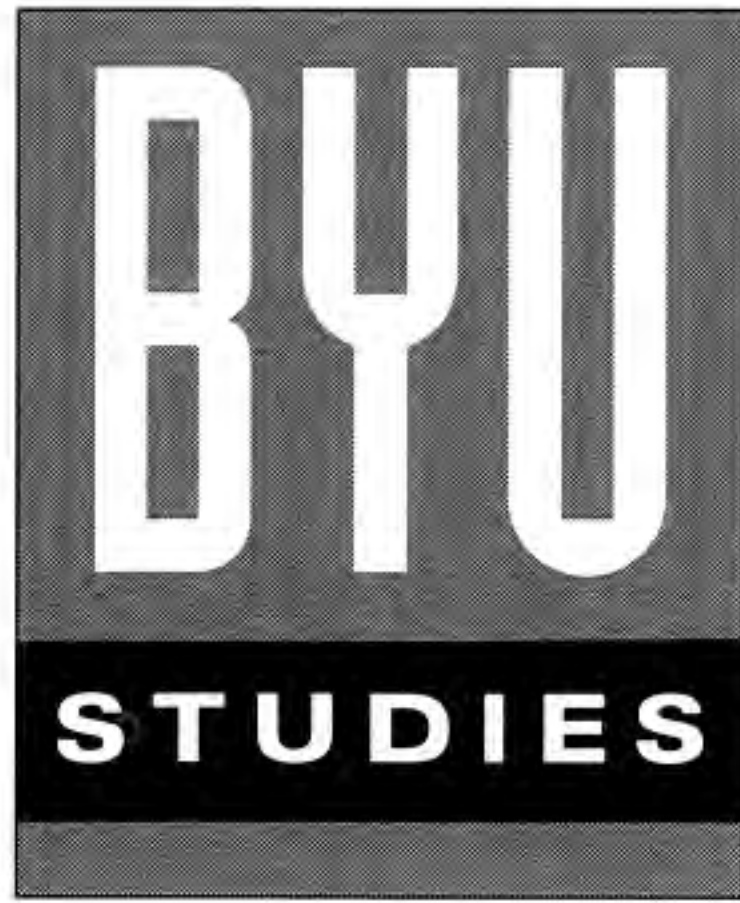
IS MORMONISM CHRISTIAN?

LESSONS FROM MORMON FOLKLORE

TALMAGE'S BRITISH CHILDHOOD

PHELPS'S 1835 LETTERS TO SALLY





A VOICE FOR
THE COMMUNITY OF
LDS SCHOLARS

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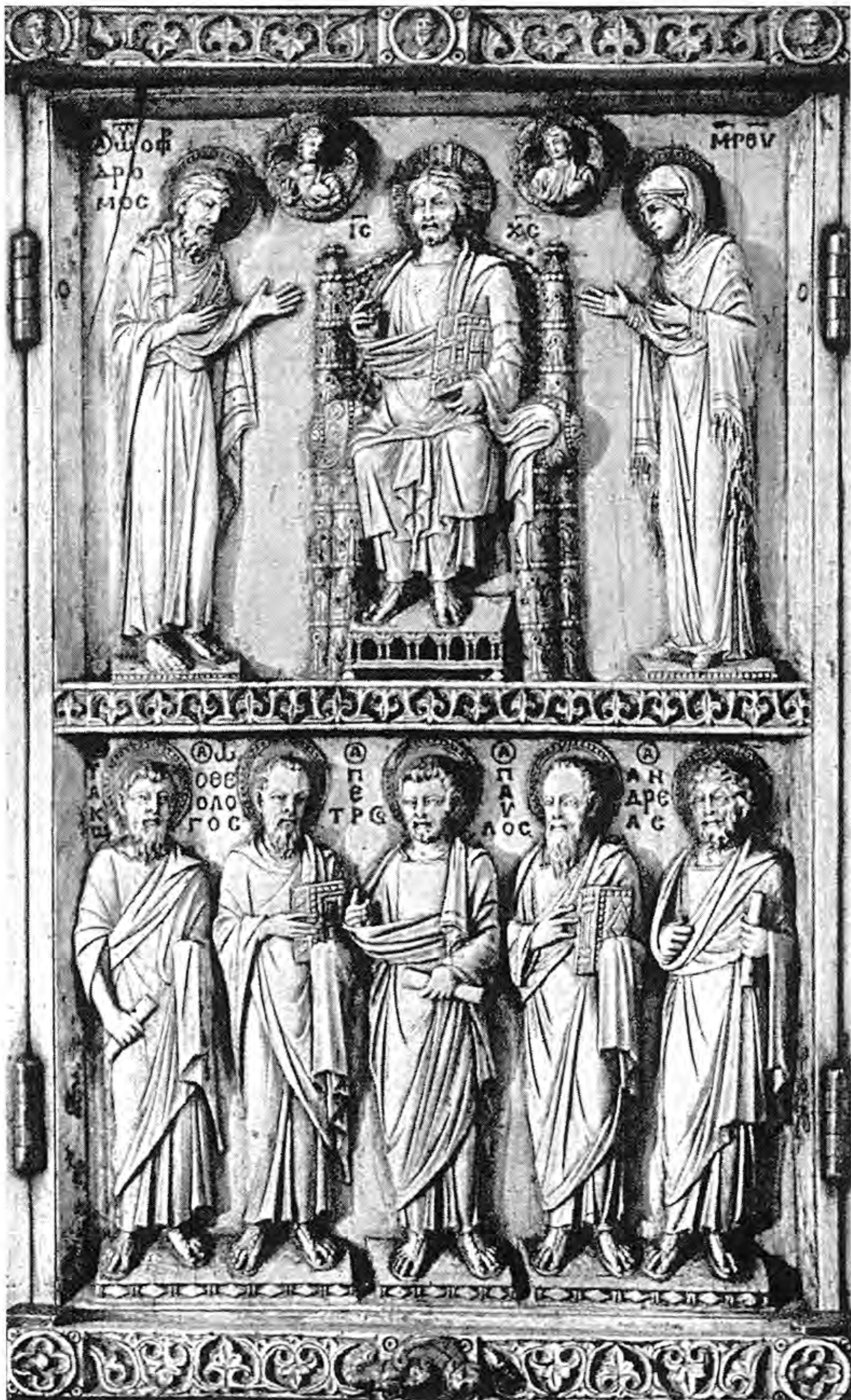
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The Harbaville Triptych, center panel. Late tenth century. In the upper scene, the enthroned Christ listens to the pleas of John the Baptist and the Virgin Mary. Five Apostles, including Peter, Paul, and Andrew, appear in the lower scene.

“Is Mormonism Christian?” Reflections on a Complicated Question

A noted scholar reflects on the roles that our names for ourselves and others have played in creating distinctive identities and in shaping perceptions of what constitutes a Christian religion.

Jan Shipps

Since I, a staunch member of the First United Methodist Church in Bloomington, Indiana, have been studying the Latter-day Saints for more than thirty years, it is perhaps not surprising that I am frequently asked whether Mormons are Christians and whether Mormonism is Christian. Put to me by journalists, academics, denominational bureaucrats, participants in adult forums in various local Protestant and Catholic churches, active Latter-day Saints, bona fide anti-Mormons, my students, and a variety of other interested persons, the query comes in both forms. But whatever the form, a forthright yes or no answer seems to be expected.

Because many people think the two questions are one and the same, inquirers are often startled when I respond by asking if they wish to know whether *Mormons* are Christians or whether *Mormonism* is Christian. Moreover, since their question, whatever its form, seems so straightforward to so many, inquirers are also surprised—and sometimes impatient—when I attempt to determine the framework within which the question is being asked. Yet before I can formulate a response, I must know both the substance of the question and its context.

The two queries are essentially the same if the inquirer's main concern is *analogical* (Is the LDS Church like the Presbyterian Church, for example, or are Mormons similar to Catholics?), *analytical* (How is Mormonism related to other forms of Christianity?), or *historiographical* (What have historians said about

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the connection between Mormonism and Christianity?). But if the framework for the inquiry is more theological and religious than theoretical and academic, these are not simply two versions of the same question. While they are obviously related, quite different theological propositions inhere in them. Inquirers who want to know whether Mormons are Christians signal their assumption that a divine determination is made about individuals on a case-by-case basis. The more usual query—"Is Mormonism Christian?"—presumes a divine economy in which redemption depends on an individual's membership in a *true* or *authentic* "body of Christ."

In order to discover whether an inquiry is more theological and religious than theoretical and academic, or vice versa, I respond to all inquiries about this issue with a series of counterqueries whose answers will allow me to determine what sort of question I have been asked. Does the inquirer wish to know, for example, whether some particular Mormon—say Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, Hugh Nibley, or William Dean Russell—is a Christian? Or is it a matter of whether some particular group of Mormons is Christian—say the members of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints or the Mormon fundamentalists in Colorado City?

Alternatively, is the question a normative one? Am I being asked whether Mormon theology is congruent with Christian theology; whether the institutional structure of the LDS (or RLDS) Church is sufficiently similar to the institutional structure of the Christian church in New Testament times to make it Christian; whether Mormon doctrine is compatible with Christian doctrine; or whether Mormon rituals and worship forms are comparable to Christian rituals and worship forms?

If the inquirer answers yes to any of these questions, I ask for more information about presuppositions that underlie the query: by what standard does the inquirer believe that individuals, organized groups of persons, or institutions are accorded status as Christians? Does one proceed in the Protestant fashion and look to the Bible, assuming that words speak for themselves? Or does one look to authority and tradition, as Catholics do, asking someone who, like the Pope, can speak *ex cathedra*? If not,

how about asking a prophet who can add “thus saith the Lord” to his or her words?

By responding to these queries with such counterqueries, I point to my conviction that definitive answers to normative questions assume the reality of discoverable norms (rules or sets of standards that can be authoritatively established). Within human communities, however, authority always rests on a base of cultural support. In the absence of a single source of authority whose nature is universally respected, I believe that humanity has to struggle along with provisional rules and standards. Thus, I conclude that definitive answers to normative questions are not forthcoming in the sort of pluralistic situation in which the contemporary world finds itself. All my years of study notwithstanding, if the question of whether Mormonism is Christian is a normative one, I do not presume to provide a normative answer.

But if an inquirer’s question is analogical, analytical, or historiographical, that’s different. These are questions I have addressed at length in much of what I have written. For example, the article I wrote for the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* dealt with the historiographical issue. It describes what historians have said about this matter from the middle of the nineteenth century, when Robert Baird erroneously classified Mormonism as a liturgical form of Protestantism—presumably something like Lutheranism—up to the recent renewal of old charges that Mormonism is a non-Christian cult.¹

I also provided my own classification in *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition*.² This book begins and ends with analogy. It opens with an observation that, just as the early Christians believed they had found the only proper way to be Jews, so the early followers of the Mormon Prophet believed they had found the only proper way to be Christians. It closes with my conclusion that the Mormonism of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is best understood as a form of corporate Christianity which is related to *traditional* Christianity—that is, the existing Protestantism, Catholicism, and Eastern Orthodoxy—in much the same way that early Christianity was related to Judaism. I did not say the same about the Mormonism of the

Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, since it appears to me that the recent experience of the “Josephites” demonstrates that when it loses zealous emphasis on “the restoration of all things” Mormonism can be classified as an idiosyncratic form of Protestantism.

In saying I am unwilling to provide normative answers when the framework of an inquirer’s question is theological or religious, I do not mean to say I am unwilling to confront this issue in a religious setting. From time to time, I am invited by various church groups to talk about the Mormons. (Since most Protestants have not caught up with recent changes in nomenclature, they nearly always speak of “the Mormons” rather than the Latter-day Saints.) When I accept such invitations, I am confronted with a real challenge—even if the members of the group that extended the invitation have not seen one of the *Godmakers* videos. While those who invite me to talk usually tell me that the Mormons are “really nice people” who “take care of their own” and “have a great choir,” most of them know very little about the Saints’ history (except that they practiced polygamy) and even less about Mormon doctrine or theology.

The task I set for myself in such situations is not merely connecting Mormonism to Christianity—after all, I am talking about a *church of Jesus Christ*. The task also involves showing how this connection “plays out,” on the one hand, in the Mormonism of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints headquartered in Salt Lake City and, on the other hand, in the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints headquartered in Independence, Missouri.

In so doing, I sometimes try to clarify the difference with a speculative comparison. In view of its emphasis on the restoration of all things, “Mountain Mormonism” could well be the sort of Christianity that might have developed if the outcome of the Jerusalem conference (Acts 15:1–30; Gal. 2:1–10) had favored St. Peter rather than St. Paul, that is, if potential converts to Christianity had been required to first become a part of the “chosen people.” “Missouri Mormonism,” on the other hand, may well signal what Christianity might have been without the conversion of Constantine

and the subsequent integration of religious and political authority. My point is that both are forms of Christianity, yet both differed from the Christianities that existed in 1830—and they still do.

As is well known, the extent of the difference was first manifested in a dramatic manner when the followers of the Mormon Prophet responded to the revelations to “gather” by establishing settlements in Kirtland, Ohio (where they built the first Mormon temple); in Independence, Far West, and elsewhere in Missouri; and in Nauvoo, Illinois.³ The very existence of these Mormon “kingdoms” set the Saints apart. This contrast was spectacularly intensified when a large body of Joseph Smith’s followers fled to the Intermountain West after the Prophet’s murder and there introduced the public practice of plural marriage.

Acceptance of the plural marriage principle, whether one adhered to it or not, became the most obvious testimony that the Saints who followed Brigham Young gave assent to a truly distinctive set of beliefs. It bound together the Saints who went west and provided them with a means of identification that kept them from being confused with members of the many other innovative Christian movements that originated in the United States in the nineteenth century.

For the “Josephites” and many of the other Saints who did not go west, plural marriage became a standard against which the reorganization could define itself. Proving that the practice was not part of Mormonism became important to them as a means of identification, as significant a negative marker for them as it was a positive marker for the “Brighamites.”

But if plural marriage told the LDS, whose church *prescribed* its practice, who *they* were and if it told the RLDS, whose church *proscribed* its practice, who *they* were, in Victorian America plural marriage told everyone else who the Mormons were not: if they practiced polygamy or even believed in its practice, they were not Christians.

The Mormon fundamentalists, who refuse to relinquish the practice of plural marriage, believe that the LDS Church jeopardized its birthright—its exclusive claim, its very *Mormon-ness*—when it surrendered the practice in response to pressures from

the U.S. government. I think they are wrong if they believe that the LDS Church renounced the essence of Mormonism by giving up plural marriage. However, it is possible that this renunciation could prove to have been an early signal pointing to an eventual relinquishing of enough of the LDS Church's distinctiveness to bring it into what some might call the traditional Christian fold. If something like that proves to be the case, I will obviously need to reexamine my interpretation of this movement as one that cannot be fully comprehended in Troeltchian categories.⁴ But that is a matter that will require another book, not just an essay.

What I want to do here is address the matter from another direction. I want to inquire how Mormonism is Christian by asking about the significance and implications of labeling and naming in the world of religion.

Teeming with an almost incredible variety of European immigrants superimposed on a much older Anglo-Dutch Yankee culture, New York City's Lower East Side in the early decades of the twentieth century produced what one might call a childhood *archetype* known as the "Dead End Kid." Familiar to aficionados of gangster movies of the 1930s and 1940s, a youngster of this ilk survived in the bewildering metropolitan milieu by becoming cocky, impudent, resourceful, and extremely suspicious.

No logical connection exists between those B-movie urban urchins and the matter of whether Mormonism is or is not Christian. Yet every time I try to organize my reflections on how the question of whether Mormonism is Christian has been answered across time, remembered snatches of dialogue from the films in which the Dead End Kids appeared keep occurring to me:

ADULT TO SCRUFFY-LOOKING PREADOLESCENT: What's your name, kid?

KID: Who wants ta know? *Or* What's it to ya?

For all that, the Dead End Kids were themselves always asking for the "monikers" of newcomers, a query which is not surprising since names were extremely important in that polyglot neighborhood. As in any polyethnic arena, names established identities,

determined boundaries, and sent encoded messages about how the members of one of these clusters of preadolescent first-generation Americans ought to treat the “new kids on the block” who came from different immigrant stocks.

The same principle holds for religion. Names matter; they matter a lot. For that reason, whenever people I do not know ask me if Mormonism is Christian, a little computer inside my head starts sorting out possibilities. *Who wants to know? What's it to 'em?* Or to put it another way, is there a hidden agenda?

In the past thirty years, certain conservative Christians, charging that Mormonism is not Christian, have established between themselves and the Mormons a sometimes bitter adversarial relationship. During the same period, one finds everywhere within Mormonism—in the *Church News* and the *Ensign*, in the public statements of LDS officials, in Sunday School lessons, and in talks the Saints give in ward sacrament meetings, as well as in private conversations—an escalating emphasis on the suffering of the Savior, the atonement of Christ, personal salvation, and so on. In view of these conflicting convictions about whether Mormonism is Christian, I often get the feeling that I am being asked for my opinion so that the inquirer can use what I say to score points for either the Latter-day Saints or those who oppose them.

And why not? If one looks at LDS history from the perspective of the Saints' perception of themselves and others' perceptions of them, it has always been thus. An agenda has always existed, and it has never been hidden.

When the Prophet Joseph Smith and his followers first appeared on the American religious scene, the situation in the new nation was becoming as religiously diverse as the lower East Side would later be ethnically varied. In this case, however, the newcomers spoke a very familiar language. They came preaching repentance, calling on their hearers to listen to the words of Jesus Christ, and reminding those who had ears to hear that the “Lord your Redeemer suffered death in the flesh” and afterward rose “from the dead that he might bring all men unto him” (see D&C 18:11–12). The Prophet's followers said that by the spirit of prophecy and revelation Jesus had

directed them to establish an ecclesiastical organization headed by Joseph Smith, Jr., who was “called of God and ordained an apostle of Jesus Christ” (D&C 20:2). They named their new fellowship the Church of Jesus Christ.

Its name and straightforward proclamation of the uniquely salvific significance of the suffering of Christ notwithstanding, this new ecclesiastical association never became a party to the informal denominational compact that, in the eyes of a majority of American citizens, turned the Christian church in this new nation into a pan-Protestant body. But this was not an instance of membership tacitly sought and implicitly denied. Sufficient reason on both sides kept the church of Jesus Christ that Joseph Smith led from becoming a member of this larger body of Christ.

For one perhaps unfamiliar example of the lack of ecumenical feeling on the Prophet’s part, listen to how Apostle William E. McLellin (whose journals have recently been made available to researchers) described a sermon preached on January 14, 1834:

President Smith preached three hours in Kirt[land] during which he exposed the Methodist Discipline in its black deformity and called upon the Elders in the power of the spirit of God to expose the creeds & confessions of men—His discourse was animated and Pointed against all Creeds of men[.]⁵

Such total refutation of the doctrines of every other Christian body reflects the extent to which the claims of this particular church of Jesus Christ were exclusive. Its members asserted that their church was set apart from all other churches that were called Christian because theirs was the only *restored* church of Jesus Christ that had been on the earth since the days of the “Great Apostasy.” They maintained that their way of being Christian was the only legitimate way to be Christian. In addition, they believed that in becoming members of this restored church they had become as Christian as Christians had been in New Testament times.

Furthermore, these “New Testament Christians” or Latter-day Saints, as they soon called themselves, believed that theirs had to be the only authentic church of Jesus Christ because theirs was the only church in which men who held the restored Aaronic and Melchizedek priesthoods presided. And it quickly became a tenet

of their faith that men who were not ordained members of these priesthood orders could not legitimately act for God in space and time.

Still, Smith's followers were by no means the only ones during this period whose preaching of the crucified Christ was coupled with exclusive institutional claims. In the same year that Smith's followers established their church of Jesus Christ, another new Christian church was also established in the United States. This church was organized by the adherents of Thomas and Alexander Campbell who called themselves Disciples of Christ. As were the members of the church headed by the Mormon Prophet, the members of this newly "restored" church were also committed to the doctrines and practices found in the New Testament. Members of both churches expected an imminent millennium, and in each case, the members believed that through their church—and only through their church—a "restoration of the ancient order of things" would be accomplished.

Exclusivity, then, was not the claim that formed the barrier that kept the Saints outside the denominational compact; the Book of Mormon was a much more serious stumbling block. By accepting the document as testimony to the truth of gospel claims, the Saints rejected *sola scriptorum*, the Protestant principle of vesting final authority in The Word only as it was manifested in the Old and New Testaments. Moreover, the Saints' church was the only Christian church of substantial size that was headed by a prophet, one who likewise assumed the role of church president and high priest. Thus theirs was a church that (in Weberian terms) made neither *office* nor *tradition* definitive, settling ultimate authority instead on *charisma* adhering in a single individual. This practice was likewise anathema to Protestants in the U.S.

The Saints' obedience to the revelations directing them to "gather" to Zion moved the Saints away from the prevailing Protestant congregational pattern and toward the creation of independent LDS enclaves that could (and sometimes did) function as virtually autonomous political, economic, and cultural units powerful enough to challenge the separation of church and state in the U.S. But the movement's true distinctiveness was not always recognized in the early years, and many observers failed to realize that this new church of Jesus Christ would withstand the

centrifugal pull of Protestant hegemony long enough to become something other than an idiosyncratic Protestant denomination. That it did so is surely related to the Saints' possession of the Book of Mormon, the gathering, the leadership of the Prophet, and all Mormonism's other singular factors including, after 1852, the publicly acknowledged practice of plural marriage.

Another reason—one that might be called “product labeling”—may have helped Mormonism escape the fate that awaited the Campbellites. In claiming the name Christian, the Campbellites found themselves being drawn into the Protestant compact and could only watch as their “true” *church to end all churches* gradually lost so much of its distinctiveness that it turned into yet one more Protestant denomination—or into two if the Christian/Disciple schism is taken into account.

A close reading of Apostle McLellan's journals prompted me to reconsider this labeling matter as Joseph Smith's followers had to work through it in the 1830s. These valuable documents provide firsthand evidence that historians who write about a religious marketplace in the early republic are not simply using an effective metaphor. In the 1830s, an actual religious marketplace existed in towns, villages, and hamlets all across the nation. Preachers of every stripe proclaimed the Christian gospel in the schoolhouses, courthouses, meetinghouses, and even barns that formed the public square of that day. This competition for converts meant that Baptist preachers had to find a way to distinguish themselves from Congregationalist and Presbyterian ministers, Disciples, and similar groups; Methodist circuit riders had to find a way to distinguish themselves from all the other evangelists; and so forth. Since the texts for their sermons were drawn from the same scriptures (the Bible) that all the other preachers used, what to call themselves and their message posed a real problem for Saints on the religious hustings.

Moreover, it was not simply a question of using scriptural texts in common. While Mormon missionaries usually told their listeners about the Book of Mormon and generally directed those who responded to their gospel presentations to “gather to Zion,” the basic LDS message was, at many points, virtually the same message that Protestant ministers were preaching.

Most particularly, according to Richard Bushman, the Mormon message often coincided with that being preached by the new Disciples of Christ.

While he delineates in *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism* the obvious difference between the Prophet's followers and this group whose members were confiscating the Christian label by calling their church "the Christian Church," Bushman did not explore the implications of the Disciples' rapid appropriation of this label for either the Disciples or the Saints.⁶ This development seems to me, however, to have been a factor in the development of Mormon distinctiveness and possibly even a factor in Mormonism's survival as a movement whose adherents became a "peculiar people."

Scholars usually report that Smith's followers shortened to "Mormon" the derisive "Mormonite" appellation their opponents had given them. Not so often mentioned, but equally consequential, is their taking Eber D. Howe's scornful naming of the movement in the anti-Mormon work *Mormonism Unveiled* and turning it inside out so that, by 1839, in an epistle from Liberty prison, Joseph Smith himself could proclaim that "truth is 'Mormonism.'"⁷ Adopted by his followers, this distinctive label sent a signal to potential converts that this church was not a Christian church in the usual sense of the term, although the Mormons who were licensed to preach the gospel contended on reasonably equal terms with all the other preachers who were likewise proclaiming the gospel of Christ.

Today, members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints may be sorry that the need to distinguish themselves from the Campbellites forced the early Saints to forego calling themselves Christians, thereby relinquishing the only name that could have provided Mormonism with an unambiguous Christian identity. But from the standpoint of the identity construction critical to the preservation of distinctiveness, the adoption of an alternative label in their early formative stage worked to the Saints' advantage.

While it was Christian, the Mormon gospel was not the same gospel being preached by Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, and

representatives of all other existing forms of Christianity. Consequently, those who accepted the gospel, repented, and were baptized under the hands of Mormon missionaries did not simply become Christians. Transported into otherness, they were convinced that they were the Saints that God promised (through revelation to Joseph Smith) to gather out from “among the Gentiles” (D&C 133:12). As such, they understood themselves to have become members of a chosen lineage, a peculiar people. Consequently, it is not surprising that the Prophet’s followers erected a sturdy rhetorical fence between themselves and those who were not part of the group. Naming the *Other*, they denominated as “Gentile” all those who had not yet heard the Mormon gospel and especially those who refused to accept it.⁸ This naming became a primary means of establishing the distinctiveness of the LDS Church.

In light of a contemporary rhetorical shift that seems to be turning *Mormon* into an adjectival modifier used to signify a particular kind of Christian, I may seem to be making too much of the fact that, at a critical juncture in the establishment of their church, the Saints accepted and came to relish Mormon and Mormonism as alternative labels. But there can be little doubt that their embracing the label *Mormon* in lieu of being called Christian contributed to a perception that Mormonism is not Christian.

The Saints’ naming of those who would not hear the LDS message also figured in the conception of Mormons as non-Christian. Writings about Mormonism penned in the nineteenth century by Catholics as well as Protestants reveal that Christians in both those camps were stung by the “Gentile” label. Their understanding was (and is) that the primary purpose of Christ’s life and ministry was extending the gospel to the Gentiles. It therefore seemed to them both strange and ironic that these upstart Saints would use this particular term to imply that Christians who were not Mormons remained outside the gospel bounds, especially as the negative naming was being done by the members of an institution that bore the name of Jesus Christ.⁹

Distinguishing so plainly between themselves and those outside the community was nevertheless useful and perhaps even

necessary during the decades of fortress mentality that characterized what is often called the kingdom period of Mountain Mormonism. While opposition to this flourishing movement was not entirely—or even primarily—grounded in religion, between 1850 and 1890 the Saints had to face intense political and legal harassment which was nearly always explained in religious terms. That they believed all their opponents were Gentiles must have helped them sluff off charges that Mormonism was the very antithesis of Christianity. Considering the source as gentile surely helped them ignore indictments that the Saints were not only unchristian because there were those among the Saints who engaged in the practice of plural marriage, but also un-American because they were all helpless pawns in the hands of tyrants who had turned a United States territory into a theocratic state. In view of such negation of all that they held dear, the Saints' confidence that they were a chosen people and that, as such, they were the only true Christians must have sustained and comforted the LDS community.

The LDS political kingdom and the practice of plural marriage were the most public and hence visible evidences of that part of the “restoration of all things” that rooted Mormonism in the Old Testament as well as the New. When coerced to give up both at the end of the nineteenth century, the LDS Church started what was at first an almost imperceptible transfiguration that would ultimately lift the Christianity that had always been at the base of Mormonism once again to public view. Following the publication of the 1890 Manifesto that renounced the Church's sanction of plural marriage, the Saints started to move away from—or at least to de-emphasize—what I have elsewhere described as the Hebraicism that was appended to Mormon Christianity in Kirtland, Missouri, and Nauvoo. Not, however, until after the mid-twentieth century did the Saints start to give up labeling outsiders—whether Christian or not—as Gentiles.

To this I provide testimony from my own experience. With my husband and son, I spent the 1960-61 academic year in Logan, Utah. I was not treated as a true outlander, perhaps because I became a student at Utah State University. Nevertheless, I was still more or less

constantly made aware of my gentile status—made so, curiously enough, as often by my Protestant coreligionists as by the Saints. In 1972–73, I was elected to the councils of both the Mormon History Association and the (RLDS) John Whitmer Historical Association, and, in each case, I recognized that I was something of a “token Gentile.” (A signal that I was not likewise the token woman came soon after I became a member of the MHA council; when I received a notice of the agenda for the first meeting of the year, it was headed “Dear Brethren.”) Then, although I took no action to alter my *gentile* status, a public announcement of my election to the MHA presidency in 1980 stated that I would be the association’s first *non-Mormon* president. While non-Mormons who study Mormonism sometimes continue to think of themselves—and to speak of themselves—as Gentiles, recent references to people like me nearly always point to our status as *non-Mormons* or *nonmembers*.

This turn away from labeling outsiders as *Other* has coincided with the dramatic turn to which I referred earlier, a turn toward Christian rhetoric and Christian themes, not only in Mormonism’s official presentation of itself to the world, but in Mormon life generally. These shifts can be seen in a close analysis of the LDS missionary lessons since the 1960s, as well as the contents of the *Ensign* since 1971 (when it succeeded the *Improvement Era* as the official LDS Church magazine), and a more perfunctory examination of all sorts of other church publications. But I regard the casual manner in which Mormons are increasingly referring to themselves as Christians as more convincing evidence that Mormons are coming to think of theirs as the Church of Jesus Christ more than they are thinking of it as the Mormon or LDS Church.

I keep a notebook of examples of linguistic signals that shows how rapidly this shift is taking place. The most recent item in it is an account of a recent three-way conversation among a graduate student who is a true-blue birthright Latter-day Saint, the chancellor of our university, and me. I am sensitive to the shift and often anticipate altered LDS rhetoric, but I must admit that I was somewhat surprised to hear my young friend explain that her husband had learned Japanese when he was serving a *Christian* mission in Japan.

This change in how the Saints think of and talk about themselves and how they think of and talk about those who are not Saints suggests to me that, having attained a firm LDS identity during 125 years or so of creating and living within a separate and distinct Mormon culture, the Saints no longer have a sociological need for Gentiles. They do not need an *Other* in order to set themselves apart either rhetorically or categorically. If this reading of what is happening is correct, it would call into question the somewhat cynical notion that is sometimes articulated, even by Latter-day Saints, that the paramount importance of public relations explains the increasing level of the LDS Church's collaboration in ecumenical efforts to relieve distress, hunger, and suffering in the world. The interreligious activities reported in the *Church News* and described by Gerry Pond nearly every week on "News from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints" instead signal the self-confidence of a people whose identity is now fixed and steadfast enough that they no longer need to be segregated from other denominations.

Saints, however, are not being universally welcomed into the Judeo-Christian fold. Several reasons may be suggested to account for this attitude. While such ecumenical bodies as the National Conference of Christians and Jews and various inter-church relief organizations are pleased indeed to have a new cooperative partner, some mainstream Protestant denominational bodies seem reluctant to accept a newcomer on equal terms. The reason may be that they are, in sociologist Wade Clark Roof's words, "hemorrhaging members."¹⁰ However, although some are clearly worried about the impact of the success of the LDS missionary program on the size of their congregations, this pragmatic consideration at least among the Methodists is of less importance than the LDS Church's doctrinal insistence that all Christian baptisms are null and void except those performed by properly ordained holders of the LDS priesthood. I expect this reaction is true also for most of mainstream Protestantism as this subject seems to have become a matter of particular touchiness since Vatican II, when the Roman Catholic Church accepted Protestant baptisms as legitimate.

Notwithstanding the recent refusal of the Presbyterians to accredit Mormonism as Christian, many members of the old Protestant “establishment” seem willing to make a place for the Saints in the American religious mosaic. Furthermore, if the signals from Salt Lake City—where the Tabernacle Choir recently gave a concert to celebrate the renovation and rededication of the Cathedral of the Madeleine—are at all indicative of a larger pattern, the same may be said of the nation’s Roman Catholic community. But the same cannot be said for most of those in the amorphous grouping of neo-evangelicals and Protestant fundamentalists who form what is sometimes described as the conservative Christian coalition.

In the latter instance, the matter of “sheep stealing” is extremely important, as are various doctrinal issues. But, to return to my main theme, I believe that neither of these is as potent as the matter of labeling. This time, however, the issue is turned on its head. As the Saints’ need for an *Other* has been steadily diminishing across the past quarter of a century, such a need has been escalating in conservative Christianity. That need is being satisfied by the Latter-day Saints, although they are by no means the only ones serving as negative markers of conservative Christian identity.

For the most part, the Christians in this evangelical-fundamentalist coalition share an emphasis on the critical need for an experiential encounter with Jesus Christ (being “born again”), and they likewise share acceptance of the Bible as “inerrant,” as revealed Word. Moreover, as many of them are members of the independent congregations, organizations like Youth for Christ, and the several denominations which make up the National Association of Evangelicals, the coalition has its own ecumenical organization. Yet the various constituencies in this conservative Christian coalition differ so much among themselves over significant points of doctrine and ritual, as well as the proper form of church organization, that finding a unifying descriptor (one that at once includes and excludes) has turned out to be a formidable task.

To the dismay of members of the mainstream Protestant denominations like mine who have always regarded themselves as evangelical, the *neo-evangelicals* have practically succeeded in taking possession of the evangelical designation. (Some of us are

also bothered because many of these new evangelicals have been trying to take exclusive possession of John Wesley at the same time.) But as all fundamentalists do not describe themselves as evangelicals, nor are all evangelicals fundamentalists, capturing this label has not proved sufficient. As a result, at least some conservative Christians have been engaging, with some success, in a two-pronged effort to take exclusive possession of the *Christian* label.

In its most wide-ranging and sustained attempt to dechristianize those who do not agree with their position on the inerrancy of the scriptures and other “fundamentals,” many conservative Christians condemn the liberal stance of the National Council of Churches (successor to the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America). These Christians make it obvious that they question the “real” or “true” Christianity of members of the historic Protestant denominations who maintain membership in a body so concerned with inclusiveness and the social gospel. More importantly, conservative neo-evangelicals and fundamentalists also characterize as potentially apostate any Christian willing to surrender one whit of Christianity’s exclusive claim. They often place beyond the pale Christians like me who affirm the possibility that, aside from traditional Christianity, other legitimate ways to be religious exist.

According to many conservative Christians, however, the ultimate heresy of liberal Protestantism is not its inclusiveness. The heresy is its tendency to acknowledge the validity of modern scholarship, including the work of scholars who question the historicity of the virgin birth and at least some of the books of the Bible, as well as those who place early Christianity in cultural context and study it as a social movement. No matter what the intensity of the commitment of such people to the cause of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the right wing of the neo-evangelical/fundamentalist coalition describes such Christians as secular humanists and reads them right out of Christianity.

A somewhat different, but equally exclusivist, approach may be seen in modern evangelicalism’s renewed embrace of old charges that America’s indigenous religions (Seventh-day Adventism, Mormonism, Christian Science, and Jehovah’s Witnesses) are

non-Christian *cults*. Such charges were a staple of Protestant journalism in the nineteenth century, when Protestants and Catholics believed that the responsibility to carry the gospel to the *heathens and pagans* included an obligation to carry the gospel to “benighted” Mormons, Adventists, Christian Scientists, and Jehovah’s Witnesses. The home missionaries, as they were called, who undertook such assignments assumed that it was also their place to warn the members of traditional Christian bodies—and anyone else who would listen—against these new movements.

Even after the Saints renounced the practice of plural marriage and gave up their political kingdom, some efforts were still made to warn Americans about the danger Mormonism posed to the nation. These efforts occurred at the time of the U.S. Senate’s investigation of the right of LDS Apostle Reed Smoot to take his senatorial seat. Otherwise, there was a break in Protestant missions to the Mormons that lasted for almost half a century. But soon after the end of World War II, certain conservative groups renewed the attempt to take the Protestant version of the gospel to participants in all sorts of “new religious movements,” including those that would increasingly be described by evangelicals and fundamentalists as the four “major American cults,”¹¹ the largest of which was Mormonism. Significantly, however, this “mission ministry” did not begin so much as a campaign to warn potential converts away from these “new” movements as it was an effort made by conservative Christians, who were convinced that they were the only ones with access to “true truth,” to share the gospel with those in darkness.

Although the Southern Baptist minister John L. Smith, who publishes the *[Utah] Evangel*, is now as much engaged in trying to keep people from becoming Mormon as he is seeking to induce Latter-day Saints to leave their faith, his early ministry was primarily directed to converting members of the Utah Mormon Church away from Mormonism and into evangelical Protestantism. To a lesser extent, this was true of the ministry of the Reverend Wesley Walters, a Presbyterian clergyman whose reporting of research into the early life of Joseph Smith was as much aimed at convincing LDS believers that Smith was not a prophet as it was aimed at

warning Presbyterians away from Mormonism. Early efforts of Ex-Mormons for Jesus and several other groups of dissident Saints were also directed to Saints whose faith appeared to be wavering. Convincing Saints that they have been deceived seems to have been the primary objective animating Jerald and Sandra Tanner, Mormon converts to Protestant fundamentalism. The Tanners publish the *Salt Lake City Messenger* and have produced and made available for purchase a mass of exposé material designed to prove that Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, and LDS leaders from the 1830s forward all had or have clay feet. But because there were other evangelists who mounted similar ministries to Adventists, Christian Scientists, and Jehovah's Witnesses at about the same time, it is clear that the Mormons were by no means the only—or even always the principal—domestic target of conservative Protestantism.

As I read it, this mission started to change in the 1970s for two quite different reasons. First is the set of interrelated elements that precipitated post-Second World War Mormonism out of its intermountain sanctuary, away from the sidelines, and onto the nation's cultural and religious main stage, where it challenged conservative Protestantism on its home turf. A second and more complex reason is related to the creation of the Moral Majority and the sense of danger felt by conservative Christians when they realized that they shared with the Saints a common social and political agenda. This very closeness caused evangelicals and fundamentalists to pull back and led many of those who had theretofore eschewed the anti-Mormon crusade to take strenuous measures to define the Saints as *Other*.

So far as their distinctiveness from mainstream white American culture is concerned, the Saints started to lose their status as peculiar people sometime between 1950 and 1970. Evidence of this shift includes the ubiquitous presence of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir on radio and television and in almost every American home equipped at that time with a sound system and roundtable for playing the "new" LP records; the gradual ascent into the nation's consciousness of an array of attractive, distinctly Mormon personalities from the political, sports, and entertainment scenes

(Ezra Taft Benson, George Romney, Johnny Miller, the Osmonds); integration of “those amazing Mormons”¹² into the idealistic representation of American culture found in middlebrow print media (*Coronet*, *Reader’s Digest*); and the depiction of Mormons—although not always so identified—in a series of low-key radio and television spots that espoused and connected the Saints to American “family values.” Both because the church worked at its image so hard and because the media’s purposes were served by pointing to real-life Leave-It-to-Beaver families (at least in the 1950s), the LDS image was transformed during these two decades from exotic outsider to inordinately wholesome, “squeaky clean” insider.

On the religious scene, the remarkable success of the LDS missionary program in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s was news. But so was the success of Adventist missionaries and Jehovah’s Witnesses.¹³ Because the exceptional rate of growth of conservative Christian congregations was likewise newsworthy, it was perhaps inevitable that the heralds of the several movements would seek out the same audiences. Evangelical and fundamentalist missionaries from the United States were as often challenged by Adventists and Witnesses as were Mormons in overseas mission fields, but the Mormons were the ones who appeared to be making the most headway at home. Mormon proselyting was especially successful in suburbia, the field whitest for the harvest, where LDS missionaries contended most directly with conservative Protestantism and where the Saints sometimes seemed to be winning.

Yet neither Mormonism’s increasing visibility and acceptability in the culture nor the news about its fantastic rate of growth was the main source of the perception that Mormonism might really be a threat to American Protestantism. That came with the growing realization that Mormonism was no longer “out there” somewhere. The appearance—apparently sudden and seemingly on every hand—of new LDS meetinghouses, easily identified as Mormon because they were all being built according to standard architectural plans, served as an alarm signaling that Latter-day Saint success was not likely to be a temporary phenomenon.

This emergence of the Saints on the American religious landscape was actually not as precipitous as it looked, for the Saints

had long been present in many areas of the nation. But before the Second World War, local Mormon organizations outside the Intermountain West and California were nearly all associated with the geographical headquarters of regional LDS missions, which, for the most part, were housed in Victorian mansions or other substantial dwellings in residential areas. Although identified by signs as LDS mission headquarters, these structures did not resemble churches and therefore did not advertise the existence of LDS congregations outside Utah. While a number of LDS ward houses had been built in southern California and all along the west coast before 1941 and while several substantial meetinghouses were located in the larger urban areas of the nation, these buildings also did not effectively advertise the presence of LDS congregations, for the structures' architecture was not peculiarly Mormon.

But this situation changed dramatically between 1945 and 1965 as LDS men from the Intermountain West, most of whom were members of the church's lay priesthood, settled with their families in many different areas of the United States. Joining branches of long-time relocated "Mountain Saints" and the rapidly expanding cadre of LDS converts who had never "gathered to Zion," these "Utah Mormons" provided the lay leadership critical to the organization of LDS stakes and wards all across the country. And the formation of these basic congregational units of the church called for the building of meetinghouses on an unprecedented scale.

In what turned out to be a brilliant decision from the standpoint of the maintenance of LDS identity in an altered situation, the brethren at the head of the church decreed that the church's standard building plans would be used for all these LDS structures. Their edict, which appears to have been made on practical and economic grounds, has been much maligned on aesthetic grounds. But in view of the significance of *place* to the Saints, the sagacity of the decision that led the Saints to build structures that gave the impression of the appearance of a new religious "franchise" is evident in retrospect.

The reason this is the case is fairly obvious. Members of virtually all of these newly formed "mission field" stakes and wards

included western Saints who had been born in the church. They had been reared in a Mormon culture as firmly rooted in a sense of place (Zion in the tops of the mountains) as in the sense of unity and order implicit in a world whose structure rests on a coherent “plan of salvation” and a clearly defined system of ecclesiastical hierarchy. In many of these newly organized units, there were also members who were life-long Saints and/or long-time converts who had never moved west but whose religious imagination as well as institutional life revolved around Salt Lake City, Mormonism’s center place.

In addition, the new LDS congregations included substantial and sometimes overwhelming proportions of recent converts; they needed a special place where the “Mormonizing” process could go forward. No matter what their physical location, the neat, utilitarian, multifunctional structures built according to the church’s standard plan were distinctively Mormon places. The very fact that these clearly identifiable LDS structures could be found in town after town and suburb after suburb cultivated among the Saints what might be called a Zionic sense, making the very LDS meetinghouses themselves agents of assimilation and signals that wherever the Saints gather, there Zion is.¹⁴

The Saints were not the only ones who were able to read this signal, however. It was also read by evangelicals and fundamentalists—and by some members of churches in the Protestant mainstream—who surmised that the growth of Mormonism, which they regarded as non-Christian, was endangering Christianity itself. As suggested, their worry was strengthened and clarified—at least it seems to me that it was—in the early 1980s after television evangelist Jerry Falwell moved over from the religious to the political arena and created the Moral Majority, into which he welcomed the Latter-day Saints, whose social and political agenda was perceived to coincide almost precisely with that of conservative (evangelical and fundamentalist) Protestantism.

In recent years, students of culture as well as religion have identified and started intensive study of a cross-cultural phenomenon they describe as “Fundamentalism.” Fundamentalist movements are

characteristic of those cultures in which change, rather than stability, has become the normal condition. Specialists in the study of these movements say that in whatever culture they appear the people who are attracted to them are threatened by the blurring of gender, race, and all the other apparently inborn status distinctions that are emblematic of traditional cultures. As indicated by Martin Marty and Scott Appleby, directors of the massive Fundamentalism Project at the University of Chicago, a critical identifying element of such a fundamentalist movement is not merely its construction of an *Other* which it can stand over and against. An *Other* must be constructed whose properties and attributes are very close to, but not exactly the same as, the properties and attributes of those in the movement. Because the *Other's* primary function is creating clarity where confusion might reign, it cannot be truly foreign.¹⁵

The Reverend Falwell was not wrong when he concluded that many of the Latter-day Saints and the members of the conservative Christian coalition shared similar values, lifestyles, and political preferences. They are for traditional family values, and they stood firmly against the Equal Rights Amendment. They define homosexuality as aberrant and homosexual practices as sinful, they are against abortion—although the LDS position is less rigid and more nuanced—and they oppose the ordination of women. They express their distaste for long hair (on men), short skirts (on women), and rock music. They even share a strong preference for the King James version of the Bible.

What they do not share is a theology and a plan of salvation. This difference is, at base, the reason for the activities of Concerned Christians, Inc., an organization that seeks to accomplish its goals by propagating the messages in the *Godmakers*¹⁶ book and films prepared and distributed by Ed Decker and Dave Hunt. It also explains the accelerated rekindling of anti-Mormonism generated by all the other groups who oppose the Mormons by arguing they are a non-Christian cult. Mainly composed of evangelicals and fundamentalists, these groups are sometimes joined by ex-Mormons, but their ministry is not aimed primarily at the Mormons. It is directed first and foremost to those who are

not Mormon. These groups believe they are “serv[ing] the Christian community” by “exposing and bringing to full knowledge the real doctrines of false prophets and teachers of the Mormon Church.”¹⁷ The purpose of such groups is to equip conservative Christians with information that will allow them to effectively discriminate between “false truth” and “true truth.”

Decker and Hunt’s rabid book and appalling films, which feature cartoon-like renderings of temple ceremonies, have been widely shown and appreciatively received in hundreds, perhaps thousands, of evangelical and fundamentalist congregations. These groups seem grateful to have the *Other* named and classified. Although no means of precisely determining the source of most of the support of these and other anti-Mormon efforts exists and while there is no way to identify the purchasers of the books and pamphlets that purport to reveal the secrets of the “temple cult,” the appeal of works in this genre, including *Secret Ceremonies*, a recent best-selling book by Deborah Laake,¹⁸ is certainly not their artistic merit or reportorial excellence. Rather it is that they touch on the point where Mormonism diverges most dramatically from traditional Christianity, thereby providing evangelical and fundamentalist readers and viewers of video presentations with negative confirmation of their own conservative Christian faith.

I feel certain that the charge that Mormons are members of a non-Christian “temple cult” must be as distressing to Latter-day Saints as the charge that liberal Protestants are secular humanists is disturbing to Methodists like me. But my study of Mormon history has helped me put these charges in perspective: there was a time not long ago when the label “Mormon” was not always enclosed within parentheses when it was used by members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. By reminding the members of the LDS Church that they were God’s chosen people, that label enclosed the Saints within communal bounds and signaled that the persons who remained outside were gentile. As an identifying label, “Christian” (even “conservative Christian”) cannot do the work of including only those who ought to be included within the boundaries of the neo-evangelical/fundamentalist coalition nearly so well as the label

“Mormon” once worked to include Saints and only Saints in the LDS community.

Consequently the designations conservative Christians use to exclude those who are not adjudged worthy to be drawn inside their particular Christian circle are less parsimonious than the Saint’s designation of outsiders. They are likewise less charitable and more offensive. And yet it seems to me that when I am described as a secular humanist and members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints are described collectively as non-Christian, what is really being said to us all ultimately has less to do with our Christian faith or lack of it than it has to do with the fact that, to those who make such charges, *we are gentile*.

A final personal observation: even though I suppose I can understand why people keep indicting liberal Christianity for its openness, its social activism, and its failure to accept the principle of inerrancy; even though I think I am able to comprehend why it is that the same people or others like them keep trying to tear Mormon Christianity down by endeavoring to prove it not true; and even though I appreciate the positive function of negation and refutation, I regret that such things must come to pass. Because I am certain that winners and losers alike will be drawn within the circle of God’s love someday, I am convinced that the time will come when Christians will no longer need to choose up sides and come out fighting. Meanwhile, when I am asked by one set of Christians whether I think they ought to be warning people away from another set of Christians, I refer to Matthew 13 and the parable of the wheat and the tares:

So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also. . . . And the servants . . . came and said to [the Lord], . . . do you want us to go and gather them? But he said “No, lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them.” (RSV, vv. 27-29)

In the fullness of time, a decision will be made in a higher court as to whether the Holy Catholic Church that evolved from the apostolic church described in the New Testament managed to stay Christian; whether the Protestants, including the Anglicans,

who separated from the Roman church maintained their status as Christians; whether the Methodists who separated from the Anglicans continued to be Christian; and whether the new Christian movements that evolved in the United States in the nineteenth century—Seventh-day Adventism, Mormonism, Christian Science—are authentically Christian. Till then, as one who sees “in a mirror dimly,” I withhold judgment, accounting within the definition of Christian any church, sectarian movement, liberal or conservative coalition, or new religious tradition that gathers persons together in the name of Christ and, in so doing, creates genuine community wherein women and men may—to use Methodist phraseology—take up the Cross and follow Him.

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NOTES

¹ Jan Shipps, “Mormonism: An Independent Interpretation,” in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow, 5 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 2:937-41.

² Jan Shipps, *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985).

³ Ronald D. Dennis, “Gathering,” in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* 2:536-37.

⁴ Ernst Troelch, one of the earliest and most influential sociologists of religion, characterized Christian institutions as either churches or sects. See Lawrence A. Young, “Sect,” in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* 3:1291-92.

⁵ William E. McLellin, Journal, January 14, 1834, Archives Division, Church Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter cited as LDS Church Archives). The McLellin journals will be copublished by *BYU Studies* and the University of Illinois Press in 1994.

⁶ Richard Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 179-88.

⁷ Eber D. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled* (Painesville, Ohio: By the author, 1834).

⁸ This idea (not the exact words) is expressed in a variety of the sermons printed in the *Journal of Discourses*. It is worked out at some length in my forthcoming article, “Making Saints in the Early Days and the Latter Days,” which will be in *Contemporary Mormonism*, ed. Marie Cornwall Madsen

and Tim Heaton. This work will be published by the University of Illinois Press in 1994.

The idea that those through whose veins the blood of Abraham courses will respond to the LDS gospel while those without “believing blood” will not was once accepted by many Saints—or so I have been told by several Mormons I have interviewed.

⁹Jan Shipps, “From Satyr to Saint: American Attitudes toward the Mormons, 1860-1960” (Paper delivered at the annual meeting of the Organization of American Historians, April 1973), copy in the LDS Church Archives.

¹⁰Jan Shipps and David Smith, eds., *Taking Stock and Charting Change: Religious Reconfigurations in America since the Sixties* (Privately printed for Robert W. Lynn on the occasion of his retirement from Lilly Endowment, Indianapolis, 1990), 6-12.

¹¹The Mormons are one of the groups covered in Anthony A. Hokema, *Four Major Cults* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1963).

¹²Andrew Hamilton, “Those Amazing Mormons,” *Coronet Magazine*, April 1952, 26-30.

¹³Although membership statistics are unavailable, most observers believe that instead of gaining members during these years, the number of Christian Scientists started to decline.

¹⁴Shipps, “Mormonism: An Independent Interpretation” 2:939-41.

¹⁵Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby, “Conclusion: An Interim Report on a Hypothetical Family,” in *Fundamentalisms Observed*, ed. Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 842.

¹⁶Ed Decker and David Hunt, *Godmakers* (Eugene, Oreg.: Harvest House Publishers, 1984).

¹⁷Quotation is one of the standard justifications often published in the *[Utah] Evangel* edited by John L. Smith.

¹⁸Deborah Laake, *Secret Ceremonies* (New York: W. Morrow, 1993).

Stone: A Symposium

Adam

In Eden I hardly noticed rocks—
 the parted stream,
 the occasional stumble.
 But outside I collected them,
 named them like beasts,
 trusted them like bones.
 In spring I piled them
 waist high,
 wondering at night
 what stone across the fields
 waited to be scrubbed
 and chiseled
 with my name.

Moses

God said, tell this boulder
 to become a spigot.
 But I kept stone silent,
 my tongue stiff as a tablet
 from all the hardness of hearts
 and the seasons of death by stone.
 For that God took me
 as I sat on a cliff,
 remembering aprons
 full of manna,
 imagining smooth cakes
 in rivers of honey
 and running milk.

Satan

Stub your tongue
 on stale clay.
 Break the crust
 and let the shards
 settle in your
 own dark well.
 You will pray for bread,
 but expect stone.

Jared's Brother

Clean rocks the size of figs
 heaped in my cupped hands
 became portals of light
 even the sea could not quench.
 Geology did not teach me this;
 it is only a prism,
 a rainbow of adjectives:
 igneous
 sedimentary
 metamorphic.
 But the soul of
 every rock is a lamp,
 a tongue of flame
 that speaks to the heart.
 When I found that fire
 I learned the hard truth:
 show God a rock and he
 shows you himself.

Joseph Smith

Because my father's meadows
 were full of them
 I had to rake all day,
 combing the soil clean,
 my hatfuls of pebbles
 spilling like seeds
 across the path.
 Small wonder
 I have seen
 so much
 in stones.

—Michael Hicks



Figure 1. Bruce Hixson Smith, *The Prodigal Son*. Triptych, oil on canvas, 51" x 59", 1984. Courtesy Museum of Church History and Art.

Visual Narratives from the Life of Christ

The new series of images by LDS artist Bruce Hixson Smith represents a painstaking search to reconcile the physical medium of paint with the transcendent truths of Christ's story.

Linda Jones Gibbs

Bruce Hixson Smith speaks in a careful, almost cautious manner, attempting to find just the right words to express his thoughts. He constructs his art with the same caution, intent upon finding just the right visual form for the underlying concept. Formally trained at both Brigham Young University and the University of Utah, Smith has been a professor of art at BYU since 1978. A native of Utah, he has lived most of his life in the state. However, his mission to the East Coast afforded him the opportunity to visit many major art museums. He also taught for three years at a junior college in New Mexico prior to joining the faculty at Brigham Young University.

Smith is perhaps best known for his exquisite still lifes containing floating drapery and clearly rendered fruits, plants, and jars alongside similar objects that are only vaguely suggested. These visually tantalizing paintings are metaphors for certain temporal and spiritual aspects of life. Wishing to create art with a more specifically religious content, Smith has recently produced a series of seven paintings depicting events from the life of Christ. Six of these paintings, *Deposition*, *Raising the Daughter of Jairus*, *Jesus in the Home of Simon the Pharisee*, *Taken in Adultery*, *Dispensation of Virtue*, and *Reconciliation of Thomas*, are reproduced either on the cover of this issue or in this article. The seventh painting, *The Raising of Lazarus*, is currently in progress.

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Figure 2. Bruce Hixson Smith, *Jacob and Leah*. Oil on canvas, 71" x 64.5", 1990. Courtesy Museum of Church History and Art.

This new series had its genesis in two previous paintings, *The Prodigal Son* and *Jacob and Leah*. Both paintings refer to a particular biblical episode and therefore depart from the general reference to spiritual concepts found in the earlier still lifes. However, like the still lifes, the two works continue to function more as metaphors than descriptive narration. In the triptych *The Prodigal Son*, the only direct references to the story are the swineherd and the fatted calf depicted in the center and right panels respectively (see fig. 1). In *Jacob and Leah*, the two protagonists are clearly contemporary individuals. The work concerns itself primarily with the universal theme of male-female relationships rather than with the specific story of the ancient couple to whom the title refers (see fig. 2).

In his new series, Smith has gone a step further toward direct narration by depicting specific stories from the New Testament. Ironically, while his subject matter has become more precise, his method has become more abstract. Unlike *The Prodigal Son* and *Jacob and Leah*, the new works do not contain any clearly painted images. All forms are semidissolved, appearing to be in flux between the material and immaterial worlds. Here, style rather than imagery becomes a metaphor for the life of Christ—a divine presence in a mortal realm. For Smith, such a contemporary approach to this particular subject matter is appropriate because it creates greater mystical and spiritual potential. Ambiguous forms reveal themselves slowly, not unlike spiritual truths that yield themselves over time and as a result of concentrated effort.

When he is painting, Smith is not always aware of the identities of his ambiguous forms. He allows character and personality to emerge unconsciously as he works. Identities sometimes suggest themselves later. The figure to the left of Christ in the home of Simon appears evil, Smith recently mused. He surmised that the man who appears to be shrinking or withdrawing on the far right side of *Taken in Adultery* could be the woman's lover.

Although strongly rooted in biblical narrative, Smith's new paintings borrow only a little of Renaissance pictorial tradition from which the subjects derive. The halos, for example, are a time-honored Christian symbol of divinity. Also, the frame for



Figure 3. Bruce Hixson Smith, *Reconciliation of Thomas*. Oil on panel, 48" x 42", 1993. Courtesy Department of Art, Brigham Young University.

Reconciliation of Thomas (see fig. 3) is constructed like an altar, thus inviting comparisons to the painted altar pieces of the early Renaissance intended as objects of devotion. Many Renaissance artists painted biblical episodes staged within detailed architecture of their own locale in order to assist the viewer in relating to the event. Smith, however, removes such vestiges of time and place in his biblical depictions, concentrating instead on the spiritual phenomenon at hand, thus universalizing the message of Christian ideals inherent in them.

In these paintings, Smith places no stress on the imitation of three-dimensional reality through precise perspective. In *Raising the Daughter of Jairus* (see fig. 4), *Jesus in the Home of Simon the Pharisee* (see fig. 5), and *Taken in Adultery*, the narrative again takes place within a significant area of undefined space. In contrast, *Deposition*, *Dispensation of Virtue*, and *Reconciliation of Thomas* contain figures pushed to the forefront, filling the picture plane. In *Deposition*, abstract qualities exist not only in undefined space, but also in forceful diagonal, vertical, and horizontal lines. Strong, downward thrusts create a rhythmic design as well as add expressive qualities by accentuating the physical weight of Christ's body in the arms of his loved ones as well as the psychological burden they experienced upon his death (see back cover). Sharp diagonal forms in the background of *Reconciliation of Thomas* resemble a cross. Smith relishes the fact that figures and background merge, creating a total environment—a pleasing notion both artistically and conceptually. He concerns himself with eternal perspective, so to speak, rather than finite space.

While void of traditional perspective, space is ordered and structured here as it is in Renaissance art. In *Taken in Adultery*, the friezelike arrangement of figures along the foreground with vaulted space above harks back to many High Renaissance compositions. In place of the meticulous perspective one might find in a work by Raphael, for example, the elevated space above the narrative in Smith's painting alludes to dimensions and depth but contains an obscure mass of arches. The ambiguous placement of these remnants of ancient architecture sets up a hall-of-mirrors effect in which one loses any sense of spatial logistics (see front cover). The portions of black-and-white checkered floor in *Raising*



Figure 4. Bruce Hixson Smith, *Raising the Daughter of Jairus*. Oil on panel, 34" x 37", 1992. Courtesy Department of Art, Brigham Young University.



Figure 5. Bruce Hixson Smith, *Jesus in the Home of Simon the Pharisee*. Oil on panel, 34" x 37", 1992. Courtesy Department of Art, Brigham Young University.



Figure 6. Bruce Hixson Smith, *Dispensation of Virtue*. Oil on panel, 29" x 26", 1993. Courtesy Department of Art, Brigham Young University.

the Daughter of Jairus (see fig. 4) and *Taken in Adultery* derive from interiors found in seventeenth-century Dutch paintings. These stark patterns enliven the pictorial space, the ordered squares contrasting with the fluidity of the surrounding abstraction. Like the turning staircase that leads into oblivion in *Jesus in the Home of Simon the Pharisee* (see fig. 5), these patterns give us something concrete to focus on momentarily. However, in the juxtaposed areas of undefined space, we are quickly forced to give up our “grounding” in reality.

Dispensation of Virtue is an interpretation of an episode in Mark 5 in which an infirm woman approaches Christ from behind. She believes that by touching his garment she will be healed. Jesus, surrounded by a crowd, is making his way to the home of Jairus whose daughter lies ill. We are shown the tender moment when Jesus responds to the anonymous touch: “And Jesus, immediately knowing in himself that virtue had gone out of him, turned him about in the press, and said, Who touched my clothes?” (Mark 5:30). The impact of Smith’s representation of the event lies in his depiction of the hands. The woman’s hesitancy is captured in her elegantly poised hand which barely touches Christ’s shoulder. The hands of Jesus are likewise gracefully postured as he resists those who encourage him to proceed. Yet another hand from a background figure reaches out to stop the woman’s advances. So successful is Smith in rendering the hands as a vehicle for expression that one does not mind that facial features are blurred (see fig. 6).

Hands also play a significant role in *Taken in Adultery*, the well-known episode from John 8 in which an adulterous woman is about to be stoned. Jesus appears to be summoning up every ounce of energy in the woman’s defense. His hands, strongly delineated, grip the arms of the chair as he prepares to rise and chastise the woman’s accusers. The hands of the faceless antagonists grope at the woman, who is dressed symbolically in scarlet red.

The use of hands to relay emotional impact is also evident in *Reconciliation of Thomas*, in which Jesus beckons the doubting apostle to inspect the nail prints in his palms. The hands of both Jesus and Thomas appear slightly enlarged, perhaps for emphasis, yet remain extremely expressive and poetic in their gestures.

Smith acknowledges the influence of three artists on his work: German Expressionist Max Beckman (1884–1950), abstract expressionist Willem de Kooning (1904–), and BYU emeritus professor of art Alex Darais (1918–). Ironically, Beckman and de Kooning are stylistically the antithesis of one another. The narrative orientation and occasional Christian themes of Beckman greatly impressed Smith, and the harsh rigid outlines in *Deposition*, for example, are highly reminiscent of Beckman's style. The series, however, also owes a debt to de Kooning, whose style is fluid and abstract. *Raising the Daughter of Jairus* and *Jesus in the Home of Simon the Pharisee*, in particular, contain de Kooning's fragmented space and free-wheeling, eloquent brush strokes.

Smith was influenced by Alex Darais's belief that form should not be dictated by outward appearance; rather, it should embody and reflect an individual artist's personal sensibilities. In keeping with Darais's philosophy, the narrative content in this New Testament series is subordinated to the formal needs of the paintings. Smith sometimes works on his paintings upside down to facilitate this release of literal reference. One result is the beautiful abstract passages of muted color, such as the warm terra-cotta, ecru, and gray in *Jesus in the Home of Simon the Pharisee*. Color is purposefully toned down so it will not dominate, or in the words of Smith, so it will not find "its own existence." Nevertheless, colors in *Reconciliation of Thomas* suggest symbolic references—the ghostly white body of the resurrected Christ and the wash of deep red at the top of the picture plane contrast with the primarily monochromatic gray color scheme. The use of typography in *Jesus in the Home of Simon*—the words "Simon" and "Pharisee" stenciled on the two columns—derives from modern art, and the letters function here as both a descriptive and aesthetic device. Distant figures also look as though they might be dressed in contemporary clothing, a fact which does not bother the artist.

As a group, the paintings represent Smith's affirmation that art can serve a belief system that is both personal and shared. In this case, that belief system is organized Christianity, an infrequent theme in twentieth-century art. When Smith was a graduate student in the late 1960s, minimalism was at its peak. (Minimalism is an

art style which celebrates the medium and eschews any representation of or allusion to reality. A minimalist painting, for example, might contain a single stripe of red on a blue background.) Even in the era of reductive art, Smith felt that a painting should both embody something substantive and exist as “art for art’s sake.” In the 1990s, art is again being used to support causes or ideologies. Much contemporary art, for example, unabashedly promotes or supports issues such as ecology, gay rights, feminism, and multiculturalism. Why then, Smith contends, should not art advance Christian ideals and beliefs?

Above all, Smith’s paintings are a deeply felt search for truth—in the case of this series, the validity of Christ’s mortal and divine missions. The artist cites Willa Cather in expressing his own philosophy: “Artistic growth is, more than it is anything else, a refining of the sense of truthfulness. The stupid believe that to be truthful is easy; only the artist, the great artist, knows how difficult it is.”¹ Smith’s loose technique and abstraction of forms might suggest to some that these works were quickly or easily executed. While intuition is important to Smith, his paintings are not the result of impulse.² On the contrary, they are the results of the artist’s painstaking search to reconcile the physical medium of paint with the transcendent qualities of religious life.

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NOTES

¹ Willa Sibert Cather, *The Song of the Lark* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1915), 477.

² The paintings’ basic compositions are deliberate constructions based upon a geometric grid influenced by Jay Hambridge’s theory of “dynamic symmetry” of the early twentieth century. Hambridge (1867-1927) promoted a mathematical system of composition based on certain ratios and proportions which he believed was used by the Greeks and Egyptians and the artists in the Renaissance.



James E. Talmage (1862–1933). James at about age seventeen, when he was attending Brigham Young Academy in Provo, Utah. Courtesy BYU Photographic Archives.

Fishing on the Kennet: The Victorian Boyhood of James E. Talmage, 1862–1876

Raised in the bucolic Vale of Kennet, Talmage spent his formative years as the oldest son of a Mormon convert family, a student in Church of England schools, and an inn worker.

Dennis Rowley

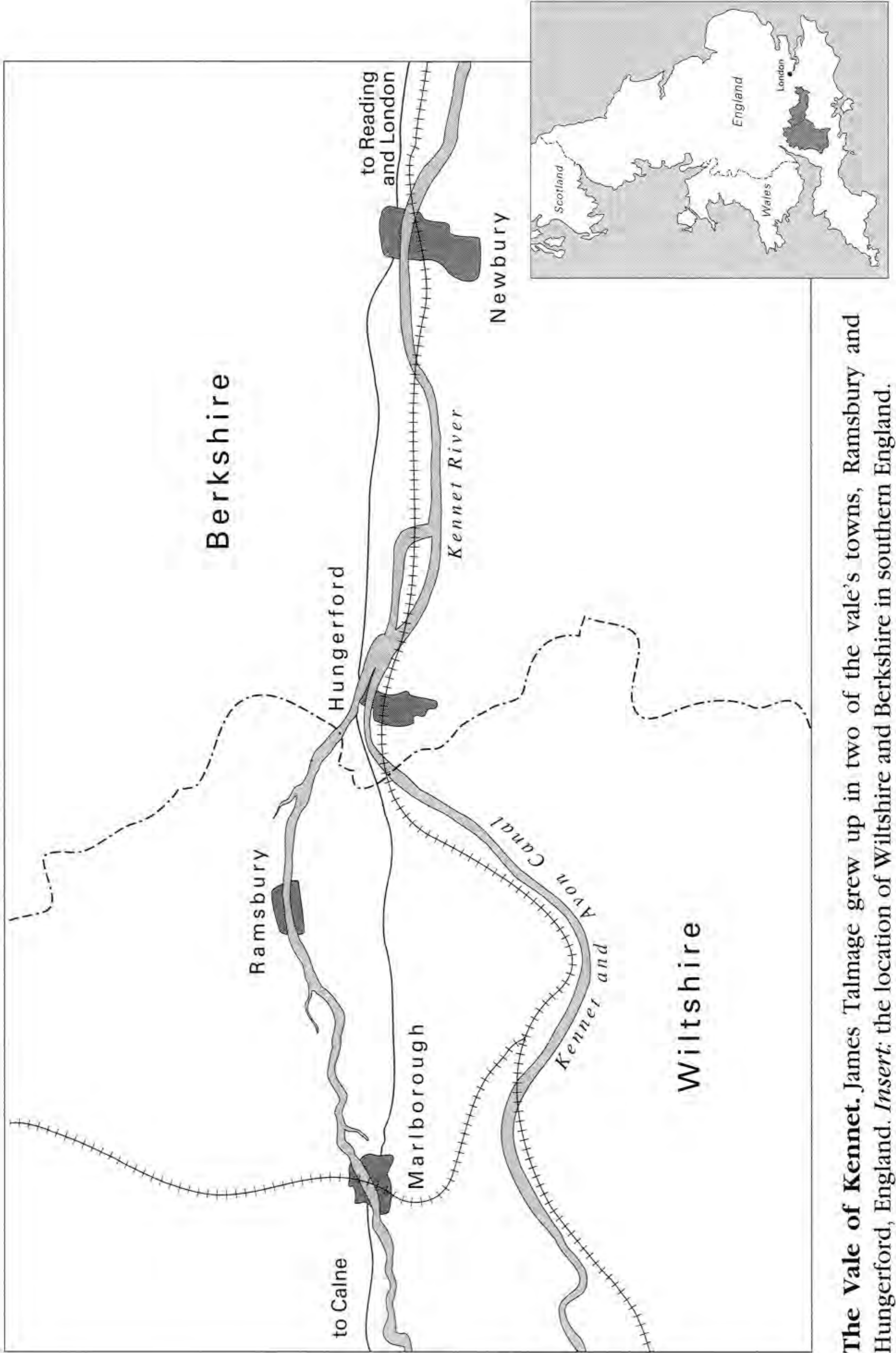
To many people, the name of James E. Talmage is synonymous with the beauty and dignity of his masterful prose work *Jesus the Christ*. Two of his other religious books, *The Articles of Faith* and *The House of the Lord*, are almost as well known.¹ As an early president of the University of Utah, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, a popular speaker and teacher, and the author of numerous scientific as well as religious works, he is an important figure in the history of Utah education and the Church. Because of the enduring significance and popularity of his writings, Talmage's childhood—the framing and foundational years—is worth consideration.²

Talmage was a product of a Victorian English family, some of whose members were making the change from the Anglican Church to Mormonism. His family, home, church, and schools nurtured his wit; his love of learning; his ability to write clear, powerful prose; and his devotion to the LDS Church.

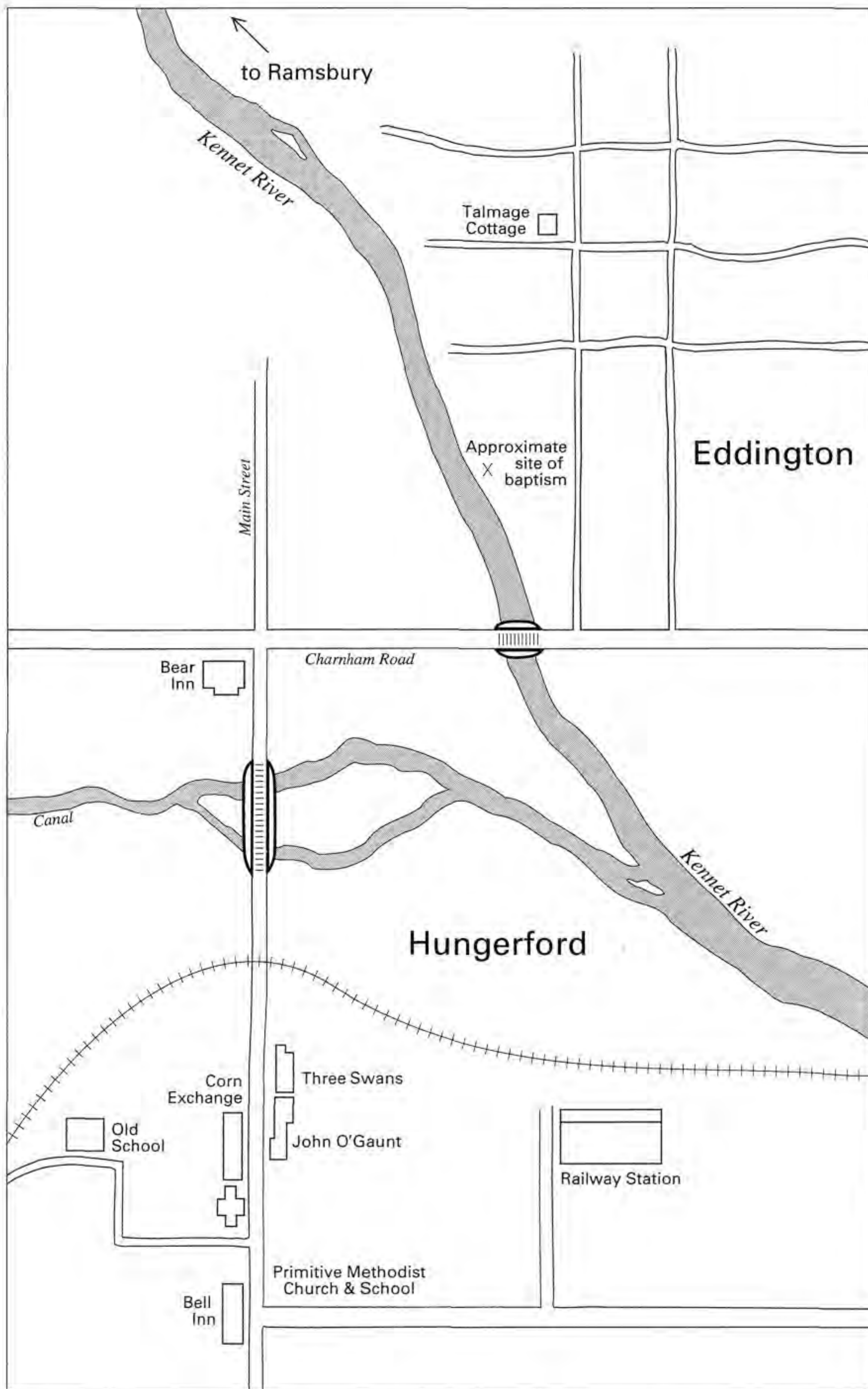
Birth and Family Background

James Talmage was the first son of Susannah Preater and James Joyce Talmage.³ He was born on Sunday, September 21, 1862, in his parents' living quarters in the Bell Inn⁴ in Hungerford, Berkshire, England.⁵ Hungerford, a prosperous market and resort

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The Vale of Kennet. James Talmage grew up in two of the vale's towns, Ramsbury and Hungerford, England. *Insert:* the location of Wiltshire and Berkshire in southern England.



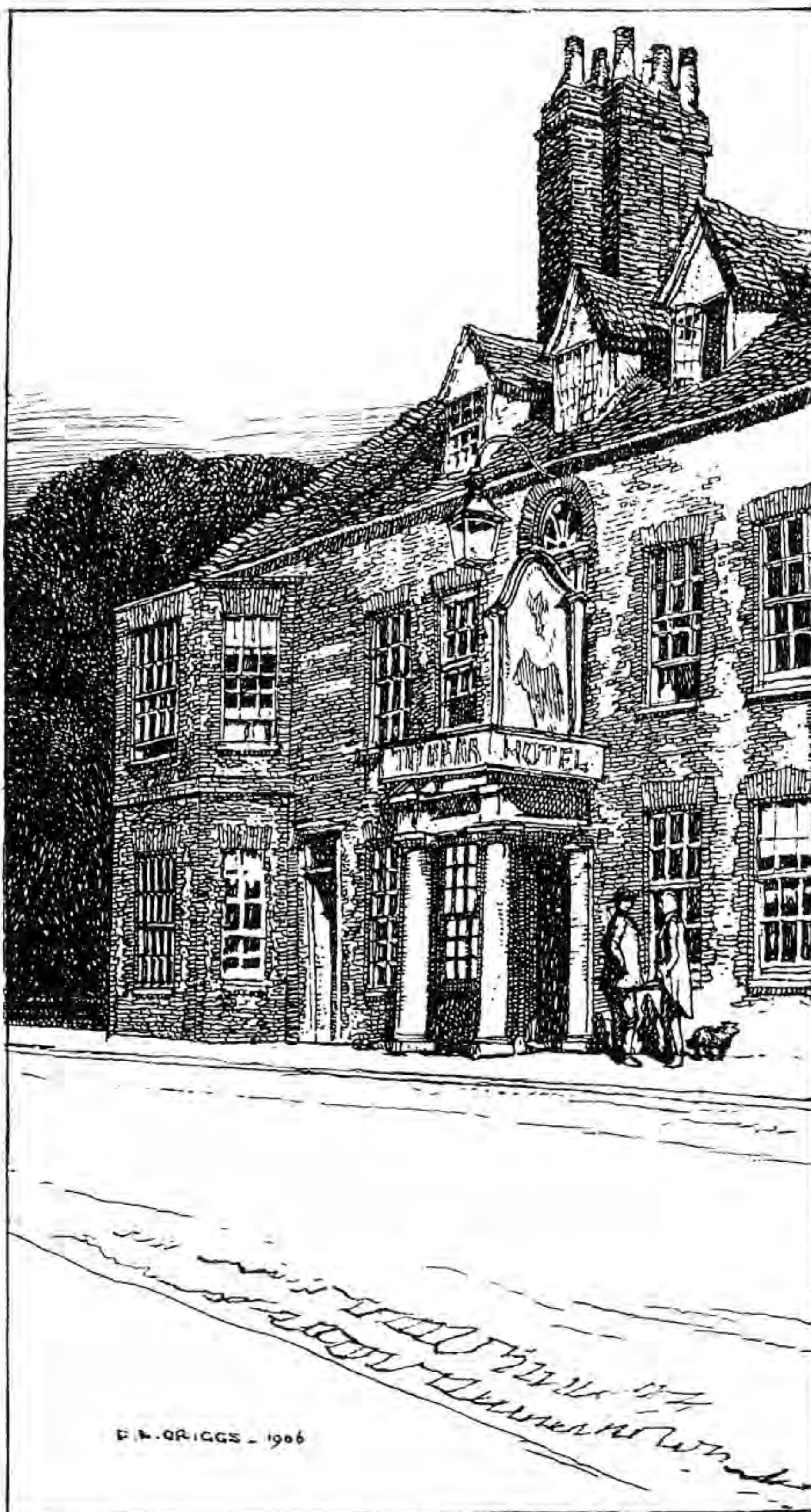
Hungerford and environs. James Talmage was born in the Bell Inn and fished in the canal. His main home and baptismal site are north of Hungerford.

town of southwestern England, was located in west Berkshire about seventy miles west of central London.⁶ Hungerford is linked by the Kennet River with Newbury to the east and with Ramsbury and Marlborough, Wiltshire to the west. The Kennet rises in north-eastern Wiltshire and flows east to the Thames and the sea. The winding, shallow valley shared by the four towns was known as the Vale of Kennet. The river and the proximity of the four towns tied them almost inseparably together, linking them economically as well as geographically.⁷ Market days, with each town having a different day and some of them different products, were held in all but Ramsbury.⁸ The residents of the vale patronized the markets in all of the towns. The Great Western Railway line, which ran through three of these towns, tightened these natural bonds.⁹

James's father was the manager—and possibly the proprietor—of the Bell Inn, a hotel founded in 1494 and one of approximately fifteen such establishments then operating in Hungerford.¹⁰ Information about the Bell is skimpy. Despite its early origins, by the 1860s it was clearly a secondary establishment, smaller and quieter than its more successful contemporaries, the Bear, the Three Swans, and the John O'Gaunt.¹¹ The Bell was located south of the Kennet and Avon Canal in upper Hungerford. Most of the larger and more prosperous hotels were situated on Charnham Street (the old stage road from London) near the Kennet River Bridge in north Hungerford. Even with the large number of travelers who stayed in Hungerford, competition was keen with inns as large and famous as the Bear.

The life of James's parents was characterized by long hours, alcoholic beverages, noise and frivolity, hot stove and hearth, and a wide variety of guests, including some travelers of questionable moral character.¹² The Talmages risked disfavor of some townspeople and the local clergy by earning their living as innkeepers and by dispensing alcoholic beverages at a time when the temperance movement was strong and active in the area.¹³ The Talmages also suffered under the unfavorable reaction of their neighbors to their religious views.¹⁴

James's ten younger brothers and sisters were born in the Bell Inn or in the family cottage in Eddington, a northern suburb,



The Bear at Hungerford, 1906. A competitor of the Bell, this most famous of the inns of Hungerford is still operating today and appears much the same as it did in Talmage's day. (James Edmund Vincent, *Highways and Byways in Berkshire* [London: Macmillan, 1919].)

where the Talmages moved shortly after James's birth. About that same time, James's older sister, Patience, died at the age of two.¹⁵

Life in Ramsbury

When James himself was two, his parents took him to live with his grandparents, James and Mary Talmage, in Ramsbury.¹⁶ Under such an arrangement, James became deeply attached to his grandfather, and the old man's influence was probably the single most important factor in James's young life:

In later years he delighted in telling his own children and grandchildren stories of Grandfather Talmage, stories of formal and informal lessons taught and learned, of occasional stern admonitions, of joyous outings in pursuit of fish in the [Kennet and Avon] Canal that ran . . . [through] Hungerford and Ramsbury, or of waterfowl and small game in the marshes and fields—and through them all ran always the vibrant feeling of loving remembrance that invariably lights the eye and warms the voice of one speaking of someone unusually close and deeply loved, who has exerted a major influence for good on the speaker's life.¹⁷

Were there sufficient sources, we would do well to study the elder Talmage more closely. What little we know of him comes mostly from family tradition. He was a farmer and a leading citizen of Ramsbury. His roots were anchored firmly in the soil of Wiltshire, where his family had resided for over a century. Other members of his family lived nearby. With the exception of a few, such as his son and a daughter, they viewed with disfavor his acceptance of Mormonism. He was a religious man with a strong sense of fair play, and, if his relationship with his grandson is any indication, he had a knack for relating to children.

Grandfather Talmage's initial encounter with Mormonism, probably in the early 1840s, demonstrated his courage, sensitivity, honesty, sense of fair play, and ability to influence his friends and neighbors. According to family tradition, he was at first a leader of the anti-Mormon mobs. Later, a change came over him, and when the elders came to his home attempting to escape from an angry mob, he hid them in a closet and threw the mob off the trail. His wife fed those missionaries, and he was later converted by them.¹⁸

Grandfather Talmage participated in local politics and community affairs. The full extent of his involvement is not known,

but the esteem in which he was held by his fellow citizens is evidenced to some degree by his election as a member of the annual Hocktide Jury in Hungerford in 1867 and 1869. Hocktide, a local holiday celebrated since feudal times on the second Tuesday after Easter, was marked each year by the election of new town officials and a jury of leading citizens to oversee the annual financial accounting to the citizenry. The jury examined the town records and certified that they had been accurately kept and that the financial accounts were true and balanced. When all was reported and in order, the jurors signed the report page in the high constable's record book. James E. Talmage's signature was as big and bold in the record—although a little shaky in 1869—as was that of his grandson on Utah and Brigham Young Academy documents many years later.¹⁹

During the three years he lived in Ramsbury, James was also undoubtedly influenced by his grandmother, Mary Joyce Talmage. Unfortunately, we know little of her during that time. James did not mention her in his journal until they were both living in Utah, and family records reveal little about her beyond her birth in Hampshire. However, it is inconceivable to think of James living in her home in his early years and being around her for the rest of his young adult life without having been influenced in a major way. James was impacted by other members of the Talmage family in Ramsbury as well. When he was twenty-nine, James wrote that his cousin Ada “was as light-hearted and winsome as she used to be, when as a boy, I gazed upon her as my ideal of gentle womanhood.”²⁰

James resided in Ramsbury approximately three years, attending infant school from time to time.²¹ Infant schools, also called dame schools, were sponsored by the National Society of the Church of England. They were attended by children ages two to seven and were usually taught by women. The schools were very common in the 1860s in the country as well as the towns although “on the whole dame schools were little more than baby-minding establishments and . . . the education which they gave was extremely rudimentary.”²² These schools could hardly have been otherwise as they consisted of a group of twenty or more children at widely varying stages of development, all entrusted to

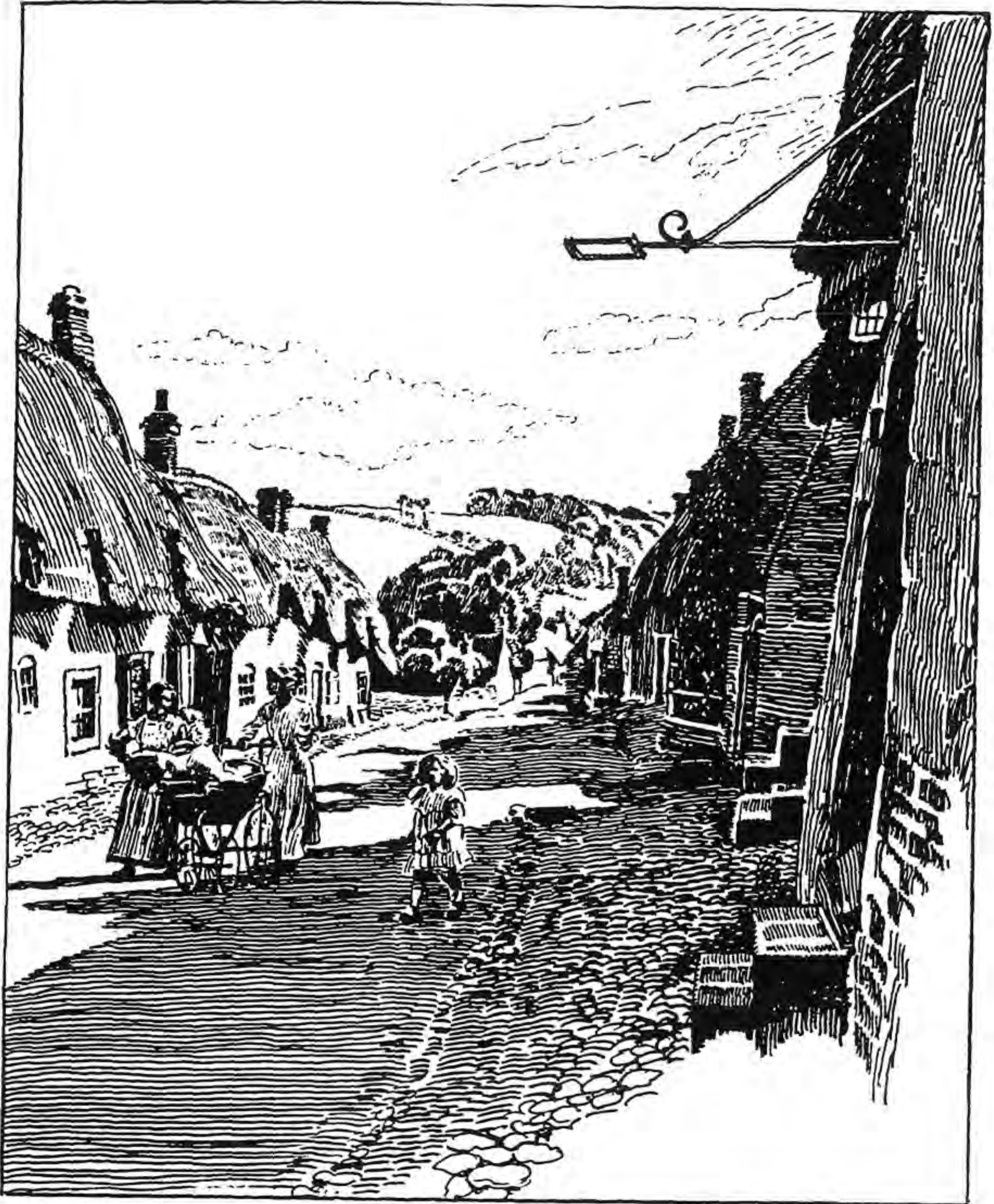
the care of one elderly woman. The weekly fee of a few pence she received for each pupil would have been well earned in simply maintaining order and assisting the smaller children with their personal needs. Depictions of life for the children in the dame schools are usually either grim or idyllic, the quality of a child's experience usually depending on the disposition of the teacher. That James attended only intermittently and was given formal lessons by his grandfather suggests that the quality of his early education left something to be desired.²³

Not only was Ramsbury the Talmage ancestral home, with all its natural ties and emotional attractions, but it also offered a somewhat contrasting environment to Hungerford for the rearing of a child. Hungerford was a prosperous market town situated at the crossroads of southwest England. Ramsbury, on the other hand, was a large village²⁴ with a small pottery industry and several tanners, shoemakers, glovers, brewers, and collar makers.²⁵ Ramsbury's inhabitants were a conservative, rural people who frowned on noise at night and drunkenness. In the 1860s, frequent letters were written to the editors of local newspapers from citizens irate over intemperance.²⁶ About the only excitement that occurred in Ramsbury during Talmage's boyhood resulted from the annual meat (stock) show at Christmas, the fall hiring fair, an occasional brass band concert, and the unrest of the laboring classes.²⁷

Ramsbury boasted several churches, including the Anglican, the Primitive Methodists, the Congregationalists, and the Independent Baptists.²⁸ Christian service was evident. For example, on March 26, 1863, a fire destroyed eight cottages in Ramsbury. Within two weeks, the Reverend J. Hawkins, one of the local clergy, collected nearly thirty pounds in currency and distributed it to the victims of the fire.²⁹ In a related vein, local businessman E. Meyrick sponsored an annual Christmas dinner for the indigent in Ramsbury.³⁰

The Talmages and the Church

It is not clear how early Talmage was exposed to the tenets and principles of Mormonism,³¹ a faith viewed with general disapproval, derision, and hostility in Hungerford and most of England



Ramsbury street scene. This idyllic lane is typical of the views from James Talmage's early childhood. (James Edmund Vincent, *Highways and Byways in Wiltshire* [London: Macmillan, 1919].)

in the 1860s.³² In his journal, he later recalled the many times he had attended St. Savior's Anglican Church in Eddington, "when a very little boy, . . . before Father had become a member of the Mormon Church."³³ Neither do we know precisely when Mormonism first entered Hungerford and Ramsbury. Apparently missionaries were active and successful in the immediate area in the early 1840s as a part of the early burst of missionary work in England. By June 4, 1843, nearby Newbury had twenty-two members, including one elder and two priests.³⁴ In September of that year, a disturbance in Hungerford was attributed to the Mormon elders. In response, Hugh Bourne, a founder of Primitive Methodism and an ardent preacher at open-air camp and revival meetings, "had to rush to Hungerford," despite his seventy-one years of age, because "the society [of the Primitive Methodists] had been disturbed by the influence of the Latter-day Saints."³⁵

Steady growth continued in the LDS Church thereafter. Four years later (1847), when the first companies of Mormons were arriving in the valley of the Great Salt Lake, Newbury had 93 members—an increase of 71 members—and one year later the total had grown to 123 members, and they were called the Newbury Branch in the *Millennial Star* for the first time.³⁶ Conversions in England reached a peak in 1851 when 2.8 percent of the Mormons in England—some 840 out of 30,000—resided in Wiltshire, most of them apparently from the poor and laboring classes. After 1851 the number of conversions and members fell steadily as the result of both emigration and unfavorable publicity spread by the critics and enemies of Mormonism who were increasingly active after the public announcement of the doctrine of polygamy.³⁷

One source states that "in the early 19th century several houses in Ramsbury were registered for worship by dissenters. One may have been that used by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints in which 30 attended the service held on Census Sunday in 1851."³⁸ Branches were organized in Ramsbury and Hungerford on January 1, 1852, at which time they were placed in the Reading Conference.³⁹ A few years later they were changed to the Wiltshire Conference, and by Talmage's eleventh year there was a single branch, which was headquartered in Ramsbury and was part of the London Conference.

James's father was president of the Ramsbury Branch for a time although the exact dates of his service are not known.⁴⁰ James later stated that his mother's house in England "was opened to the elders and not a few of them learned to call her 'Mother' from the kind treatment they received from her hands,"⁴¹ no doubt a reference to the years when she was a branch president's wife. James recalled his own deep attachment to his mother:

Mother and I were close and confidential companions. She shared my boyish troubles, heartened me in failure, rejoiced in every little success, and was a loving friend in my youth and early manhood. It was a joy to tell her, by word and deed, of my thankfulness and appreciation while yet she lived in mortality; though no expression of gratitude could be adequate.⁴²

Return to Hungerford

When James returned to Hungerford to live with his parents at age five, it is likely that the purpose of the three-year visit had been achieved. Certainly, his grandparents were still able to care for him, since his grandfather, at least, was actively involved with James right up to the month before the old man's death in 1874. But James was old enough to help around the hotel at age five, and there were younger children who also needed attention. He almost certainly helped care for them. Moreover, he needed to receive a quality education, and the Ramsbury schools were inferior to those of Hungerford at that time.⁴³

That James was probably helping with the hotel and the younger children is implied in a journal entry which states that he attended school only "at irregular intervals" for the next three years. He also may have missed some school because of his parents' inability to pay the weekly fee or his own need to escape periodically from the daily inculcation of Anglican dogma. The latter two possibilities are unlikely, however, since the fee was only a few pence, and children with frequent absences were required to pay even higher fees. This penalty was to encourage high attendance in order for the school to pass inspection at the annual visit by a royal inspector.⁴⁴

A high absence rate was normal for most of the children attending the national school during the same time period, and

night school was held for those twelve and over (including adults) whose daily work prevented their attendance. All over Victorian England, children were an important part of the economic structure, and Talmage was probably no exception to the general rule. He was needed at home. Except for occasional visits to Ramsbury and some schooling there during his tenth year, he spent his fifth to twelfth years in Hungerford.

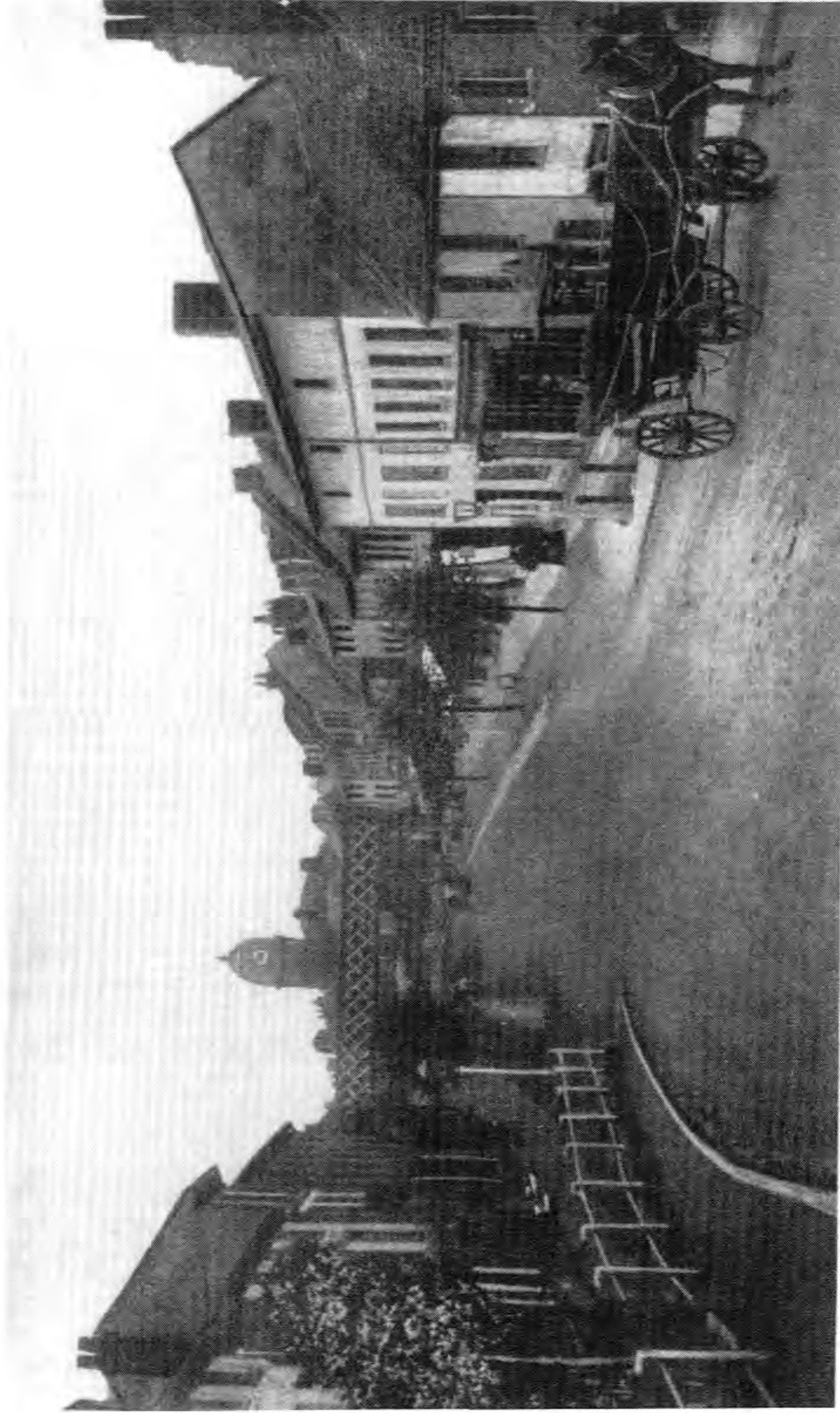
Life in Hungerford

Agriculture was the mainstay of Hungerford and its neighboring towns, and many of the services rendered and events held were an outgrowth of an agrarian and pastoral society. The soils of the Vale of Kennet were among the most fertile in England.⁴⁵ In most years, the vale was lush and green from abundant rainfall. During the dry years, the farmers irrigated the meadows and fields from the waters of the river.

Barley was the principal crop of the area. Some of it went to support the local brewing industry—Hungerford was famous for its beer. Some barley was consumed locally by the citizenry and used for livestock feed, and the remainder was shipped by rail to London, along with wheat, oats, beans, peas, and occasionally potatoes. By 1874 haymaking “became general” in the neighborhood of Hungerford.

Cows and horses were kept, of course, as a necessity for daily life, but sheep were especially plentiful and supported a thriving industry. The annual Hungerford Sheep Fair was held in August, attracting several thousand entries and exciting all with a myriad of related festivities, including races at Hungerford Downs and nearby Lambourn.⁴⁶

Nearly as important as agriculture in the economy of Hungerford and Ramsbury were the Kennet River and the fishing industry. Hungerford was “a towne famous for its Troutes” as early as 1654. In 1688 no less a personage than Samuel Pepys commented on the “good trouts, eels and cray fish” after eating dinner in Hungerford. In its descent from the hills of Wiltshire to Hungerford, the river fell four hundred feet, its swift pace providing an excellent habitat for trout, salmon, grayling, and perch.⁴⁷ A principal reason that the



High Street, Hungerford, Berkshire. The clock tower of the town hall and the corn exchange loom in the center as they did when James walked the street both in his youth and during his 1891 visit. Courtesy Berkshire County Reference Library.

fish thrived was the abundance of crayfish, which was a favorite trout food.⁴⁸

Equally important was the fishery maintenance and preservation program implemented by the town authorities, who regularly destroyed trash and predator fish such as carp and stocked the stream with trout.⁴⁹ By limiting the length of the season, by limiting bait to artificial flies, and by limiting fishing to the commoners with a vested right⁵⁰ and to those visitors with tickets purchased at a reasonable cost, the Fishing Committee insured a future for the fishery and the revenue it generated.⁵¹ Visitor revenues, whether from fishing or from purchases made in the shops and hotels, were important to the local economy.

Hungerford was a popular resort and holiday spot. From earliest times, it had been a gathering place for visitors—some who while enroute to other places simply stopped to enjoy a day of rest on the banks of the Kennet and others who came specifically for the fishing or the climate of Berkshire. The air was pure and bracing on the downs and mild in the valleys. No equally level country in England could compare with the Vale of Kennet for picturesque scenery. Its meadows, heathlands, chalk hills, pinewoods, and royal park and forest attracted many visitors each year.⁵²

Within Hungerford, “there were the carriers’ carts, the ‘Sociables,’ and the four, six, and eight-horse waggons,”⁵³ and a large fleet of yellow-and-blue horse cabs called flies. The flies ran between the hotels, the business district, and the railway station. In the busy streets with the market traffic and the flies going back and forth to the trains a dozen times a day, horse and cart accidents were a regular occurrence.⁵⁴

One example of the nature of the local tourism industry is the following advertisement run by the Bear Hotel in an 1877 guide to Berkshire:

A very Old-established family, Commercial, and Posting House. Situated on the London, Bath and Bristol Road. Flies to and from every train.

FISHING EXCELLENT⁵⁵

Among those who had responded to the enticements of such advertisements and enjoyed the pleasures of Hungerford were

some of the most famous names in English history, including Henry VIII, Queen Ann of Cleves, Queen Elizabeth I, Charles I, and William of Orange.⁵⁶

When James was not in school, at work in the hotel, at the cottage in Eddington, or by the canal fishing, he strolled the streets of Hungerford with his friends. The town's surprisingly cosmopolitan air, high level of activity, medieval traditions, and mixture of the urban and rural made Hungerford a vivid and interesting place to spend one's boyhood. Especially exciting was market day, when the streets were alive with people. Every Wednesday the farmers brought their produce, livestock, flour, and bread to town to sell or trade. The many shops did a thriving business.

Captivating for James and his friends was the wide variety of offerings in the many shops and cottage industries. Always available were foodstuffs produced locally. The smell of fresh-baked bread and pastries mingled with the scent of fresh



The Kennet and Avon Canal at Westfields, Newbury. James Talmage fished in this canal as a boy in Hungerford and environs, possibly wandering as far east as this point in Newbury. (James Edmund Vincent, *Highways and Byways in Berkshire* [London: Macmillan, 1919].)

meat at the butcher's (lamb chops, kidney, and salmon or trout from the Kennet), the rich bouquet of leather from the glover's and the saddler's, the fragrance of kiln-dried oak and beechwood at the lumber dealer, and the clean, medicinal smell of the chemist's shop (drugstore). Cheese, milk, and vegetables were available at the grocer's along with imports from Crosse and Blackwell in London. Imports included exotics such as pickles, orange marmalade, calves' feet in jelly, spices, and mushroom catsup.⁵⁷

The people of Hungerford provided many additional activities and annual events that were sheer heaven for a boy—even a studious boy or one with no pence to spend. There were celebrations on most holidays, with a special two-day affair on New Year's Eve and Day which included bell-ringing, Church services, and a pigeon shoot "for a fat pig."⁵⁸ (Due to a shortage of pigeons, the latter was cancelled the year James was twelve.) There were bicycle races, horse races, cricket matches, flower shows, and fairs in the summer and fall; ice skating on the canal in the winter; and concerts and circuses year round. Hungerford had a brass band (as did Ramsbury), a drum-and-fife band, a singing class, a choral society, and numerous choirs, including the boys' choir from the national school. There were many clubs, including a chapter of the Order of Foresters, which sponsored an annual fete in Hungerford Park. A parade, music, a cricket match, much food and drink, hurdle racing, flat racing, jumping in sacks, dancing, and quoits (ring toss) marked the all-day affair. In James's eleventh year, the fete was attended by over two thousand visitors, and the park was cleared at 8 P.M. "after a most successful day."⁵⁹ The Annual Hiring and Pleasure Fair in 1862 was

the usual heterogeneous collection of gingerbread stalls, penny shows, shooting targets, etc., which are the invariable concomitants of a statute fair, . . . and had many patrons. Nor did the various public houses lack patronage, judging from the numerous specimens of inebriated rusticity to be seen in the evening.⁶⁰

There were regular excursion trains to Kensington Station in west London to visit the Great Exhibition and the Crystal Palace; in short, there was no dearth of diversionary activities.

One highlight of the year for all the children of Hungerford was Hocktide Court. On the second Tuesday after Easter, the

townspeople gathered at the sound of “the Hungerford Horn, presented to the corporate body by John O’Gaunt. It . . . [was] blown every Horn Tuesday, to assemble the inhabitants for the election” of the high constable and other officials for another year.⁶¹ Hocktide was also a holiday, hearkening back to an annual renewal of feudal pledges between the Lord of the Manor and his serfs. Anciently, “before the days of policemen, two tithingmen were appointed annually to keep a watch over the inhabitants and property of Hungerford; and on Hock Tuesday were entitled to demand a penny a head from the townspeople for services rendered during the past year.”⁶²

By Talmage’s day, the tithingmen were no longer limited to two and were composed chiefly of tradesmen of the town (thus James’s father was eligible). Their duties had long ceased, but the tradition was perpetuated. After receiving from the high constable a staff gaily decorated with flowers, surmounted by an orange, and bedecked with blue ribbon, the tithingmen began their progress through the town. First they went to all the schools, requesting a holiday for the children, who were immediately released from school. The children then accompanied the tithingmen from house to house, with the officials requesting a penny from the men and a kiss from the ladies. The day’s festivities were concluded with a grand distribution of oranges to the children.⁶³

On the following Friday,

a court called Court Baron [was] . . . held, at which the officers elect [were] . . . sworn in; every resident in the Borough above fourteen years of age [was required to] . . . attend or be fined one penny. . . . A banquet [was] . . . served in the evening [probably at the Bear Hotel] in honor of the new constable. The ‘immortal memory of John O. Gaunt’ [was] . . . drunk in solemn silence, and a breakfast on the following morning [terminated] . . . the Hocktide revelry.⁶⁴

Abundant cultural events and activities also occurred in Hungerford.⁶⁵ In addition to the national school, which offered night classes and the use of its facilities to clubs and community groups, there were several smaller church-related schools. Frequent lectures, some in a religious vein, were sponsored in the Corn Exchange and Town Hall by the churches and various clubs and lodges. For example, “An Evening with the Poets” was held in

the Congregational School on January 31, 1874, and in the spring of the same year, several foreign missionaries spoke on Sierra Leone, Madagascar, and other African countries.

There was no free library as such, but James had no dearth of reading material. He was able to draw upon half a dozen local newspapers, four published in Marlborough and two in Newbury, and, if he desired, papers from Reading, Oxford, and London. He could also listen to the cracker-barrel-type discussions of the contents of those papers which took place at the Bell Inn. The local papers covered world events through excerpts from the *Times*, providing ample coverage of world news—including such events as the U.S. Civil War, the settlement of the American West, an occasional sensationalistic article on the Mormons⁶⁶—and of national and regional news, including descriptions of the activities and beliefs of Victorian social reformers. James was taught Anglican doctrine in school, and he had ready access to the standard works of the Mormon faith as well as related works such as the *Millennial Star*⁶⁷ and missionary tracts. In no sense of the word was he a sheltered boy.

Compared to many of his contemporaries in the psychologically depressing slums of the large cities, James E. Talmage's childhood was idyllic.⁶⁸ Children in the back-to-back houses of the great, industrial towns experienced inadequate sanitation and water supplies as well as little familial time and attention. After spending long hours in the sweat shops of the manufacturing districts of industrial England, parents were too tired to care at the end of the day, and the children, who all too often joined them as members of the work force, were too tired to play.⁶⁹

Talmage's Schooling

Between the ages of five and eight, James was enrolled in the Infant School of the Hungerford National School. It carried that name because the local board, in order to obtain outside funding, was willing to subscribe to the "terms of union" of the National Society of the Church of England. (The infant school that James had attended in Ramsbury was part of the same system.) These terms of union required that the children be instructed in the holy

scriptures and in the liturgy and catechism of the established church, with such instruction supervised by the parochial clergyman; that the children be regularly assembled for the purpose of attending service in the parish church; and that the masters and mistresses be members of the Church of England.

The National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church—its full name—was formed in October 1811 as an arm of the Church of England. In order to accomplish its purpose of educating the poor throughout England and Wales, the National Society provided financial support to schools at all levels, from infant schools to training schools for teachers, disbursing funds by diocese. Hungerford Parish, as a part of the Diocese of Oxford, was one of 242 places receiving part of a total of £19,970 prior to December 1868 for the purpose of constructing local school buildings.⁷⁰

The school day began with a roll call for which a form was provided with spaces to indicate whether the student was “Present,” “Absent with leave,” “Absent without leave,” “Absent-ill,” or “Absent-weather.”⁷¹ Following the daily roll and, on Fridays, the payment of weekly fees, there were devotionals and prayers and then two religion lessons. The religion lessons, one lasting twenty-five minutes and the other twenty minutes, included memorization of hymns, scriptures, and the Lord’s Prayer. Children under age nine were given picture lessons on the Old and New Testament. This morning routine was followed Monday through Thursday. Friday was examination day. By age eight, the child was expected to have mastered step I, which consisted of proficiency in the following: accurate recitation of the Lord’s Prayer, some knowledge of God the Father as creator, some knowledge of God the Son as redeemer, some knowledge of God the Holy Ghost as sanctifier, knowledge of simple hymns, and a short and very simple form of private prayer.⁷²

Because hymns were required for graduation, Talmage sang them along with the other children. The National Society printed the hymns on large 18" x 30" posters for the teachers to use in leading the students. Some of the theology of the hymns ran counter to Mormon doctrine, but there was much that was familiar

and consistent, such as “Hymn to the Blessed Trinity” which sang praises to “Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; Godhead one, and Persons Three.”⁷³ There were also the comforting words in such hymns as “Visitation of the Sick,” and “Hymn For Evening”:

Our changeful lives are ebbing to an end,
Onward to darkness and to death we tend;
O Conqueror of the Grave, be Thou our Guide,
Be Thou our Light in Death's dark Eventide;
Then in our mortal hour will be no gloom,
No sting in Death, no terror in the Tomb.

Thou, Who in Darkness walking didst appear
Upon the waves, and Thy Disciples cheer,
Come, Lord, in lonesome days, when storms assail,
And earthly hopes and human succours fail;
When all is dark, may we behold Thee nigh,
And hear Thy Voice, “Fear not, for it is I.”⁷⁴

Victorian schoolboys were taught to be proud of the British empire and to emulate the heroes of England's climb to the pinnacle of world dominance. The “success story was the favorite Victorian fiction.”⁷⁵ Heroes of such stories included not merely military men, explorers, and adventurers, but also businessmen and industrialists such as china king Josiah Wedgwood and railroad builder Sir Daniel Gooch, and social reformers such as Robert Owen. In Talmage's geography notebook and in his examination paper for standard six, the heavy emphasis on Britain's worldwide possessions testify that he was indeed taught to be proud of the British Empire. Also, the manner in which the notes were arranged and the emphasis on dates and other specific facts in James's history notebook, suggest that Dickens's description of Victorian education can be generalized and applied to Talmage.⁷⁶

Dickens contended that Victorian education engaged in “taking childhood captive, and dragging it into gloomy statistical dens by the hair.” Victorian school children, he wrote, “had been lectured at from their tenderest years; coursed, like little hares.” In the classroom, “it hailed facts all day long, so very hard.” The children were an “inclined plane of little vessels then and there arranged in order, ready to have imperial gallons of facts poured

into them until they were full to the brim.” “The schoolmaster seemed a kind of cannon loaded to the muzzle with facts, and prepared to blow them out of the regions of childhood at one discharge.” “You are never to fancy,” instructed the government inspector, as he sternly lectured the students of Dickens’s schoolmaster, Mr. Choakumchild, on the first day of school:

Fact, fact, fact! . . . You are to be in all things regulated and governed . . . by fact. We hope to have, before long, a board of fact, composed of commissioners of fact, who will force the people to be a people of fact and of nothing but fact. You must discard the word Fancy altogether. You have nothing to do with it. You are not to have any object of use or ornament, what would be a contradiction in fact.⁷⁷

There is ample evidence in Talmage’s surviving school records and papers and in his speaking and writing of later years that he was a capable memorizer and that he developed a good head for facts at an early age. However, he never lost his appetite for “fancy,” as may be seen in this combination of fact and fancy from his geography notes:

Cape Colony, Africa. The climate is on the whole healthy. The worst defect is the irregularity of rain which either falls in torrents or is absent for very long periods. Sometimes long droughts, or heavy rains or stifling hot winds come and make the settlers wish they were at home in Gt. Britain again. . . . The summit of Table Mountain is often covered by a cloud which people call the Table-cloth, when the Table-cloth is spread then stormy weather may be looked for.⁷⁸

The school’s afternoon was occupied by the teaching of secular subjects. The content of the curriculum varied with the individual school and depended upon what each school could convince the crown inspector to approve. Five subjects were standard fare in all elementary schools—reading, writing, arithmetic, grammar, and geography. Other subjects offered in some elementary schools of the time were algebra, geometry, natural philosophy, natural sciences, political economy, English history, English literature, French, Latin, German, singing, and military drill. In addition, the boys of Hungerford regularly met the boys of Ramsbury in cricket matches.

No record has turned up of how well James performed in infant school, but on May 8, 1874, at age twelve, he passed the examination of the Oxford Diocesan Association for a second-class certificate, which meant that he had completed the requirements for “graduation” from elementary school. Second-class certificates were the highest offered at that stage in a child’s education. He was then eligible to earn a first-class certificate through “good service” and go on to enroll in a training school for teachers.

In order to prepare himself for the examination to earn his second-class certificate and to qualify as an Oxford Diocesan Scholar, James had undergone four years of stringent schooling. From age eight to ten, he had attended the Hungerford National School, and from age eleven to fourteen, he had probably attended both the new board school in Ramsbury and the Hungerford National School. His progress, and that of all the students, was checked periodically—at least annually—by a church/crown inspector. For example, the *Marlborough Journal* reported that “children of the National School were examined on Monday by the Rev. DuPort and Mr. Pierce. The children passed successfully and a favourable report will be given on Wednesday.”⁷⁹

When we analyze James’s extant schoolwork, the picture that emerges is one of an earnest, hardworking child who was not without his foibles and who did not lack a sense of humor. A history notebook written at age ten and geography notes and an examination written between the ages of eight and twelve reveal firm, clear handwriting, in ink, complete with Spencerian flourishes and embellishments, a characteristic of much of his later work. He wrote with the earnestness of a typical ten- to twelve-year-old child, with occasional spelling errors and some problems with verbs—for example, he tended to pluralize at the wrong time. Periodically, the serious and almost parrot-like recitation of facts was interrupted with an expression of his own feelings or with a snappy comment. His notes include the following:

Australia. The natives are black or sooty brown very lean and very lazy but they are clever at hunting the kangaroo and other animals and can well use the weapons needful to kill or catch them.

Malta. The poor speak Arabic and can beg in English. The polite tongue is Italian.

Gibraltar. It has been denominated, the 'Key of the Mediterranean,' which means that through holding it the British can if they please keep any ship from entering, or coming out of that sea.⁸⁰

Comments such as this one at the end of the section on Gibraltar—"Englishmen in Spain have to endure many an uncivil act because we keep that rock"—demonstrate a plucky forthrightness on his part, no matter what the origin or authorship of the comment may have been.⁸¹ The style of the exam questions, "Describe the British Possessions in Europe," "Describe India," "Describe the South Coast of England," required the student to write a clear essay at an early age. Needed were a thorough knowledge of the facts, an organized mind, and the ability to write clearly. Talmage seems to have had all three. Seeing these qualities in him at age ten to twelve helps us understand more fully how he could become a member of the Brigham Young Academy faculty at age seventeen and a member of its governing board before he was thirty.

A final indication of his seriousness and the quality of his schoolwork is found in his practice of transcribing notes. While teaching in the Brigham Young Academy in 1880, he copied his notes from an English history course taken in 1872 into a larger more permanent notebook at no small effort and with minimal changes. By way of comparison, this task would be comparable to a college freshman of today copying his fifth-grade notes into his college notebook to use in his job as a tutor to high-school students.

The abuses to children generally present in Victorian Society were not practiced in the Talmage household. If Mrs. Bedoneby-asyoudid⁸² had called on a given Friday to check on James's welfare during his later school years, the only person she would have found guilty of ill-using the boy was the schoolmaster. Mr. James Newhook found nothing strange or unusual in the thrashings he gave James and indeed would have been quite appalled to have been challenged; a common belief was that a boy needed a few belts each day for general purposes. It was not uncommon to knock a boy down "in order to teach him (as young gentlemen used to be taught at public schools) that he must be an extra good boy that



Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid. The Victorian fairy sternly oversees an act of recompense by one of Charles Kingsley's water babies. (Charles Kingsley, *The Water-Babies: A Fairy Tale for a Land-Baby* [London: Macmillan, 1863], 218.)

day.”⁸³ Newhook taught only the upper classes,⁸⁴ meaning that he encountered James Talmage after the boy's introduction to Mormonism and possibly after his baptism in 1873. Aggravating the situation was Mr. Newhook's hearty condemnation of Mormonism. James was harassed, thrashed, and beaten by Newhook, possibly as a result of his faith rather than for any school-boy infractions.⁸⁵

James's later schooling may have been more formative in his development because it was broader and deeper. In all likelihood, it still included a generous dosage of Anglicanism. The absences of his fifth to seventh years were probably not repeated because by his eighth birthday the Education Act of 1870 was made law.⁸⁶ One of its provisions empowered local school boards to pass laws for compulsory attendance of all children ages five to thirteen.

Talmage's Baptism

In the spring of 1873, his eleventh year, James became violently ill and was near death. His father, for an unexplained reason, attributed the illness to his own failure to have James baptized prior to that time. He solemnly promised the Lord in prayer that if James recovered he would promptly baptize the boy. Shortly thereafter James did recover and plans for the baptism were made. James later described that important event as follows:

During my eleventh year, in the spring of 1873, I was stricken with a severe illness; and, as my parents afterward informed me, my life appeared to be near its close. My father associated this illness with the fact that my baptism into the Church had been deferred beyond the time at which it should have been attended to. At that time, father was president of the Hungerford and Ramsbury Branch of the Church.

As my father afterward told me, he made a solemn covenant with the Lord that if my life should be spared he would lose no time in having me baptized after my recovery. We were then living at Eddington, a suburb of Hungerford, Berkshire, England.

Ellen Gilbert, also in the eleventh year of her age, a faithful daughter of a devoted mother, was to be baptized at the same time. Ellen Gilbert's brother, Elijah, was then a deacon in the Branch. On June 15, 1873, my father and Elijah Gilbert left our house shortly before midnight, traversed the Kennet bridge back and forth, looked around the neighborhood, and returned to the house telling us that all seemed clear, and that Ellen and I were to prepare to enter the water. In the interest of caution they went out once more, and returned with the same report. Ellen and I accompanied father and Brother Elijah to the place selected in the mill race for our immersion.

I was to be baptized first. As father stood in the water and took my hand, I being on the bank with Ellen and her brother, we were veritably horror-stricken by a combined shriek, yell, scream, howl—I know not how to describe the awful noise—such as none of us had ever heard. It seemed to be a combination of every fiendish ejaculation we could conceive of. I remember how I trembled at the awful manifestation, which had about it the sharpness and volume of a thunderclap followed by an angry roar, which died away as a hopeless groan.

The fearsome sound seemed to come from a point not more than fifty yards from us, near the end of the great bridge. The night was one of bright starlight, and we could have seen anyone on the bridge, which was built of white stone with low walls. Elijah Gilbert, with courage unusual for so young a man, started to investigate, but father

called him back. Father, who was also trembling, as were the others, then asked me if I was too frightened to be baptized; I was much too terrified to speak, so I answered by stepping into the water. I was baptized, and Ellen Gilbert was baptized immediately afterward.

As we started back to the house, not more than three hundred yards from the spot at which we had been immersed, father and Elijah went toward the bridge, surveyed the immediate vicinity, but failed to find any person abroad besides ourselves.

The frightening noise had sounded to us as loud enough to be heard over a great area; but none except ourselves seemed to have heard it, as not even a window was opened by anybody in the neighborhood, and no mention or inquiry concerning the matter was later made by others. Neighborly gossip was quite the order of the time; and surely, if that blood curdling shriek had been heard by others than ourselves it would have been the subject of talk for many a day.

But we heard it, as we shall never forget.

Sister Ellen, Brother Elijah and I have spoken together on the matter as we have occasionally met. On January 20, 1912, I was a visitor at the home of Bishop and Sister [Ellen Gilbert] Hyer, in Lewiston, Utah; and when mention was made of the unusual incident associated with our baptisms, I requested Sister Hyer to relate in detail the circumstance as she remembered it, for I have often wondered whether the distance of time had in any way distorted my view and rendered my remembrance inaccurate. I was struck by the strict agreement, even as to minute details, between her recital and my recollection. On July 20, 1919, I was again in the home of Sister Hyer and made a similar request; but as Sister Hyer wisely suggested that as her brother Elijah was present, he should be the one to tell the story. This he did, and his account agreed with our remembrance in all details.⁸⁷

Blinding of Talmage's Brother

This was but one of several significant events which transpired in James's boyhood and left a profound emotional and spiritual impression upon him. A second occurred a few months after his baptism. He was working with a digging fork on a very dark night. His brother Albert, then about five years of age and six years his junior, came quietly towards him without giving notice of his approach. James later wrote that

until he screamed I had not an idea he was near me; then to my horror I discovered that while in the act of pitching with the fork I had struck

him with the tool, one grain piercing the ball of his left eye. This organ was finally removed, though not before the right had become sympathetically affected and he was almost absolutely blind, being only enabled to distinguish very bright colors and then only when within a few inches of the eye. . . I need say nothing in regard to my feelings and reflections at this mishap;. . . my relief lies in the promise pronounced on him by the priesthood of God that he shall recover.⁸⁸

Albert never fully recovered, and James was deeply solicitous of his welfare into their retiring years.

Events such as his baptism and the accident with Albert suggest that James had ample reason to be serious and spiritually oriented while yet a boy. Talmage's son John wrote of the injury to Albert's eye as follows: "More than any other event, or series of events, this awful occurrence may account for the deep, almost fanatical dedication to work, to Church duties and to all the serious adult responsibilities that marked the life of young James E. Talmage from that terrible day forward."⁸⁹

Grandfather Talmage's Death

A third event occurred the following spring. James had just returned from a month-long tour of Hampshire and Berkshire with his grandfather⁹⁰ when the old gentleman became quite ill. The old man died on July 16, 1874, after four weeks of illness, during which time James remained with his grandmother helping her to nurse his grandfather. Again James recorded his feelings:

Having been very closely attached to him his death affected me severely; and the more so as I never before lost a near relative to my knowledge. I began to reflect seriously on his actions, as brought up by memory to note them very closely, and at length to meditate on his present lot; fully knowing he died in the possession of the priesthood and a firm belief and faith in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day-Saints. One night while meditating in this manner I received a very curious dream concerning him, which had the effect of so firmly imprinting on my mind the conviction that his lot was 'allright,' that not the slightest doubt in that respect has ever been entertained.⁹¹

Following that account was the final boyhood entry in his journal:

My father was making calculations to emigrate with his whole family to Utah, America, at the time of my grandfather's demise; then however he was necessitated to remain in England until affairs were

settled. He moved with his family from Hungerford to the family estate at Ramsbury where all remained until a sale was effected. We left Ramsbury and enrolled as Mormon emigrants set out on our journey to America, May 22nd 1876. Set sail on board the Steamship 'Nevada' of 'Guion Line of Steamers' from Liverpool, May 24th 1876.⁹²

Overall, mid-Victorian southwestern England was a stimulating environment for a boy and an idyllic inculcator of the character traits James E. Talmage would exhibit as a man. The bucolic countryside; the romance and adventure of the river; the bustle of business; the discipline of school; the diversions of fun and frolic; the love and companionship of family; the stimulation of culture and travel; the wisdom and joys of religion; the sobering influence of persecution and sorrow—all of these James knew as a boy. And all of these he drew upon as a man. In his adult life, James Talmage responded as faithfully to the call of duty as the River Kennet answers gravity's pull to the sea.

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NOTES

¹ Elder Melvin J. Ballard, his colleague in the Council of the Twelve, once predicted that Talmage's writings would "be read until the end of time, because that which he has written is so clear and so impressive that it shall ever be among the cherished treasures of those who love the works of God" (from Elder Ballard's sermon at Talmage's funeral, quoted in Albert L. Zobell, ed., *The Parables of James E. Talmage* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1973], 71).

² In most writings about Talmage, his boyhood is either not mentioned or mentioned only briefly. John R. Talmage's *The Talmage Story: Life of James E. Talmage—Educator, Scientist, Apostle* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1972) provides the most information about the childhood years, but even it provides little more than a reiteration of information drawn from Talmage's personal journals, which give few details of his childhood.

³ LDS Family History Center, Patrons Section, 1962, microfilm 422323. Susannah was probably attended by Dr. Harry Pike Major, the most well-known and respected of the local doctors and midwives. It is also possible that James

was delivered by his own father, who, according to his grandson John, “acted as village doctor in Hungerford, though he had no formal medical schooling or degree” (John R. Talmage, “James Joyce Talmage and Susannah Preater Talmage,” box 24, folder 13, James E. Talmage Papers, Special Collections and Manuscripts, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University [hereafter cited as Talmage Papers]).

⁴ *Marlborough Times*, September 27, 1862; and Talmage, *Talmage Story*, 1.

⁵ The birth notice in the *Marlborough Times*, Marlborough, Wiltshire, September 27, 1862, reads “On the 21st inst., at the Bell Inn, Hungerford, Berks, the wife of Mr. James Talmage, of a son.”

⁶ The borough of Hungerford “was originally part of the royal manor of Kintbury, and as such was ancient demesne of the [English] Crown. . . . The town and borough were included in the grant of the manor to Sir Walter Lord Hungerford in 1446” (William Page and P. H. Ditchfield, eds., *A History of Berkshire*, 4 vols., The University of London Institute of Historical Research, Victoria History of the Counties of England [1906–24; reprint, London: Dawsons of Pall Mall, 1972], 4:185). The manor passed in and out of Hungerford family hands over the following years. In the fourteenth century, John O’Gaunt granted the manorial rights, including common pasture and fishing, to the citizens of the manor and the borough. The commoners of Hungerford control the main street, the fishing rights to the Kennet in and near Hungerford, and a great deal of private property to the present day.

⁷ Their histories are closely intertwined. Much that is known of Hungerford and Ramsbury, for example, is drawn from the newspapers of Marlborough and Newbury. Those of greatest value for this essay were the *Marlborough Times*, the *Marlborough Journal*, the *Newbury Weekly News*, and the *Hungerford Gazette*. All are available on microfilm in the British Library, London.

⁸ No Ramsbury market day was mentioned in any of the newspapers cited. Compare the following from D. A. Crowley, “Ramsbury,” in *A History of Wiltshire*, ed. R. B. Pugh, Elizabeth Crittall, and D. A. Crowley, 14 vols., University of London Institute of Historical Research, Victoria History of the Counties of England (London: Oxford University Press, 1953–), 12:40. A market was held in Ramsbury in 1219 but was discontinued ten years later because it was a threat to the one at Marlborough. It was held again from 1300 to 1319 “but nothing is known of it thereafter. The lack of surviving references to it suggests that it failed to flourish and that it petered out long before the 1790s when it was expressly said to have been discontinued.”

⁹ *Berkshire: The Official County Map and Guide* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, Stationer’s Hall Court, 1877), 10 (hereafter cited as *Berkshire Guide*); and W. H. Summers, *The Story of Hungerford in Berkshire*, ed. Harold Peake (n.p., 1926), 158. The Great Western Railway line was first completed in 1847 and ran west from London to Newbury and then passed through Hungerford, Marlborough, and Great Bedwyn on the way to Bath, Bristol, and the coast.

¹⁰ James E. Talmage wrote that the Bell was “kept” by his father; see Journal 1:1, in Talmage Papers. Talmage may have been the owner or the lessor. See, for example, the Craven Arms Inn Lease Agreement, 1840, Berkshire Records Office, Reading, Berkshire. The twenty-one-year lease for the Craven

Arms, also in Hungerford, included fishing and commons rights, a pew in church, outbuildings, and certain privileges. Both nearby Swindon and Ramsbury also had a Bell Inn, apparently a popular name of the time. *Newbury Weekly News*, August 12, 1869, and *Marlborough Journal*, May 16, 1874. Two of the Bell's competitors, the Three Swans and the Bear, the latter also founded in Tudor-Stuart times, are still operating today.

¹¹ Frequent references to these inns and others can be found in the local newspapers. The Bear and the Three Swans were hosts for large public gatherings comparable to those of Kiwanis and Rotary Clubs in American restaurants of today. The Bear was the most popular, being praised often in the newspapers for the quality of the food.

¹² Begging, poaching, stealing, and related lawlessness were a continual problem because of the large number of transients and itinerant tramps crisscrossing the countryside and passing through Hungerford and Ramsbury on their way to and from London or Bristol. Trespassing and catching wild game, especially rabbits, on another's property were strictly punished. In 1870 in the Hungerford District of the Berkshire Constabulary, 1,328 tramps were arrested and assisted, and in the Newbury District, 2,819 were arrested. See the issues of the *Marlborough Journal* for June 1874.

¹³ Frequent letters to the editors of local newspapers during the 1860s expressed strong feelings about intemperance. For general information on the temperance movement in England during the Victorian period, see Dawson Burns, *Temperance in the Victorian Age . . . from 1837 to . . . 1897* (London: Ideal Publishing Union, 1897), a contemporary view of the growth of the movement during the nineteenth century; Janet Roebuck, *The Making of Modern English Society from 1850* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973, 1982), 28, 63-64, 96-97; Edward Royle, *Modern Britain: A Social History, 1750-1985* (London: Edward Arnold, 1987), 238-43; and Richard L. Jensen and Malcolm R. Thorp, eds., *Mormons in Early Victorian Britain* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1989), 64, 110, 113.

¹⁴ Richard O. Cowan points out:

Whilst the missionaries often had to take the brunt of the opposition directed against the Church, the local members were by no means immune. Sometimes persecution was aimed at branches or other groups of saints, but most often it hit individuals or families quite directly. Hostile landlords would sometimes order converts out of their homes. Some employers withdrew work from Mormons unless they would renounce their faith. And, perhaps most difficult of all, many families disowned their own members when they accepted the gospel. Such pressures were most intense in rural areas, where the poorer saints had fewer options in employment or lodging and where the clergy of the established church had more pervasive influence. ("Church Growth in England, 1841-1914," in *Truth Will Prevail: The Rise of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the British Isles, 1837-1987*, ed. V. Ben Bloxham, James R. Moss, and Larry C. Porter [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1987], 218-219)

¹⁵ Henrietta Patience Talmage died November 24, 1862. For this information and Talmage family genealogical information, see Talmage Papers, box 24; and LDS Family History Center microfilm 422323.

¹⁶ The village of Ramsbury was located about five miles up the river from Hungerford. It was the largest of several villages in the parish of Ramsbury and enjoyed a certain ecclesiastical prominence in medieval times when the Bishop of Salisbury's manor and a cathedral were located there. By Talmage's day, there were several hamlets, manor houses, and large farms located nearby as well. The parish was in the hundred of Ramsbury, which was a geographical unit of Wiltshire. Wiltshire has deep, even ancient roots. For occasional Ramsbury references in Wiltshire's history from 1099 to the present, see the index entries in *History of Wiltshire*, vols. 1-5; and for an extended and detailed history of Ramsbury hundred, parish, and village, see volume 12, especially D. A. Crowley, "Ramsbury Hundred," 1-2, and Crowley, "Ramsbury," 12-46.

The history of the village of Ramsbury was little different in kind than hundreds of other English villages. Its citizens participated in the events of the neighboring towns, and there is evidence that people in the larger communities of Marlborough and Newbury thought of Hungerford and Ramsbury as practically one town. The newspapers sometimes listed news of Ramsbury under Hungerford, and there was frequent contact between their residents. See A. W. Batson, *Ramsbury, Past and Present*, a series of articles in *Wiltshire Advertiser*, ending April 16, 1908, reprinted (n.p., n.d.). See also E. Doran Webb, "History of the Hundred of Ramsbury," in John Britton, *The Beauties of Wiltshire . . . 1801-1825*, 3 vols. (London: Werner and Hood, 1801-25). See also the entry for Ramsbury in Samuel Lewis, *A Topographical Dictionary of England . . .* 5th ed., 4 vols. (London: S. Lewis, 1844), 3:608-9.

¹⁷ Talmage, *Talmage Story*, 1-2. The woods were alive with foxes, badgers, wild boars, deer, otters, rabbits, and mice and the following birds: thrushes, redwings, blackbirds, nightingales, wrens, warblers, tits, sparrows, nuthatches, swallows, martins, finches, starlings, magpies, crows, ravens, rooks, woodpeckers, owls, hawks, doves, ducks, and swans. Charles J. Cornish, "Mammals," in *History of Berkshire* 1:167-72; and Heatley Noble, "Birds," in *History of Berkshire* 1:141-66.

¹⁸ Talmage, *Talmage Story*, 2-3. Grandfather Talmage was forty-four years old in 1843, and the mob in question may well have been part of the "disturbances" in Hungerford that brought Hugh Bourne there in September of that year. See note 32. Malcolm Thorp's description of rural areas in England in the 1840s provides a broader perspective:

In rural areas where the social powers of the Anglican vicar and the local squire continued to be influential, there tended to be more intolerant behaviour, and there were episodes in such areas where the local magistrates would not afford protection to the missionaries, there were also many instances where elders went about without purse or scrip and were either well received or at least treated with indifference. Serious persecution was the exception, not the rule. (Malcolm R. Thorp, "The Setting for the Restoration in Britain: Political, Social, and Economic Conditions," in *Truth Will Prevail*, 66-67)

While grandfather Talmage was not the vicar or the local squire, he was a prominent local figure. As such, the details of his conversion add interest and complexity to the overall process described by Thorp.

¹⁹ For a general description of the hocktide holiday and related terms see *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2d ed., s.v. “hock,” “hock-cart,” “hock-day,” “Hock Monday,” “hock money,” “Hocktide,” and “Hock Tuesday” (hereafter cited as *OED*). Compare the more detailed entries in *OED*, 1st ed. For a description of actual events of the time, see the *Marlborough Journal*, April 18, 1874. Additional general information is found in W. L. Barker, *Hungerford* (ca. 1880), 11-12; in *Berkshire Guide*, 19; and in Lewis, *Topographical Dictionary* 2:573. For grandfather Talmage’s signature, see the entries for April 30, 1867, and April 6, 1869, in Hungerford Borough Records, Administration, Constable Accounts, 1658-1922, 5 vols., Berkshire Records Office, Reading, Berkshire.

²⁰ Journal 4:166-71.

²¹ Journal 1:2.

²² Howard Clive Barnard, *A History of English Education* (1947; reprint, London: University of London Press, 1963), 2-3. Barnard presents a rather grim picture of the dame schools, especially when contrasted with the rosy and charming views of proper education portrayed by Charles Kingsley in *The Water-Babies: A Fairy Tale for a Land-Baby* (1863; reprint, New York: Garden City, 1937), 19, 210-15, 220-22, 230-41.

²³ When James began attending infant school in Ramsbury, the board schools administered by local citizens were of inferior quality, and the deficiency was not rectified until 1875, his thirteenth year. In 1875 new board schools were opened in Ramsbury with 130 boys in one school and 100 infants in another. These “replaced all the schools in Ramsbury except the girls’ school” (Crowley, “Ramsbury,” 46). The *Marlborough Journal*, January 9, 1875, lamented that “it is a sad fact that the education of the children of Ramsbury is very deficient even in the most elementary courses.” Similar deficiencies were present in the Hungerford National School in the 1860s. Hungerford National School Minute Book, 1837-1903, Berkshire Record Office, Reading, Berkshire (hereafter cited as Hungerford Minute Book). On July 7, 1862, the inspector’s report in the Hungerford Minute Book read as follows:

The Scholars are on the whole well behaved, attentive children; they are very young—only 3 out of 173 present were over 12. More distinctness in reading should be aimed at, and the minds of the children should be awakened more; their work shows neatness. The lower classes in the Infant department are not in a satisfactory state.

²⁴ In 1861, Ramsbury parish had 2,533 inhabitants and Hungerford parish had 3,001. Ten years later, the respective figures were 2,480 and 3,064. George S. Minchin, “Table of Population, 1801-1901,” in *History of Berkshire* 2:238, and Margaret Saunders, “Table of Population, 1801 to 1951,” in *History of Wiltshire* 4:350, 356. There are no comparative figures available for the smaller village or town. In general English use, a town is commonly designated as “an inhabited place larger and more regularly built than a village, and having more

complete and independent local government" (*OED* 18:320). A village, in a difference that the *OED* calls "somewhat indefinite," is a "collection of dwelling-houses and other buildings, forming a centre of habitation in a country district; an inhabited place larger than a hamlet and smaller than a town, or having a simpler organization and administration than the latter" (*OED* 19:632). Although the population of the two parishes was similar between 1861 and 1871, Ramsbury was clearly a large village and not a town, as witnessed by its lack of an independent market and a newspaper and by the tendency of the newspapers of the region to list Ramsbury news under Hungerford, as though the former were an appendage (or suburb) of the latter.

²⁵ Crowley notes:

From the 17th century Ramsbury had many trades related to agriculture and typical of a large village. The leather trade has been the most prominent. There was a tan house at Ramsbury in the 1630s, when inspectors of leather were appointed at the view of frankpledge, and there were tanners, shoemakers, glovers, and collar makers throughout the 18th century. In 1780 there were three or more tan yards. . . . In addition to tanners and curriers there were seven bootmakers and shoemakers and a collar maker at Ramsbury in 1848. . . . In 1839 London was the destination of much of the beer from the brewery south of the Square. ("Ramsbury," 40-41)

²⁶ See, for example, the *Marlborough Times*, December 1862. See also note 13.

²⁷ *Marlborough Times*, December 27, 1862. As in other rural areas of England between 1840 and 1870, jobs were scarce or decreasing in number for agricultural and common laborers due to Ramsbury's declining tourism and due to the growing wool industry, which resulted in the further enclosure of fields for sheep grazing. The laborers occasionally held meetings, sometimes with a speaker from London. On one occasion, Joseph Arch, founder of the National Agricultural Labourer's Union spoke to them in a field provided by one John Talmage, most likely James E.'s uncle. Arch outlined the advantages of immigration to Canada and New Zealand. Subsequently, a few of the labourers departed for both places. *Marlborough Journal*, February 28, 1874.

²⁸ Lewis, *Topographical Dictionary* 3:609.

²⁹ *Marlborough Times*, March 28, and April 11, 1863.

³⁰ *Marlborough Times*, December 27, 1862. For related general background, see Batson, *Ramsbury, Past and Present*; and Britton, *Beauties of Wiltshire*.

³¹ Talmage was possibly exposed to Mormonism between the ages of three to five, when his grandfather may have taught him some of the principles of the gospel in Ramsbury.

³² For a reference to anti-Mormon feelings in Great Britain in the 1860s, see John D. Gay, *The Geography of Religion in England* (London: Duckworth, 1971). Gay writes:

Mormonism had reached its 19th century peak in England by 1851. In 1852 the Mormon doctrine of polygamy was officially formulated by Brigham Young, who stated its authority rested on a special revelation from God to Joseph Smith eleven months before his death.

The official organ of Mormonism in England, the *Millennial Star*, set about proclaiming the new doctrine with gusto, and very quickly the Mormons became a laughing stock. Membership figures fell drastically and for the next hundred years English Mormonism was in the doldrums. (194)

Compare conversion statistics for the 1840s, 1850s, and 1860s in Richard L. Evans, *A Century of Mormonism in Great Britain* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1937), 244; Richard L. Jensen, "The British Gathering to Zion," in *Truth Will Prevail*, 197; and Jensen and Thorp, *Mormons in Early Victorian Britain*, 187, 188, 210, 226.

³⁵ Journal 1:168. Complete and precise information about conversion dates for James's parents and grandparents is not available. We know, for example, that his mother was not baptized until 1868, James's sixth year. His father was born in 1840, baptised in 1850, and married in 1860. See Talmage Papers, box 24, folder 13; and LDS Family History Center microfilm 422323.

³⁴ *Millennial Star* 4 (July 1843): 33-34.

³⁵ John T. Wilkinson, *Hugh Bourne, 1772-1852* (London: Epworth Press, 1952), 158. See also P. A. M. Taylor, *Expectations Westward: The Mormons and the Emigration of Their British Converts in the Nineteenth Century* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1965), 37-38.

³⁶ *Millennial Star* 9 (August 1, 1847): 230; and *Millennial Star* 10 (May 15, 1848): 148.

³⁷ Taylor, *Expectations Westward*, 20-24; and Gay, *Geography of Religion*, 193-94.

³⁸ Crowley, "Ramsbury," 45.

³⁹ *Millennial Star* 13 (November 1, 1851): 333. No early records for either branch exist in the LDS Church Archives. Along with the Newbury Branch, members in Hungerford and Ramsbury had been a part of the London Conference prior to the time branches were officially organized in both towns.

⁴⁰ He was named president of the Ramsbury Branch sometime in the late 1860s. Talmage Papers, box 24.

⁴¹ Obituary from the *Salt Lake City Intermountain Republican*, June 4, 1906, included in Journal 11:64. Talmage wrote that "the speakers [at her funeral] were those who knew Mother best—elders who had called her 'Mother' while in their mission fields abroad, and neighbors who loved her more as they knew her better."

⁴² Talmage Papers, box 24, folder 5.

⁴³ See note 23.

⁴⁴ For a caricature of a royal inspector, see Charles Dickens, *Hard Times*, (1854; New York: New American Library of World Literature, 1961), 15. Regarding fees for absences, see Hungerford Minute Book, April 3, 1871: "It was ordered that children who fail to attend the Government Inspection having kept the required number of days shall be charged double fees."

⁴⁵ See the section entitled "Forestry," by J. C. Cox, in *History of Berkshire* 2:341-353. At one time, the entire south part of the county as far west as Hungerford was covered by the Forest of Windsor. By the mid-nineteenth century, most of the arable farm land around Hungerford and Ramsbury had been

deforested and enclosed. The soil was chalky loam, covered with a stiff red clay with flints in spots. "Some of the best timber [especially oak and beech] in the county [grew] upon the clay with flints, and good crops [were] often found on it in spite of the stony ground" (Horace W. Monckton, "Geology," in *History of Berkshire* 1:19).

⁴⁶ The composite description of events and daily life in Hungerford and environs in this paragraph and those immediately following, except where noted otherwise, is drawn entirely from the *Marlborough Times*, the *Marlborough Journal*, the *Newbury Weekly News*, and the *Hungerford Gazette* for the years 1862-74.

⁴⁷ Pope immortalized the river in verse as "The Kennet swift, for silver eels renowned" (Barker, *Hungerford*, 20).

⁴⁸ T. R. R. Stebbing, "Crustaceans," in *History of Berkshire* 1:124; and C. H. Cook, "Fishes," in *History of Berkshire* 1:133-34.

⁴⁹ *Marlborough Journal*, October 11, 1873, reads:

Hungerford. News for the Angler. On Tuesday the Fishing Committee, . . . had the water netted to catch the jack, previous to their placing 10,000 young Trout into the famous trout stream. Not only has there been some very large trout caught this year, but there are plenty left for next season, some very large ones having been caught and carefully replaced into the stream for future sport.

⁵⁰ Records do not indicate whether James's father or grandfather was a commoner in Hungerford, which would have guaranteed the men the right to fish in the stocked and highly-protected Hungerford Fishery without having to purchase a ticket. The commoners held such rights in perpetuity as the result of a grant from John O'Gaunt in the fourteenth century. However, James and his friends did fish in the Kennet and Avon Canal, watching the canal boats go by and spending many a lazy summer afternoon "at the waterside, hour after hour, catching nothing" (Talmage, *Talmage Story*, 101). On June 23, 1891, when Talmage was in England to be made a fellow of the Royal Microscopical Society, he recorded the following in his journal. He was twenty-nine years old:

My heart throbs wildly as I retrace the old paths, and visit again the places of such personal interest to me, from which I been away now fifteen years. I walked along by the canal, in which I used to fish; and seeing there a boy afishing, I hired his tackle for a time, to enjoy again the old sport. I had good luck, and in half an hour landed five fine perch: these I left with the boy, to gether with 3d. (Journal 4:164-65)

⁵¹ See, for example, the *Marlborough Journal*, September 6, October 11, and November 1, 1873, and March 14, 1874. It is so even today. When I visited Hungerford in 1978, the Kennet fishery was beautiful and well maintained. Visiting fishermen are required to pay £400 a season for the privilege of catching the large fish from the stream where they swim among the constantly undulating watercress.

⁵² Summer was the busiest time for the townspeople of Hungerford. The schools closed in August for harvest vacation, the hotels were full as anglers and

tourists flooded the town for the annual trout season from May through August, and the merchants and cabs were busier than ever. For instance, in 1836 over two hundred London and Bath coaches passed each week, with additional coaches in the summer. There was also heavy north-south traffic from Oxford to Salisbury with as many as fifty coaches a day in the 1840s. By Talmage's time the railroad had eliminated most of the cross-country coach travel.

⁵³ Summers, *Story of Hungerford*, 156.

⁵⁴ Some accidents were apparently caused by improperly controlled animals. For example, it was illegal—and subject to a fine—to drive a cart horse without reins (*Marlborough Journal*, September 13, 1873, and August 14, 1875).

⁵⁵ *Berkshire Guide*, 4.

⁵⁶ A prospectus of the Bear Hotel, n.d., in the author's possession.

⁵⁷ *Berkshire Guide*, advertisements. James's mother could have purchased a new Wanzer Sewing Machine at the ironmonger's for upwards of £4 or a bicycle or a set of Canadian sleigh bells by special order from Moir, Hutchins, and Hickling, Queen Victoria Street, London.

⁵⁸ *Marlborough Journal*, January 3, 1874.

⁵⁹ *Marlborough Journal*, August 9, 1873.

⁶⁰ *Marlborough Times*, October 18, 1862.

⁶¹ *Berkshire Guide*, 19.

⁶² Barker, *Hungerford*, 11.

⁶³ See the description of events in *Marlborough Journal*, April 18, 1874.

⁶⁴ Barker, *Hungerford*, 11-12. See also Hungerford Borough Records, 12; *Berkshire Guide*, 19; and Lewis, *Topographical Dictionary* 2:573.

⁶⁵ The poor and the laboring classes were excluded from many of the cultural events and activities described above. Most of the financial support for education by the British government, the Church of England, and other voluntary societies was intended to alleviate the plight of the poor, and to an extent it did. As noted above, poor-relief measures were instituted by the churches and various individuals in Hungerford and Ramsbury. One reason, other than natural feelings of charity, was the compelling number of the poor and the recurring problems of the laboring classes in a complex and changing economy. Many of the poor were transients and itinerant tramps, roaming the countryside and providing the source of much of the crime. *Marlborough Journal*, June 1874.

⁶⁶ See for example, "Co-operative Mormons and Gentile Trades," *Newbury Weekly News*, September 9; "Rebellion amongst the Mormons," *Newbury Weekly News*, October 14; and "The Salt Lake City," *Newbury Weekly News*, November 25, 1869.

⁶⁷ Taylor states:

Millennial Star, which by 1852 was being issued weekly, was filled with news of the Mission, reports of life in Utah, discussions of Mormon doctrine, as well as with detailed instructions. . . . To reassure [converts] about the character of the [emigration] journey, the *Millennial Star* printed abundant reports and letters from leaders of emigrant companies, or letters from ordinary emigrants to their relatives in Britain. To keep Zion firmly in their minds, the journal carried numerous reports and articles describing conditions in Utah, developments in

communications, proceedings of conferences, and the movements of Church leaders. Such articles commonly bore the title 'News from Home,' for it was an essential part of Mormon teaching that, for a convert his birthplace, his original home, in Europe was really an exile. (*Expectations Westward*, 25-26)

⁶⁸ Compare the childhood of his countryman George Reynolds, who was born twenty years James's senior in the west end of London. George developed an interest in Mormonism and began attending the Paddington Branch of the Church with the maid of a "lady lodger" living with his parents. When he refused to desist, his parents enrolled him in a school in Paris for a year at age twelve. Less than a year after he returned, he was baptized a Mormon in the Somers Town Branch. By the last weeks of his fifteenth year, he was an ordained priest and was preaching in the streets of London, still without his parents' approval. Grant R. Hardy, "George Reynolds: The Early Years" (Master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1972), 8-14.

⁶⁹ For a description of family life in an English factory town such as Preston in the 1830s and 1840s, see Thorp, "The Setting for the Restoration," 48-53. Thorp, and the recent scholarship he cites, warn against the dangers of stereotyping; for example, life in all large Victorian towns was not the same, and "not all factory children were subjected to . . . petty tyrannies" (50). For a graphic and revealing selection of photographic views of London in the 1860s and 1870s, see John Betjeman, *Victorian and Edwardian London from Old Photographs* (New York: Viking Press, 1969). Also, compare and contrast Talmage's favorable boyhood circumstances with the following passage from Taylor, *Expectations Westward*, 127. Citing from the *Millennial Star*, Taylor states that complaints about their poverty among prospective Mormon emigrants increased in the 1860s:

Church members were now described as domestic servants, weavers, shoemakers, miners, farmworkers, seamen's wives or widows, while the effects of unemployment, strikes and lock-outs were mentioned. In the Norwich Conference, only half a dozen members in 1858 were earning more than £1 a week. Three years later in the District which comprised Wiltshire, Somerset, Devon, and Cornwall, "hundreds will never be able to emigrate by their own means, for their circumstances are such that they can barely exist, to say nothing of living. . . . Their clothes are in pawn, their house-rent unpaid, and their provision-shop accounts increasing." (*Millennial Star* 20 [October 30, 1858]: 703; and *Millennial Star* 23 [March 2, 1861]: 141)

⁷⁰ In the Oxford Diocese alone in 1870, twelve training schools for masters and twelve for mistresses either belonged to or were connected with the society, and a substantial number of the young men training to be schoolmasters were given maintenance grants for at least part of the expense of their training and education. Also, between 1856 and 1869, the society granted some funds to every building application submitted, with 2,350 grants totaling £81,115 for the thirteen-year period. The above figures and statistical information are available

from the Church of England, National Society, in their Annual Report, vols. 1865-1878, available at the British Library, with the latter figures taken from vol. 1878, pp. 2-5, 54-55, 70-71.

⁷¹ Church of England, National Society's Capitation Class Register, 1863, British Library.

⁷² Church of England, Oxford Diocese, Board of Education, *List of Lessons . . . in . . . Religious Instruction for Schools . . .* (Oxford: James Parker, 1875), 6-7, British Library.

⁷³ Church of England, National Society, "Hymn for Schools," 1864, British Library.

⁷⁴ From "Hymn for Evening," in "Hymn for Schools."

⁷⁵ R. J. White, *The Horizon Concise History of England* (New York: American Heritage, 1971), 185-87.

⁷⁶ Dickens's descriptions of Victorian education can be applied to Talmage notwithstanding that Dickens's works abounded in poetic exaggeration, caricatures, and stereotypes in order to induce change in England.

⁷⁷ All of the Dickens quotes are from *Hard Times*, 12-20.

⁷⁸ Talmage Papers, box 9, folder 1.

⁷⁹ *Marlborough Journal*, February 17, 1876. See also Dickens's caricature of a royal inspector in *Hard Times*, 15.

⁸⁰ Talmage Papers, box 9, folder 1.

⁸¹ Talmage Papers, box 9, folder 1.

⁸² Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid is a fictional character of English author, poet, and clergyman, Charles Kingsley. In his book-length fairy tale, *The Water-Babies*, this great fairy and her sister, Mrs. Doasyouwouldbedoneby, "the former the ugliest and the latter the loveliest" (182), watched over the behavior and welfare of English children. Every Friday Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid called up and punished all those who had ill-used little children. The list was a long one and included parents and schoolmasters (204-25).

⁸³ Kingsley, *Water-Babies*, 19. Compare the ill-treatment of some children in the mills of large English towns two decades earlier. See, for example, passages from the autobiography of Thomas Wright Kirby quoted in Thorp, "The Setting for the Restoration," 50-51. Kirby, who began working in a Norfolk silk mill at age seven recounted that

most of those who had charge of us younger Children were Ignorent and cruel to us and would whip us for the least little Mishap. . . . [One] tawl Muscular fellow by the name of Palmer . . . was always watching to give some poor boys a knock with his big hand. Then there were women . . . who were also very tyranical and would Smack us over the head and ears, with their hand or with a stick more because they were cross than for anything else. They [would] follow [us] through the noise and rattle of the machinery and say I'm just in the right temper for you to-day and you shall catch a whipping which we were Pretty sure was true and any being young children would begin crying and then they would whip us because we cried for nothing.

⁸⁴ For multiple references to Newhook and his wife, who was appointed "Infant Schoolmistress" in July 1874, see Hungerford Minute Book, 1874-77.

⁸⁵ According to his journal, it was in the Hungerford National School where he received “so many thrashings” (Journal 4:165). He did not specify if they occurred early or late, but one strongly suspects that they occurred later, under Newhook’s tutelage. However, it is also possible that he did not take a religion course during the years ten to twelve, because the Education Act of 1870 allowed parents to withdraw their children from religious instruction in all schools receiving public funds. The Hungerford National School did receive some public funds and was inspected regularly by the royal inspector. Hungerford Minute Book, July 7, 1862, August 3, 1863, September 5, 1864, October 3, 1866, and April 3, 1871. The thrashings suggest that he did take religion and disagreed with the teacher or that Newhook made a point of his religious differences by harassing him in nonreligious classes.

Newhook was not a one-dimensional stern schoolmaster, however. Evidence of other traits is found in the following newspaper report about “Mr. Newhook’s concert,” an annual event held in Hungerford’s Corn Exchange. The newspaper called it “the richest musical treat we annually get in Hungerford,” and it was presented to standing-room-only crowds. The glowing report included the following:

Mr. Newhook is the master of the National School and he has taken infinite pains to teach a number of the boys some of the best choruses from the operas. These with members of the parish Church, St. Saviour’s and Congregational Church Choirs form an orchestra of between 50 and 60 voices. . . . Never have we seen in Hungerford such a rush for places as on Thursday night. The Exchange was literally crammed, and numbers had to go away not able to squeeze in. (*Marlborough Times and Marlborough Journal*, January 10 and 17, 1874)

⁸⁶ The Education Act of 1870 was the result, in part, of the intense and at times bitter rivalry between the nonconformists and the churchmen, with the former demanding the right to an education without compulsory religion for the children of England. With the act, the nonconformists won a paper victory, but it was well into the twentieth century before all of the act’s provisions were made reality. The effect of the act on James was probably minimal, resulting in at best a more tolerant attitude toward non-Anglican children’s resistance to the proffered faith, since there was no competing board school (i.e., a school governed by a locally elected school board as the 1870 law made possible) in Hungerford for him to attend. John Lawson and Harold Silver, *A Social History of Education in England* (London: Methuen, 1973), 226.

⁸⁷ Typescript in Gilbert Family Biographical Materials, mss/SC 272, Special Collections and Manuscripts, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah. Compare his more nearly contemporary journal entries:

July 21st 1873. At Hungerford, Berkshire, England was baptized by my father—‘Elder James Talmage’ into Church of Jesus Christ of Latterday Saints, and confirmed as such during the same month. . . . August, 1873. Was ordained by ‘Elder Charles Marchant,’ of Ramsbury branch - London Conference of L.D.S. Church, to the office of a Deacon. (Journal 1:260)

⁸⁸Journal 1:3. Compare the account of this incident in Earl T. Pardoe, *The Sons of Brigham* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Press, 1969), 205–8: “Previous to his sixth birthday, Albert Talmage was hammering some spikes when one flew up and split his left eyeball.” Pardoe’s description is probably the story the family agreed to use for public consumption (or at least that Albert told anyone who asked, especially during his later years when Pardoe gathered the information for his book) so as to keep the matter private and protect James’s and Albert’s feelings.

⁸⁹Talmage, *Talmage Story*, 7.

⁹⁰An indication of how much James could have seen in a month is found in the Railway Time Tables from the *Newbury Weekly News* for 1869. For example, James and his grandfather could have left Hungerford on a Sunday morning at 9:20 and arrived in London at 3:25 P.M., with a required three-hour stopover in Reading. They could have caught the return train to Bristol at 4:45, arriving in Hungerford at 7:22 P.M., having had a day-long excursion.

⁹¹Journal 1:2.

⁹²Journal 1:3.

Mormon Folklore: Cut from the Marrow of Everyday Experience

Stories tell as much or more about the people who tell them than the subjects they are about. The forthcoming BYU Studies volume entitled Mormon Americana (1994) will contain chapters describing many specific areas within Mormon studies: architecture, art, literature, material culture, museums, performing arts, photography, pioneer trails, science, and the following article on folklore.

William A. Wilson

One of the few characteristics all human beings hold in common is the propensity to reduce their lives, and what is most important in those lives, to stories. We are, all of us, inveterate storytellers. We talk about our jobs, our hobbies, our successes and failures, our courtships and marriages, our children, and our religious beliefs and experiences. We do so because in order to communicate effectively to others what is in our hearts and minds we must make the abstract concrete—we must transform experience and belief into narrative. It would follow, then, that to know each others' hearts and minds, we must know each others' stories. Certainly this principle holds true in our study of Mormons and their folklore.

This essay describes the archives that make Mormon folklore available for research. Experience has taught me, however, that unless I first say something about the nature of folklore and about the contribution it can make to the study and interpretation of Mormon life, some scholars will not pay serious attention to a subject they have too often deemed frivolous.¹

The Church is awash with stories. Members talk constantly of hardships faithfully endured by pioneer ancestors, of present-day

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persecutions, of missions, of conversions, of God's interventions in individual lives, of admiration for and sometimes frustration with Church authorities, of acts of sacrifice and kindness performed by charitable Church members, and of the day-to-day delights and sorrows of Church membership.

Because these stories are cut from the marrow of everyday experience and reflect the hopes, fears, joys, and anxieties of common Church members, they bring us about as close as we are likely to get to Mormon hearts and minds and to an understanding, from the lay membership's point of view, of what it really means to be Mormon. Yet these stories have been largely ignored by interpreters of the Mormon experience—partly because they are “just stories” and partly because until the 1980s they have not been adequately collected, archived, and made available to researchers.

Consider the following two accounts detailing events from the pioneer trek west and from the settlement of central Utah:

The McDonalds were among the several thousand Mormons who lost all their worldly possessions in the tragic mid-winter exodus from their beloved homes in Nauvoo. With little food and scant protection from the elements, they suffered greatly from hunger and disease at Winter Quarters and during their long migration to Salt Lake City. Yet on reaching the Platte River crossing, they were still in sufficiently good condition to kneel together and thank the Lord for getting them through the worst part of the journey.

During the river crossing cholera broke out among the members of the company. The terrible disease raged throughout the camp. Dozens died. It was necessary for James McDonald to assist in digging graves for the victims. James was a willing worker and finished three graves that October morning, even though he began to feel a little ill as he started the third. A short time after the last grave was completed, James was dead from the effects of cholera. His young daughters Elizabeth and Jane helped their mother wrap him in an old blanket, place him in the grave, and cover him with the dirt he had spaded up two hours earlier.²

* * * * *

After the Indians and the white people had become a little friendly, they didn't go to the fort quite as often. This one day there was this girl down in town and she was washing. They lived quite close to the hills and Indians were camped quite close in the foothills. This girl was washing; she had a washing machine that was an

old wooden one that had a wheel that would turn. This Indian brave came down and he had long braids. He came down and he started acting smart to her and talking smart to her and she couldn't understand him. He wanted different things that she had at her home; she wouldn't give them to him. When she wouldn't give them to him, he grabbed her and started throwing her around. She grabbed one lock of his hair, his braid, and hurried and put it into the wringer [of the washing machine] and wound it up tight and fixed it so it couldn't run back, and then she turned and fled while he was tied to the wringer.³

The teller of the first story, the great-great-grandson of one of the little girls who helped bury her father, will not easily turn from the faith his ancestor died for. But the story is more than just a family narrative. It, as well as countless stories like it, stands as a metaphor for the entire migration experience and for the faith and courage of the pioneers who endured these hardships that life might be better for those who would follow them. The view of the past reflected in such stories may or may not square with historical reality, but to the investigator trying to fathom the religious commitment of those who have told and listened to the stories, historical veracity may prove less significant than the fact that these people have generally believed the stories and have therefore been motivated by them to honor their ancestors and remain faithful to their church.⁴

The second story might easily be dismissed as an engaging piece of local color interesting to the amateur history buff yet of little consequence to serious scholars. But to the careful researcher, the narrative recounts a paradoxical tale: It mirrors a time when Mormon settlers and local Indians lived on the fringes of open hostility toward each other. It captures a continuing Mormon fascination with that time. And it draws in heroic lines a portrait of a typical pioneer woman who bravely and resourcefully faced down marauding Indians and whose courage can inspire contemporary women facing a new set of dangers in today's society. But, in an age when we supposedly value cultural diversity and practice ethnic tolerance, the narrative also reflects and perpetuates an uncomplimentary and dehumanizing picture of Native Americans. Probably the Native Americans, whose valleys the early Saints moved into, would tell quite different stories of the pioneer

settlement. The story serves, therefore, as an unsettling reminder that we have failed to reach our stated ideals (we do not usually ridicule those we consider our equals) and that we have some distance to travel before we overcome old animosities.

Both these stories, then, can enhance our understanding of crucial Mormon beliefs and attitudes that lie behind Mormon actions. Both are part of that ocean of story we call Mormon folklore. To the uninitiated, folklore may seem not unlike that other important ocean of story we call oral history. Though the line between the two is sometimes blurred, folklore differs from oral history in at least one significant way. Oral histories are first-person accounts told by individuals who witnessed or participated in the events they describe. Folk narratives, on the other hand, are third-person accounts narrated by individuals who have heard about the events they describe from others.⁵

Neither the oral history nor the folk narrative will ever fully capture the truth of “what really happened,” but the oral history will come closer to that end than will the folk narrative. Folk narratives will yield a different, but equally important, kind of truth. Kept alive by the spoken word as they are passed from person to person through time and space, folk narratives will be formularized by the storytellers, usually unconsciously, to make them more aesthetically appealing and persuasive; and they will be reshaped, again unconsciously, to reflect not so much the events recounted, but rather the storytellers’ attitudes and beliefs toward these events. In other words, some of these narratives comprise what we might call a “folk,” or “people’s,” history—that is, a history generated by the folk (in this case the Mormons), circulated orally by them, constantly re-created in the process in response to their current needs and concerns, and reflective of what is most important to them. In our attempts to deepen our understanding of Mormon life, we ignore such stories at our peril.

Because the stories given above describe the pioneer era, they may strengthen a common misperception about folklore—that it is always tied to the past. Folklore will, to be sure, tell us something of the past, but, as we shall see, it will usually tell us much more of the present. Folklore provides keys to understanding

contemporary culture for the simple reason that people keep alive those practices and tell those stories that interest them most. Once people lose interest in particular practices or stories, these will disappear. The folklore current at any given time will therefore serve as an excellent barometer, helping us plumb the beliefs and emotions of the people who possess the lore. The following narrative, known widely in Mormon country, is a good example of a story born in recent times and reflective of current needs and interests:

A dear L.D.S. lady left her small family in Phoenix to go to the temple in Mesa. While she was in the middle of a session, she got a strong feeling that she should go home—that something was terribly wrong. The feeling wouldn't go away, so she told the temple president and asked him what she should do. He said, "Have no fear. You are doing the right thing by being here. All is well at home." So she continued the session. She hurried home when she was through and found her six-year-old daughter in bed. She asked her daughter if something was wrong. She told her mother that she had left the house while the baby sitter was busy with the other children and had gone out by the canal near their house. While she was playing, she slipped on some grass and fell in. She couldn't swim, and the canal is deep. Many people drown this way. But a lady all dressed in white came along just then and got her just before she would have drowned. The lady set her on the bank and made sure she was okay. The little girl asked the lady who she was because she knew that the lady didn't live near by. So, the lady told her what her name was. The lady who saved the little girl was the lady whom the mother had done work for in the temple that day.⁶

To believing Mormons, this story speaks many messages. It encourages them to persist in the search for their ancestral roots; it testifies to the validity of temple ordinances; it suggests that God is a caring God who will protect them in time of need; it stresses the importance of the family and strengthens family ties; and it gives them hope that these ties will continue beyond this life. These messages are brought forcefully home by an artistic performance designed to move listeners to action and are made all the more powerful by the narrative symmetry in which two lives are saved at the same moment—the physical life of the young girl and the eternal life of the rescuer, the mother serving as the link between the two. It is, therefore, an important artifact for anyone

interested not just in the Mormon past, but also in Mormon social organization, Mormon belief, and Mormon creative expression.

Because the materials of folklore are traditional—existing among the people only in the spoken word or in customary practices—many of the stories recounted by earlier generations of Mormons and applied to the circumstances of their lives have been irretrievably lost. A few of these stories did make their way into early Church publications, albeit without the social contexts necessary to give them life. The bulk of them, however, were not preserved for the simple reason that no one was there to record them. Fortunately, as scholars have gradually become aware of the wealth of intellectual history embodied in folklore, they have begun redressing past neglect and, in order to enhance their understanding of Mormon life, have turned to stories once ignored.⁷

Because the materials of folklore reside not on library shelves, but in the minds of people, informed study and interpretation of Mormon folklore must always be preceded by three steps: collecting, archiving, and indexing.

Collecting

Fieldwork in Mormon folklore commenced in earnest in the 1930s and 1940s. Thomas E. Cheney and Lester A. Hubbard began collecting Mormon folksongs. Hector Lee gathered stories of the Three Nephites—ancient American disciples of Christ allowed, according to the Book of Mormon, to “tarry in the flesh” until the second coming of the Savior. Austin E. and Alta S. Fife crisscrossed the highways and byways of the Mormon cultural region, recording a full range of Mormon expressive forms and, in the process, bringing together one of the most important personal collections of folklore in the United States.⁸

Beginning in the 1960s and inspired by the work of their predecessors, a second generation of folklorists began to break new ground: William A. Wilson and Richard C. Poulsen at Brigham Young University; Jan H. Brunvand and Margaret Brady at the University of Utah; Barre Toelken, Steven Siporin, Barbara Walker, and Jay Anderson at Utah State University; Joe Peterson at Dixie College; Thomas Carter, formerly at the Utah Historical Society

and now at the University of Utah; David Stanley at Westminster College; Carol Edison, Craig Miller, and Annie Hatch at the Utah Arts Council's Folk Arts Program; and Hal Cannon at the Western Folklife Center.⁹

Not only have these scholars collected a considerable body of folklore themselves, but also those teaching at universities have for three decades sent scores of students armed with notepads, tape recorders, and cameras into the field to collect folklore. Under the direction of their professors, these students have brought together a massive body of material, much of it dealing with Mormons. Some of these student collections are understandably weak, but many are first-rate and, taken together, provide a depth and range of topics earlier collectors, working alone or in pairs, could not hope to reach. To demonstrate the nature and use of folklore archives, I have focused in this essay on one of the dominant forms of Mormon folklore, the legend—a story generally told as true. In fact, the archives contain a broad range of Mormon folk materials: verbal lore (songs, jokes, sayings, as well as legends);¹⁰ descriptions of customs (medicinal practices, courtship and marriage practices, and family and community traditions and celebrations);¹¹ and slides and photographs of material objects (handicrafts, gravestone markers, and architecture).¹²

The first generation of collectors, like their contemporaries, tended to be item oriented. This orientation meant they would collect a song or story, give the place and date of the collection, and record minimal biographical information about the informant. They provided little data, however, on the social context of the item collected—the situation in which it was performed or practiced, the use made of it, the makeup of the audience for whom it was performed, its impact on the audience. In recent years, folklorists have shifted away from the study of items to the analysis of process—from the story told to the “telling” of the story. This shift has required a corresponding change in what is collected. Folklorists, including our student collectors, still collect folklore items, but they now surround those items with as much social and cultural context as possible in order to give a fuller, more dynamic picture of the lore in actual life.

Archiving

For many years, the materials brought in by this second wave of collectors, by both professors and students, were stuffed into boxes and filing cabinets in the professors' offices—the result being that, even though an adequate Mormon folklore data base was coming into being, it was still not available for scholarly analysis. General readers may find it interesting to know how this circumstance has gradually changed.

When I left Brigham Young University in 1978 to direct the folklore program at Utah State University, I offered to give the BYU library copies of the student collections in my office if the library would do the photocopying. The library accepted my offer; I took the originals to USU and left the copies behind. At USU, I discovered that the magnificent Fife collections—manuscripts, audio recordings, and color slides—resulting from more than forty years of field research were housed in the university library but were not generally available to researchers. We managed to secure a special room in the library, name it the Fife Folklore Archive, house both the Fifes' personal collections and the student-based collections there, and for the first time open both for public use. Under the able direction of Barbara Walker, the archive has continued to develop into one of the best in the country.¹³

As I prepared to return to BYU in 1984, I once again began photocopying, this time the student collections that had been submitted during my years at USU. The process lasted nearly a year. Upon arriving at BYU, I retrieved the earlier student collections from the corner of the library where they had been gathering dust in my absence, combined them with the photocopied USU collections I had brought with me, secured a library room, and made these collections available for scholarly use. Thus the student collections on file at both the USU and BYU archives contain identical materials to 1984; since then, each archive has developed in its own direction. During these same years, Jan Brunvand and Margaret Brady at the University of Utah turned the student collections crowding their offices over to their university library. As a result of these efforts, three research archives

now exist in Utah: the Fife Folklore Archive, located in the Merrill Library at Utah State University; the University of Utah Folklore Archive, located in the Marriott Library; and the Brigham Young University Folklore Archive, located in the Lee Library. All three of these archives contain significant amounts of Mormon materials.

An additional archive, the Utah Folk Arts Program Folklore Archive, is located at the Chase Home in Salt Lake City's Liberty Park. The Folk Arts Program, following its public-service mandate, brings together materials more for exhibits and performances than for scholarly analysis. However, since good public presentations must be based on equally good documentation and field research, the Folk Arts Program has collected considerable data useful to the scholar. For example, its impressive color-slide collection of Utah gravestone art will provide valuable insights into Mormon cultural and spiritual values.

Elsewhere, a smattering of Mormon folklore has made its way into archives all across the country, as university students have collected from Mormons they have encountered in the field. The best collection outside Utah is located at the Folklore and Mythology Center at the University of California at Los Angeles. The past director of the center, Wayland D. Hand, now deceased, was also a strong supporter of Mormon folklore collection and study in Utah.

Potential folklore archive users should be aware of how these repositories are like and unlike other archives containing Mormon materials. The special features of folklore archives grow out of the characteristics of folklore discussed above. These need further elaboration here.

First, like archives in general, folklore archives provide space where materials can accumulate until a sufficient data base is available to warrant sound generalizations. The archives thus provide an effective countermeasure against those who would jump to quick and easy conclusions on the basis of only a few texts. One occurrence of the story of the child saved from an irrigation canal cannot guide us to safe conclusions about its importance as a mirror of Mormon spiritual values; but the numerous versions of the story in various archives, attached to different temples and existing over a period of years, can help us better understand the

importance of temple activity in Mormon life. Similarly, one or two stories describing relations between Mormon settlers and the original occupants of the land, though possibly striking accounts valuable for their own sakes, will teach us little about Mormon attitudes toward Native Americans and will scarcely prove or disprove generalizations like those drawn above; but a thousand such accounts available to the scholar in archives will make defensible conclusions possible. Also, good contextual background data accompanying these accounts will make the conclusions still more convincing.

Second, like other archives, the folklore archives contain a wealth of material describing the pioneer past. Unlike these other repositories, however, the folklore archives will not greatly increase our understanding of that past. This is so for two reasons already discussed above. Stories generated and circulated about past events such as the practice of polygamy were not collected during the time the events were taking place. In addition, because people tell stories about the past in terms meaningful to them in the present, stories that did originate during the pioneer era and have remained in circulation through our day will have been reshaped during the frequent tellings and retellings to reflect the attitudes and meet the needs of the present tellers. Though describing pioneer happenings, the stories will speak to us most clearly of the contemporary Mormon world.

As we study stories that have been born in the past but live in the present, we may occasionally pick up a thin residue of truth about that past. But, of first importance, we will discover how contemporary Mormons have, through their stories, constructed the past in order to negotiate their way through the present. Consider the following polygamy story:

This is just a story I heard once about three wives who were helping their husband push a new piano up the hill. They stopped to rest for a moment at the top of the hill and the husband said, "You know, this piano will belong to Martha." "What about us?" the other two said. "No," said the husband, "it's for Martha alone." So the two wives jumped up, pushed the piano down the hill, and watched it bust into a thousand pieces.¹⁴

Many contemporary Mormon women, almost always the narrators of such stories, identify with the piano-busters in this account and cheer their victory over the crass and unfeeling husband. Whatever the practice of polygamy was actually like, few Mormon women today contemplate its practice with pleasure. Though humorous on the surface, this story captures some of the pain of these modern storytellers and, at least vicariously, satisfies their need for justice. When I asked one woman why she liked the story, she replied, "Because they [the husband and the favored wife] got what they deserved."

Other narratives cast polygamy in a more favorable light and reflect a more positive attitude toward it. The point to remember is that the picture of polygamy, or of any other historical event emerging from the narratives in the archives, will be a picture drawn by contemporary Mormons. Because people are motivated not by what actually happened in the past, but by what they believe happened, learning what contemporary Mormons believe about events in Church history will help us better understand the forces that move them to action.

In addition to making available the data that will help us understand these motivating forces, the folklore archives will provide future scholars an opportunity denied us in our study of the Mormon past: the archives will preserve the folk narratives circulating today and will thus help future scholars understand our time from the perspective of stories told during our time.

Third, unlike other repositories of unpublished data, folklore archives seldom contain completed or closed collections. If a traditional research archive receives the papers of a prominent figure or the diaries and letters of an ordinary individual, once those papers have been indexed they are closed—new material is not usually added to them. Folklore collections, on the other hand, are open-ended—and this is their strength. As new variants of the irrigation-canal story are recorded or new accounts of appearances of the Three Nephites are collected, they are added to the existing files, expanding all the while our understanding of the stories and of the Mormon life they reflect. Examining the ever-changing nature of the folklore collections, therefore, is an excellent means of keeping a finger on the Mormon pulse.

Further, folklore archives help us measure that pulse across time. For instance, tracing changes in the Nephite stories over the fifty-year period they have been collected will help us understand changes taking place in the Church during that same period.¹⁵ An extended example from the folklore of Mormon missionaries¹⁶ will help illustrate this point.

Most of the stories told of divine intervention in the lives of missionaries have to do with supernatural assistance in preaching the gospel or supernatural protection from physical harm. The following story, known worldwide, illustrates the supernatural protection:

This story happened when two missionaries were in a tough neighborhood somewhere in Australia. They came out of the apartment in the rough part of town, and there were at least thirty-five people standing around their car with chains, clubs, and knives. The missionaries looked at each other and asked if they should go inside and call the police, go outside and handle the crowd, or just fake it and just walk right in and hope nothing happens. [In many versions the missionaries pray for help.]

Well, they decided on the latter, and so they walked right through the crowd and opened the car door. They started up the car and drove away. When the car started, the crowd jumped back and scratched their heads. The missionaries drove away and didn't understand what had happened.

They drove some twenty miles, checked in with some missionaries for the evening and returned to their car a few moments later and found it would not start. On opening the hood, they found that there was no battery. The battery was back with the mob which had apparently removed it to keep the missionaries from leaving. No wonder they jumped back when the car started.¹⁷

Given the fact that missionaries face constant danger, they quite naturally tell stories like this one to reassure themselves that divine help is available in times of need. Such stories are legion. In the past, almost all these have been told about male missionaries, the elders. In recent years, however, a new story has emerged and swept the mission fields:

These two sister missionaries were out tracting [going from door to door] one day, and they came onto this deserted house, and they didn't know this but the guy living in there had escaped from prison. He was in prison for killing women, and the women he had

killed were right there in the 21–23 age group. Well, they knocked and he wasn't interested, so they went on their way.

Well, they saw a flyer or something that showed his picture and said that he was wanted, so they turned him in and identified him. And when he was taken into the police department they asked him why he hadn't killed those two girls that had come tracting, because they were just the age group that he was always killing.

And he said that there was no way that he was going to even touch those girls because they had three big guys with swords standing behind them. So he just wanted to get rid of them as quickly as possible because those three big guys with swords would have killed him if he had touched the girls.¹⁸

The sisters' protectors, whom they never see themselves, are generally thought to be the Three Nephites, though sometimes they are simply called angels or divine personages. Of the thirty-seven versions of this story in the BYU Folklore Archive, the earliest was collected in 1985. In none of the accounts was the action described thought to have occurred before 1980. What we have here is a good example of narratives mirroring changes occurring in the surrounding society—as more and more women have entered the mission field, they, quite naturally, have become subjects of missionary lore.

But the lore does more than simply catalog the fact that the number of sister missionaries is increasing. Since far more elders than sisters still serve missions, one would expect more of the collected versions of this story to have come from males. Instead, twenty-four of the thirty-seven accounts were collected from women, suggesting that this is a narrative especially meaningful to them. Sister missionaries know that because they cannot hold the priesthood held by the male elders and because they have not been encouraged to serve missions as strongly as the elders have, they will sometimes be scorned and held in less regard as missionaries than are the elders. When elders do tell this story, they again stress the possibility of divine protection in the face of danger. Sisters stress the same possibility, but some of them also see in the story a validation of their roles as missionaries. One of them said, "Since it specifically concerned sisters, [it] helped calm some of my fears. The fact that the story was about sisters instead of elders showed

me that the Lord was just as concerned about the few as the many.”¹⁹ Another said that the mission president’s wife had told her the story to remind her “that God protects sisters, as well as the elders.”²⁰ If sisters and elders were held in equal regard, such a reminder would, of course, not be necessary.

As the story has moved from the sisters’ to the elders’ domain, the Nephite warriors have disappeared:

There were two missionaries tracting one day. They knocked on the door of one gentleman’s house who appeared to be interested and invited them in. The man was very hospitable and asked the two elders to sit down for a moment while he fetched them a glass of milk. The man served the milk and one elder attempted to take a drink. The elder felt some sort of distinct restraining force, like an invisible hand, holding back the glass of milk so that he could not bring it to his lips. The elder was quite alarmed and felt very strongly they should leave. Though they felt awkward, the two missionaries politely excused themselves and left. The man looked perplexed but made no objection. Later that day the missionaries happened to pass the police station and were shocked to see the picture of the same man on a “wanted” poster. The poster claimed that the man was being sought for repeated murders which he had committed by giving people poisoned milk.²¹

The elders in this account are saved by divine intervention. Still, they tend to rely on inner strength and inspiration rather than on external beings, as the sisters do. Indeed, as I spoke to a class on this topic recently, one young man, a former missionary, said that the elders in his mission told the story of the sister missionaries derisively—to make fun of sisters for not being able to take care of themselves without Nephites coming to their aid.

Hopefully this is an isolated response. Whatever the case, the story emerging here, as new material is constantly added to the open-ended missionary collection, is typical of stories emerging in folklore archives across the full spectrum of Mormon cultural life. As changes in the missionary system continue to occur, influencing gender roles and sometimes inspiring gender conflicts, missionary lore accumulating in folklore archives will remain a sensitive indicator of missionary attitudes and beliefs, helping us take the pulse of missionary life. Similarly, as changes occur in the larger Church,

the full range of Mormon folklore accumulating in folklore archives will help us keep our fingers on the pulse of Mormon life.

Indexing

One of the most difficult tasks in making Mormon folklore available for research is to develop indexing systems that will make open-ended archive collections accessible. For several years, Barbara Walker of the Fife Folklore Archive and I have been working on such a system. Ann Reichman at the Marriott Library has begun applying the same system to materials in the University of Utah Folklore Archive. Our hope is to enable a researcher to find the same set of data at all three of our archives with relative ease. To achieve this end, we have developed a hierarchical system that simply divides data into smaller and smaller thematic units and then moves to individual stories within these units—the irrigation-canal story, for example—and finally to variants of that story.

A brief look at our large legend collections will illustrate the method. We have broken data contained in many volumes of legends into the following thematic divisions: (1) Supernatural Religious, (2) Supernatural Non-Religious (ghost stories), (3) Human Conditions, (4) Character, (5) Etiological, and (6) Urban. Most Mormon legends occur in division 1, stories of divine intercession in human affairs; division 3, stories of recurring human situations such as migration (for example, the trek West) or marriage (for example, polygamy); division 4, stories of extraordinary characters in Church history; and division 5, Mormon place-name stories.

Let us trace our irrigation-canal story through the system. The story clearly falls into the first thematic division, “Supernatural Religious” legends. That division, in turn, can be subdivided into further thematic divisions:

1. Appearances or manifestations of supernatural beings
2. Unsolicited divine intervention
3. Solicited divine intervention

Plus nine further divisions.

Our story falls under “Appearances or manifestations of supernatural beings,” which can be further subdivided:

1. Deity, dead prophets, saints, prominent figures
2. Dead family members or friends
3. Unknown beings
4. Malevolent beings.

The woman who saves the child in the story is unknown to the family, so the story falls under the third category, “Unknown beings,” which can again be subdivided, this time according to reasons for the appearance:

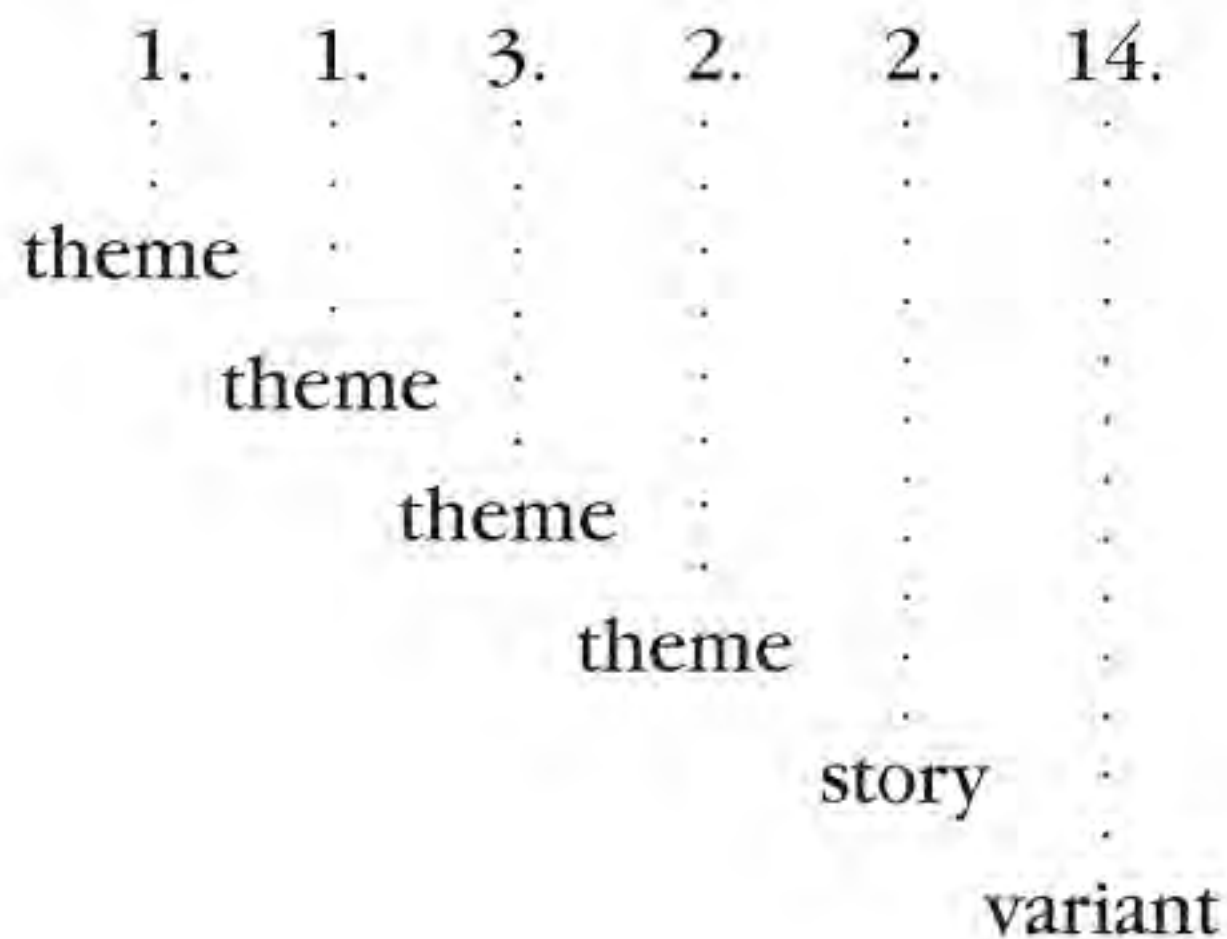
1. Comfort
2. Protect or aid
3. Urge or cause change in behavior

Plus seven further divisions.

Because the woman saves the child from drowning, the story falls under the second division, “Protect or aid”; it is the second of twenty-four separate stories in the division, and the version given at the beginning of this paper is the fourteenth variant. Charted, it would appear this way:

1. Supernatural Religious Legends
 1. Appearances or manifestations of supernatural beings
 3. Unknown beings
 2. Protect or aid
 2. Child saved from drowning by person for whom parent has performed temple work
 14. variant number.

The index number for the story would thus be 1.1.3.2.2.14. This number is derived from these categories:



The benefit of this system is its open-endedness—new material can be worked in constantly without restructuring the basic index. The 335th variant of the irrigation-canal story submitted to the archive would simply be placed in the proper file following the 334th. Should so many variants be collected that they begin to break into subtypes, the thematic division to which the stories belong would be further subdivided without affecting the rest of the index. The index can thus be infinitely expanded to accommodate and manage an ever-growing body of Mormon folklore.

In the final analysis, a good index is much more than just an information retrieval system. By identifying major themes in Mormon folklore and by including under these themes stories that are similar to each other and by excluding those that are not, the archivist identifies corresponding themes and emphases in Mormon cultural life and moves the researcher a step closer to interpretation.

Such study and interpretation should make clear that Mormon folklore not only expresses the needs and aspirations of Mormons, it also reveals their essential humanity and, properly understood, can help us better understand both Mormon and universal human strivings. The folklore archives provide a record of those strivings.

Editor's note: These collections are accessible to interested and qualified readers at the libraries that house them. Knowing how these collections are organized and indexed will hopefully help readers understand how to access these resources. These archives are constantly expanding. People all over the world are

invited to submit stories that have become meaningful parts of their experiences as Latter-day Saints. A submission form for use in adding stories to the Brigham Young University Folklore Archives is available at 4069 HBL, Provo, Utah 84602.

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NOTES

¹ For general introductions to folklore, see Jan Harold Brunvand, *The Study of American Folklore: An Introduction*, 3d ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 1986); Barre Toelken, *The Dynamics of Folklore* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1979); and Elliott Oring, *Folk Groups and Folklore Genres: An Introduction* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1986).

² Collected by Steven C. Walker in 1964. Brigham Young University Folklore Archive [hereafter BYUFA]: L3.5.2.2.6.1.

³ Collected by Susan Christensen and Doris Blackham in 1971. BYUFA: L3.2.1.5.2.2.1.

⁴ For more on the relation of folklore to history, see Brynjulf Alver, "Historical Legends and Historical Truth," in *Nordic Folklore: Recent Studies*, ed. Reimund Kvideland and Henning K. Sehmsdorf (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), 137-49; Seppo Knuutila, "What the People of Sivakka Tell about Themselves: A Research Experiment in Folk History," in *Studies in Oral Narrative*, ed. Anna-Leena Siikala, *Studia Fennica* 33 (1989): 111-26; and William A. Wilson, "Folklore and History: Fact amid the Legends," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 41 (Winter 1973): 40-58.

⁵ See Jessie L. Embry's "Oral History Programs of the Charles Redd Center for Western History, Brigham Young University," in *Mormon Americana: A Guide to Sources and Collections in the United States*, ed. David J. Whittaker, forthcoming. For more on the distinction between folklore and oral history, see William A. Wilson, "Mormon Folklore and History: Implications for Canadian Research," in *The Mormon Presence in Canada*, ed. Brigham Y. Card and others (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press; Logan: Utah State University Press, 1990), 150-66.

⁶ Collected by Kathryn Wright in 1975. BYUFA: L1.1.3.2.2.17.

⁷ For an overview of the development of Mormon folklore study, see William A. Wilson, "The Study of Mormon Folklore," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 44 (Fall 1976): 317-28.

⁸ For the results of these efforts, see Lester A. Hubbard, *Ballads and Songs from Utah* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1961); Thomas E. Cheney, *Mormon Songs from the Rocky Mountains: A Compilation of Mormon*

Folksong, American Folklore Society, Memoir Series, vol. 53 (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1968); Hector Lee, *The Three Nephites: The Substance and Significance of the Legend in Folklore*, University of New Mexico Publications in Language and Literature, no. 2 (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1949); and Austin E. and Alta S. Fife, *Saints of Sage and Saddle: Folklore among the Mormons* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1956).

⁹ For examples of changed emphases in the works of these and other contemporary scholars, see William A. Wilson, "The Paradox of Mormon Folklore," *BYU Studies* 17 (Autumn 1976): 40-58; William A. Wilson, "Mormon Folklore," in *Handbook of American Folklore*, ed. Richard M. Dorson (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), 155-61; William A. Wilson, "The Study of Mormon Folklore: An Uncertain Mirror for Truth," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 22 (Winter 1989): 95-110; George H. Schoemaker, "Made in Heaven: Marriage Confirmation Narratives among Mormons," *Northwest Folklore* 7, no. 2 (Spring 1989): 38-53; Margaret K. Brady "Transformations of Power: Mormon Women's Visionary Narratives," *Journal of American Folklore* 100 (October-December 1987): 461-68; Carolyn Flatley Gilkey, "Mormon Testimony Meeting: Some Aspects of a Narrating Event," *Southwest Folklore* 3 (Fall 1979): 45-59; Clifton Holt Jolley, "The Martyrdom of Joseph Smith: An Archetypal Study," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 44 (Fall 1976): 329-50; Ellen E. McHale, "'Witnessing for Christ': The Hill Cumorah Pageant of Palmyra, New York," *Western Folklore* 44 (January 1985): 34-40; Susan Peterson, "The Great and Dreadful Day: Mormon Folklore of the Apocalypse," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 44 (Fall 1976): 365-78; Richard C. Poulsen, "Fate and the Persecutors of Joseph Smith: Transmutations of an American Myth," *Dialogue* 11 (Winter 1978): 63-70; Wayland D. Hand, "Magic and the Supernatural in Utah Folklore," *Dialogue* 16 (Winter 1983): 51-64; and Barre Toelken, "Traditional Water Narratives in Utah," *Western Folklore* 50 (April 1991): 191-200.

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¹⁰ See William I. Kaufman, with Thomas E. Cheney and Richard P. Condie, *The Mormon Pioneer Songbook* (Bryn Mawr, Penn.: Theodore Presser, 1980); Jan Harold Brunvand, "As the Saints Go Marching By: Modern Jokelore Concerning Mormons," *Journal of American Folklore* 83 (January-March 1970): 53-60; Thomas E. Cheney, *The Golden Legacy: A Folk History of J. Golden Kimball* (Salt Lake City: Peregrine-Smith, 1973); William A. Wilson, "The Seriousness of Mormon Humor," *Sunstone* 10, no. 1 (1985): 6-13; Barbara Bosen, "Danish Stories from Ephraim," *AFF word* 2 (Fall 1972): 24-34; and William A. Wilson and John B. Harris, "And They Spake with a New Tongue (On Missionary Slang)," in *Conference on the Language of Mormons*, ed. Harold S. Madsen and John L. Sorenson (Provo: Brigham Young University Language Research Center, 1974), 46-48.

¹¹ See Davis Bitton, "The Ritualization of Mormon History," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 43 (Winter 1975): 67-85; *Popular Beliefs and Superstitions from*

Utah, collected by Anthon S. Cannon and others, ed. Wayland D. Hand and Jeannine E. Talley (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1984); and Suzanne Volmar Riches, "Threads through a Patchwork Quilt: The Wedding Shower as a Communication Ritual and Rite of Passage for the Mormon Woman" (Ph.D. diss., University of Utah, 1987).

¹² See Austin E. Fife, "Stone Houses of Northern Utah," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 40 (Winter 1972): 6-23; Ann Hitchcock, "Gods, Graves, and Historical Archaeologists: A Study of a Mormon Cemetery in Tucson," *AFF word* 1 (January 1972): 11-16; Jan Harold Brunvand, "The Architecture of Zion," *The American West* 13 (March-April 1976): 28-35; Hal Cannon, ed., *Utah Folk Art: A Catalog of Material Culture* (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1980); Hal Cannon, *The Grand Beehive* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1980); Thomas Carter, "Building Zion: Folk Architecture in the Mormon Settlements of Utah's Sanpete Valley, 1849-1890" (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 1984); and Richard C. Poulsen, *The Pure Experience of Order: Essays on the Symbolic in the Folk Culture of Western America* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1982).

¹³ See William A. Wilson, "USU Fife Folklore Archive," *Folklore Society of Utah Newsletter* 17 (Autumn 1983): 2-3.

¹⁴ Collected by Peggy Hansen in 1971. BYUFA: Collection #253, no. 26.

¹⁵ See, for example, William A. Willson, "Freeways, Parking Lots and Ice Cream Stands: The Three Nephites in Contemporary Mormon Culture," *Dialogue* 21 (Autumn 1988): 13-26.

¹⁶ For an overview of Mormon missionary folklore, see William A. Wilson, *On Being Human: The Folklore of Mormon Missionaries*, Utah State University Faculty Honor Lecture (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1981).

¹⁷ Collected by Tiare Fullmer in 1981. BYUFA: HWC5.2.3.5.12.

¹⁸ Collected by Jane England in 1990. BYUFA: HWC5.2.3.12.2.

¹⁹ Collected by Laura Andersen in 1990. BYUFA: HWC5.2.3.12.18.

²⁰ Collected by Rhonda Jones in 1992. BYUFA: HWC5.2.3.12.14.

²¹ Collected by Joshua D. Heiner in 1992. BYUFA: HWC5.2.8.1.4.

Genesis

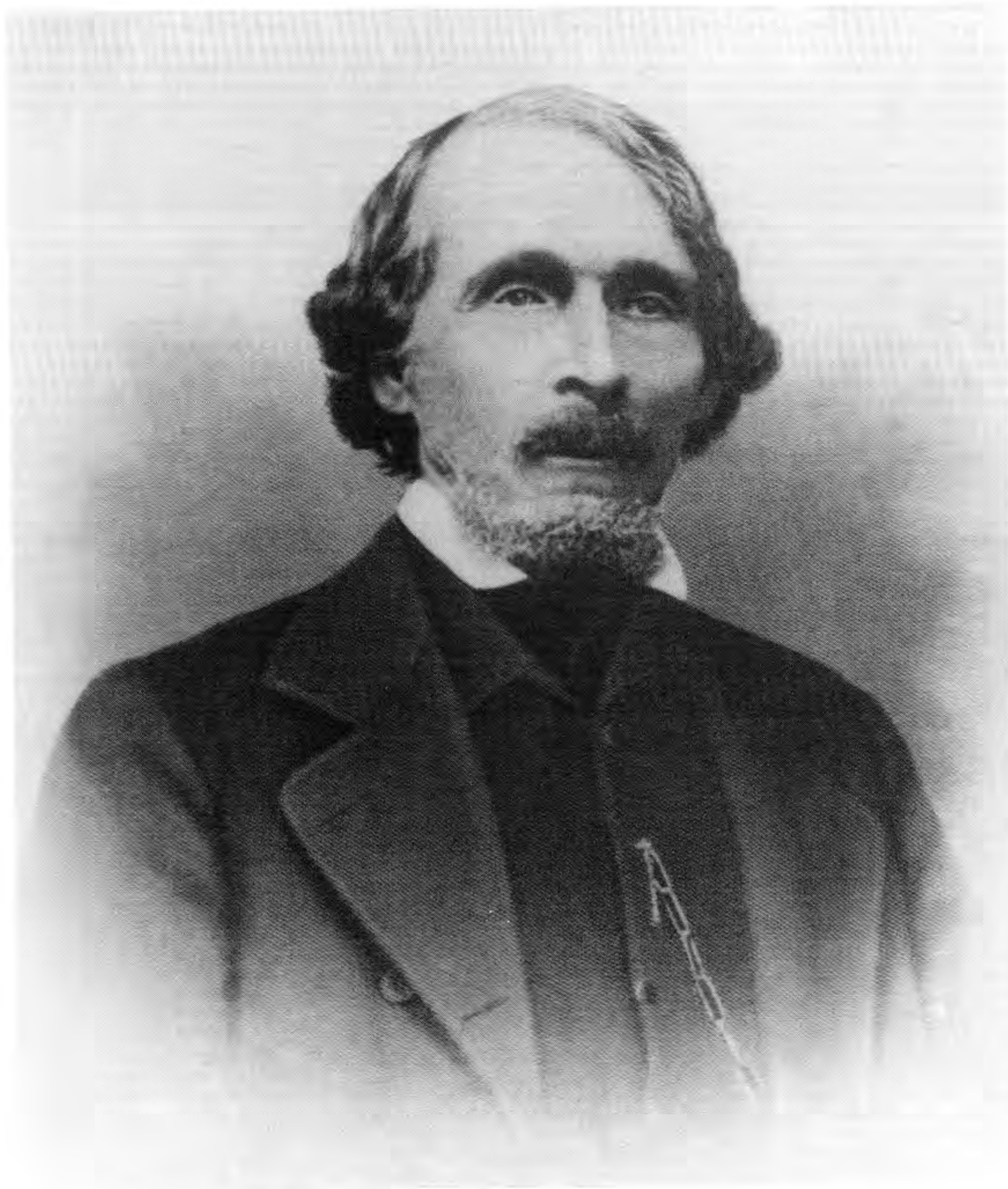
Jason swaggered through
the Smithsonian—
his right hand
clutching my finger
as if he were
pulling the cord—
whistling
to clear the tracks.

With his free hand
he blessed
a symmetrical stack of bones.

“El-e-phant!” he pronounced
syllabically,
enlivening the petrified—
fleshing out a form
long since iced.

He helped me see
beyond a jungle
of rope and trees
and away from a fortress
of wall and snake
to a parading garden
rising
like a gentle mist
from the earth.

—Robert M. Hogge



W. W. Phelps (1792–1872). Courtesy Jeanne A. Clawson.

Writing to Zion: The William W. Phelps Kirtland Letters (1835–1836)

These letters, many published for the first time, give important details about the lives and teachings of Latter-day Saints as the Church flourished in Kirtland, Ohio.

Edited by Bruce A. Van Orden

William Wines Phelps (1792-1872) was the LDS Church's first editor and hymnist and was perhaps the best educated member of the Prophet Joseph Smith's nearest associates during the 1830s.¹ He significantly affected the articulation of LDS doctrine from 1832 to 1836.² Because of his closeness to Joseph Smith, we take interest in his holographic writings, which reveal many details about the Prophet's activities and teachings. Phelps rarely kept a journal, and when he did, it was brief.³ But while he served as Joseph Smith's scribe and as a member of one of the groups of presidents in Kirtland, Ohio, from May 1835 to April 1836,⁴ Phelps wrote numerous letters to Saints in Missouri that he decided to designate as his journal. Most letters were addressed to his wife Sally. "I have told you once or twice to take all my letters that I have written to you and lock them up," he wrote. "You can perceive that my letters are my private Journal" (January 1836).

Phelps, who was known as "W. W." throughout his entire adult life, was born February 17, 1792, in Dover, Hanover Township, Morris County, New Jersey. A prominent journalist in western New York,⁵ he was also eccentric. Everywhere he went, people considered him a strange man. Plainly, he was a zealot in whatever cause that captured his attention. In New York, he helped found one of the most ardent of frontier political/religious

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causes, Anti-Masonry.⁶ With his publications, he viciously attacked society's foes as he perceived them; in exulting and ponderous tones, he also praised virtue and his concept of right.

Throughout his life, Phelps sought to excel and gain honor. He took pride in his rhetorical skills and knowledge of ancient languages. He fancied himself a poet and forever carried a notebook in which he would compose a rhyme, couplet, or a bit of poetic prose. Most of his poetry was moralistic.

Yet Phelps, a sincerely devout man of Puritan stock, sought to do God's will. He professed absolute fealty to his Savior Jesus Christ and often extolled the Lord in verse and prose. W. W. may have struggled with pride, but he also desired to be humble and to receive God's approbation. His Kirtland letters reveal these sides of his personality.

W. W. Phelps was thirty-nine years old when he approached Joseph Smith on June 15, 1831. He had known the Prophet since the previous December but had refused to join the Church because his ever increasing association with Mormons threatened to undermine his prominence in the Anti-Masonic movement. When his Anti-Masonic associates turned on him, Phelps brought his family from Canandaigua, New York, to Kirtland "to do the will of the Lord."⁷

Phelps was called by revelation (D&C 55) to accompany Joseph Smith to Missouri to locate the land of Zion. As part of the Prophet's entourage, he immediately became one of Joseph Smith's confidants, a position he retained for the next several years. Once in Missouri, another revelation (D&C 57) called Phelps to serve as "printer unto the church" in Independence.

Phelps returned to Ohio, picked up his family, purchased a printing press with Church funds in Cincinnati, and established his home in the area and the W. W. Phelps and Co. printing business in Independence in the spring of 1832. Phelps played a prominent role in both the Literary Firm and the United Firm, the communal financial institutions that oversaw the Church's printing and storehouse establishments.⁸ He published the Church's first periodical, the *Evening and the Morning Star*; printed a secular weekly, the *Upper Missouri Advertiser*; performed other

local printing jobs; and nearly completed the printing of the Book of Commandments.⁹ He often expressed his loyalty to Joseph Smith, and his newspaper extolled the young Prophet's revelations. During this time, he served as one of the Church's seven presiding high priests in the Missouri settlements.¹⁰ He wrote many letters to Joseph Smith on behalf of the Missouri Saints, and Joseph Smith in turn wrote letters addressed to Phelps for the Missouri Church leadership and members.¹¹

Jackson County mob action drove Phelps and the Mormons across the Missouri River in November 1833. W. W. labored vigorously in behalf of the Saints in seeking redress from Missouri government officials. When Joseph Smith arrived in Clay County with Zion's Camp in July 1834, the Prophet established a high council in Zion (modeled after the new one in Kirtland; see D&C 102) and installed David Whitmer, W. W. Phelps, and John Whitmer as the presidency of that council. This appointment made Brother Phelps one of the six "presidents of the church," consisting of the Ohio presidency (Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and Frederick G. Williams, who were also the First Presidency) and the new Missouri presidency. (The number of "presidents" increased to nine in December 1834 with the addition of Oliver Cowdery, Hyrum Smith, and Joseph Smith, Sr.)¹² Soon after his appointment, Phelps, along with the other Zion presidency members and other Missouri Church officials, was chosen to go to Kirtland and receive his "endowment with power from on high" in the temple that was nearing completion.¹³

Phelps tarried in Clay County, Missouri, through the winter of 1834-35 to watch over the Church in Zion, to care for his family, and to be there for the birth of a daughter. In mid-May he traveled with his son Waterman and close friend John Whitmer to Kirtland, where they were greeted warmly by the Prophet and many other Saints. He indicated his delight in being able to stay in the home of Joseph and Emma Smith.

The arrival of Phelps and Whitmer occasioned some new assignments from Joseph Smith. The Prophet replaced Oliver Cowdery with John Whitmer as editor of the *Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate* so that Cowdery could dedicate most of



John Whitmer (1802–78) circa 1870. Whitmer and Phelps were close friends. The two served in the Missouri high council presidency. They traveled together to Kirtland to receive a temple endowment, and both were assigned by Joseph Smith to publish the *Messenger and Advocate*. Courtesy Archives Division, Church Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City.

his time to printing and publishing the Doctrine and Covenants. Phelps, with his extensive printing and publishing experience, was assigned to help both Whitmer with the *Messenger and Advocate* and Cowdery with the Doctrine and Covenants.¹⁴

The Phelps Kirtland letters shed considerable light upon the contemporaneous teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith. In one of his first letters, W. W. exulted, “President Smith preached last Sabbath and I gave him the text; ‘This is my beloved son: hear ye him!’ He preached one of the greatest sermons I ever heard; it was about 3 1/2 hours long—and unfolded more mysteries than I can write at this time” (June 2, 1835). This is one of the rare historical references to Joseph Smith’s first vision in the mid-1830s.¹⁵

Phelps was equally excited to share with his wife startling new teachings from Joseph Smith on the eternal nature of marriage. In his first letter to Sally, he wrote, “A new idea, Sally, if you and I continue faithful to the end, we are certain to be one in the Lord throughout eternity; this is one of the most glorious consolations we can have in the flesh” (May 26, 1835). His letters are full of references to these new concepts. These letters, as well as other original documents from that period, reveal the extent to which the subject of marriage was a recurring theme with Joseph Smith and his associates at this time.¹⁶

Phelps’s relationship with his wife was a complex reflection of the new teachings on eternal marriage; American cultural values concerning women; his strict, puritanical nature; his zealousness; and his interpretations of the Apostle Paul’s and the Prophet’s teachings about husband-wife relations. For example, he merged American and Pauline ideas when he considered having his wife and daughters—“my women”—veil their faces when in public (September 16, 1835). In one of his frequent admonitions to his wife, Phelps again echoed Paul, “Keep your husband’s commands in all things as you do the Lord’s. Your husband is your head, and the Lord is his head.” In the letter, this instruction is followed by the report that “Br. Joseph has preached some of his greatest sermons on the duty of wives to their husbands” (September 16, 1835). (The Prophet’s diaries for 1835 to 1836 indicate he addressed the duties of husbands and wives to each

other.¹⁷) Phelps could be in turn loving and jealous, concerned and domineering, pleased and demeaning. “I love you,” he asserted, “and I want you to love me and write to me that you do. I love to please you, and I want you should love to please me, and say so in your letters” (September 11, 1835; underlining in the original).

Phelps’s letters, taken together with Oliver Cowdery’s more well-known letter (December 22, 1835) to William Frye,¹⁸ help us understand the early excitement about the Egyptian papyri that Michael Chandler brought to Kirtland. “The last of June, four Egyptian mummies were brought here,” W. W. reported. “There were two papyrus rolls, besides some other ancient Egyptian writings with them.” He explained that Joseph Smith soon knew what they represented. The rolls

contained the sacred record kept of Joseph in Pharaoh’s court in Egypt, and the teachings of Father Abraham. . . . These records of old times, when we translate and print them in a book, will make a good witness for the Book of Mormon. There is nothing secret or hidden that shall not be revealed. (July 19 and 20, 1835)

The Phelps letters also give tantalizing tidbits about the Church’s ambitious publication and education projects. They reveal the excitement Phelps felt at receiving some of the initial spiritual outpourings and sacred ordinances of the promised Kirtland endowment.¹⁹ And they tell of the hustle and bustle of Kirtland as its population burgeoned in anticipation of the completion of the temple. (A subject index of the main topics mentioned in these letters is provided at the end of this article.)

After the months covered by these nineteen letters, the Missouri presidency—David Whitmer, W. W. Phelps, and John Whitmer—were advised on Friday, April 1, 1836, that they were released from their assignments in Kirtland.²⁰ They could return to their families in Zion and reassume their duties in directing the Missouri Saints. After arriving in Clay County, Phelps learned of the Clay citizens’ determination that the Mormons leave that area. With the assistance of John Whitmer and Bishop Edward Partridge, Phelps located a new gathering place for the Missouri Saints. After many negotiations and the action of the Missouri state legislature, Caldwell County was set aside for Mormon settlement. Phelps and

John Whitmer purchased government lands with Church monies, laid out the city of Far West, and sold lots to incoming Saints.

The Missouri High Council later accused Phelps and Whitmer of appropriating too much authority to themselves in establishing Far West. Because this matter was never resolved, Phelps eventually forsook his loyalty to Joseph Smith and apostatized. After the Battle of Far West, he testified in the Richmond courthouse against Joseph Smith, thus contributing to the Prophet's incarceration in Missouri jails for six months.

After Joseph Smith and the Mormons found refuge in Illinois, W. W. Phelps, as a "returning prodigal," begged forgiveness from Joseph Smith and received it. He was accepted back into the Church. In Nauvoo he once again served as a scribe to the Prophet,²¹ but he never regained the high station he once held in Missouri and Ohio. He remained faithful the rest of his life and died in full fellowship among the Saints in Salt Lake City in 1872.

The Phelps letters are unfortunately not complete. From the extant sources it is clear that we do not have the entire text of several of these letters and that Phelps wrote additional letters. These 1835-36 letters are drawn from various sources, mainly the letter collections of W. W. Phelps, excerpts, LDS Church Historical Archives. There is also a microfilm copy of the more extensive collection in the Family History Library in Salt Lake City (based on a copy in possession of Lydia Varney Spry in 1942). Excerpts of some letters were also copied into the Journal History of the Church; in "Some Early Letters of William W. Phelps," *Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine* 31 (January 1940): 25-31; and in Leah Y. Phelps, "Letters of Faith from Kirtland," *Improvement Era* 45 (August 1942): 529. The letters have been arranged chronologically, with a number designation for each that corresponds to an appended index. I have included excerpts from more than one source of the same letter if the sources shed additional light on what Phelps wrote. In such cases, the additions are labeled with the corresponding number and the letter A.

Phelps's background as a printer and editor fashioned him into a remarkably good speller for his time. The few spelling variations that exist in these letters have been maintained, together with Phelps's capitalization, punctuation, and occasionally

underlined words and phrases. The same policy has been practiced in regard to those portions of the letters written by Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, and W. W. and Sally's oldest child, Waterman. To distinguish between Phelps's own editorial comments and mine, his use of parentheses has been maintained, while my comments and supplied dates have been enclosed in brackets: [].

Those letters found in the Journal History of the Church are often preceded, interrupted, or followed by a series of asterisks, likely indicating that a portion of the letter (probably thought insignificant by the compilers) has been left out. The asterisks have been reproduced here. Where a word or words were impossible to decipher or even predict due to torn and taped pages or flaked-off ink, no editorial judgments have been made. Rather, the passages have been marked [*word(s) unintelligible*]. Most persons mentioned in Phelps's letters have been identified in notes.

1

Written May 26, 1835, from Kirtland, Ohio, to his wife, Sally Waterman Phelps, in Liberty, Missouri:²²

You are not aware how much sameness there is among the Saints in Kirtland. They keep the Word of Wisdom²³ in Kirtland; they drink cold water, and don't even mention tea and coffee; they pray night and morning and everything seems to say: Behold the Lord is nigh.²⁴ But it is hard living here; flour costs from \$6.00 to \$7.00 a barrel and cows from \$20.00 to \$30.00 a head. It is a happy thing that I did not move back, for everything here is so dear. Our brethren are so poor and hard for money that it would have been more than I could have done to maintain my family.*****

A new idea, Sally, if you and I continue faithful to the end, we are certain to be one in the Lord throughout eternity; this is one of the most glorious consolations we can have in the flesh.²⁵

2

Written by the presiding authorities of the Church²⁶ from Kirtland, Ohio, June 1, 1835, to Elder John M. Burk²⁷ and "the Elders, Priests, teachers, deacons and members of the Church of Christ of Latter-day Saints" at Liberty, Clay County, Missouri; as the style

of the letter seems to be that of Phelps, he could easily have been the author:²⁸

President Burk:

You will not value the postage of a letter I presume when you learn that this part of the sheet is for the benefit of the Saints of God. According to the order of the kingdom, begun in the last days, to prepare men for the rest of the Lord, the Elders in Zion on in her immediate region, have no authority nor right to meddle with her affairs, to regulate or even hold any courts. The high council has been organized expressly to minister in all her spiritual affairs; and the Bishop and his council are set over her temporal matters; so thus the Elders acts are null and void. Now the Lord wants the tares and wheat to grow together; while in an unorganized state Zion must be redeemed with judgments and the converts by righteousness. Every Elder that can, after he has provided for his family (if any he has) and paid his debts, must go forth and clear his skirts from the blood of this generation. While they are there, instead of holding courts to stop communion, or anything else, let every one labor to bind up the broken hearted, reclaim the wanderer, and persuade back into the kingdom such as have been cut off, by encouraging them to lay to and work righteousness, and prepare with one heart and one mind to redeem Zion, that goodly land of promise, where the willing and the obedient shall be blessed. Souls are as precious in the sight of God as they ever were, and the Elders were never called to drive any down to hell, but invite and persuade men everywhere to repent. It is the acceptable year of the Lord. The Priests too, should not be idle, their duties are plain and unless they do them, they cannot expect to be approved. Righteousness must govern the Saints in all things and when the new covenants come forth the Priests will learn that great things may be expected at their hands.

The Teachers and Deacons are the standing ministers of the Church,²⁹ and in the absence of other officers, they will have great things required at their hands. They must strengthen the members; persuade such as are out of the way, to repent and meekly urge and persuade everyone to forgive each other all their trespasses, offences and sins. Bear and forbear one with another, brethren, for so God does with us. Cease to find fault and learn to do well. Pray for your enemies in the Church and curse not your foes without; for vengeance belongs to God. Know you not, that there is more joy in heaven over one sinner that repents, than there is over ninety-nine just persons that need no repentance!!! Strive not about the mysteries of the kingdom; to one is given the word of wisdom; to another the power of healing difficulties. To every officer we say be merciful and you shall find mercy. Your Brethren, who leave their families

and go forth to warn the present generation of the great things to come, expect great things of those who enjoy the society of the Saints and their families. They pray that they may be very prayerful and very humble, working diligently spiritually and temporally for the redemption of Zion, when all the pure in heart can return with songs of everlasting joy, to enjoy the good of the land of Zion. Brethren, in the name of Jesus we entreat you to live worthy of the blessings which shall be heired by the faithful after Zion is redeemed.

To Elder Lyman Wight:³⁰

The Lord is not pleased with him because he did not come to Kirtland as is manifest to the council. The council fear that in consequence of self-sufficiency and self-knowledge, which heretofore at time has led our worthy brother aside from the strict principles of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, unless he goes forth into the vineyard and magnifies his calling according to the commandment, Satan will sift him as chaff. Let him be reminded that it is necessary for him to repent and humble himself before God and go about his Master's business; and let those who have been appointed: whose appointment have been sanctioned by the voice of the Church, regulate the affairs of Zion, lest he that puts his hand forth to steady the ark, be made an ensample, as was Uzzah in the days of David.³¹

Decision in Elder George Busket's³² case, appealed from the Elder's Court.

Kirtland, Ohio, May, 30, 1835: The foregoing case was reviewed by the Presidency and decided that the proceedings were illegal on the part of the Elders; they not having authority to act in that country, the Lord having appointed regular councils for the trials of transgressors—Oliver Cowdery, Clerk.

We say to Elder Busket: go to the parties and witnesses and forgive them whatever hardness you may hold against them and they must forgive you. When you have done so and sufficiently humbled yourself, prepare yourself and go forth and magnify your calling, lest Satan sift you as chaff.

We, having regard for Elder Fosdick,³³ hope and pray that he may also go forth and improve his talent, lest he lose his crown.

In the bands of the new covenant, we are,

Joseph Smith, Jr.

Oliver Cowdery³⁴

W. W. Phelps

John Whitmer.³⁵

3

June 2, 1835, to his wife, Sally, in Liberty, Clay County, Missouri:³⁶

The Elders are constantly coming and going.³⁷ Last week, Elders Simeon Carter³⁸ and Solomon Hancock³⁹ started for the East. Bishop Partridge⁴⁰ and Councillor Isaac Morley⁴¹ will start soon; Elder Amasa M. Lyman⁴² came in last week. Elders Peter Dustin⁴³ and James Emmett⁴⁴ arrived last week and Elder Oziel Stevens⁴⁵ this week.

*****President Smith preached last Sabbath and I gave him the text; "This is my beloved son: hear ye him!" He preached one of the greatest sermons I ever heard; it was about 3 1/2 hours long—and unfolded more mysteries than I can write at this time.

The congregations of the Saints at Kirtland are larger than any we used to have at Canandaigua, Ontario Co. N.Y., and when any of the world come in, we have what may well be called "a large congregation."

The Prophet Joseph Smith added the following to this letter:

Cousin Almyra Scoby⁴⁶

Bro. Wm. W. Phelps has left a little space for me to occupy and I gladly improve it. I would be glad to see the children of Zion and deliver the work of Eternal Life to them from my own mouth, but cannot this year. Nevertheless the day will come that I shall enjoy this privilege I trust; and we all shall receive an inheritance in the land of refuge, which is so much to be desired, seeing it is under the direction of the Almighty, therefore let us live faithful before the Lord and it shall be well with us. I feel for all the children of Zion and pray for them in all my prayers. Peace be multiplied unto them, redemption and favor from God, Amen.

Joseph Smith Jr.

As a further postscript Elder Phelps adds:

N.B. If I was able to bear the expense, I would write weekly, but it would cost \$12.50 both ways; I cannot afford it.

4

Extracted from a letter written at Kirtland, Ohio, to Sally at Liberty, Missouri:⁴⁷

On the 4th inst. Brothers Peter Brownell⁴⁸ and David Shibley,⁴⁹ who went up this spring from Pennsylvania to Missouri, brought tidings from the region of Zion up to June 12th by which we learned that the spirit of Satan had started the elders to do what they ought

not to do and leave undone that which they ought to do. On Sunday the 12th inst. we received news by Brother William Tippetts⁵⁰ up to the 30th of June. He came through in eleven days and 12 hours, the shortest passage known****He gave us all the intelligence we could wish which caused us all to rejoice. He stated that my letter had checked the elders in their crusade for exaltation.****The weather here [Kirtland] is variable hot and cold; the lake breezes come almost as cold as winter. Haying has commenced, but harvest, I do not think, will begin until one or two weeks hence.***I am much pleased to hear that Elder Peter Whitmer⁵¹ stepped forth to vindicate the cause of the Saints. God will bless him for all such noble acts. He that will do good can do it without a commandment.***The Elders are mostly out preaching. Elders Corrill,⁵² Newel Knight⁵³ and Elias Higbee⁵⁴ work upon the House of the Lord. Elder Emmett goes to school, Elder Morris Phelps⁵⁵ and Priest Duncan⁵⁶ arrived last week. We have just learned that Bishop Partridge and Elder Morley are well. On the last of June four Egyptian mummies were brought here. With them were two papyrus rolls, besides some other ancient Egyptian writings. As no one could translate these writings they were presented to President Smith. He soon knew what they were and said that the rolls of papyrus contained a sacred record kept by Joseph in Pharaoh's court in Egypt and the teachings of Father Abraham. God has so ordered it that these writings and mummies have been brought into the Church, and the sacred writings I had just locked up in Bro. Joseph's house, when your letter came, so I had two consolations of good things in one day. These records of old times when we translate and print them in a book will make a good witness for the Book of Mormon. There is nothing secret or hidden that shall not be revealed.***** Kirtland has altered a great deal since we lived here. It is growing very fast indeed, but I do not like it as well as home (Missouri), or any other place that I have seen. Our passage from Missouri to Kirtland was not as quick as it might have been, but I thank the Lord that we got here safe.***The building of the Lord's house is progressing very fast. It is a large house, I assure you. The men are now at work on the steeple.***I live now at President Smith's. There are at present three stores in this town, two of which belong to the Church. Meetings are already held in the Lord's house.

4A

A different version of the previous letter, which is located in the *Journal History of the Church*; dated July 19-20, 1835:⁵⁷

Beloved Sally:

Last evening we received your first letter after an absence of twelve weeks and twelve hours. Our tears of joy were the witness

of its welcome reception. By these things we learn the value of each other's society and company, and friendship, and virtue. Taking the letter altogether, with all its candor and information and remembered names, it is, by all who have read it, called a very good one. Brother Joseph remarked that it was as easy to shed tears while reading that letter as it was when reading the history of Joseph in Egypt. . . .

My affection for you and my children grows very fast. I mean it grows purer and more ardent. I want you to send for Elder Calvin Beebe⁵⁸ as soon as you receive this and have Sarah⁵⁹ baptized. [He acknowledges letters from the two older girls, Sabrina and Mehitabel and then continues]: Sarah, Henry, James and Lydia—I must wait to see them a good while yet. They have my tears and mother's smiles till I come, with the blessings of the Lord. . . . I hope and pray that the children will be diligent and learn well this summer.

You say the roof of the house leaks; I have written to have another good roof put on over the one now on. You can get 12 penny nails out of the goods at Brother Corrill's; and anything else that you actually need that is among those goods, get and use and I will settle the matter. . . .

I was sorry to hear that the cupboard fell down because I forgot to nail it, but now it is so. If there is not crockery enough at Brother Corrill's, go to Liberty⁶⁰ and replenish it. . . .

I rejoice that that little branch of the Church had the Spirit of God to reject the temptations of Satan. The Lord will remember their constancy. Teacher Music [could possibly be Samuel Musick]⁶¹ is right that you need our prayers and we need yours, for by faith and prayer and every good word and work, we can enter into the joys of our Lord. . . .

I am much pleased that Elder Peter Whitmer stepped forth to vindicate the cause of the Saints; God will bless him for all such noble acts. He that will do good can do it without a commandment. The fact is, the Saints must work righteousness. . . .

The elders are mostly out a preaching. Elder Corrill, Newel Knight and Elias Higbee work upon the House of the Lord. Elder Emmett goes to school. Elder Morris Phelps and Priest Duncan arrived last week. We have just learned that Bishop Partridge and Elder Morley are back. . . .

The last of June, four Egyptian mummies were brought here; there were two papyrus rolls, besides some other ancient Egyptian writings with them. As no one could translate these writings, they were presented to President Smith. He soon knew what they were and said they, the "rolls of papyrus," contained the sacred record kept of Joseph in Pharaoh's court in Egypt, and the teachings of Father Abraham. God has so ordered it that these mummies and

writings have been brought in the Church and the sacred writing I had just locked up in Brother Joseph's house when your letter came, so I had two consolations of good things in one day. These records of old times, when we translate and print them in a book, will make a good witness for the Book of Mormon. There is nothing secret or hidden that shall not be revealed, and they come to the Saints. . . .

Forever yours,

W. W. Phelps

5

First paragraph written by Waterman Phelps; W. W. Phelps took up the pen again in the subsequent paragraph, July 20, 1835:⁶²

Dear Mother and Sisters: I now take my pen in hand to inform you that I am well and thankful to God for it. Father received your letter Saturday the 18th and I was glad to hear from you and find you are all well [several words unintelligible] Kirtland has altered [word unintelligible] since we lived here it is a growing very fast indeed, but I do not like it so well as house nor any other place that I have seen. Our journey here was not as fast as it might have been but I thank the Lord that we got here safe. I have sent some paper to Henry Rollins and to you. The building of the House is going on very fast. Brother Corril and Higbee say [word unintelligible] it is a large House. I assure you they are now to work on the steeple. Give my respects to all these [word unintelligible] and to Iva⁶³ and to Henry, Sarah Young⁶⁴ and Lydia tell them I long to see the time when I shall return home to live. I mean to live faithful if I can. I live now at President Smiths. There are now at prent [present] three stores in this town, two of them belong to the church. They hold meetings in the House now. Write on the paper that we had not got any letter from home till that same we got your letter. I have your papers nearly every time to you and Henry R. I do not know when we shall return home. Tell Iva that I get along as well as I should in this world. Father has got him [several words unintelligible] but have I not got [word unintelligible] anything yet. I must now close for the present give my respects [two words unintelligible] that know me and tell them I am well to [word unintelligible] tell I see you all. From your affectionate son. William Waterman Phelps. Sally Phelps, Sabrina Phelps, Mahetable Phelps, Sarah Phelps, Henry Phelps, James Phelps, Lydia Phelps

[Writing changes to that of William W. Phelps.]

I must stop in the middle of my letter. Sally will remember that before we came into the church, we both dreamed in one night; I, that I fed a great flock of sheep in a [word unintelligible] Mill; and you, that you drew water out of a well and watered many

cattle: While I feed the sheep, and I forgot to water the cattle—and work righteousness. Be careful of your words: I dreamed the other night that Nephi said “How do you do Br. Phelps?” I answered “I do as well as I can.” To which he replied—“He doth as well as he can, that followeth the direction of the Holy Spirit and keepeth all the commandments of the Lord and his only.” By the first elder or any honest person that is coming this way, tell James H. Rollins to send me all the Rice pencils which may be among the goods &c. I hate to stop but must.

Forever yours,

W. W. Phelps

I say to the elders, priests, teachers, deacons, & members:⁶⁵ be prayerful, humble, and watchful, so that Satan may not deceive you: Let such as live in the region of Zion at least pray over their flocks and fields and for the prosperity of those with whom they tarry; and three times a day for the welfare of your selves and families. If every Saint is not very prayerful and very humble, he must feel the displeasure of his God. The three Presidents of Zion act for her good whether in Zion, Kirtland, or England⁶⁶ and have a right to spirit in regulating the affairs of her stakes. Therefore, when any one attempts to meddle with her affairs, they will be held to an account before God.

As ever,

W. W. Phelps

6

Letter addressed to Sally Phelps, Liberty, Clay County, Missouri. From Kirtland Mills, Ohio,⁶⁷ August 14, 1835. The beginning of the letter is missing.⁶⁸

. . . they may be saved with you, for they will be your joy with God, and for each that comes into the Kingdom, you shall have a star in your crown. That is if you keep them in the Kingdom, you shall have a star in your crown. Babies are always in the Kingdom until they transgress when they have come to years of accountability. Well might the Psalmist exclaim: “Lo children are the heritage of God.” How necessary, then, that every pain be taken, and every means used to keep them in the Kingdom; and to obey the requisitions of the Gospel that parents may come into the presence of God and bring all their sheaves with them; for all their pain, then, they will receive joy; for all the sorrow, pleasure; for all the tribulations, blessings; and for all their children, “stars.” Methinks Solomon knew this when he penned the third verse of the 6th chapter of Ecclesiastes: for if we should not go to heaven with our children, we should have



Lydia Phelps Varney (1835–1923). When Phelps wrote the letters reproduced in this article, Lydia was his youngest daughter. The number of times he sends special greetings to his “little innocent Lydia” seems to indicate he had a special fondness for her. Courtesy Louis D. Allen.

no joy with them; and if we should go without them we should lack that glory. Hence I entreat you with all the affection I have for you and “our” children to keep them in the way they should go, that all of us may come in to the bliss of God together, with songs of everlasting joy.

I know the task of training up children right before the Lord is too much for a woman, and was I not confident of your virtue and capability, I should feel very uneasy, but your piety and prudence is so well known to me, that I know you will do all in your power to gratify my feelings in bringing up our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord: to be obedient, to be wise, to be good, and to be pure in heart. It may be supposed, and I know, and you know, that if we had nothing to do but save ourselves, we could do it pretty easy; but where much is given, much will be required, and instead of saving myself only, I must labor faithfully to save others, that I may obtain a crown of “many stars.”

This shows you that the order of heaven has great men, even principal men, who do much and have much glory; and you being my legal wife, if you continue as you have begun, and I know you will, you are next to me; are my equal, all save my power and authority, and you participate in my glory. O, then, who would not labor for the Lord? You are in a great place and if you labor to be so you will be great with me and great with God. Do so, Sally, for your sake, and for my sake, and for Jesus’ sake. Sabrina and Mehitabel are in the right age to be light, and vain, when the current of vice and folly can easily overflow, but be strict with them, even as I, and you will keep them in the Kingdom as ornaments of your love and glory.

Let others do as they may, square your conduct with the word of the Lord, and declare that as for you and your house, you will serve the Lord. If you lack wisdom or information on any point, write to me and you shall have all the knowledge I can give: freely I receive and freely I give: forget not your prayers in the season thereof, nor let the children forget theirs. Pray for me daily, for so I do for you three or four times a day. Pray for health, peace, and our dwelling together in unity. Amen.

Forever yours,

W. W. Phelps

The following notes are written on the outside of the letter:

Sally—lest anything should be wrong, I asked your forgiveness on all things passed. But you have not written a word about it. Why? Tell “little innocent Lydia” her father longs to see her, and all the rest of the children, not omitting her mother—for her “satisfaction.”

W. W. P.

Dear Sister in the Lord:

Your husband has written you of his health, etc. It is proper to say that he is doing well, and I bear this testimony concerning him, that he is humble and faithful. Next spring you may expect him, if all be well. Waterman does well. If he continues he will be loved of the Lord, and so will all who continue to keep the Lord's commandments. Great things await the earth, and great joys await the Saints. Soon the Son of Man comes, and then righteous families will no more be separated. I bless the Lord for that. The Lord bless you and all the faithful, even more than your hearts can premeditate. Thus shall it be. My family are well. My wife remembers you, Sally Phelps.

O. Cowdery

Brother Burk:

We are glad to receive intelligence from you and others concerning the affairs of the Saints, but yet we see a lack in some respects. The presidency, sometime since, dropped a word to Elder Lyman Wight. We want to know whether he will neglect us much longer without writing? There is evidently a wrong somewhere. We wonder if the elders never think to give us their proceedings, officially. We want to know from them, what they are doing, and what they are to do hereafter. Whether they are about to go forth in the spirit of meekness and preach the Gospel? A word further, Bro. Burk must be humble! We hope that the melancholy will remember that the Saints always rejoice!

O. Cowdery

7

September 9, 1835:⁶⁹

Beloved in the Lord: The letter from both the high councils to the elders and church in Clay County, Mo. addressed to Br. Hezekiah Peck,⁷⁰ contains so much good instructions, that I have supposed it to be unnecessary to write to any but Sally, and inasmuch as you submit unto my teachings and commands, as unto the Lord, others seeing your submission, your meekness, and virtuous example, if they mean to be among the saints, "will go and do likewise." The Spirit whispers me thus the instructions already given in connection with what each travelling elder will necessarily write to his wife, will be sufficient to keep every member in the way of duty till the "Doctrine and Covenants"⁷¹ arrive, when all can choose for themselves; and if they then miss their way, and are unfaithful in keeping the commandments, and living by every word that proceeds forth from the mouth of God, they must be chastened!

I have it in my heart to give you a little instruction, so that you may know your place, and stand in it, beloved, admired, and rewarded, in time and in eternity.⁷² But in order to do this, I must show the duty of man, in part. Man was created in the beginning to dress the earth to multiply his species; to honor God, and enjoy his presence forever. Hence it is the duty of man to labor for his living; to provide for his own household; to cultivate the land; to beautify it, to rear up habitations, and to have dominion over all animals which were made for his use and benefit. But it is not good that man should live alone, therefore it is pleasing to the Lord, that he should have an helpmeet, and multiply and replenish the earth, raising up seed, that the earth may be filled with its measure of man: Wherefore marvel not that a person without raising up seed to continue his or her name, and inheritance lacks a blessing: For the Psalmist says: "Lo children are the heritage of the Lord." In the first chapter of Romans, beginning at the 26 verse, see what abominations women and men work by changing the order of heaven. Then one reason why the generations of men have been more or less cursed, with harlots, whoremonger, adulterers, maimed children, ungodly wretches, &c. God gives them up to their own vile affections. This you know is the fact with men and women in general among the gentiles. The Lord promises to bless the fruit of the body of the Saints, if they keep his commandments: This brings to mind "our little innocent Lydia" who, I am persuaded from what I learn, is beloved and blessed of the Lord: if I were with you I could tell you why, but (suffice till I come,) to say that one of the great reasons is because her Mother did the will of the Lord without murmuring in bringing that child into the world.

In the 11th chapter of first Corinthians, you will see that the head of Christ is God; and the head of man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and that the woman was created for the man: I might refer you to many other passages which give light on this subject but you have a good concordance and you can turn to them at your leisure. God placed man upon earth to do his will and it is his will that the earth should be filled with its measure of man. Celibacy is not tolerated by the commandments, neither is fornication, nor is any device that hinders the increase of man: This you may learn by reading the 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th and 10th verses of the 38 chapter of Genesis. Man was created upright but Satan has lead him to commit many abominations.

I shall next say thus, man being placed on this earth to honor God, had his agency given him so that he might choose for himself, that by obeying the laws and commandments of his Creator, he might be rewarded with honor and glory in eternity; thus he might become a Son of the Lord Jesus, for Jesus was the Only Begotten of the Father. Now you know that man was placed at the head of creations next to the Lord; and the Woman is next to the man, bone of

his bone. If man honors the Lord, he will obey his commandments; if woman honors her husband she will obey his commandments, and thus the order of heaven is followed on earth, and the man and the woman, and the children are blessed of the Lord, and peace reigns.

8

September 11, 1835:⁷³

Well Sally—On Wednesday the ninth instant, I received your fourth letter, in 19 days from Mo, by the postmark. You have no idea how much Joy your letters give me: and those who read them are pleased with them also. I mean that you write with your “own hand.” Your Spirit comes modestly in your ideas, and it gives me great consolation in my absence from you. I was sorry to learn that you thought [unintelligible] on a visit to Jerusha⁷⁴ who would take care of our children among strangers and who would take care of Sally in the midst of mobs & diseases? If you will read the 19 verse of a commandment in the little Book of Commandments, page 146,⁷⁵ you will see that you can not go by water, and to go by land would be too hard for you. O Sally, don't think of going while I am absent. Now, I know that no man on earth thinks more of his wife than I do of you. I do not conceal it, nor never did. I love you and I want you to love me and write to me that you do. I love to please you, and I want you should love to please me, and say so in your letters. I expect an endowment, I labor to forgive and be forgiven. I have said so in my letters to you and I think you have forgotten to mention it in your letters. If you and I tarry together on earth, and to go the Lord together, we “must be one.” I made an expression in one of my letters that it almost made me “mad with myself” to think I did not make you write more when I was home. You quote [two words unintelligible] sorry I made it you wrote better than I expected. I can write some [one word unintelligible] you do; but your simple, unaffected modest style does away every other lack. Just say you love to write to me and that will please me. Selah J. Griffin⁷⁶ and Elder G. M. Hinkle⁷⁷ came here [several words unintelligible] with Br. Joseph and Oliver and Sidney as they returned from Portage Conference on Tuesday evening. Selah was in a good spirit. And so was brother Hinkel. I feel as if Read Peck⁷⁸ was not very mad at me as he is a clerk in the business to Brother Whitney⁷⁹ and myself and is accountable to “me” for his good conduct and not me to him. If he does not know that I am one of the surviving partners of this little lot of goods, I will try and get Br. Whitney to write him a line so that he need have no fears nor has stress on that account. Sister Emmett⁸⁰ need not to fear, bro. Emmett will attend to his rent in time. And I hope the Lord will have mercy on his boy. If Kelly has not

paid you yet, I do not know what to say. He acts wrong and the whole world is just so. Pray to God to open his heart to pay you, and I will, and he will do it. I was truly glad to receive another letter from Sabrina. The souls of our children, Sally, are of great worth; don't let them be lost if in your power to prevent it. I love our children and love to have them brought up right. May God assist to do it. I am now revising hymns for a hymn Book.⁸¹ Nothing has been doing in the translation of the Egyptian Record for a long time, and probably will not for some time to come.⁸² Why don't you say how you like the papers I sent you? As soon as I hear from any of your folks⁸³ I shall write. Be careful as you have been to have your letters good, so that every body can read them (except you send me a private one). Br. Joseph thinks much of them, and so do I. The rest of this letter was written when yours came. Sally and children remember him whose voice you can not hear, but whose words speak to you.

9

To Sally, September 16, 1835:⁸⁴

MY ONLY ONE: Situated as I am in the family of President Smith, with such counsel as brother Corrill, and where, too, I have the benefit of all the instruction of the heads of Israel, and the knowledge and the satisfaction of all the preaching, teaching, and information from all the elders, you must be sensible, that I have a better chance to gain knowledge for the good of you, and the saints, than I have ever before had. This is the reason why I propose to write. If what I write is heeded, I shall be glad: For the Lord will reward for every good act, and I mean to admonish for goodness and this glory that shall follow; and for nothing else. The cause we have espoused is God's; the religion we profess is Christ's and we are not of this world but of the world to come; therefore we must obey the commandments of the Lord, and please him to entitle us to an inheritance in the holy city that shall come down from heaven adorned as a bride for her husband.⁸⁵ Perhaps you may have drawn wrong conclusions from my letters, or some others may have; but verily I say unto you, they have been written for the salvation of the Saints, and I ask you in the name of Jesus to begin and read them all over again, and treasure up the truth. Mark what I have said to you, or asked of you and do it and great shall be your reward. But I must resume this subject left in my last letter. In that I spoke of men: Now I must hint of women: For the man is not without the woman neither is the woman without the man in the Lord. I wish you to read the seventh of I Corinthians and learn for yourself: In Ephesians and Colossians it says—"Wives submit yourselves unto

your own husbands as unto the Lord.”⁸⁶ That is keep your husband’s commands in all things as you do the Lord’s. Your husband is your head, and the Lord is his head. Br. Joseph has preached some of his greatest sermons on the duty of wives to their husbands and the rule of all women I ever heard. I would not have you ignorant, Sally, of the mystery of Men and Women, but I can not write all. You must wait till you see me. This much, however, I will say, that you closed your 4th letter to me in a singular manner; really it was done after the manner of the Gentiles; Says Sally “I remain yours till death.” But since you have seen my blessing I think you will conclude “if your life and years are as precious in the sight of God as mine,” thus you will be mine in this world and in the world to come; and so long as you can remain on earth as you desire, I think you may as well use the word “forever,” as “till death.” In this world we have to labor, we have to marry; we have to raise up seed; honor God, &c, but in the world to come, we praise God and the Lamb forever, and ever, and we neither marry, nor are given in marriage—do you now begin to understand: This—is the reason why I have called you at the commencement of this letter, my only one, because I have no right to any other woman in this world nor in the world to come, according to the law of the celestial kingdom. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; And what shall I say of him or her who lives till the Lord comes, and is caught up into the cloud to meet him? O Sally, Sally, be wise I beseech you, for you know not how great things must come to pass after much tribulation! I hope and pray that you give heed to what I write, and I wish you would let me know that you do and mean to: Now what I say unto you, I say unto all: women, or wives must obey their husbands in all things and then they are clear; the husband is responsible, and he being the head, as Christ is the head of the church, must do as much for his wife as Christ did for the church; lay down his life for her, if necessary. This will show that he loves her. If you read the 11th chapter of first Corinthians, you may find some good instruction: In old times honest women veiled their faces in public; especially as is mentioned in the 10th verse of this chapter “because of the angels” they probably formed veils then of their hair. I think when I return that my women will generally vail [*sic*] their faces in public and give no one a chance to gaze upon what is not his.⁸⁷ This modest way will not lead to temptation, and may be one means of promoting virtue. I have cried for joy when your letters have come, because of their seeming virtue and meekness: I should hate to have to chasten you, but as I love you, so I will chasten you, if you step aside from what I require, and what I know is the will of the Lord. You must not tattle; you must not find fault; you must not be proud; you must not be exalted; you must not speak evil of your neighbor; no; no; Sally, do none of these things, but the pure in heart, and you shall be sure

of Zion, and me. This instruction is good; I want every saint to follow it. Look around you, Sally.—who fills your husband's place in God, to talk and converse of all that is near and dear to you; and play with little Lydia? Who fill his chair by the fireside, to instruct and explain? Who fills his place at table? Who sounds his notes to praise the Lord? Yea, Sally, and how many sisters equally good as you, are in the same condition, while their husbands are away to sound the alarm of the approaching end? And what man takes time when others sleep to write to his wife and the saints weekly, except me? O, if you and the saints knew how my heart burned for your welfare, how many times I pray for you, and how many tears I shed for you; (you all, I mean) I think you would be humble and rejoice. I want to say beware of covetousness: for if there are any that hover over a little property it will canker their souls. God will have a perfect people, if he has to destroy hypocrites and his dissemble[r]s with fire, famine, pestilence and the sword. Oh the horror, the trouble, the vexations that has commenced, will increase, and shall continue to waste the wicked and ungodly till corruption is ended! I want to say to Sister Gilbert,⁸⁸ cease to be melancholy; but rejoice; cease to care so much about many things; tis the willing and obedient that will eat the good of the land of Zion; religion is the balm of God for the fatherless and widow; God is love and meekly seek the Lord, without disconsolation, and he will bless you (write this little word of consolation for her).

The news here is about as usual. Health prevails among the brethren generally. Whenever the wind is in the north it blows cold and I talk of hurrying to Missouri. From appearance, the season is about two months longer at Zion than at Kirtland.⁸⁹ A letter from the Twelve of the last week,⁹⁰ says they will return to prepare for school about the 1st of October. Br. Marsh⁹¹ was meek and in good health and spirits. The travelling elders begin to come in: Kirtland will be filled with them in a short time. Many of the Zion elders are at work on the house,⁹² which is being finished slowly. It is a great work and will take some longer, I think, than was expected to complete it. The subject of which could be most pleasing to the saints in Missouri, I have no particular knowledge of—that is, when Zion will be redeemed. Little is said or known, more than you know and is printed. To try our faith and for other purposes, the Lord says little to us about it.⁹³

Fruit is beginning to be ripe, I have eaten a few peaches and apples, but give me the society of my wife and children and the saints before anything on earth. Away with flaunting fashions; away with the luxuries of life: give me the knowledge and love of God; my meek and modest wife; our children;—the real Saints for friends, and I shall have more health and joy on earth; more glory

and intelligence in eternity than Caesar in his greatness or Solomon in his splendor. We got some of the Commandments from Cleveland last week;⁹⁴ I shall try to send one hundred copies to the Saints this fall by Br. Wm Tippetts. He starts next week. I know there will be one hundred Saints who will have their dollar ready, when he arrives, for a Book, we put them at a dollar in order to help us a little, considering how much we have lost by the Jackson mob. I would not be without one for five dollars. I have prepared one Book for Sally, one for Sabrina, one for Mehitabel, and one for Sarah, and if they arrive in Clay this fall, I pray God, that maybe made good use of for the truth's sake. I shall send a few great egg plumbs stones, which I want Ira⁹⁵ to plant near the house this fall that they may freeze. Ira will also have a Book. Daniel Stanton⁹⁶ has gone home. Peter Dustin started off last summer rather singularly, have not heard from him since. I fear Peter is not altogether right.⁹⁷ No earthly consideration is equal to celestial glory. I know I set as much store in my wife and children as any other person on earth, yet I forego the sweet enjoyment of their society for the glory that will follow and be brought to pass by faith and diligence. If my folks and the saints die faithful and pray in faith, I shall come home with Waterman the latter part of next spring and make a visit. And what next I know not for the Lord has not said. Maybe Sally's the children's another Saints' faith will be to have me stay a while—the Lord's and not my will be done. *Day before yesterday David Whitmer⁹⁸ and Samuel H. Smith⁹⁹ were appointed general agents to the Literary firm¹⁰⁰ to take and sell Books among the extensive branches of the Church, &c. I wear my same clothes that I had on when I came this way, but they are but little the worse for wear. I have got some others, but I intend to keep them to wear home. Sally, I want you should answer this letter so that I may know how you and the children will be off for clothing when what I have sent arrives: if you have received the money I sent you and whether this and what little you may have got will be enough to make you comfortable this winter. If you can get along I want you should, so thus I can begin to make my calculations for spending money by and bye. Write in your own meek and simple way just as it is, and whenever you want a "good word" to yourself and don't forget to write me "some good words" for I am flesh and blood, the very same as you, and love a little consolation once and awhile, seeing I cannot see you and the children's faces and hear you talk and pray morning and evening, nor watch "little innocent Lydia" sit and play.

Forever

W. W. Phelps

10

October 7, 1835:¹⁰¹

Sally:—This evening, after waiting patiently four weeks for a letter, I was astonished and pained, with room of getting a letter to see “these words” on the margin of the Liberty Enquirer,¹⁰² dated Sept. 15, mailed the 19th. It was written by Warren Graves,¹⁰³ thus: “We received two papers, and seem directed to the Northern Times¹⁰⁴ for you. I am well and father’s family generally. Your father’s family. You will hear the state of their health by brother Peter. Hitty and Sarah are sick; your mother had the Ague once at fathers.” Of all the news I can receive, after waiting so long, this was the saddest. What shall I say? What shall I do? Could you not have gotten some body to write, if you were all sick? I wonder if you sent a letter by Brother Peters,¹⁰⁵ or any body else? A letter by private conveyance! You might just as well put into the Missouri [*sic*]. The post office was instituted expressly to carry letters. But then, again I mourn, supposing you were all sick and not able to write: Could you not have got Henry Rollins¹⁰⁶ or someone to have written a few lines? I expected, after requesting you so much, to have received a letter every two weeks but disappointment thus heart growing [word unintelligible] has been my lot. O that it were otherwise! But what can I do?—I received a letter this evening from Brother Covey¹⁰⁷ and others, stating that Sister Stout¹⁰⁸ had been got with child in adultery by John J. Fanner. I didn’t call such a crime “adultery.” I call it fornication! which in my opinion can only be washed away by the water of baptism. The law does not say that such a sin is to be forgiven. It ought not to be—it is im- [rest of letter missing]

11

Copied from a letter written October 27, 1835, in Kirtland, Ohio:¹⁰⁹

On Sunday last we had one of the largest congregations ever convened in the House of the Lord. There were probably 1200 persons present and what added to the scene was the fact that a brother and a sister were married, according to the rules of the Church as published in the “Messenger and Advocate.” My heart felt for the Saints in Missouri. I longed for the day when the Saints in Zion could meet and partake of the sacrament of the Lord Jesus, confessing their sins according to the commandments. Peter Dustin arrived here on the 21st inst. having been greatly blessed of the Lord. He has labored in Canada in the King’s Dominion alone, and, the Lord working with him, has has [*sic*] baptized 32 souls. No single Elder has been so greatly blessed. Peter went away, as I suppose, heavy hearted and none of us knew where he was. The Elders begin to gather in for their school, which commences on the 2nd of

November next. We calculate to commence a "School of the Prophets" as soon as we can. We shall begin to study Hebrew this winter, according to our present calculations. Zion and her redemption is our greatest desire and we pray and hope that the Saints who have been smitten and driven will be faithful and sanctify their hearts for the enjoyment of the blessings in store for them.*** When I look upon the House of the Lord and recount the expense of the printing office here I marvel to think how the Lord blesses us with means to build such a great house and to carry on such a vast business. It needs patience and faith to live here; a great number of Elders are to be boarded and clothed and their schooling costs considerable besides. We are also establishing a bindery to bind our own books. We go on faith and the Lord blesses us inasmuch as we rely on Him.

12

Extracted from a letter written November 14, 1835, to Sally in Liberty, Missouri:¹¹⁰

King Follett¹¹¹ arrived from the west since my last letter to you was written. Elder Morley also returned from the east, all well. The Elders are coming in every day, almost. The school has commenced under the charge of President Sidney Rigdon¹¹² as teacher. I shall not be able to go much, if any; President Cowdery has gone to New York to purchase tools for a book bindery and to secure some Hebrew books so that we may study Hebrew this winter. My time and that of President John Witmer [*sic*] is all taken up in the printing office. We have, when all are in the office, three apprentices and four journeymen, and we shall have to employ more men, as our work is so far behind. We have 18 numbers of the old "Star" [*sic*] (Evening and Morning Star) to print yet, and the "Messenger and Advocate" has been and is yet five or six weeks behind its time; and the hymn book is not likely to progress as fast as I wish,¹¹³ but we are all kept busy and have faith that the Lord will eventually bring about all things for our own good and his name's glory. Our subscribers, in many instances, are very negligent about paying for their paper. Those in Clay County (Missouri), it was hoped, would have paid you by this time, and I hope that all will pay you for the two volumes.*** On Thursday, the 12th inst., the snow was about three inches deep in Kirtland. This hinders the mason work on the Lord's House considerably.

13

Entered in a journal on December 16, 1835:¹¹⁴

I attended a feast at the house of Bro. Zera S. Coles;¹¹⁵ about sixty guests were present, a number of whom were blessed by

Father Joseph Smith,¹¹⁶ among them being Elijah Fordham,¹¹⁷ King Follett and Jesse Hitchcock.¹¹⁸ This was the first and greatest blessing feast I have ever attended. The greatest solemnity and harmony prevailed. The victuals were good and the affair was orderly and enjoyable, though many of those present were young. We sang "There's a feast of fat things", "Adam-Ondi-Ahman", "O Behold the Lord is nigh," etc.¹¹⁹ The greatest wishes of the guest[s] were that we might soon celebrate a feast in the land of Zion. The weather was very cold.

14

Written from Kirtland Mills, Ohio, to Sally Phelps in Liberty, Missouri, on December 18, 1835:¹²⁰

Myself and Waterman, together with the Saints in general, are well, and we daily thank the Lord for it, praying constantly that he will have mercy upon you and "our little ones," and grant you the same blessing.

My anxiety for your welfare is inexpressible: fires are to be made; wood to be split; cows to feed; milking to be done; corn and potatoes to be saved for next summer; children to be taught; and many other matters that ought to be done by me, if I was only there, run through my mind by day and by night. I trust in the Lord, however, that you will do all that is needed, and so I am reconciled to be patient until I return to my family post again.

I shall begin with items. In my last letter, I said, "All that were 'honest' would pay" etc. It should have read "honest and able." Let Sabrina interline it.

If you have money to spare, Ira or Brother Burk should go to Atchison¹²¹ and get me the new statutes or Digest of Missouri. Mr. Atchison said he would save me a copy. If one is obtained, keep it safe for me.

Let me know about the wood, how it burns, and how long you think it will last. Be very careful of that Flagelett [doubtless flageolet, a small musical instrument of the flute class], don't let it be mused and played with: keep it in the chest. Keep that old Fife book choice. Did you raise any broom corn? How many chickens? How comes on the last year's and this year's calf? What for weather was November and December? I hope you have taken pains to save sweet potatoes for seed.

Don't reckon too much on my coming home in the spring! It may be a little after before you see me. Keep up your faith and pray for the endowment; as soon as that takes place the elders will anxiously speed for their families.

Everything is dear with us: fresh pork is from five to six cents a pound; beef 2 1/2 to 3 1/2 cents; wheat is one dollar twelve and a half cents per bushel and rising; corn 75 cents a bushel; cheese 9 cents by wholesale; butter 25 cents a pound; and hay and oats 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.

Great exertions are making in schools; besides the Elders school, there are two evening grammar schools, and one writing school; and as soon as the attic rooms are completed in the Lord's house as much as one or two more will commence.

We have had some hindrance. A large board kiln has recently been partly burnt, which, besides the loss, occasions some delay. Brother Corrill will drive the work as fast as he can in order that he and his brethren may be enabled to visit their families.

You must give my desires to the brethren and sisters for their spiritual welfare. To Brother Burk and Sister Burk say, "God bless them!" To Sister Gilbert, "May the Lord have compassion upon her in her loneliness." Say to Sister Partridge and Sister Corrill and Brother Graves and his family, "Keep with the Lord and you shall be blessed." Brother Musick and family, "I hope they continue in the right way." I pray for all the pure in heart. Sister Haist (?)¹²² has been greatly afflicted. I am sorry for her. She seems to think I meant to chastise her in one of my letters, but I did not. I only gave her a friendly hint, and when I see her face to face, I will explain it so satisfactorily.

I am, since winter commenced, getting back to my common heft. I guess I am not more than 3 or 4 pounds more than 135 pounds. Brother Corrill begins to be quite pussy,¹²³ and so do a number of the brethren.

We must be patient. Read CV [105] Psalm.

[Four pages missing here.] solemnized in Kirtland, and if, with an eye single to the glory of God, well.

When you receive this letter you will learn by the date that I have stopped writing so often. I mean to do as I am done to; and hereafter, if the Lord is pleased, I shall write to Sally just as often as she writes to me, for I hope and pray that the time may be short till I shall see my family. I have been absent so long now that I cannot tell how pretty, little, precious Lydia looks, and the rest of the children are strangers to my eyes; but as I dream of you so often I fancy you have not altered much—nothing for the worse. I hardly know what I should do, if it were not that Waterman, as he fleshes up, shows his mother's looks. He has been a good boy lately.

I want you should send me your height; and bigness round the waist, so that, if I should feel disposed to get you a new mantle,

I could have it made as they make them here. You can write in . . . many feet high, and so many inches round . . . in your next letter. Let me know when Lydia***alone.

I want Brother Graves to inform Mr. Rees¹²⁴ that*** Depositions taken in Kirtland, were forwarded to George Woodward, Esq.,¹²⁵ Richmond. Mr. Rees can take them out of the office and charge the postage to me.

The Zion Elders, except S. J. Griffin, A. Gifford,¹²⁶ G. M. Hinkle and E. H. Groves¹²⁷ are going to school and all well. The four above named are out a preaching.*** attend to Brother Child's¹²⁸ request as soon as I have a chance.

Now may the blessings, love and grace of our Lord and Savior be and abide with the Saints, and my only one, and little ones, forever,

W. W. Phelps.

14A

Extracts from the previous letter, dated December 18, 1835, but printed somewhat differently from the version published in the *Utah Genealogical and Historical Quarterly*:¹²⁹

Everything is dear with us in Kirtland: fresh pork costs from 5 to 6 cents per lb. and beef from 2 1/2 to 3 1/2 cents per lb.; [sic] wheat is \$1.12 1/2 per bushel and rising, corn 75 cents per bushel, cheese 9 cents per lb. by wholesale, butter 25 cents per lb, and hay and oats are also high. . . .

Martin Harris¹³⁰ has just arrived from Palmyra, New York; he states that the winter in that State is severe and has been for about four weeks. The sleighs fly merrily and the people are ten times as wicked as they ever have been. Martin says: "Everything is dear, all are proud and ugly, mobbing common, quite common, even in Palmyra." So the world waxes fat in iniquity and multitudes are hastening on to ruin. The work on the Lord's House goes on quite rapidly again. Bros. Elijah Fordham, Bro. Durfee,¹³¹ Rathburn,¹³² Morey,¹³³ Hitchcock and Elder Calvin Beebe have commenced working upon it. The committee has made a contract with a man to warm the house until the 1st of April. Four stoves are placed in the cellar and they heat twelve cylanders, four on the court for the sacrament, four in the court for the school of the Apostles and four in the attic school rooms. If this plan works well, it will save wood and save trouble as to fires. Again it will be of great service to warm the house for the men who work on it this winter and for the Hebrew School when it commences. Weddings are very frequent here; about half a dozen have been solemnized here in Kirtland, and if, with an eye single to the glory of God, well.

15

To Sally Phelps, from Kirtland Mills, Tuesday, 2 P.M., January 5, 1836:¹³⁴

They bring persecution upon us, but we have to suffer many straight things because there are "foolish virgins" among the wise. I hope the children of Zion will learn wisdom by experience after a while, and please God rather than gratify the whims of such Philistine heifers, as Samson's. The elders wives, in the regions of Zion, if pray for one another, and assist one another, and teach one another [word unintelligible] according to the scriptures, will soon come (and justly too) Mothers in Israel, indeed! Yea, and [unintelligible] the Kingdom of the Lord, with a race of Just men made perfect by righteousness; loving the truth because their deeds are good; and walking in light because it shines from heaven. I am not finding fault with the Elders' wives to whom blessings have been sent, but I wish to caution those that are forever grabbing little and great things and writing them to, they know not who! forsake trouble, such practices should cease. I want Little Lydia should be honored in my absence with a birthday family feast: The best you can get. Therefore on Monday the 14th day of March treat her and make a feast to the Lord for her good, and pass the day in a sacred prayerful manner. I am not making a precedent but I want our youngest child honored before God, that she may grow up without sin; and whenever the Lord shall grant my return then all our children shall be honored with a feast before the Lord. Mark my advice and be wise and holy for Christ's sake. Br. Child's wife will write to him what she will do. Elder Palmer¹³⁵ of New Portage, saw her and says there is no danger she will do anything, but her friends are violent. The New Portage church are calculating to remove to Zion next season and they will bring her if requested, means sent, and she is willing.

The High Council directs a president of the teachers to be chosen [*sic*]. Bishop Partridge will advise on the subject.

The Hebrew school has commenced in one of the attic school rooms in the Lord's House. These rooms are nearly all completed. The whole work continually progresses, though but slowly. I can not tell when the endowment will take place. Therefore I can not say anything about the Redemption of Zion or bring you new tidings for her children: you all know Zion must be redeemed with judgment, (that is, wisdom and prudence) "and her converts with righteousness." We must be very humble prayerful and watchful: you know what the Savior said to the Seventy, Luke 10th Chapter 17, 18, 19, & 20 verses. So likewise, let us not rejoice in the goods of this world, nor boast of our faith and works, but rather that our names are written in heaven. If we could see each other's faces now and converse about heaven and divine things, it would seem like the

meeting of angels and we would hate to part in one short hour.— but the Lord has not said when we shall see him again, in order that we may be proved and found faithful: which may God grant. The western mail brought a number of letters from Clay this morning. Among them one for me, dated Dec. 10th. I immediately called the bishop and his counsellors [*sic*] on the subject, and we shall write on the subject again this week. My great anxiety for my family and friends causes me to answer this day. Tell Peter H. Burnett¹³⁶ that I sold the other keg of printing ink at one dollar a pound. The kegs contained 50 lbs each; though some of the ink in this may have run out. It can be weighed. With your letter came one that brought the melancholy death of Elder Christian Whitmer.¹³⁷ It made a deep impression upon his relatives and the brethren. We are solemn. God have mercy upon the Saints in Zion. Prepare the living for life and dying for eternity. The letters accompanying yours from Elder Harris: Br. Childs & Cleminson¹³⁸ are gratefully received and duly appreciated. Br. Childs is answered on another page. On the subject of writing letters to the Saints if I had ever so much a mind to, I could not write oftener than once in 2 or 3 weeks for want of time. I want to study Hebrew, and I have not as yet been able to begin. Oliver is gone to a state convention at Columbus. One thing and another keeps me back.— You want to know what made me write concerning letters. I told you in my next [?].

I am not jealous of you, Sally, but I am jealous that Br. Fosdick is not right before the Lord. Your letter of Nov. 20 contained some things which were wrong and I forgive you as I wrote. What you wrote of Chloe was contrary to the covenant. See said Book page 125, sec. 13 paragraph 238. When you said she had influenced or [word unintelligible] Br. Corrill's mind, you stated a falsehood, as you will see by Br. Corrill's letter. You say to me "don't praise you"—and then you praise Br. Littlefield.¹³⁹ A virtuous wife should not praise other men in the absence of her husband. All I want is that you should do so no more. And write to me that you was mistaken, and "that you are sorry you have offended and will do so no more." Now, Sally, in the name of the Lord Jesus, be admonished to let alone other folks business; forgive them if they are where you can not see them face to face. Don't praise other men to your own hurt. Don't undertake to write explanations: you can not make any satisfaction. When you write to me, write as you did at first: simply about our own concerns and the general welfare of the brethren and sisters. If any slander you or our children, and do not make amends, let them alone till the authority of Zion return. Don't be so studiously careful in your letters to avoid saying anything in my favor or of showing a little more love for me than the rest of the world. When I read your November letter, I was almost tempted not to write any more letters—but I don't believe you meant any hurt, and I can not say that I think any less of you than I ever did. And you

know how much that is. The high council and elders of Zion meet tomorrow evening to fill the vacant place of councilors. It will be a good meeting to see all the Elders of Zion together. They are all well. I need not name them. Give my best wishes to all the Saints. And so I am forever thine, W. W. Phelps

16

January 1836 (the beginning of the following letter is lost):¹⁴⁰

noon, the congregations became so large, that after the 3 weddings, which I noticed, were solemnized, and the sacrament administered, the meeting was dismissed, I then went with a number of the church, to Elder Cahoon's¹⁴¹ to partake of the wedding supper. It was a solemn time, singing and solemnity—Sister Whiting,¹⁴² President Rigdon, and [three words unintelligible] others [one word unintelligible] me. "If it did not make me think of my wife to be in such good company!" My tears answered and "I cried to think I might rest in the day of trouble!" Our meeting will grow more and more solemn, and will continue till the great solemn assembly when the house is finished! We are preparing to make ourselves clean, by first cleansing our hearts, forsaking our sins, forgiving every body, all we ever had against them; anointing washing the body; putting on clean decent clothes, by anointing our heads and by keeping all the commandments. As we come nearer to God we see our imperfections and nothingness plainer and plainer. I can not write my thoughts to you. I can only say in the name of the Lord Jesus, Sally, Sally! Children, Children! Saints, Saints! if you ever mean to see me in the flesh, be holy, be humble, and solemn. O Sally! O children! hear the voice of him who loves you, and let your tears tell [word unintelligible]. Dear Sally, if you have any money by you that you get for covenants or anything else, do not lend it out; for I may give orders for it you know not when; and besides you might not know who to trust, and who not. I feel sensible that you will be careful. If you have bank bills get them changed into hard money. The charter of the United States Bank expires on the 4th of March next.¹⁴⁵ One month has passed without sleighing. It has been mud and mire, and cold and warm

[The above page ends and the next page starts as recorded. Obviously some information has been lost.]

in righteousness, will do so. Is it because a woman is all talk, that her husband values her? "A continual dropping will wear away stones." Is it because a woman is handsome, that her husband loves her? "Handsome is she, that handsome does." But enough on this head for the present. I have heretofore cautioned you against letting any one copy of certain documents and blessings. [About three

words covered up by tape] things are not written to you because there may be a "Philistine heifer" like Samson's, to copy it and send it to the four winds, and innocent saints must suffer the consequence. I want to give you an idea of the ordination of those who are sent as especial witnesses to all the world: Don't let any one copy it, Sally; read it to the pure in heart: and none else. "Kirtland Jan. 3, 1836

"The ordination and blessing of E_____ F_____ ¹⁴⁴

"Brother:—We lay our hands upon thy head in the name of the Lord Jesus, and we ordain thee an elder in the church of the Latter day Saints, praying our heavenly Father, that he will bless thee with all the blessings of this ministry; that thou mayest be a messenger of righteousness to the nations; and that thy heart may be prepared for this high calling of God. Thy Heavenly Father loves thee and delights in thee, because thou wast of that number that offered to lay down their lives for their brethren; and because thou hast done this thing there are many and great blessings laid up for thee if thou art faithful. Thou shalt go forth and proclaim the gospel. Thy tongue shalt be unloosed so that thou canst declare the things of God to those to whom it is the will of thy heavenly Father to send thee. And it is not only his will to send thee to the people of this continent, but to nations afar off, even to the Islands of the Sea, and to nations thou knowest not of, that the word of the Lord may be fulfilled. "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of Good; that publisheth salvation; that sayeth unto Zion: Thy God reigneth!"

And because thou wast willing to give thy life unto thy heavenly Father, and regarded it not unto the death: Therefore thy life shall be bound up in the bundle of life with his life; and God, even thy God will give his angels charge over thee lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. Thou shalt go and return as may seem good unto thy heavenly Father, and nothing shall have power over thee to prevent thee from fulfilling the ministry, which we this day bestow upon thee in the name of the Lord Jesus: For the heavens are disposed to be very propitious unto thee. The Lord will make thee swift messenger unto the nations: And thou shalt bear his name to people afar off: Thou shalt testify unto them of the things which thou dost know; for thine eyes shall see the glory of the Savior in the visions of heaven; and holy angels shall minister unto thee, and make known unto thee, the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven; and thou shalt testify of it to many nations and peoples, and that in other than our own languages, for thou shalt have power to speak in many languages, that thou mayest do a great work in this day and generation, and have many stars in thy crown, in the day of suffering. For notwithstanding thine enemies will seek thy life and art

brought into many trials and tribulations, still thou shalt have many seasons of great rejoicing for the Lord will pour out his spirit upon thee, and give thee exceeding Joy in the midst of all thy tribulations. And if thou art faithful thou shalt fulfil thy ministry and return to the land of Zion with songs of everlasting Joy upon thy head,—to go no more out: yea, to take part in the [there appears to be one more line that is cut off at the end of page] reign when Christ shall reign on the earth a thousand years. All these blessings we seal upon thy head, if thou art faithful, to gather with many others, (for the heavens are full of blessings for thee) which it is not wisdom at this time to mention, but none shall deprive thee of them: Even so. Amen.” Thus you have the substance, Sally, and do be wise, for when I learn that you are careful to do as I write to have you do, then will I be encouraged to let you have “things precious.”

Jan. 18 [1836]. A Grand Council¹⁴⁵ was held last Wednesday, [Jan. 13]—consisting of the High Councils of Zion and Kirtland together with the “Twelve,” [sic] the Seven presidents of the Seventy; and the two bishops and their counsellors, besides others. It was one of the most interesting meetings I ever saw. The next day [Jan. 14] I sat in council with the presidency to Draft Rules for the Lord’s house. The next day [Jan. 15] we held another Grand Council much more interesting than the first. On Sunday [Jan. 17] at an early hour all authorities of the church regularly organized met in the school room under our printing office, and the presidents commenced the meeting by confessing their sins and forgiving their brethren and the world. You know the Lord’s prayer reads: “forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those that trespass us?” The Lord poured out his Spirit in such a manner as you never witnessed. When I was speaking, which was but few words, the Spirit of the Lord came upon me so that I could not speak, and I cried as little children cry in earnest and the tears from my eyes ran in streams; the audience, which was the largest ever convened in the said room, sobbed and wept aloud. The presidency and the “Twelve” occupied the forenoon. There was speaking and singing in tongues, and prophesying, as on the day of Pentacost. In the af [end of page]

17

This is a continuation of the letter above:¹⁴⁶

In the afternoon [Jan. 17, 1836], the congregation became so large that after the three weddings, which I noticed were solemnized, and the sacrament administered, the meeting was dismissed. I then went with a number of the Church to Elder Cahoon’s to partake of the wedding supper. It was a solemn time, singing and solemnity.

18

January 1836 (the first page or pages are missing):¹⁴⁷

year's and the one we have commenced. All reasonable men will suppose, that we cannot print papers without means, and in my absence you may want some of the Atchison to live upon. At any rate, if the saints would pay you these, I should not have to send you any money from here. If you can send this news among the brethren, I think the honest ones would try to pay you. I want you should buy one piece of common cotton shirting such as you need for the children and your own wear. And perhaps you will want some "Jeans" for Henry and James, such articles can be bought cheap for cash at [?]. You will want some tallow, or bees wax and lard for candles, &c. On Saturday the 7th I heard from Lydia. Elder Coons¹⁴⁸ gave me the information. He labored in the south part of Smyrna, as you will learn by the Messenger. He says Lydia¹⁴⁹ accounted herself a Mormon, but he did not learn whether she had been baptized or not he understood she meant to get ready, if possible and come to Kirtland next Spring. I have written a letter to her and when I get the answer, I will write you the particulars. I feel confident that I shall get her into the church thus Sally can rejoice that she has some own blood besides her own in the Kingdom. I shall try hard to have all your brothers and sisters brought in.

By the letters which Sister Marsh sends to Thomas I perceive, that she is training to be a Rhymestress. I wonder if you cannot pray to the Lord for the Spirit of poetry, and "Singing," and give me a little specimen of a "poetess" in my absence, and a fine sample of "sweet singer" when I return. Pray for these endowments in faith and I will and the Lord will grant them to you. No good gift will the Lord withhold if the Saints are only faithful. Brother Whitney's father and mother came to Kirtland from Vermont in October and have both been since baptized. There have come to Kirtland, in a short time, a great number of brethren—the saints seem to "keep all things in motion." Matthias, the false prophet has made Kirtland a visit, and found that the Saints know such men to be influenced by the wicked one. Very great exertions have been made to finish the House of the Lord this winter. I suppose for the last fortnight, that nearly 50 men, as carpenters and Joiners, masons, mortar makers, burnus, &c, have been laboring on the house. The hard finish is about half on the outside, and the scaffolds cut down halfway so that this monument of the Latter day saints liberality begins to show itself. The lower part of the inner court is nearly plastered and will soon be finished. See book of "Doctrine and Covenants" page 233: paragraph 3. You can read that revelation for it will show you that whom the Lord loves he chastens.¹⁵⁰ A great effort is now about to be made to procure a "bell" for the Lord's house. I must relate the

marvelous works here. There have been built during the past years nearly 20 houses, mostly very small. Only one of note called the "Boston House." It is 53 feet by 32 feet—three stories high, it is not yet enclosed. It is almost a miracle how such a large number of people live, but the Lord is merciful. All the lawsuits commenced against our folks, or which our people have commenced against the world's people, have turned in our favor but one and [about seven words covered by tape]. Sally, you have never mentioned a word about our suits. Don't you hear anything about them? It is quite natural to see Bishop Partridge, Elder Morley, Corril, Beebe, and many other Zion elders every day—I sometimes think if it were not for our being together, where we can exchange our feelings that time would hang heavy. Elder Marsh and I generally see each other every day, and comfort one another by chatting on what is to be! What is to be when the Lord permits us to come home, and what will be when Zion is redeemed. Brother Marsh is as corpulent as an Alderman, and I remain just the same in body, in mind, and in health, and I thank and praise the Lord for keeping me just so poor: just so common minded, and just so healthy. I want you to be careful and do just as I [covered by tape] you do. I have told you once or twice to take all my letters that I have written to you and lock them up. I want to make a book of them. If you, or Sabrina, or any one, has copied anything, get them all in—do as I tell you for my sake. The reason is, by the time you get this letter, the "covenants" will arrive, and the Saints must learn their duty from the Revelations. We must live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God, and not by what is written by man or is spoken by man. The high Council and the Bishop's Council, are the proper authority to give advice to the Saints, and in time of need they will do what the Lord requires. Therefore you can perceive that my letters are my private Journal—and you must take good care of them and see that no copies are out. I shall continue to write to you all the news and new things that is expedient for you, or the Saints, but keep my letters at home. It is a great thing to give advice—I am a weak man—subject to the like vanities and passions of others, and rather than offend one of the children of God wrongfully—I would beg—I pray the Lord to forgive me of all my iniquities and I want my brethren to forgive me and even my wife must have nothing against me. How can I receive an endowment if my skirts are not clean from the blood of this generation? My own family is of the blood of this generation, and so are my brethren and sisters: Let us be wise, then, and forgive others as the Lord forgives us, that we may be clean I forgive all, all their trespasses, or hardness towards me. My letters are my property. I direct them to my wife, because she and I are one, and she will keep them safe for me whatever news they contain. She is at liberty to read [them] to the Saints, for their consolations, in their loneliness. The Book of Doctrine & Covenants is an excel- [end of page]¹⁵¹

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NOTES

¹ Sidney Rigdon and Frederick G. Williams were two other inner circle members of the 1830s who were learned men. Not one of the three had attended a college or university. Each was self-educated. I arrive at my conclusion because of Phelps's better command of the classics, history, and politics.

² Bruce A. Van Orden, "W. W. Phelps's Impact on Mormon Doctrine" (Paper delivered at the Mormon History Association annual meeting, Claremont, California, May 31, 1991).

³ A brief William W. Phelps journal for January 1835–June 1835 is located in the Archives Division, Church Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter cited as LDS Church Archives).

⁴ Bruce A. Van Orden, "W. W. Phelps: His Ohio Contributions, 1835–36," in *Regional Studies of Latter-day Saint Church History: Ohio*, ed. Milton V. Backman, Jr. (Provo, Utah: Department of Church History and Doctrine, Brigham Young University, 1990), 45–62.

⁵ Bruce A. Van Orden, "By That Book I Learned the Right Way to God': The Conversion of William W. Phelps," in *Regional Studies in Latter-day Saint Church History: New York*, ed. Larry C. Proter, Milton V. Backman, Jr., and Susan Easton Black (Provo, Utah: Department of Church History and Doctrine, Brigham Young University, 1992), 203–14; and Bruce A. Van Orden, "William W. Phelps's Service in Nauvoo as Joseph Smith's Political Clerk," *BYU Studies* 32 (Winter–Spring 1992): 81–94.

⁶ The best source on the Anti-Masonic movement is William Preston Vaughn, *The Anti-Masonic Party in the United States, 1826–1843* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1983). Phelps's ties with the Anti-Masonic movement are discussed in Van Orden, "William W. Phelps's Service in Nauvoo," 81–84.

⁷ Dean C. Jessee, ed., *The Papers of Joseph Smith*, 2 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989–92), 1:355 (hereafter cited as *PJS*). See also Joseph Smith, Jr., *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 7 vols., 2d ed. rev. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1957), 1:184–85 (hereafter cited as *History of the Church*).

⁸ Lyndon W. Cook, *Joseph Smith and the Law of Consecration* (Provo, Utah: Grandin Book, 1985), 43–70.

⁹ Peter L. Crawley, "A Bibliography of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in New York, Ohio, and Missouri," *BYU Studies* 12 (Summer 1972): 465–537.

¹⁰ *History of the Church* 1:335–36.

¹¹ Dean C. Jessee, comp. and ed., *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1984), 243-50, 258-68, 282-92, 307-20; and *History of the Church* 1:259, 273-84, 297-99, 316-21, 327, 335-36, 340-42, 362-70.

¹² *PJS* 1:24-25, 189n; and *History of the Church* 2:364.

¹³ *History of the Church* 2:112-13.

¹⁴ *History of the Church* 2:227.

¹⁵ Dean C. Jessee, "Priceless Words and Fallible Memories: Joseph Smith as Seen in the Effort to Preserve His Discourses," *BYU Studies* 31 (Spring 1991): 19-40.

¹⁶ *PJS* 2:94, 103-4, 138, 149, 153-54. See also Leonard J. Arrington, ed., "Oliver Cowdery's Kirtland, Ohio, 'Sketch Book,'" *BYU Studies* 12 (Summer 1972): 414, 417-18.

¹⁷ See Jessee, *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 92, 103, 132.

¹⁸ *Messenger and Advocate* 2 (December 1835): 233-37; and *History of the Church* 2:350.

¹⁹ The fullness of the "endowment of the holy priesthood" as now practiced by the Latter-day Saints in their temples was not administered by Joseph Smith in the Kirtland Temple or anywhere else in Ohio. Nevertheless, the "Kirtland endowment" was fulfilling to its recipients. It consisted of various visions, solemn assemblies, and testimony meetings experienced by the leading priesthood quorums in the House of the Lord from January to March 1836. These culminated with the "Pentecostal" spiritual experiences at the temple's dedication on March 27, 1836. Certain ordinances called washings, anointings, and the washing of feet performed during this period are also associated with the Kirtland endowment. The more complete endowment was revealed to Joseph Smith after he left Ohio and was first administered by him in 1842 in Nauvoo, Illinois.

²⁰ *History of the Church* 2:434.

²¹ Van Orden, "William W. Phelps's Service in Nauvoo," 81-94.

²² In the Journal History of the Church, May 26, 1835, 1, LDS Church Archives; this journal entry was copied from the original letter in possession of W. W. Phelps, a grandson of W. W. Phelps.

Sally Phelps, wife to W. W. Phelps, was born Stella Waterman on July 24, 1797, in Franklin, Delaware County, New York. As far as we can tell, she went by the nickname "Sally" all her life. W. W. Phelps and Sally were married in her hometown of Smyrna, Chenango County, New York, on April 28, 1815. He was twenty-three and she not yet eighteen. Smyrna was thirty miles northeast of W. W.'s hometown of Homer, but both towns were on the major turnpike running from Ithaca to Albany, the state capital. Likely W. W. met Sally after serving in the War of 1812. Sally's family came from strong Puritan stock similar to that of Phelps. W. W. and Sally lived for brief periods with both his and her parents. In 1820 they established their own home in Homer, where W. W. went into the printing and newspaper businesses. Sally and W. W. had a total of twelve children. Sally died January 2, 1874, in Salt Lake City, a year and a half after the death of W. W.

²³ Doctrine and Covenants 89 is the revelation known as the Word of Wisdom. It was received at a meeting of the School of the Prophets in the upper level of the Whitney Store in Kirtland, Ohio. The Word of Wisdom was not

always practiced the same in the nineteenth century as it has been in most of the twentieth century. See Paul H. Peterson, "An Historical Analysis of the Word of Wisdom" (Master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1972); and Leonard J. Arrington, "An Economic Interpretation of the Word of Wisdom," *BYU Studies* 1 (Winter 1959): 37-49. Phelps was impressed that the basic principles of the Word of Wisdom *were* being applied in Kirtland, perhaps a contrast to the struggles to have the Missouri Saints follow the Word of Wisdom.

²⁴ Phelps's writings in the *Evening and the Morning Star* and the *Messenger and Advocate* as well as many of his hymns show that he believed the Second Coming of Christ was imminent. He once hypothesized from biblical evidence that the "Great Day of the Lord" would occur within nine years. See *Evening and the Morning Star* 1 (August 1832): 6. Phelps was not alone among early Mormon leaders in his millennialism. See Grant R. Underwood, "The Millenarian World of Early Mormonism" (Ph.D. diss., UCLA, 1988); and Van Orden, "William W. Phelps's Impact on Mormon Doctrine."

²⁵ This informative quotation is probably the first reference in Mormon documents of the idea of the eternal relationship between a man and wife.

²⁶ The four authorities who wrote this letter were Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, W. W. Phelps, and John Whitmer. Oliver was at this time the Assistant President of the Church, next in authority to Joseph Smith. Phelps and Whitmer were members of the Zion presidency. The other presidency member, David Whitmer, was not in Kirtland when this letter was written.

²⁷ John Matthias Burk, born February 4, 1793, in Fairfield, New York, was baptized in October 1830. An early inhabitant of Jackson County, Missouri, Burk was one of the few elders in Clay County, Missouri, after the presiding high priests returned to Kirtland in 1835. A fondness between Phelps and Burk is evident from these letters and other papers. Burk died in Utah in 1853. Most biographical notes in this article are based on data found in Susan Easton Black, *Membership of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: 1830-1848*, 50 vols. (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1989); and Andrew Jenson, *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia: A Compilation of Biographical Sketches of Prominent Men and Women in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 4 vols. (Salt Lake City: Andrew Jenson History, 1901-36).

²⁸ In the Journal History of the Church, June 1, 1835, 1-3.

²⁹ These concepts are taught in Doctrine and Covenants 20:46-60. Aaronic Priesthood offices were given almost exclusively to adult men in the 1830s.

³⁰ Lyman Wight was born May 9, 1796, in Fairfield, New York. He was instrumental in the rise of the Campbellites. Baptized November 14, 1830, in Ohio by Oliver Cowdery, he was a devout Saint in Jackson County, later settling at Adam-ondi-Ahman. During the Missouri-Mormon War of 1838 he served as a military leader. He was called as one of the Twelve Apostles in 1841. After Joseph Smith's death, he led a group to Texas, where he founded at least five colonies. Wight's propensity to follow his own counsel is evident in the next paragraph of this letter and in the nickname given him years later by Phelps—"Wild Ram of the Mountains." Wight died in Texas in 1858.

³¹ See 2 Samuel 6:3-8; and 1 Chronicles 13:7-11.

³² Nothing more is known about George Busket.

³³ Nothing more is known about Brother Fosdick.

³⁴ Oliver Cowdery had been serving as Assistant President to Joseph Smith since the previous December. Probably this calling is why he signed the letter along with Phelps and John Whitmer, two of the Presidents of Zion. Cowdery was born October 3, 1806, in Wells, Vermont. He was one of Joseph Smith's chief scribes, one of the three Book of Mormon witnesses, Second Elder in the infant Church, and a printer, publisher, justice of the peace, teacher, and lawyer.

³⁵ John Whitmer, one of the Zion Presidency and one of the eight Book of Mormon witnesses, was born in Pennsylvania, August 27, 1802. He served briefly as a scribe to Joseph Smith in 1829 and as Church historian from 1831 to 1838. He was a close associate and friend to Phelps.

³⁶ In the Journal History of the Church, June 2, 1835, 1.

³⁷ Davis Bitton demonstrates the significance of Kirtland as a busy missionary hub in his "Kirtland as a Center of Missionary Activity, 1830-1838," *BYU Studies* 11 (Summer 1971): 497-516.

³⁸ Simeon Carter was born June 7, 1794. Baptized February 14, 1831, he was ordained a deacon, elder, and high priest that same year. He served missions in New England and the Midwest, established a branch in Indiana, and marched with Zion's Camp in 1834. He died in Brigham City, Utah, in 1869. Those named in this paragraph all departed for short-term missions.

³⁹ Solomon Hancock was born August 15, 1794, in Springfield, Massachusetts. He served missions in New York and Indiana. He gathered to Zion in 1831. He served on the high council in Clay County and Far West. Hancock died in Council Bluffs, Iowa, en route to the Rocky Mountains.

⁴⁰ Edward Partridge was born August 27, 1793, in Pittsfield, Massachusetts. He apprenticed as a hatter and eventually established a prosperous hatting business in Painesville, Ohio. He united with the Campbellites in 1828 and became a friend of Sidney Rigdon. He traveled with Rigdon to Fayette, New York, in early December 1830 to become acquainted with the Prophet. He was baptized December 11, after reading the revelation addressed to him (D&C 36). He was called as the Church's first bishop (D&C 41), went by assignment with Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon to Missouri to identify the land of Zion (D&C 52:2-4, 24), and was called to direct the temporal affairs in Zion (D&C 57:7; 58:14, 24). He performed his bishop's calling in Independence until mob action drove the Saints out of Jackson County, where he was tarred and feathered at the courthouse square July 20, 1833. Partridge, along with many Church leaders, went by assignment to Kirtland in 1835. The mission alluded to in this letter was in the eastern states and lasted until early November. After participating in the Kirtland Temple dedication in March 1836, Partridge went back to Missouri, where he and Phelps located a new gathering place for the Saints in what became Caldwell County. Partridge and Phelps worked harmoniously together as the two most significant Church leaders in Missouri from 1832 to early 1838. Partridge died in May 1840 in Nauvoo. Phelps wrote a moving obituary which appeared in the *Times and Seasons* 1 (October 1840): 190.

⁴¹ Isaac Morley was born March 11, 1786, in Montague, Massachusetts. Instrumental in introducing agriculture to the Western Reserve, he operated a large farm in the Kirtland area and was in Sidney Rigdon's congregation. Baptized in November 1830, he was set apart as a counselor to Bishop Partridge in June

1831. He served in Missouri from 1832 to 1838. By appointment he left Missouri in 1835 to participate in the temple dedication. He returned to Missouri and helped the Saints relocate in Caldwell County, being ordained a patriarch in 1837. He died in Sanpete County, Utah, in 1865.

⁴² Amasa M. Lyman was born March 30, 1813, in Grafton County, New Hampshire. He was baptized there on August 23, 1832, and moved to Kirtland. As a single young man he served two missions and marched with Zion's Camp. He married only eight days after Phelps wrote this letter. Lyman became a premier missionary. He was ordained to the apostleship in 1842, serving until he was excommunicated in 1870.

⁴³ Peter Dustin was born April 19, 1781. He was baptized June 9, 1830, in New York. Peter served as branch president and high councilor in Missouri. His 1835 mission, alluded to here, was in Upper Canada. He later migrated with the Saints to Utah.

⁴⁴ James Emmett was born February 22, 1803. He was baptized in 1831 in the Kirtland area and served missions in Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Ohio, and Missouri. He resided in Kirtland during the 1830s. Emmett went west with the Saints and died in San Bernardino in 1852.

⁴⁵ Nothing more is known about Oziel Stevens.

⁴⁶ This is Almira Mack Scoby, who was born April 28, 1805, in Tunbridge, Vermont. She was a first cousin to Joseph Smith and the daughter of Stephen Mack, Lucy Mack Smith's brother. Almira was baptized in May 1830. She married William Scoby, who later died while visiting relatives in Pontiac, Michigan, in 1833. Almira died in 1886 in Salt Lake City.

⁴⁷ In the *Journal History of the Church*, July 20, 1835, 1-2; this journal entry was copied from the original letter in possession of W. W. Phelps, a grandson of W. W. Phelps.

⁴⁸ Nothing more is known about Peter Brownell.

⁴⁹ Possibly Henry Shibley who marched with Zion's Camp in 1834 and who was called to the First Quorum of the Seventy in 1835.

⁵⁰ William P. Tippetts was born June 26, 1812, in Groton, New Hampshire. He was baptized in 1832. Little is known about his life before he came to Utah in 1850. He died in Brigham City in 1877.

⁵¹ Peter Whitmer, Jr., was born September 27, 1809, in Fayette, New York. He was one of the Eight Witnesses of the Book of Mormon and one of the six original members of the Church. Peter was called by revelation (D&C 30:5) to accompany Oliver Cowdery on the 1830 mission to the Lamanites. He was called to the Missouri High Council to replace his deceased brother Christian. He died of tuberculosis near Liberty, Missouri, in September 1836.

⁵² John Corrill was born September 17, 1794, in Worcester County, Massachusetts. He was residing in Ashtabula, Ohio, when missionaries came through, baptized him, and ordained him an elder. In 1831 he moved his family to Jackson County, where he served as a counselor to Bishop Partridge. He was one of seven leading high priests in Jackson County. He came to Ohio in 1835 with other leaders. He helped settle Far West in 1836 and was elected state representative for Caldwell County in 1838. He left the Church when he became disenchanted with Joseph Smith during the Missouri-Mormon War and published a brief, but valuable, history of the Church.

⁵³ Newell Knight was born September 13, 1800, in Marlborough, Vermont. He was a close friend of Joseph Smith and joined the Church in May 1830. In one of the Church's first miracles, the Prophet cast an evil spirit out of him. As branch president of the Colesville Saints, Knight led the group to Thompson, Ohio, and then to Jackson County, Missouri. He served on high councils in Clay County, Far West, and Nauvoo. He came to Kirtland in 1835. He died en route to the West in January 1847.

⁵⁴ Elias Higbee was born October 23, 1795, in Galloway, New Jersey. He was baptized in Ohio in the spring of 1832. He settled in Jackson County in 1833, but he came by appointment to Kirtland in 1835. He became part of the Missouri High Council in 1836 and helped settle Caldwell County, where he became the senior county judge and devoted his life to seeking redress of Missouri grievances until he died in Nauvoo of cholera in June 1843.

⁵⁵ Morris C. Phelps was born December 20, 1805, in Northampton, Massachusetts. He was not closely related to W. W. Phelps. He was baptized in 1831 in northern Illinois and moved to Jackson County, where he was driven out in 1833. He was imprisoned with Church leaders after the fall of Far West in 1838. He became a patriarch. In 1876 he died in Montpelier, Idaho.

⁵⁶ Nothing more is known about John Duncan.

⁵⁷ In Leah Y. Phelps, "Letters of Faith from Kirtland," *Improvement Era* 45 (August 1942): 529.

⁵⁸ Calvin Beebe was born July 1, 1800, in Paris, New York. He filled a mission to Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, and Ohio in 1832. He was one of the elders who presided over the Saints in Missouri while other leaders were absent. He later served on the Far West High Council.

⁵⁹ This refers to W. W. Phelps's daughter Sarah. The Phelps children in 1835 were Sabrina (born August 30, 1816, age eighteen at time of the letter), Mehitable (July 3, 1819, age sixteen), William Waterman (January 23, 1823, age twelve; Waterman accompanied his father to Ohio), Sarah (January 19, 1825, age ten), Henry (October 21, 1828, age six), James (September 22, 1832, age two), and Lydia (March 15, 1835, age four months).

⁶⁰ Evidently the Phelps family did not live directly in Liberty. Clay County records do not reveal any property owned by Phelps at this time; most Mormons did not own property in Clay County or Liberty. They were living off the temporary good will of the Clay County citizens.

⁶¹ Samuel Musick was born March 23, 1804, in Virginia. He often served as a teacher among the Saints in Clay County, Caldwell County, and Nauvoo. He also was a store owner in Far West.

⁶² LDS Church Archives.

⁶³ Nothing is known about how this Iva fits into the story.

⁶⁴ This may be Sarah Young, who was born February 1, 1830, in Salem, Massachusetts. Perhaps Sarah knew the Phelps children mentioned in the letter.

⁶⁵ Acting in the office of his calling as a member of the Zion presidency, Phelps sent along words of admonition to the Missouri Saints.

⁶⁶ Ever since the call of the Twelve Apostles in February 1835 (see D&C 107), there had been considerable talk in the leading councils about sending a missionary team to England. It was perhaps even contemplated that David Whitmer,

W. W. Phelps, or John Whitmer (the Missouri presidency) would be among the elders sent to preach in England.

⁶⁷ In the 1830s, Kirtland was often referred to as Kirtland Mills.

⁶⁸ In "Letters," *Utah Genealogical and Historical Quarterly* 31 (January 1940): 27-28.

⁶⁹ LDS Church Archives.

⁷⁰ Hezekiah Peck was born January 19, 1782, in Windham, Vermont. Oliver Cowdery baptized him June 28, 1830. He was a member of the Colesville Branch that settled in Jackson County, Missouri. He was one of the elders handling Church business while the Missouri presidency was absent. He died in 1850 in St. Joseph, Missouri.

⁷¹ The Doctrine and Covenants had been sustained as scripture by the body of the Church in a conference held on August 17, 1835, in Kirtland. Phelps took a prominent role in the book's publication and in that conference. Now in September printed copies of the book were coming out of a Cleveland bindery.

⁷² This is perhaps the earliest known use in Mormon sources of the phrase *time and eternity* pertaining to the marriage relationship.

⁷³ LDS Church Archives.

⁷⁴ Jerusha was a sister to Sally Waterman Phelps. The Waterman family was from Ohio and may have still been living there. Evidently Sally was contemplating making a visit to the East to visit Jerusha as well as her husband. But W. W. chastised her for this wish.

⁷⁵ This admonition is now found in Doctrine and Covenants 61:18-19.

⁷⁶ Selah J. Griffin was born March 17, 1789, in Redding, Connecticut. He joined the Church in Kirtland before June 1831. A revelation (D&C 52:32) appointed him to serve a mission en route to Missouri in 1831. He later moved with his family to Independence. Later he located in Clay and Caldwell Counties. He did not migrate west with the Saints.

⁷⁷ George M. Hinckle was born November 13, 1801, in Jefferson, Kentucky. He was baptized in 1832 and served missions in many states. He commanded the Caldwell County militia forces in the 1838 Missouri-Mormon War. Hinckle was accused of treason against Joseph Smith for handing the Prophet over to Missouri officials at the siege of Far West. Later in Nauvoo, Phelps, who had come back to the Church, corresponded with Hinckle and tried to persuade him to return to the fold.

⁷⁸ Reed Peck was born in 1814 (location unknown) and was a son of Hezekiah Peck. He apostatized during the 1838 Missouri-Mormon War and wrote a long anti-Mormon manuscript. He died in 1894 in New York.

⁷⁹ Newell K. Whitney was born February 5, 1795, in Marlborough, Vermont. He was a junior partner in the Gilbert-Whitney Store in Kirtland when missionaries came in the fall of 1830 and converted him and his family. A revelation (D&C 72:8) called him to be a bishop in Ohio in December 1831. As such, he helped administer the Lord's storehouses and Church businesses. He often traveled with Joseph Smith to accomplish important tasks. He died in Salt Lake City in 1850.

⁸⁰ Phebe Emmett married James Emmett in 1823. They had eleven children.

⁸¹ Revising and collecting hymns for the Church's first hymnbook was not a new assignment for Phelps. Back in Independence, Missouri, in 1832, Joseph

Smith directed Phelps to “correct and print the hymns” selected by Emma Smith in fulfillment of Doctrine and Covenants 25:11. Phelps proceeded to compose many pieces for the book. Missouri persecutions halted the hymnbook’s publication in Independence, but Phelps continued to compose numerous hymns through 1836. Although *A Collection of Sacred Hymns* bears the date of 1835, the book actually was printed in March or April 1836. Phelps authored over a third of the book’s ninety hymns. Some of his better-known hymns that appeared in the hymnal are “Now Let Us Rejoice in the Day of Salvation,” “Redeemer of Israel,” “O God, th’ Eternal Father,” “Gently Raise the Sacred Strain,” “Adam-on-di-Ahman,” and “The Spirit of God Like a Fire Is Burning.”

⁸² This comment shows how eager Phelps was to work on the eschatological subjects contained in Joseph Smith’s translation of the Book of Abraham. Later Phelps wrote the hymn “If You Could Hie to Kolob” that illustrates his enthusiasm.

⁸³ These would probably be Sally’s Waterman family members whom she thought she might want to visit in 1835 or 1836.

⁸⁴ LDS Church Archives.

⁸⁵ Phelps was clearly imbued with excitement about the doctrines coming through Joseph Smith about the establishment of Zion in the latter days and the coming of Enoch’s Zion down from heaven. See Doctrine and Covenants 84: 2-5, 99-102; and Moses 7:18-21, 62.

⁸⁶ Ephesians 5:22; and Colossians 3:18.

⁸⁷ Phelps’s views on this subject were more strict and Puritanical than those of most Latter-day Saints of that era, including Joseph Smith.

⁸⁸ This is Elizabeth Van Benthusen Gilbert, the wife of Algernon Sidney Gilbert. Although her husband died of cholera when Zion’s Camp arrived in Missouri in 1834, she continued to live in Missouri with the Saints. Elizabeth died in Utah.

⁸⁹ Phelps was always interested in the weather. Apparently he had made a study of the emerging science of meteorology when he was younger. When the Saints reached the Salt Lake Valley, Phelps was Utah Territory’s weatherman, providing weather information in almanacs and the *Deseret News*. Evidently northern Ohio was experiencing frosty weather earlier than usual in the fall of 1835.

⁹⁰ The original Twelve Apostles of this dispensation had first received their callings in February 1835. Excitedly they prepared for their first mission together. By late March, the Twelve had completed plans for a series of proselytizing activities in New York, New England, and Upper Canada. They departed Kirtland on May 4 and returned on September 26, having served a total of five months. The Twelve traveled both individually and in pairs. About every two weeks they met for a two-day preaching “conference.” See James B. Allen and others, *Men with a Mission, 1837-1841: The Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in the British Isles* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992).

⁹¹ Thomas B. Marsh was born November 1, 1799, in Acton, Massachusetts. A dissatisfied Methodist, he joined the Church in New York in September 1830. Doctrine and Covenants 31 was directed to him and designated him “physician to the Church.” He was called in Doctrine and Covenants 52:22 to do missionary work en route to Missouri. He led a group of Saints to Jackson County, Missouri,

in the fall of 1832. Marsh became a member of the Missouri High Council in July 1834. He was one of the original Twelve Apostles and, as the oldest, was designated the quorum's president. As such, he wrote the letter referred to in Phelps's letter. He became disaffected from his brethren during the Missouri-Mormon War of 1838 but returned to the Church in 1857. He died in Ogden, Utah, in 1866.

⁹² The Kirtland Temple was almost always referred to as the House of the Lord or simply as "the house" during its construction and early use.

⁹³ Concern for the redemption of Zion continued to occupy the minds of Joseph Smith and the other "presidents" of the Church in the fall of 1835. The Missouri Saints had been driven from their inheritances in Jackson County two years earlier. Phelps's letter indicates the council of presidents obviously had petitioned the Lord for revelation on the matter. It finally came on September 24, about two weeks after this letter.

It was the voice of the spirit of the Lord, that a petition be sent to the governor of the state of Missouri, praying for his assistance in his official capacity, in restoring those to their possessions in Jackson County, who had previously been driven from them by a lawless mob. The brethren had a good time, and covenanted to struggle for this, their favorite object, until death dissolve this union; and if one falls, the rest are not to abandon the pursuit, but struggle on, until the ultimate object is attained, which, they prayed that God would grant unto them, in the name of Jesus Christ. (*PJS* 1:99-100; see also *History of the Church* 2:281-82)

⁹⁴ From this reference, we learn when the bound copies of the Doctrine and Covenants were completed.

⁹⁵ The name "Ira" cannot be located in any of the existing Phelps or Waterman family records. Perhaps Ira was a foster son of W. W. and Sally Phelps.

⁹⁶ Daniel Stanton was born May 28, 1795, in Manlius, New York. He was baptized in Ohio in November 1830 by Parley P. Pratt. He was called in Doctrine and Covenants 75:33 to do missionary work. He served as a branch president in Jackson County and later held high-council positions in Missouri and Illinois. He went west with the Saints and died in 1872.

⁹⁷ As it turned out, all was right with Peter Dustin. He was out doing missionary work. See letter herein dated October 27, 1835.

⁹⁸ David Whitmer was born January 7, 1805, near Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. He was one of the three Book of Mormon witnesses and as such received a call as President of the Church in Missouri in July 1834 (Phelps and John Whitmer were in the presidency) and assisted in choosing the Twelve Apostles in February 1835. He partook of the spirit of apostasy in Kirtland in 1837 and was excommunicated in Missouri in 1838. After leaving the Church, he became a prominent citizen in Richmond, Missouri, where he lived until his death in 1888.

⁹⁹ Samuel Harrison Smith, the next child after Joseph Smith, Jr., in the Smith family, was born March 13, 1808, in Tunbridge, Vermont. He was the first baptized after Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery. He became one of the eight Book of Mormon witnesses and the Church's first full-time missionary, serving

many missions. He was called to the Ohio High Council in 1834. He lived in Daviess County, Missouri, during the Missouri-Mormon War. Samuel died July 30, 1844, from a sickness he contracted while escaping the mobocrats who killed his two brothers in Carthage.

¹⁰⁰ The Literary Firm was organized in November 1831 and was concerned with the printing of official Church literature. Early members of the Literary Firm were Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, Sidney Rigdon, John Whitmer, Martin Harris, W. W. Phelps, and Frederick G. Williams. According to principles of the Law of Consecration, these men consecrated their time, skills, and money for the purpose of printing Church literature, especially the revelations to Joseph Smith. See Cook, *Joseph Smith and the Law of Consecration*, 43-55. Phelps's explanation in this letter shows additions to the Firm and something of how the Firm operated.

¹⁰¹ LDS Church Archives.

¹⁰² The *Liberty Enquirer* was a newspaper founded in Clay County, Missouri, following the destruction of the W. W. Phelps and Co. printing office in 1833. Enemies of the Church actually gave Phelps's press to the *Liberty Enquirer* to use. The *Enquirer* had an anti-Mormon editorial stance.

¹⁰³ Nothing more is known about Warren Graves.

¹⁰⁴ The *Northern Times* was a political newspaper started by the Church in February 1835. It reflected the Democratic Party inclination of the Mormons at the time. Its first editor was Oliver Cowdery, who was replaced by Frederick G. Williams in May 1835. Cowdery and Phelps performed much of the editorial work also at this time. The length of the newspaper's life is unknown. See Peter Crawley, "A Bibliography of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in New York, Ohio, and Missouri," *BYU Studies* 12 (Summer 1972): 465-537.

¹⁰⁵ Nothing more is known about Brother Peters.

¹⁰⁶ This may be James H. Rollins, who was born May 27, 1816, in Lima, New York. He worked for the Gilbert-Whitney Store in Kirtland and was baptized soon after meeting Joseph Smith. He marched with Zion's Camp and clerked for Joseph Smith's store in Nauvoo.

¹⁰⁷ This may be Benjamin Covey, who was born March 9, 1792, in Fredricksburg, New York. He was baptized in November 1830.

¹⁰⁸ Nothing more is known about Sister Stout or Brother Fanner.

¹⁰⁹ In the Journal History of the Church, October 27, 1835, 1; this journal entry was copied from the original letter in possession of W. W. Phelps, a grandson of W. W. Phelps.

¹¹⁰ In the Journal History of the Church, November 14, 1835, 1-2.

¹¹¹ King Follett was born July 26, 1788. He was baptized in Ohio in 1831. He was a close friend of Joseph Smith and was incarcerated with the Prophet in Missouri during the winter of 1838-39. He died in an accident in Nauvoo on March 9, 1844.

¹¹² Sidney Rigdon was born February 19, 1793, in St. Clair, Pennsylvania. Before founding his own independent congregation in Mentor (near Kirtland), Ohio, Rigdon had associated with Alexander Campbell and the Campbellites. He was baptized in November 1830 after reading the Book of Mormon. He sought out Joseph Smith in Fayette, New York, and became the Prophet's scribe and chief advisor. He served as first counselor in the original First Presidency. Following Joseph's 1844 martyrdom, Rigdon claimed to be "guardian of the Church,"

but he was rejected in favor of the Twelve. He persisted in his claims and was excommunicated in August 1844. He founded his own church, which did not prosper. He died in New York in 1876.

¹¹³ Phelps's work on the hymnbook did indeed extend for some time before it was published in 1836. See Crawley, "A Bibliography of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," 504.

¹¹⁴ In the *Journal History of the Church*, December 16, 1835, 1.

¹¹⁵ Nothing more is known about Zera S. Coles.

¹¹⁶ Joseph Smith, Sr., was born July 12, 1771, in Topsfield, Massachusetts. He married Lucy Mack on January 24, 1796. They were baptized the day the Church was organized, April 6, 1830. They and their eleven children played key roles in the Restoration, including Joseph Sr.'s ordination as Church Patriarch under the hands of the First Presidency, December 18, 1833. The senior Smith often held blessing meetings in Kirtland members' homes. The intense persecution to which he was subjected in Missouri led to his physical demise and death in Nauvoo in 1840.

¹¹⁷ Elijah Fordham was born April 12, 1798, in New York City. He assisted in building both the Kirtland and Nauvoo Temples, where his skill as a carpenter and knowledge as a lumber dealer proved valuable assets to the Church. He was miraculously healed by Joseph Smith on the "Day of God's Power" in 1839. He died in Wellsville, Utah, in 1879.

¹¹⁸ Jesse Hitchcock was born August 10, 1801, in Ash, North Carolina. He was baptized in 1831 and was called to the Missouri High Council in 1834. He performed much missionary service.

¹¹⁹ Phelps wrote these hymns and thoroughly enjoyed introducing his compositions to other Latter-day Saints. The first two of these mentioned were part of the ninety hymns published not long thereafter in *Sacred Hymns*. According to my research aided by Professor Michael Hicks of Brigham Young University, Phelps wrote or adapted from other writers forty-one of these ninety hymns.

¹²⁰ In "Letters," *Utah Genealogical and Historical Quarterly* 31 (January 1940): 29-31. Ellipses are reprinted here as they appear in the *Utah Genealogical and Historical Quarterly*.

¹²¹ David R. Atchison was born in 1807 in Frogtown, Kentucky. He was a lawyer who had extensive college training. He moved to the Missouri frontier and established a law office in Liberty, Clay County. Among his early clients were the Mormons in 1833, when they were being persecuted and driven from Jackson County. He and Alexander Doniphan, who was part of the same law office, became the Church's best friends during the Missouri period.

¹²² The question mark has probably been supplied by the editors of the *Utah Genealogical and Historical Quarterly* to indicate either that they did not know of a Sister Haist, or they were unsure of Phelps's writing.

¹²³ A variant of *pursy* 'fat or obese'.

¹²⁴ Amos Rees was another lawyer associated with the law office of David Atchison and Alexander Doniphan. He represented the Church for many years.

¹²⁵ Nothing more is known about Woodward.

¹²⁶ Alpheus Gifford was born August 28, 1793, in Adams, Massachusetts. He was baptized in 1830. He was a settler of Jackson County. He died in 1841.

¹²⁷ Elisha H. Groves was born November 5, 1797, in Madison County, Kentucky. He was baptized by Samuel H. Smith. After his baptism, his wife

divorced him. He marched with Zion's Camp. After the Kirtland Temple dedication, he played a key role in Missouri, including serving on the Far West High Council. He was also a high councilor in Illinois. He died in 1867 in Toquerville, Utah.

¹²⁸ This may be Nathaniel Childs, who was born March 7, 1787, in New Ashford, Massachusetts. He marched with Zion's Camp. Nathaniel and his wife filed for redress in the Missouri petitions.

¹²⁹ In the *Journal History of the Church*, December 18, 1835, 4; this journal entry was copied from the original letter in possession of W. W. Phelps, a grandson of W. W. Phelps.

¹³⁰ Martin Harris was born May 18, 1783, in Easttown, New York. He owned 240 acres in Palmyra and was relatively wealthy when he heard of Joseph Smith, Jr., and the Prophet's claims to having seen an angel and the gold plates. He was one of the three Book of Mormon witnesses. He was a member of the Ohio High Council in 1834. A significant financial benefactor of the Prophet, he was also known as an eccentric. As evidenced in this letter, he went back to Palmyra to do missionary work in 1835. He fell away from the Church during the apostasy of 1837. He reconciled with the Saints in Utah in 1870 and died in Clarkston, Utah, in 1875.

¹³¹ Edmund Durfee was born October 3, 1788, in Tiverton, Rhode Island. He was baptized in 1831. He worked on the temple as a millwright and a carpenter. He served various missions. He was killed by mobbers in Illinois in 1845 while trying to stop them from burning his haystack.

¹³² This may be Robert Rathburn, who labored with Luke S. Johnson as a missionary in southern Ohio and preached as he traveled from Missouri to Ohio.

¹³³ This is probably George Morey, born November 15, 1803, who preached along the way from Missouri to Ohio in 1835.

¹³⁴ LDS Church Archives.

¹³⁵ Nothing more is known of Elder Palmer.

¹³⁶ Peter H. Burnett was a lawyer and resident of Liberty, Missouri. He probably was part of the same law office as David Atchison, Alexander Doniphan, and Amos Rees. At the 1838 siege of Far West and as part of Doniphan's brigade, he defended Doniphan's decision not to execute Joseph Smith. He migrated to California and became California's first elected governor in 1849.

¹³⁷ Christian Whitmer was born September 27, 1809, in Pennsylvania. He was a younger brother to the more famous Whitmer brothers. He was one of the eight Book of Mormon witnesses. He was appointed to preside over the elders in Jackson County in 1832. He died in 1835 of complications caused by a sore on his leg.

¹³⁸ This is probably John Cleminson. He served in a number of positions in Far West, including clerk of the circuit court and official recorder. He sympathized with the Missourians in the Missouri-Mormon War and was granted free passage out of Far West. He was subsequently excommunicated.

¹³⁹ This is probably Waldo Littlefield, who was born May 24, 1797, in Petersburg, New York. He named his third child Sarah Phelps Littlefield. He died in 1879 in Cannonville, Utah.

¹⁴⁰ LDS Church Archives.

¹⁴¹ Reynolds Cahoon was born April 30, 1790, in Cambridge, New York. He was baptized by Parley P. Pratt in Ohio in October 1830. A revelation (D&C 52:30) called him to travel to Missouri to do missionary work. He served as a counselor to Bishop Newell K. Whitney in Ohio. He was a major worker during the construction of the Kirtland Temple. He was appointed a counselor in the Adam-ondi-Ahman stake presidency in 1838 and in the Zarahemla stake presidency in 1839. He died in Utah in 1861.

¹⁴² This may be the wife of Elisha Whiting. Elisha was born in 1785 and baptized in 1830. He filed for redress in the Missouri petitions.

¹⁴³ Interestingly, Phelps accurately foresaw that people would experience financial difficulties when the Bank of the United States charter was not renewed.

¹⁴⁴ This is Elijah Fordham, one of the missionary elders called in 1836.

¹⁴⁵ The pentecostal events that Phelps describes here and in subsequent lines are very significant to Kirtland church history leading up to the dedication of the temple. Phelps's references to these activities help us understand the intensity of spiritual manifestations to Church leaders. Milton V. Backman, Jr., *The Heavens Resound: A History of the Latter-day Saints in Ohio, 1830-1838* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1983), 284-309.

¹⁴⁶ In Journal History of the Church, January 17, 1836, 2.

¹⁴⁷ LDS Church Archives.

¹⁴⁸ Libbeus Thadeus Coons was born May 13, 1811, in Plymouth, New York, and baptized in 1832. As a doctor, he was set apart by Joseph Smith to nurse the sick. He was appointed to the First Quorum of the Seventy in 1835. He was a subject of intense persecution in Missouri and Illinois.

¹⁴⁹ This refers to Sally Phelps's sister Lydia.

¹⁵⁰ The verse cited is now Doctrine and Covenants 95:1.

¹⁵¹ Since Phelps did not leave Kirtland until the second week of April, this was undoubtedly not his last letter to Sally. Unfortunately, no more letters have been found.

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Out of the Rain

The drops on the dry canvas
spring back into beads
before catching the seams down and pooling
near the bent steel pegs at each corner.
In half an hour the sound has lost its edge
though the rain is strong as ever;
the walls, too, have joined the muddied flow
and only bend the fall around them.
Inside, I am marooned against the flood,
aground and dry, with moorings still taut,
strung myself not an hour ago, maybe two.
The green-gray dawn will come in time,
bring out each khaki pore
so I can count them all if I choose,
waiting against the rain.

—C. Wade Bentley

Book Reviews

PAUL M. EDWARDS. *Our Legacy of Faith: A Brief History of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints*. Independence, Mo.: Herald Publishing House, 1991. 335 pp. Selected bibliography, appendixes, index. \$27.50.

RICHARD P. HOWARD. *The Church through the Years*. Vol. 1, *RLDS Beginnings, to 1860*. Independence, Mo.: Herald Publishing House, 1992. 402 pp. Bibliography, index. \$27.50. Vol. 2, *The Reorganization Comes of Age, 1860-1992*. Independence, Mo.: Herald Publishing House, 1993. 531 pp. Bibliography, index. \$27.50.

ROGER D. LAUNIUS and W. B. "PAT" SPILLMAN, eds. *Let Contention Cease: The Dynamics of Dissent in the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints*. Independence, Mo.: Grace-land/Park Press, 1991. 304 pp. \$18.00.

Reviewed by Louis Midgley, Professor of Political Science at Brigham Young University.

For thirty years, according to William "Bill" D. Russell, there has been "a deepening theological division within the ranks of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints" (*LCC*,¹ 125) between the liberal faction now in control of the RLDS bureaucracy and hierarchy and the remnants of a more traditional RLDS faith.² The dominant RLDS faction—clearly constituting a new "liberal" establishment³—is reforming the Reorganization on lines more or less consonant with what they consider to be respectable, mainline liberal Protestantism.⁴ The four books reviewed here either reflect or describe these changes. The books by Richard P. Howard and Paul M. Edwards rationalize the changes

from the perspective of the RLDS liberal establishment while *Let Contention Cease* offers valuable insights into internal RLDS politics and currently fashionable ideology from a somewhat less partisan perspective.

Theological liberals trained in Protestant seminaries have come to dominate the Reorganization. At first, they infiltrated the bureaucracy and then eventually gained the confidence of the hierarchy. The liberals now control the RLDS institutional machinery and are in the process of altering and amending some traditional RLDS understandings and abandoning others. Radical changes have been made in what the RLDS assume constitutes divine revelation, thereby transforming their understanding of Joseph Smith, his prophetic role, and his encounters with angels and deity; the priesthood; the Book of Mormon;⁵ the book of Abraham; the gathering and Zion; the Apostasy and the Restoration and whether they occurred; and what constitutes a church and hence whether there should be a distinctive community.

These and other changes often fly in the face of previously normative beliefs, practices, and expectations. Even the name of the church, intended to distinguish the RLDS from the LDS, has become problematic and seems to be open to change. Apparently the name is too closely associated with the Latter-day Saints, who are seen as standing in the way of the RLDS gaining respectability in the larger culture.⁶ But the current RLDS leadership sense limits beyond which they cannot move in modifying their community; hence, they are faced with the necessity of managing and suppressing dissent lest the community vanish or fly apart.⁷

One significant obstacle to the formation of an identity distinct from that of the Latter-day Saints and also to the concentration of power by the dominant liberal faction has been the traditional understanding of the RLDS past. Since accounts of the past rest upon texts which are interpretations of events and since all subsequent accounts are also interpretations, historians within the RLDS liberal establishment have sensed that a radical reshaping of the RLDS understanding of their past is both possible and necessary in reconstituting the RLDS community along liberal Protestant lines.

The Church through the Years and *Our Legacy of Faith* are best seen as official reshaping efforts.⁸ Howard, who has been working on *The Church through the Years* since 1982, has been RLDS Church Historian since 1966. Edwards is director of the Temple School Division⁹ and dean of the Park College Graduate School of Religion. In these capacities, he oversees the training of RLDS clergy. *The Church through the Years* and *Our Legacy of Faith* manifest an institutional authority and ambiance. To accommodate the radical changes in traditional beliefs, the RLDS establishment has found it necessary not only to refashion the traditional account of the Reorganization from its 1850s origin to the present, but, more importantly, to provide an essentially new understanding of those portions of their past that they share with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

To obtain “crucial insights and feedback to the discussions” of goals for the Reorganization (*CTY* 2:364), the RLDS Joint Council¹⁰ called on the services of Protestant theologians, including Dale Dunlap, Carl Bangs, and Paul Jones, all from the liberal St. Paul School of Theology in Kansas City. “The outcome,” Howard says, “was a major corrective to the naive claims the Latter Day Saint church had traditionally made about its having replicated the New Testament church in its form, structure, and ecclesiastical officers” (*CTY* 2:364). The end result of this and similar discussions “had major implications for claims to exclusive religious authority, traditionally affirmed by Latter Day Saints” (*CTY* 2:365).¹¹

Where previously the RLDS were anxious to see the Kirtland period as the glory years of the Restoration, Howard insists that what went on in Kirtland was not all that wonderful, but was more like the wild speculation, excesses, and experimentation that the RLDS associate with the Nauvoo period and have struggled to jettison. But the reassessment of the past goes far beyond merely adjusting the RLDS myths of Kirtland and Nauvoo. The more fundamental reassessment is found in the way in which the current RLDS clergy and leadership want to treat issues such as Joseph Smith’s theophanies and the Book of Mormon.

After a glance at several of the accounts of Joseph Smith’s first vision, Howard asserts that in his estimation “history shapes

its own telling. This means there is an inevitable gap between any actual event and ensuing records or interpretations of it. This gap is not so much a matter of simple chronology as it is of substantive content and details" (*CTY* 1:100). What we see in the accounts by Howard and Edwards is an attempt to provide, as far as is currently feasible, a liberal Protestant version of the restoration of the gospel through Joseph Smith. From a Latter-day Saint perspective, though much of the language of the Restoration has been maintained, the substance has been transformed or removed.

By Howard's own admission, his collection of essays "meander[s] all over the place, following a faint chronological line" (*CTY* 2:9). The collection begins with some short essays that provide the setting for an account that transforms the RLDS understanding of the church's past. The function of these essays, which are not particularly well-reasoned or elegantly stated (though unlike Edwards, Howard uses language that manifests the emotional intensity and deep piety typical of his earlier writings), is essentially to bolster and support the changes now being implemented by the RLDS hierarchy and bureaucracy. These essays carry the titles "On Remembering and Forgetting Church History," "Toward a Concept of History," and "Using History Creatively." These essays, which more than any other part of the book express and reflect Howard's own commitments, both introduce and justify essays on "The Social Setting of the Early Restoration," on Joseph Smith and his "visionary experiences," and on the Book of Mormon. And it is here that we find clear indications of a fundamentally different understanding of Joseph Smith's prophetic claims and of the Book of Mormon.

In both *The Church through the Years* and *Our Legacy of Faith*, we are offered novel interpretations of Joseph Smith. What were once seen as realities are transformed into something closely resembling insights, deep feelings, and sentiments. Events and texts (especially the Book of Mormon) are treated in much the same way that biblical materials are handled in fashionably liberal Protestant circles.

Howard and Edwards see a "story" at work behind their faith community (see *CTY* 1:34). But for them that story is malleable because, at least to some extent, its telling depends upon

the assumptions, categories, and explanations of the storyteller. For example, Edwards tells his “story” of Joseph Smith in a somewhat matter-of-fact way. Compared to Howard, Edwards includes little revisionist commentary once he gets into his narrative (see *OLF*, 33–81). But Edwards begins his account by announcing that the Restoration took place in a “time of magic, of metaphysical scares, of buried treasures and awesome places, of extremes of pride and of prejudices; just as it was a time of freedom, newness, dreams and visions, and a place where all those things could well come true” (*OLF*, 22). With such an opening in place, he is prepared to claim that it was in such an “environment in which *Joseph’s concept* took root and shaped the movement—we find that Mormonism rested easily in the nineteenth-century environment” (*OLF*, 24; italics added).

Unlike Richard L. Bushman, Edwards never suspects that Joseph Smith may have outgrown his immediate environment.¹² For Edwards that rustic, superstitious environment was always controlling. It was simply larded with “mysticism and magic” (*OLF*, 24), according to Edwards, and hence “it was a time when folk religion, with its emphasis on magic and mystical symbols, supported beliefs in supernatural causation to explain those daily events of life that appeared unexplainable” (*OLF*, 25). Edwards’s explanation of the Restoration is stated as a conclusion following from his assertions about the environment: “Like all of us, Joseph was a product of his age and environment. He was a child of his times and reflected the moods, desires, beliefs, and methods of his generation” (*OLF*, 31).

Against the notion of the appropriate environment, Edwards tells his version of “the story.” But, with his assumptions in place, he profoundly modifies “the story.” The genuinely divine element, as it is traditionally understood, has been effectively removed, although the traditional language is allowed to remain more or less in place while Edwards supplements and supplants it with his vague talk about myth, mysticism, magic, and the like.

Edwards’s *Our Legacy of Faith* is an institutional history which seems tame when compared with its author’s usual style. For an indication of his preferred style, one must ponder some of the

passages in his personal essay “Ethics and Dissent in Mormonism” in *Let Contention Cease*.

While *Our Legacy of Faith* and *The Church through the Years* focus mainly on the new history, *Let Contention Cease* provides a description of the impulses at work behind the crafting of these revisionist accounts. The following provides an instructive illustration: “The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints,” according to Pat Spillman, editor of and contributor to *Let Contention Cease*,

began as an organization of dissenters—those who disagreed with others who claimed to inherit the prophetic mantle after the assassination of Joseph Smith, Jr. Since its earliest days, members of the church have cherished their independence of thought and freedom of expression. To observers unacquainted with the church’s history, many of its conferences may have seemed raucous and undisciplined as delegates shouted and contended with one another over minutia and significant issues alike. (*LCC*, 10)

Spillman grants that within RLDS ranks “only rarely has dissent reached levels that large numbers of people have found it necessary to effectively remove themselves from active participation in the church community. Regrettably, the late 1980s was one of those periods” (*LCC*, 10).¹³

What Spillman does not indicate is that when the RLDS liberals and their fellow travelers gained power the traditional believers who publicly protested were at first ignored and then increasingly silenced—that is, they had their priesthood licenses lifted. Those in power have begun to deal with recalcitrant traditional believers with an iron fist. Many traditional RLDS have fled to various sects presumably offering prophetic guidance, or they have separated themselves from RLDS congregations and gathered in what they call Restoration Branches in an effort to remain loyal to their understanding of Joseph Smith and the Restoration.¹⁴ Or some may have simply abandoned their faith. This tragic story is told with some equanimity by William D. Russell (*LCC*, 125–51)¹⁵ and by Larry W. Conrad (*LCC*, 199–239), formerly an RLDS member and now a pastor for the United Methodist Church. These cautious, well-informed, but also candid accounts are, along with a historical account of early struggles

among the RLDS by Roger D. Launius (*LCC*, 17-58), easily the best essays in *Let Contention Cease*, which is more uneven than most collections of essays.¹⁶

The most astonishing essay in *Let Contention Cease*, “Ethics and Dissent in Mormonism,” was written by Edwards, who boasts that

during the majority of my church life I have been a dissenter, my dissent ranging from a slight discomfort over procedures to open rebellion as legalistic interpretations and prejudices became social legislation. Usually I have been in the minority and, with select company, have stood in isolated grandeur in priesthood quorums and church assemblies. (*LCC*, 241)

But where does that leave Edwards now that his views are more or less those of the majority and he has direct access to the levers of power? He is, he reports, quite impatient with those he sees as dissenting from the new liberal RLDS orthodoxy. Complaining about the more traditional believers, he says that “these dissenters concluded that majority opinion is not valid when the body of religious truth is denied” (*LCC*, 242).

Of course that stance is not entirely unlike the position he has held much of his adult life. The difference, if there is one, is minimal. The “traditionalists,” who are now seen as troublesome by the RLDS leadership, do not urge a break with the understandings upon which the RLDS community has rested. Ironically, the liberals like Edwards, rather than the traditionalists, are the ones who want to cast away what they consider morally defective and intellectually embarrassing remnants of a rustic, parochial past.

Edwards laments that “traditionalists” often now “find it necessary to leave and begin a new church—or more accurately, reestablish a restored reorganized restoration of the reformation” put together in 1860 by dissenters from Joseph Smith’s original restored gospel. And Edwards boasts that his own earlier dissent always involved efforts to “change the church,” that being, from his perspective, highly desirable. “I have,” he boasts, “endeavored to make it what I would consider theologically valid and socially responsible. Granted, my purpose was not to retain its tradition, but to alter it” (*LCC*, 243).

Since Edwards seems to believe that “the church is what the majority considers it to be” (*LCC*, 243), it follows that traditionalists should submit to the new liberal regimen, as he once very reluctantly did before his assent to power, or “alter the church if they can do so by their pressure” (*LCC*, 243). But the traditional believers lack the necessary political skills, money, and power. Hence, they now have no voice within the Reorganization.

For all the seemingly impressive mastery of primary and secondary literature on the Mormon past, Edwards and Howard take a rather slovenly approach to crucial issues. I will provide but two of several possible illustrations. First, neither Edwards nor Howard show any interest in the serious scholarship on the Book of Mormon. When Howard pushes his theory that the book is Joseph Smith’s frontier fiction, though perhaps inspired or inspiring, he cites only the conventional bromides and supports his opinions with either outdated or simply awful essays (*CTY* 1:119-23, 125 n. 12). On this matter, unlike Bushman,¹⁷ he simply ignores information that does not conform to his bias.

Second, both Edwards (*OLF*, 15-16) and Howard (*CTY* 1:17-21) have much to say about memory, remembrance, and forgetfulness in forming and sustaining identity both in individuals and in communities. Howard uses various forms of these words some forty-five times in the first five pages of his book. Since, as Howard correctly understands, the way the past is understood by a people constitutes their memory and hence identity, *Our Legacy of Faith* and *The Church through the Years* constitute an important and even crucial part of the process of transforming the RLDS memory and identity into a more fashionable and presumably more sophisticated and respectable liberal Protestant community.

However, Howard reduces remembering the Mormon past to preserving the figures of that past in a kind of contemporary, symbolic immortality through historical writing. Hence, he advances the odd notion that “if we forget them, part of who they actually were will fade away *from them*. If we forget them, part of who we have become on the wings of the faith will be lost to us” (*CTY* 1:21, italics added). There is much sentimentality in his formulations but less substance. And his history, he claims, is

intended to preserve the RLDS “capacity to be thankful for our heritage [which] rests on the power of memory” (*CTY* 1:20).

All these points are interesting, but Edwards misses the crucial issues. He does so precisely because of a neglect of the literature that makes clear the vital function of “the story” told by believing communities. Howard has a source or two upon which he draws for his ruminations on memory and its relationship to history and to personal and group identity, but the sources are not from prominent writers whose work might have helped him get clear on the role of history in grounding and sustaining communities of memory and faith.

Howard could have turned to Martin E. Marty,¹⁸ perhaps the most prominent contemporary American church historian and a sometime observer of Latter-day Saints, who has shown that “religious communities are not made up of antique-collectors. For instance, the Christian Church is not a memorial society.” Marty then quotes a German theologian who, when “speaking of faith in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, says that the church is not a ‘keeper of the city of the dead.’ While tradition keeps it healthy, when it loves tradition it is not a community of traditionalists.”¹⁹ From Marty’s perspective, Christians, Jews, Muslims, and especially Mormons “live by stories.” Latter-day Saints, according to Marty,

have not made much . . . of theology: they especially live as chosen and covenanted people in part of a developing history. Much is at stake when the story is threatened, as it potentially could have been when forged documents concerning Mormon origins agitated the community and led to tragedy a few years ago.²⁰

Much is at stake when alternative ways of understanding the crucial founding events and texts (especially the Book of Mormon) are offered to brush aside or radically alter the story that constitutes the memory and identity of a community of faith.

But the most sophisticated treatment of these issues is found in Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi’s magisterial study of Jewish history, memory, and identity.²¹ In an elaborately illustrated and elegantly written book, Yerushalmi has shown that Jewish identity over the millennia has depended on remembrance of the mighty acts of God on behalf of Israel, on the covenant made with God, and on

accounts of the halting response to that covenant, all of which give the people of God warning, moral direction, and finally hope. And when that story was challenged, called into question, or explained away with categories drawn from the secular culture, the Jewish community suffered disintegration and other terrible harms. Yerushalmi's work thus cautions those tinkering with novel, and essentially secularized, naturalistic accounts of the Mormon past, but only if they have eyes to see and a will to learn from the encounter between faith and what Professor Marty and I have both called the "acids of modernity."²² What we seem to be seeing in the books under review is the corrosive effects of secular, naturalistic explanations of the Mormon past on the RLDS community. For these essentially cautionary lessons, though perhaps not intended in exactly that way, we can only thank their authors, even as we wisely prefer to move in other directions by preserving, refining, correcting, and enlarging the story that grounds the community of faith and memory.

NOTES

¹ Citations to the books under review will be parenthetical, with *OLF* identifying *Our Legacy of Faith*, *CTY* (with the volume number) identifying *The Church through the Years*, and *LCC* identifying *Let Contention Cease*.

² These remnants form a group now effectively outside the control of the Reorganization and numbering at least 15,000 and perhaps as many as 30,000 out of the total membership of slightly over 240,000 RLDS. This group consists of "more than 200 independent local groups in thirty-two states, Canada and Australia" (Russell, in *LCC*, 134; compare *CTY* 2:427).

³ Though members of this faction picture themselves as "liberal," they are not necessarily tolerant of differing views.

⁴ The new interpretations of Joseph Smith and his prophetic claims provided by Howard and Edwards justify and bolster the ideology of the faction currently in control of the Reorganization. By making this point, I risk giving offense to those who see the religious world more or less through the lens provided by these books. I am not supportive of the ideology or the politics of the faction that currently has the upper hand among the RLDS. But I do not wish to offend delicate religious sensitivities. I believe that I honor these books by describing their polemical function in the current struggles within the Reorganization.

⁵ For the details on recent RLDS treatments of the Book of Mormon, see Louis Midgley, "More Revisionist Legerdemain and the Book of Mormon," *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 5 (1991): 261-65, 267-78; and Louis Midgley, "The Radical Reformation of the Reorganization of the Restoration: Recent Changes in the RLDS Understanding of the Book of Mormon," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 2 (Fall 1993): 132-63.

⁶ Beginning with at least the RLDS World Conference in 1992, there has been talk about changing this name. The *Saints Herald* has recently published a number of items discussing the possibility of a name change intended to end what the RLDS see as an unfortunate link with those they tend to call the "Utah Mormons." This discussion should come as no surprise since earlier they made an effort to unofficially shift to the name "Saints Church." While that name is used here and there, it has not supplanted the legal name for either the outside public or RLDS communicants. Signs of a sensitivity about their identity can be seen in the attention the RLDS give in their writings to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The *Saints Herald* regularly contains awkward references to the LDS Church as do the histories by Howard and Edwards.

⁷ On this point, see Edwards, "Ethics and Dissent in Mormonism," in *LCC*, 241-57. Edwards seems to sense that the institutional imperative, to which he now bows, requires that he push the liberal agenda only moderately in order to minimize contention and disaffection. Hence,

the more popular middle-of-the-road responses to the central ideas of our time [those ideas driving the new 'liberal' establishment?] leave us driving one additional nail into the coffins of Mormon dissent. As dutiful followers not only of the church but of the social fads of our civilization, we seek to manage the behavior of the church and in so doing leave behind the passionate source of our dissent. (*LCC*, 253)

In one of the clearest passages in his remarkably confused and confusing essay, Edwards writes: "For the Reorganized Church there is considerable smoke for a fairly small fire; for the Mormons [LDS] not even much smoke. Reorganized Church dissenters will stay longer in the structure, but in the final analysis they will find the need to be outside" (252).

⁸ Howard notes that others see recent developments in the Reorganization differently. A few of these "can (and will) talk back. A few of them can even compel changes here and there, and (prediction here) in fact, did. They're upstairs or out at Herald House" (*CTY* 2:10). Howard's office is just below that of the RLDS Joint Council (First Presidency, Quorum of the Twelve, and Presiding Bishopric) in the new temple headquarters in Independence.

⁹ In 1974 the Temple School replaced the School of the Restoration (*CTY* 2:371), and it is currently housed in the new temple headquarters in Independence. Edwards has directed the Temple School since 1982.

¹⁰ For a definition, see note 8.

¹¹ "Some church members," according to Howard, "became angry on learning that their leaders had turned to Protestant theologians to instruct [them] in the ways of the gospel, and they began stirring others to reaction" (*CTY* 2:420).

¹² On this matter, see Richard Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 7.

¹³ Howard speaks about an RLDS “basic right to dissent” or “inalienable right to dissent from various courses of action or thought embraced by their leaders” (CTY 2:414). But dissent can go too far, as it has with the dissent of the traditional believers against the new liberal establishment. Hence, Howard describes the resistance to the liberal takeover as involving “much harmful behavior exercised by some of the more radical reactionaries toward anyone even remotely connected with the changes in the church” (CTY 2:422).

¹⁴ While remaining on the RLDS membership rolls, they hold their own meetings, conduct weddings, elect officers, administer “communion,” baptize, and ordain, all without any official authorization (Russell, in *LCC*, 134).

¹⁵ Russell and the loquacious Edwards are the two liberal enfants terribles of the Restoration, though they are now past their prime as provocateurs.

¹⁶ For example, the essay by Steven L. Shields (*LCC*, 59-90) is unoriginal and merely descriptive, and the essays by Donald J. Breckon (*LCC*, 153-76) and Maurice L. Draper (*LCC*, 177-97) are disappointing.

¹⁷ See Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism*.

¹⁸ Martin E. Marty, *We Might Know What to Do and How to Do It: On the Usefulness of the Religious Past*, Westminster Tanner-McMurrin Lectures on the History and Philosophy of Religion at Westminster College, vol. 1 (Salt Lake City: Westminster College, 1989), 3-21.

¹⁹ Marty, *We Might Know What to Do*, 9.

²⁰ Marty, *We Might Know What to Do*, 12.

²¹ Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory*, 1st ed. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1982); 2d ed. (New York: Schocken Books, 1989). Gary F. Novak and I attempted to draw attention to this remarkable book in an essay entitled “Remembrance and the Past: Jewish and Mormon Memory and the New History” (Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Mormon History Association, May 11, 1984); see also David B. Honey and Daniel C. Peterson, “Advocacy and Inquiry in the Writing of Latter-day Saint History,” *BYU Studies* 31 (Spring 1991): 148-49, 164-66.

²² See Louis Midgley, “The Acids of Modernity and the Crisis in Mormon Historiography,” in *Faithful History: Essays on Writing Mormon History*, ed. George D. Smith (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992), 189-225, especially 192, 219-20 n. 27. See also Martin E. Marty, “Two Integrities: An Address to the Crisis in Mormon Historiography,” in *Faithful History*, 169-88.

RICHARD P. HOWARD. *The Church through the Years*, vol. 1, *RLDS Beginnings, to 1860*. Independence, Mo.: Herald Publishing House, 1992. 402 pp. Bibliography, index. \$27.50.

Reviewed by Davis Bitton, Professor of History at the University of Utah.

One way of looking at this new book by RLDS church historian Richard Howard is to see it as the most recent survey of early Mormon history—three short chapters on the nature of history, twelve chapters on the events to 1844, and three chapters on the rise of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints as one of the varieties of Latter Day Saintism. While not dismissing the usefulness of the volume as a survey, I see its major significance rather differently: it is a fascinating example of the throes being experienced by the RLDS Church during the generation extending from the 1960s to the present.

To understand what is going on here, one should read very carefully the way in which the following are presented: the First Vision, the Book of Mormon, the Nauvoo period, the crisis of succession following Joseph Smith's assassination, and the establishment of the Reorganization under Joseph Smith III.

The First Vision. After noting that in 1838 Joseph Smith dictated an account of his early life, which was revised and published starting in 1842, Howard states that with the passage of time witnesses generally forget and embellish their accounts. The vision was not mentioned in published works until the 1840s, which, for Howard, "means that Joseph spoke very little about it during those early years" (92-93). However, Joseph's own account told of finding "none who would believe the heavenly vision" (93), which must mean that he was speaking of it. Howard believes that such rebuffs "likely drove Joseph to years of relative silence about it" (93). "Relative" silence is, of course, not absolute silence.

The 1842 published account of the vision is then quoted *in extenso* with the comment that Joseph Smith was choosing language for his later audience with a "desire to convey as clearly and powerfully as possible his claims to prophetic leadership" (97). Then there is a contrast with the 1832 diary account. One conclusion, perhaps necessary for some, is that there is a difference between an event and its recording in words. "It is useless for us to become

lost in a war of words over which version is correct," Howard continues. "We today simply accept our distance from the reality of Joseph Smith's boyhood vision. We truthfully affirm that it happened, but we openly confess the mystery of its specific content" (101).

One might think, so far so good. But at this point, recognizing that the attempt is "risky," Howard provides a composite or synthesis of the Sacred Grove experience. In the third person, he reviews Joseph's despair, his confusion "in a world of clashing values, contentions, and demands for his allegiance," his prayer, "deepening gloom and despair," and finally "a vision of splendor and light [that] enveloped his whole being in an aura of love and mercy." In this account, no personage is witnessed. Instead, "from the midst of that glorious light came a voice as clear as his own." Is this a suggestion that Joseph was providing his own answer? He "*felt that* he knew the truth about God and himself" (102; italics added). The two major conclusions "etched into his consciousness" were the promises of forgiveness and the belief that he could "trust that merciful God again and again for love and light to guide his life journey" (103).

This account is moving, but we must understand what Howard is doing—putting into his own words, into phraseology that he can relate to, a transcendent experience of someone else. (Vardis Fisher did the same thing in his novel *Children of God*.) Howard does not wish to deny that *something* happened, even that Joseph "actually encountered deity" (98). But his retelling dilutes the experience. I do not think I am alone in preferring Joseph Smith's own description (or descriptions) of the event to which he was the only eyewitness. If his 1838 account of the First Vision is more complete, I do not have to believe that he was contriving it, although I can accept readily enough the impossibility of adequately communicating such an experience in words.

The Book of Mormon. It is hard to deny the existence of the Book of Mormon. Howard describes its publication in 1830, tells of the testimony of the Three and Eight Witnesses, and recognizes that Moroni's promise has been fulfilled for thousands. But Howard's account is not exactly a believer's testimony of the book. There is a one-paragraph summary of the historical framework of the Book of Mormon but no appreciation of its doctrinal

riches, its textual complexity, or its rhetorical power. Instead, Howard goes over some of the early revelations having to do with the translation process. He draws these significant conclusions: “‘Translation’ in this light bears no relation to a linguistic exercise of conveying ideas to one language from another” (119). It was a “revelatory,” or “imaging,” process in which Joseph Smith’s “imaginative, intuitive mind” verbalized “a lengthy and varied text under the subjective impress of inspiration” (119). We do have “revelatory” and “inspiration,” which imply a divine source, but, if I am not mistaken, words like “imaging” and “subjective” suggest that Joseph Smith himself was the source.

The next section on the Book of Mormon lists topics that “addressed many concerns of nineteenth-century New York people” (120). The chosen land, the religious utopian ideal, a self-supporting lay ministry, anti-Catholicism, the Millennium and the gathering of the Jews, anti-secret society sentiment, and preference for democratic rather than monarchical rule—these (along with the faith-works controversy, sectarianism, original sin, and trinitarianism/unitarianism) were all popular themes and obsessions of the time. Such listings are not new. The footnote cites sociologist Thomas F. O’Dea and an article by Susan Curtis Mernitz. Of course Alexander Campbell started this game in 1831. Howard gives no indication of the scholarship in support of the Book of Mormon. It is not simply that the continuing publications by the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, for example, are criticized or dismissed; they are totally ignored. Howard makes no effort, in other words, to inform the reader of the range of opinion, even within the RLDS tradition, about the Book of Mormon.

Howard’s words are carefully chosen. His paraphrase of Moroni’s promise is especially interesting: “If they will read it in the spirit of honest seeking and pray to know whether the Book of Mormon is a true witness to God’s redemptive work, they will be blessed with that conviction” (113).

Nauvoo and Polygamy. Chapter 15 on “Nauvoo and Metamorphosis, 1839–1846” is, of course, crucial to any RLDS interpretation of Church history. We read that “understanding Nauvoo has been a major stumbling block for Latter Day Saints of whatever

persuasion” (273). The Utah Mormons, he writes, “see Nauvoo as the primary stimulus for all that has been meaningful in their theology and history” (273-74). I might quarrel with that word “all.” RLDS history, on the other hand, has been “disjunctive with the meaning and purpose of Nauvoo for Utah Mormons” (274), for the RLDS Church “came into being largely as a reaction to what were felt to be Nauvoo’s excesses” (274).

Howard then goes over the origins of the Council of Fifty, insists that Joseph Smith and his followers really thought he would become president of the United States in 1844 (I remain unconvinced), and describes the development of the holy order, prayer circles, baptism for the dead, and the temple endowment. Polygamy at Nauvoo is discussed in less than two pages. From being sealed to a new spouse after the death of one’s first spouse, it was a short step to the conclusion that “what will prevail in celestial glory should also be permissible in this life” (293). But, the reader cannot help but ask, did Joseph Smith have anything to do with it? The closest we get to an answer is the following:

Several RLDS leaders during the 1850s and 1860s remembered the plural marriage system at Nauvoo. Some, notably William Marks and Isaac Sheen, wrote that Joseph Smith bore responsibility for the start of Nauvoo polygamy. They noted, however, that shortly before his death Joseph saw the error of plural marriage, and tried to end it, to save the church from ruin. (293)

That’s it. No details. No indication of Joseph Smith’s own plural wives. No indication that the convenient memory of Marks and Sheen was contradicted by all of the Council of the Twelve Apostles and even Joseph’s brother William Smith. It is not even clear whether Howard here accepts the accuracy of the Marks-Sheen statement. Elsewhere, he frankly accepts the fact that Joseph Smith both taught and practiced plural marriage.

Nauvoo is seen as a major dividing point in the history of Latter Day Saintism:

Many [in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints] accepted the new temple ritual system, the political kingdom of God, militarism, the exaltation of priesthood, and other theological and doctrinal innovations [and] extended and amplified all of these things during the ensuing generations. (298-99)

Many others [the RLDS Church], however, either were opposed to much of the cultic trappings that accrued to Mormonism from 1840 to 1846 or had serious misgivings about them. (298-99)

The expression “cultic trappings” contains a heavy value judgment, playing into the hands of the hatemongers who denounce Mormonism as a non-Christian cult. It is also inaccurate to leave the impression that “all of these things” have been extended and amplified down to the present, for a great watershed around 1890 led to the abandonment or reinterpretation of political, social (polygamy), and economic programs.

A chapter on “Dispersions from the Early Restoration” claims that more than 150 groups have resulted from dividing and subdividing. A dozen or so are briefly described. A conflict between the text and the boldface headings occurs in the section entitled “Schismatic Developments after Joseph Smith’s Death.” Listed as one of those developments is “Brigham Young/Council of Twelve, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1844”; in contrast, the text concedes that “Utah Mormonism hardly qualifies as a schismatic group” and that a “large majority” of the Nauvoo Saints followed Brigham Young (310). A later contradictory sentence reverts to the negative label: “It is impossible to understand early RLDS development apart from its rootedness in and disenchantment from Nauvoo (Utah) Mormonism and the many other schismatic groups” (352).

Howard concludes with two chapters on the emergence of the Reorganized Church and the coming to its presidency of Joseph Smith III. The complete text of an 1851 vision of Jason Briggs is given along with helpful commentary. Common to the founders of the Reorganization, prior to Joseph III’s arrival, was abhorrence of polygamy. In 1853, Zenos Gurley proclaimed an anti-polygamy revelation, which is quoted on pages 345-46. A conference was held that effectively began the RLDS Church, and an invitation was sent to young Joseph III, who finally responded affirmatively in 1860. While at the Amboy conference to assume the leadership, Joseph III said, among other things:

There is but one principle taught by the leaders of any faction of this people that I hold in utter abhorrence. That is a principle taught by

Brigham Young and those believing in him. I have been told that my father taught such doctrines. I have never believed it and never can believe it. If such things were done, then I believe they never were done by Divine authority. I believe my father was a good man, and a good man never could have promulgated such doctrines. (372)

Here is Joseph III's implicit reasoning:

1. Joseph Smith was a good man and would not therefore have promulgated an evil doctrine or practice.
2. Polygamy is evil.

Therefore, Joseph Smith did not teach or advocate it.

The logic of the Utah Mormons was of course, from their point of view, equally compelling:

1. Joseph Smith was a good man and would not claim that something was sanctioned by God if it was not so sanctioned.
2. Joseph Smith introduced polygamy and claimed a divine authorization for it.

Therefore, polygamy was divinely sanctioned.

While the major premises may be subject to discussion, the demonstration by historians that Joseph Smith did in fact originate polygamy leaves one of these arguments in shambles.

Chapter 3 tells of "Using History Creatively," including a touching, if partisan, overview of "the story" of RLDS history, beautifully told in the first-person plural. Howard contrasts the good practice of "using history to expand self-understanding" with the undesirable practice of using history as self-justification. For Howard the example of the latter is Joseph Smith's 1838 dictation of his personal history. That may be, but if I am not totally tone deaf, there is more than a little self-justification in Howard's entire interpretation.

This book can be read simply as a fresh treatment of early Mormonism and the origins of the RLDS Church. It is, however, as Richard Howard would be the first to recognize, an interpretation; it has a spin to it. To my mind, it is especially revealing as an

example of the Reorganization's effort to redefine itself, or, more correctly, an example of that effort as represented by Howard and those who agree with him. For a valuable essay on this whole question, see Howard's article on the Reorganized Church in the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, with its conclusion: "The RLDS church seems intent on shedding many of the vestiges of its sectarian background of early Mormonism. To what extent it can discard these while retaining its identity as a recognizable part of Latter Day Saintism remains to be seen."¹ For those who approve of this "shedding," *The Church through the Years* may well become a classic.

NOTE

¹Richard P. Howard, "Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (RLDS Church)," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow, 5 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 3:1216.

RICHARD P. HOWARD. *The Church through the Years*, vol. 1, *RLDS Beginnings, to 1860*. Independence, Mo.: Herald Publishing House, 1992. 402 pp. Bibliography, index. \$27.50. Vol. 2, *The Reorganization Comes of Age, 1860-1992*. Independence, Mo.: Herald Publishing House, 1993. 531 pp. Bibliography, index. \$27.50.

Reviewed by William Dean Russell, Professor of American History and Government at Graceland College, Lamoni, Iowa.

In 1934 the RLDS Church published Inez Smith Davis's *The Story of the Church*, a one-volume history intended for its members. A very amateurish and apologetic work, Davis's book remained the only one-volume history of the RLDS Church for fifty-seven years, until Paul Edwards published *Our Legacy of Faith*.¹ With the publication of the two-volume work *The Church through the Years*, the RLDS Church has completed the process of making Davis's embarrassing book a thing of the past.

The Story of the Church reflected the common RLDS attitude toward the much larger LDS Church. It was one of a great many articles, pamphlets, and books which were published during the first century of the RLDS Church's existence and which examined Mormon claims and found them wanting. The last major book-length, anti-Mormon diatribe was published in 1965. Written by Aleah Koury, a seventy who was about to become an apostle, *The Truth and the Evidence: A Comparison between Doctrines of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*² was a survey of the major differences between the two churches. Key issues raised were the doctrines of God, marriage, tithing, and succession in the presidency of the church. In every instance, the RLDS Church had the truth, and the LDS Church was wrong. It was a clean sweep for the little-known rivals of the kingdom out west. The RLDS Church did not even have to settle for being "right" on three out of four issues. The book was appropriately titled: the author began with "the truth" and then marshaled his evidence.

But by the time Aleah Koury's book had been read by very many members, RLDS historians were aware that a new, more professional, non-apologetic approach to history was needed.

The book by Davis in particular needed to be replaced. Robert Flanders, author of *Nauvoo: Kingdom on the Mississippi*;³ Paul Edwards and Alma Blair at Graceland College; Richard Howard, the first professionally trained historian in the office of RLDS church historian; and others in the RLDS Church began to push for the publication of historical writings that were more professional and less apologetic.

By the late 1970s, Alma Blair had been commissioned to write a one-volume survey to replace Davis's book. However, Blair was not able to get his project off the ground, so in 1982 Paul Edwards, newly appointed president of the Temple School in Independence, assigned Howard, who had already produced a documentary history of the RLDS Church, to write the one-volume survey. In the process of writing that survey, however, Howard decided instead to produce a two-volume work that would not be so much a survey history as a collection of reflective essays on RLDS history. Not all members of the First Presidency were pleased when they learned that Howard was producing a collection of essays, so they assigned Paul Edwards to write the long-awaited, one-volume survey.

Volume 1 of Howard's work, covering ground that has already been examined by many authors, deals with early Mormonism until the post-martyrdom events. Mormon readers may be interested in the interpretation of early Mormon history offered by an RLDS author who could be characterized as an "institutional liberal." Howard, the church historian for nearly thirty years, has been one of the participants in the movement of the RLDS Church from a sect which held itself to be "the one true church of Christ on earth" (1960s and before) to a denomination that considers itself merely a part—although hopefully a vital part—of the body of Christ on earth. Howard wrote a historical column in the official publication, *The Saints' Herald*, for fifteen years (1969–84), as well as several significant articles on topics like the book of Abraham, the First Vision, and polygamy. His *Restoration Scriptures*,⁴ which traced the evolution of the text of the three standard books of the RLDS Church (the Inspired Version of the Bible, the Book of Mormon, and the Doctrine and Covenants), won a Mormon History Association award.

A more important volume for LDS readers will probably be volume 2, which covers RLDS history since the 1850s. Mormon readers will be particularly interested in the chapters dealing with the RLDS relationship to their cousins in Utah. Needless to say, the attitude was hostile. Fortunately, in the past twenty-five years that hostility has eased considerably. Howard has participated in that effort as well. He has a long friendship with Leonard Arrington, former LDS church historian, as well as many other historians through active participation in the Mormon History Association, including one year as its president. Howard also negotiated with the LDS Church over one of Mark Hofmann's forgeries—the Joseph Smith III blessing letter. As a result of that encounter, Howard was one of the first historians to distrust Hofmann. While Hofmann was speaking at the 1982 MHA meeting in Ogden, the editors of *Sunstone* heard Howard utter in disgust a word that is not found in the publications of either church. In volume 2, Howard does discuss the fact that the RLDS have become more friendly toward the Mormons in recent years but strangely omits any mention of the Mormon History Association, which played a major role in easing tensions. He also does not mention Mark Hofmann. Perhaps Howard was reluctant to discuss events in which he was a participant.

Three practices in *The Church through the Years* are refreshing reversals of past customs. An officially published RLDS history, it accepts the word *Mormonism* in reference to the early years of the church. The RLDS have in the past rejected the word altogether because of their desire to distance themselves from their Utah cousins. Herald House has also routinely added the LDS citations for Book of Mormon and Doctrine and Covenants passages. In addition, the RLDS Church historian herein acknowledges that Joseph Smith became a polygamist. The RLDS Church felt honor-bound for about a century to deny his practice of plural marriage, largely because Joseph Smith III was emotionally committed to the proposition that his father could not have introduced that doctrine because he was a good man. The past decade has seen a shift in RLDS willingness to face the issue. Howard's

article “The Changing RLDS Response to Mormon Polygamy” in the 1983 issue of the *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* was a milestone in that regard.

I was particularly impressed with the chapters on the development of the canon and on the tension in the 1870s and 1880s between Apostles Zenas H. Gurley, Jr., and Jason W. Briggs on the one hand and the First Presidency and other leaders on the other hand. Briggs and Gurley finally resigned from the church.

LDS readers will probably be interested in Howard’s account of the evolution of women’s roles in the church, culminating in a 1984 revelation calling for their ordination. Since November 1985, when such ordinations began, more than 3,500 women have been ordained, according to Howard. He does not say how many total priesthood holders there are in the RLDS Church, but this reviewer would hazard a guess that at the present time about one-third of the active priesthood holders are women. Howard’s treatment of the women’s issue and the aftermath—a nasty split that has occurred in the church since 1985—is well done. While Howard’s sympathies are clearly not with the schismatics, he is fair in his treatment, with only minor examples of bias.

I think LDS members who are interested in what has happened to the little splinter church, headquartered in Independence, Missouri, and led so far by Joseph Smith’s male heirs, will find Howard’s two-volume survey a useful account.

NOTES

¹ Paul M. Edwards, *Our Legacy of Faith* (Independence, Mo.: Herald Publishing House, 1991).

² Aleah Koury, *The Truth and the Evidence: A Comparison between Doctrines of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Independence, Mo.: Herald Publishing House, 1965).

³ Robert Flanders, *Nauvoo: Kingdom on the Mississippi* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1965).

⁴ Richard P. Howard, *Restoration Scriptures* (Independence, Mo.: Department of Religious Education, RLDS Church, 1969).

JAMES B. ALLEN and GLEN M. LEONARD. *The Story of the Latter-day Saints*. 2d ed. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992. xiv; 802 pp. Illustrations, maps, bibliography, index. \$25.00.

Reviewed by Donald Q. Cannon, Associate Dean of Religious Education, Brigham Young University.

“The history of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is constantly changing as new information becomes available and as each generation asks fresh questions about its past,” write James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard in their preface to the 1992 edition of *The Story of the Latter-day Saints*. It was “the need to synthesize such new research for an audience of interested general readers” that prompted publication of *The Story of the Latter-day Saints* in 1976 (reviewed in *BYU Studies* 17 [Spring 1977]: 241–47). “Now, after sixteen years,” the authors observe, “ongoing events in the Church’s history and additional scholarship suggested the appropriateness of a revision” (xi).

The second edition of this valuable and finely illustrated one-volume history of the Church reflects the solid scholarship and faith of the authors, both of whom are recognized authorities on LDS Church history. James B. Allen taught history at BYU from 1963 until his semiretirement in 1992. He also served as assistant Church historian. Glen M. Leonard, currently director of the Museum of Church History and Art in Salt Lake City, served previously on the staff of the Utah State Historical Society and with the Historical Department of the LDS Church.

How is the new edition distinguished from the first edition? Conspicuously, the second edition is longer: eighty pages have been added. The text has been significantly changed throughout, the most obvious change involving a restructuring of the late-twentieth-century material, including the addition of a final chapter current to 1990. The volume’s comprehensive bibliography has also been updated.

A revision of particular significance is the perspective the authors provide in part 5, “Toward Becoming a Universal Church, 1950–1990” (titled in the first edition “The Gospel to All Nations, 1939–1976”). The six-page introduction to this section

skillfully sets the international stage for the past forty years of Church history. Amidst political upheaval, new technology, and eroding moral and ethical values, the Church expanded exponentially.

“In 1950 Mormonism was still largely an American religion, but it stood on the threshold of a new international presence,” the authors observe (558), and then provide comparative statistics for the following four decades:

In 1950 Church membership was about 1,100,000. At the beginning of 1990 it was 7,300,000. [Stakes grew from 180 to 1,700; missions from 43 to 228.] In 1950 the Church was organized in fewer than 50 nations or territories, but in 1990 it was in 128 nations. In 1950 there were fewer than 6,000 missionaries in the field. In 1990 there were nearly 40,000. In 1950 some 7.7 percent of the population of the Church lived outside the United States and Canada, but forty years later this had changed to 40.5 percent. (560-61)

Assessing the challenges presented by such rapid growth, the authors comment:

The widespread acceptance of the gospel by people of diverse ethnic and cultural origins demanded not just tolerance but, more importantly, a reexamination by some Saints of their personal attitudes toward other races and cultures. As the Church grew more rapidly in Asia, Latin America, and Africa, for example, as well as among highly diverse cultural and ethnic groups in the United States itself, some important questions were raised. Could the traditional American-born, Wasatch-front Latter-day Saint, whose culture tended to dominate the Church, wholly and sincerely accept those of other cultures as brothers and sisters in the fullest sense? Could the Church as an institution adapt its policies and emphases in such a way that people of all cultures felt fully accepted? Conversely, to what degree did some cultural mores violate the essence of the gospel, and what necessary changes would some converts have to make in order to become Saints? Or, to put it another way, what traditional LDS policies, practices, and teaching were *essential* to the gospel of Jesus Christ, and which ones were merely convenient and subject to change? (559)

By framing such questions, the authors heighten readers' understanding of Church growth and correlation in the chapters which follow, providing, for example, an important context for Spencer W. Kimball's 1954 comments on "bigotry and class distinction" (580), the 1978 revelation on priesthood, and the challenges of culturally

diverse wards. “The vision of an international, worldwide church was continually reemphasized,” they explain, “but the more important quest was for a *universal* church: one in which people of all nations, all races, and all cultures could act toward each other as brothers and sisters in the truest sense of Christ’s teachings” (560).

Nowhere is this emphasis more evident than in the book’s final chapter, “Toward a Universal Church, 1974–1990,” which covers President Kimball’s administration as well as President Benson’s administration to 1990. (The 1976 edition’s chapter 21 covered the early years of President Kimball’s administration: “Lengthening Our Stride, 1973–76.”) The new concluding chapter covers fourteen topics: the lengthening stride, growth and internationalization, revelation on priesthood, the international church, the intercultural challenge, course corrections, the compassionate church, politics and public policy, the Church and the changing role of women, the public image, the scriptures, President Benson and the Book of Mormon, and looking to the future. The foregoing list indicates the breadth of coverage of this important era of LDS Church history. The chapter is very positive in both spirit and tone, as indicated by the following description of President Spencer W. Kimball:

Those who predicted that President Kimball’s would be a short, “caretaker” administration could not have been more wrong. Instead, he set a pace of physical, spiritual, and mental activity that much younger men found difficult to follow. On October 3, 1974, the seventy-nine-year-old church leader stood before a seminar for Regional and Mission Representatives. Filled with a vision of the universal mission of the Church, he was concerned with what the Latter-day Saints must do to help it fulfill its destiny worldwide. “If I need a title for what I desire to say this morning,” he said, “I think it would be ‘Lengthening Our Stride.’” That theme characterized the history of the Church itself for the rest of the decade and throughout the 1980s. (628)

The section entitled “Revelation on Priesthood” captures the basic historical features of the June 1978 revelation and gets to the heart of the matter through the use of direct quotations. Elder Bruce R. McConkie’s speech given at BYU a few weeks after the revelation exemplifies the essence of this discussion. Speaking of

the contrast between the earlier and subsequent policy on priesthood, Elder McConkie said: "Forget everything I have said, or what President Brigham Young or President George Q. Cannon or whomsoever has said in days past that is contrary to the present revelation. We spoke with a limited understanding and without the light and knowledge that now has come into the world" (636). The story is further enlivened and enhanced by the inclusion of personal experiences of such men as Helvécio Martins, the first black General Authority and a native of Brazil (637), and Anthony Obinna, a Nigerian who had been seeking Church literature and requesting missionaries since the late 1960s and became the first of nineteen Nigerians baptized in his country in November 1979.

The opening of nations previously closed to Latter-day Saint missionaries is the basis of an informative discussion which treats David M. Kennedy's calling as a special Church ambassador; the goodwill established by Elders Nelson and Oaks in China; and the opening of Poland, Greece, the former Yugoslavia, Hungary, the former Soviet Union, and India to missionary work.

Appropriately, this final chapter closes with President Benson's vision of "flooding the earth with the Book of Mormon." The prophet's call to Saints to study the scriptures and particularly the Book of Mormon formed the basis of his first conference address as President of the Church, and in the next three years he delivered thirty-nine addresses on the Book of Mormon. During the same period, fifteen new foreign language translations of the Book of Mormon were completed. "His message was effective," observe the authors, "for throughout the Church people increasingly bore witness of what reading the Book of Mormon had done for them" (669).

There is much more to applaud in this last chapter, not the least of which is the fact that it does not ignore some of the sensitive issues the Church has faced in recent years, including the ERA and women's issues, the excommunication of George P. Lee, and the Hofmann forgeries. There are also some real weaknesses—weaknesses which are perhaps inherent in any survey history because of the lack of space. On some topics simply too little is

included. While the international church is discussed at great length, the section on the BYU Jerusalem Center leaves the reader grasping for additional material. There are only sixty-two words to tell the story of this important place (648). The section on "Course Corrections" reads more like a series of telegrams than history. It raises more questions than it can answer in mentioning the retirement of Eldred G. Smith as Patriarch and the introduction of the consolidated meeting schedule (655). When controversial topics such as the change in the patriarchal office are discussed, more explanation is needed in order for the reader to be sure of the authors' intent.

Other significant changes have been made in the text of *The Story of the Latter-day Saints*. Generally, these changes de-emphasize historical environment and increase emphasis on revelation. A good example of this trend is the section on the Word of Wisdom. In the first edition, the authors emphasized the social milieu of Jacksonian America as background for the Word of Wisdom. In the second edition, while the American environment is still discussed, revelation is the major force in the development of this teaching. Note the following new material in the 1992 edition:

This revelation, known as the Word of Wisdom, was another good example of divine guidance coming to the Church in response to inquiries about particular matters. Not only was there controversy among the region's populace, but, it appears, an immediate situation closer to home played a key role in calling forth the inspired code of health. Joseph and his family lived in rooms in Newel K. Whitney's store and, as Brigham Young reported many years later, the Prophet was influenced by happenings among the elders attending the School of Prophets in an upstairs room above the store.

When they assembled together in this room after breakfast, the first they did was to light their pipes, and while smoking, talk about the great things of the kingdom, and spit all over the room, and as soon as the pipe was out of their mouths a large chew of tobacco would then be taken. Often when the Prophet entered the room to give instruction he would find himself in a cloud of smoke. This, and the complaints of his wife at having to clean so filthy a floor, made the Prophet think upon the matter, and he inquired of the Lord relating to the conduct of the Elders in using tobacco, and the revelation known as the Word of Wisdom was the result of his inquiry. (105)

Revelation is also emphasized in the discussion of Joseph Smith's ideas on the three degrees of glory. The 1976 edition contained information on a book by Thomas Dick entitled *Philosophy of a Future State*. The authors then showed parallels between the ideas of Thomas Dick and Joseph Smith concerning the future condition of mortals. In the 1992 edition, reference to Thomas Dick has been deleted and a sentence added concerning Joseph Smith's preparation, searching, and inquiring of the Lord (79).

Careful readers will find other differences, too. The discussion of the Mountain Meadows Massacre, for example, softens the statement "Though the Church itself cannot be held responsible, the massacre at Mountain Meadows is nevertheless the most tragic slur on its history, for some members of the Church participated" (1976, 303), to read "Though the Church itself cannot be held responsible, the massacre at Mountain Meadows became a tragic stain on the history of these tense and difficult times" (1992, 311). A new photograph features descendants of victims and participants in the massacre in the spirit of reconciliation, "joining hands in a symbol of unity and forgiveness" at the September 1990 dedication of an on-site memorial to the victims (313). There are numerous editorial changes in less sensitive matters. In some instances, the 1976 text has been condensed to allow the inclusion in the 1992 text of stories and details about individuals, a commendable effort by the authors to maintain a personal touch in this comprehensive survey history.

On subjects of current interest, Allen and Leonard have an extensive list of sources. In "The International Church," for example, an entire page of sources is presented with reference to both books and articles. There is a wide range of coverage, with references on LDS topics from official LDS publications, publications with only minimal LDS connections, and non-LDS publications.

For both the serious scholar and the casual reader of LDS history, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints* is a book worth owning. With the strengths already described, as well as excellent maps and illustrations, this new edition is an attractive and useful volume for Latter-day Saint readers.

LESTER E. BUSH, JR. *Health and Medicine among the Latter-day Saints: Science, Sense, and Scripture*. Health/Medicine and the Faith Traditions Series. New York: Crossroad, 1993. xv; 234 pp. Notes, index. \$24.95.

Reviewed by John L. Sorenson, Emeritus Professor of Anthropology at Brigham Young University.

This volume is one of a dozen in a series which “explores the ways in which major religions relate to the questions of human well-being” (ii). Some of the other volumes have treated health and medicine in the context of the Lutheran, Catholic, Christian Science, Hindu, and Islamic faiths.

In his helpful foreword, Martin E. Marty notes that these books aim to “inform the rest of us about neighbors, fellow citizens, people who care about care and who would cure and be cured—while pursuing ways which set them apart” (x-xi). Aimed mainly at professional care givers, the books also give lay people a new view of their religious traditions by analyzing a crucial aspect of their belief and practice. Each volume is organized around ten themes, including death, suffering, healing, madness, sexuality, morality, and dignity (xiii), although Bush has packaged the themes in a unique way to present the Mormon case with greatest clarity and power.

Marty considers Bush, a physician, to be “one of those rare individuals who is equally at home in the ‘health/medicine’ and ‘faith’ aspects” (xi) of his religion. Latter-day Saint readers will recognize Bush as the author of important publications on the history of LDS ideas and behavior in the areas of race and evolution. This book is another important contribution to Mormon history. I also consider it to be one of only a handful of penetrating anthropological treatments of the Mormons. (Douglas J. Davies’s *Mormon Spirituality: Latter Day Saints in Wales and Zion*¹ is another, also by an acute observer who is not a professional anthropologist, but is a professor of religion with a strong interest in anthropology.)

As Marty points out, Bush sets out not to analyze or explain the Mormons to his readers, but to sketch their “integral character,” “that which provides vision and wholeness to those who

share” Mormonism (viii). In doing so, he uses many expressions drawn directly from the culture—exactly what an anthropologist would do in attempting to depict the “elaborate and intricate array of nuances” (ix) needed to represent his subject sensitively and respectfully. Marty observes, “Whoever is having a first encounter with Mormonism will already [in the chapter on the first theme] recognize how intact, apparently enclosed, and inaccessible that faith may be to others” (ix). He adds,

It becomes clear almost at once that Mormons are not merely a church. They are a people. They own identifying symbols and follow practices that put greater distance between them and ‘mainstream’ Christians than the distance between one and another of almost any of these Christian groups. (ix)

Not only is the non-Mormon well instructed here about much in Mormonism, but Bush’s presentation also succeeds—though not painlessly—in telling “the Saints about how and why they got where they are” (xi).

One of the strongest features of Bush’s work is his use of sources not accessible to many, if any, other Latter-day Saints (he credits friend Gregory Prince for his “remarkable private library” [xv]). In addition to the Church *General Handbook of Instructions* in its many variations over the years, he draws on hundreds of circular letters issued by the First Presidency, as well as much private correspondence between them and inquirers. He points out that

for almost a half-century, in fact, the most complete and accurate current statement of LDS beliefs has been the [First] Presidency’s file of privately answered letters. Carefully indexed to insure consistency over time, these private statements not infrequently have provided the text for statements formally published several years later. (202)

While readers may wish for more source listings on particular topics, I know of no other two-hundred-page book that is so widely and fully documented with obscure but appropriate material as this one.

To show how topics are handled, I summarize the handling of chapter 6, “On Sexuality and Birth.” It is introduced as tracing,

in approximately the order they became of concern to the modern church[,] LDS perspectives on sexuality and sex education, birth control, abortion, sterilization, infertility, homosexuality, and sex-change surgery [masturbation, eugenics, reproductive technologies, birth defects, and “ensoulment” of the fetus are also treated]. As with nearly all other LDS teachings, those related to birth and sexuality can be understood only in the context of a considerable historical legacy. . . . Taken in its totality, the record that unfolds in this chapter is without parallel in the window it offers on the evolution of authoritative guidance within the LDS church. (139)

Varied counsel and commentary are cited from Church leaders, both early and late, which will surprise and enlighten nearly all readers. The seven-and-one-half pages on abortion trace in fascinating detail little-noted nuances in the evolving language of policy on the subject; the same is true of the almost eight pages on “marital sexuality and birth control.” Of course most, but not all, systematic statements on these practices have been issued in the last few decades. Nevertheless, few Mormons, even physicians, will have more than limited knowledge of the long-term process of development of LDS thought and policy on any of the subjects that Bush adroitly lays out.

The picture that emerges has significance beyond the health and medical area. It becomes, in Bush’s view, a paradigm for how the Church handles change in other matters: “The LDS record [on policies regarding sexuality] is notable for the insight it affords into the gestation and progress of Mormon doctrine, at least within the modern church” (178). The author usually does not attempt to shock us with any sort of exposé of these changes. Instead, he shows that where counsel on the health and medical issues has been modified, even where “core beliefs” have altered,

this [change] generally reflects an accommodation to new knowledge simply unreconcilable with the previous view. This development does not pose as much a challenge to church authority as might be supposed. It is in fact a tenet of the Mormon faith that this sort of refinement [continuing revelation] periodically will take place. (203)

A uniquely valuable contribution which Bush provides to help us understand this history is his demonstration that “despite the homogeneous stereotype many hold of the Mormons, a significant spectrum of views exists within [the membership of] the

church, which can be understood only in the context of the often unrecognized diversity of the past” (xiv). One consequence of that diversity is the inclusion in Mormon communities, “particularly among the so-called ‘splinter groups,’ [of] living reminders—embryological vestiges, as it were—of the history through which Latter-day Saint thought has passed” (203). For example, Bush sees the sympathy for herbal medicine evident today among many Mormons as a carry-over from the widespread belief in herbal treatment of illness in America and the Church during the nineteenth century (89).

Throughout the book, clear evidence is given documenting changes in Church policy or guidance. These have been, he generalizes, “invariably . . . in the direction of greater conformity to the general medical and social consensus on the subject” in American society (202). Despite this accommodative trend, he believes that a “core of [Mormon] ethical concern” has held constant. This core, he says, is

tied to central tenets of the faith: the centrality of marriage and children; the overriding importance of maintaining family harmony and stability and protecting the health and well-being of mother, children, and ‘tabernacles-to-be’; the preservation of free agency and personal accountability; and the total unacceptability of decisions based on “selfish” rationales. (203)

He believes that “personal accountability” before God is increasingly being called upon as a solution to health issues. “It seems likely that the church eventually will move further in this direction and substantially limit the circumstances in which it calls members to account in the here and now” (203).

Despite my obvious admiration for the book, I wish gaps in the treatment of several areas had been filled. The approach is, understandably, very physician-oriented—perhaps too much so. “Modern scientific” medicine, of course, has had the most obvious impact on Church policy (we are told on pages 200–201 that a committee of LDS doctors is regularly called upon to advise Church authorities on medical matters). But we would have been helped by some consideration, besides the author’s historical attention to herbal medicine, of competing medical systems—at least chiropractic and homeopathic medicine. (For example, may fast

offering money be used to pay for these forms of treatment?) The international spread of the Church particularly calls for discussion of alternative theories of disease and treatment, yet nothing of substance is offered in this volume about conditions among Church members beyond the United States. The discussion is largely Salt-Lake-centric—it looks out and down from the top—like most other treatments of Mormon history, in part because the written sources stem from the center.

The possibility of a wholly different, more ethnographic, view looking from the folk level upward, is hinted at in a single paragraph that states in part, “On occasion the membership at large simply has reached such an overwhelming degree of consensus on a subject, individually and privately, that church leaders in essence ratify their judgment” (201).

Another area that could have been discussed is the role of family and kin in health and medical matters. Some factors I would like to see researched are home doctoring and remedies, lay people’s opinions of professional medical personnel, financial and other support from extended family during illnesses, and transmission through family lines of knowledge and notions about health and illness. At one point, Bush mistakenly says that the home teachers as ward representatives are the first ones called upon to anoint for healing (181), but actually family members are given priority. A related line of inquiry might well be how members explain the fact that health and medical problems are suffered by those they consider their spiritual betters, “the Lord’s anointed.”

Grateful as we should be for this pioneering overview, it is evident that much more could be written on every one of the subjects Bush treats. When he or others proceed with expanded studies, I suggest that more comprehensive use be made of conventional resources in the hands of Mormon historians. The cryptic historical sketches in this book need to be reconciled with more conventional interpretations by historians whom Bush hardly acknowledges. For example, Milton V. Backman, Jr., and Richard O. Cowan’s *Joseph Smith and the Doctrine and Covenants*² contains reminiscences about the origin and influence of section 89 that give a different perspective about how mandatory the Word of Wisdom was thought to be by the early Church.

The American history context of section 89 is also simplified. For example, Bush states, “While in some aspects prescient in the warnings it offered Latter-day Saints of another century, Mormonism’s early health code did not depart appreciably from the conventional wisdom of its day” (51). This statement dodges a key point, that “the conventional wisdom” of nineteenth-century America was a hodgepodge, not a consistent body of belief. Bush does not explain how section 89 omitted so much of that potpourri while hitting valid targets so often. I suspect that Bush is not interested in “Mormon history” per se and so has given its literature short shrift, and he pays even less attention to the apologetic or devotional literature. This lack of interest in history is demonstrated notably by his citing only a single book, that of Jan Shipps, in his skeletal sketch of LDS history (1-7). Her volume is of some interest but makes an odd selection for the sole historical reference in an introduction to Mormonism.

With few exceptions, the author uses language that does not demean the Church or its authorities and is not scathingly revisionist. Some sensitive readers might consider the frequent use of quotation marks around Mormon expressions condescending or ironic; I do not, especially given the general religious and medical audiences intended for the book.

The book is adequately edited, printed, and bound. Unfortunately, its price, much higher than typical for LDS books, will restrict readership among Church members.

Nobody who desires to understand the historical and contemporary Church should fail to read this volume—and then build upon it to go beyond its insights.

NOTES

¹ Douglas James Davies, *Mormon Spirituality: Latter Day Saints in Wales and Zion* (Nottingham: University of Nottingham, 1987; distributed by Utah State University Press).

² Milton V. Backman, Jr., and Richard O. Cowan, *Joseph Smith and the Doctrine and Covenants* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992).

EUGENE ENGLAND, ed. *Bright Angels and Familiars: Contemporary Mormon Stories*. Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992. xx; 348 pp. \$19.95.

Reviewed by Patricia Mann Alto, a high school English teacher in Ukiah, California.

Academics have recently been inundated with demands to include in what has been called a Eurocentric canon more literature from other cultures. Such inclusion would necessitate exclusion of some standard material to make room in crowded curriculums, yet the multiculturalists contend that students derive great satisfaction in literature written by or relating to their own cultures. After reading *Bright Angels and Familiars: Contemporary Mormon Stories*, I better understand the deep satiety that comes from seeing one's culture explained, explored, and enhanced in what would be in anyone's book good literature. Fortunately—or not—this book's inclusion in the Mormon canon of literature would not precipitate bumping much material off the short list of what one should read. Mormons are just now coming into their own in the realm of good literature.

England explores this coming of age in his introductory essay, "The New Mormon Fiction," which stands as one of the best parts of the book. He has peeled back the academic verbiage and scholarly pretension that often accompany such an undertaking and offers a lucid and concise history and explanation of Mormon fiction. After tracing Mormon literature from early apology and satire through "home literature" and the "lost generation," he introduces the crop of well-schooled writers who now are defining a Mormon voice both in the Church and in the larger world. England, a professor of English at Brigham Young University, has a broad view of literature from the perch he has taken, straddling—or perhaps bridging—the realms of a convinced Mormon and of a liberally educated man of letters. For example, he writes of the home literature movement without attacking or apologizing for its "didactic and sentimental" stories (xii). He explains that Orson F. Whitney, concerned about the influences of the world on the early Utah Saints, promoted homegrown poetry and fiction for Church members by such writers as Susa Young Gates and

Nephi Anderson. England notes that this writing, aimed at combating evil from without, was “based more in dogma than experience” (xii). And he discusses what such literature meant to Mormon readers after its inception in the 1880s.

By the 1940s, according to England, the lost generation of Mormondom—writers such as Vardis Fisher, Maurine Whipple, Virginia Sorensen, and Samuel Taylor—created a new body of literature, written by and about Mormons, but acclaimed by non-Mormons nationally far more than by the Mormon milieu. England compares these writers with America’s “lost generation,” noting “their impatience with their culture and expatriation from their people” (xii), but nonetheless dedicates the collection to Sorensen and Whipple with the note “they taught us how.” Both writers are represented in the collection, as are two of those “taught how,” Douglas Thayer and Donald R. Marshall, whom England dubs “pioneers of a second generation” (xiii). Thayer and Marshall benefited from having studied both the lost generation’s approaches to Mormon culture and the works of modern British and American authors. When the 1960s brought *Brigham Young University Studies* and *Dialogue*, the spate of new writers England describes found vehicles to publish their contemporary literature.

England explains that he selected the stories because they were Mormon and contemporary, offering insights into Mormons’ own kind of ethnicity and “mythic vision,” which he claims are the stuff of “good and characteristic literature” (xviii). Whether the stories are actually about Mormons or not, the authors have been influenced, England maintains, by the way Mormonism has impacted their beliefs. He contends, rightly I think, that the stories he has selected are good partly because they are expressions of minds which “reveal, develop, and challenge the shape of Mormon beliefs” (xviii) and partly because they provide insights into both the physical and the spiritual worlds: “Thus the title reminds us that the best Mormon fiction concerns both bright angels of spiritual reality and the familiar, beautiful world in which we live and create our being” (xix).

I agree that the stories are good. They have the advantage of all short fiction: they are accessible to the busiest of us since they

can be consumed and considered in one sitting. They are well-formulated, well-peopled, well-told tales. They are certainly not hampered by the old mediocrity Mormons have sometimes wallowed in, willing to forego excellence and connection through real experiences for that which is uplifting only according to the standard set by home literature.

My only problem with the book comes with the double bind created by its diversity. While almost anyone will find something intriguing and satisfying here, any ordinary reader will also find some stories to disregard. The very variety of the selections thus becomes a drawback for casual readers, few of whom would find all the stories to their tastes. For example, I am no fan of science fiction, and I would ordinarily have skimmed over Orson Scott Card's "The Fringe." (Being forced to read it for my review, I must admit, has caused me to consider re-evaluating that stance.) Not a lover of fantasy, I was caught up in the skillful crafting of Maurine Whipple's "They Did Go Forth" but found the element of myth did not suit my tastes since it was so unrealistic in the face of Mormon folk myth and legend. Somehow, the folk tales ring more true than the literary ones. Likewise, some stories, such as Darrell Spencer's "I Am Buzz Gaulter, Left-Hander," John Bennion's "Dust," and M. Shayne Bell's "Dry Niger," are not stories my taste would have led me to. In fairness to the excellence of the writing of these tales, there are many other readers who would find these stories more fascinating than the stories I personally liked best.

For example, I sympathize completely with the women in some of the stories. In Eileen Gibbons Kump's "Sayso or Sense," we see that men have the sayso, while women have the sense. Karen Rosenbaum's "Hit the Frolicking, Rippling Brooks" gives us a glimpse of the educated female intellectual coming face-to-face with the clichés of cultural Mormonism, while in Pauline Mortensen's "Woman Talking to a Cow" a woman in a difficult family situation unburdens herself to perhaps the only one who will hear her—the family cow. These tales might whiz over the heads of many beloved men because the stories are out of these men's frames of reference. But my experiences made the tales as meaningful as my lack of experiences made other stories obscure.

Anyone who has ever lived in an LDS ward will enjoy my personal favorites: the stories—some funny, some not so funny—that tell *about* Mormon life without erasing the warts or hiding the human frailties that we've gossiped about among ourselves but would deny if made public. I felt a palpable joy in seeing familiar scenes—even some of the family's dirty laundry—common to the Mormon experience described via excellent writing. Phyllis Barber's "At the Talent Show" and Virginia Sorensen's "Where Nothing Is Long Ago" confront the child's struggle with the adult view of the world. Levi S. Peterson writes of the conflict between love for and self-preservation from the difficult member in "The Christianizing of Coburn Heights." And then we read of the covert—and sometimes not so covert—warfare that brews in some Gospel Doctrine classes. Neal Chandler draws this situation so well in "Benediction" that I wonder, after having read this story, when I will be able to go to a Sunday School class without having to stifle a giggle as the closing prayer commences.

Then there are the stories that make us look inside our individual hearts and lives. "Lost and Found" by Michael Fillerup is one. A tale of a man lost to everyone but the little Navajo LDS branch he serves as the only priesthood bearer shows the implications of being lost and of being found. The story begs for rereading. I commanded a friend to read this story because it left me with an urgent need to discuss it with someone else.

The stories contain compelling characters to add to our list of intimates, real or imagined, with whom we share the world. One agonizes with the newly returned missionary taken out to kill in Douglas Thayer's "Opening Day" and rejoices with Thalia Beale's escape from Ephraim to Carmel in "The Week-end" by Donald R. Marshall.

Space limitation precludes just exploration of the individual tales in the book. They are so well concocted that anyone with an appetite for fine literature will find a banquet here. Those who are interested in reading good stories will find plenty to feed their tastes as well. The stories do not apologize for our faithfulness, our faithlessness, or even our faith, as some pieces by the lost generation seemed to. They do not preach from the desperate and

emotional call to didactic perfectionism that was portrayed as real life in the home literature movement. England's selections bubble from the day-to-day experiences of living—not idealized—Saints in the latter days, and they ring true because the connections are so real.

To top the volume off, England gives an extensive bibliography of other notable Mormon stories and collections and describes the work of those represented in the anthology, providing a place to launch—or continue—the quest for works by Mormon writers or about Mormon culture.

Recently, a friend and I were discussing the Church as a huge tent covering a variety of people. Some cling tightly to the center pole. Others wander very close to the edges but are still covered by the same tent. While no one would likely consider *Bright Angels and Familiars* ground-breaking in contemporary fiction, it conjures magic for those interested in the Mormon culture; it reaches to all ends of the tent, thereby telling us more about ourselves and allowing us to become more intimately acquainted with a range of bright angels, fainter angels, familiars, and not-so-familiars.

STEPHEN E. ROBINSON. *Are Mormons Christians?* Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1991. ix, 133 pp. Index. \$8.95.

DANIEL C. PETERSON and STEPHEN D. RICKS. *Offenders for a Word.* Salt Lake City: Aspen Books, 1992. xiv, 212 pp. Bibliography, index. \$9.95.

Reviewed by Paul Hedengren, Professor of Philosophy, Brigham Young University.

Offenders for a Word and *Are Mormons Christians?* both address the familiar criticism that Latter-day Saints are not Christian. In different ways, each book argues that it is erroneous to claim that Mormons are not Christians.

Stephen E. Robinson's *Are Mormons Christians?* considers several general reasons given by critics for excluding Latter-day Saints from the category of Christians. For each reason, the book shows that exclusion is unjustifiable on religious, doctrinal, and historical grounds. Robinson considers criticisms that exclude Latter-day Saints by definition, by misrepresentation, by name-calling, by tradition, and on the grounds of canonical or doctrinal differences, especially those relating to the Latter-day Saint concept of God.

Daniel C. Peterson and Stephen D. Ricks's *Offenders for a Word* identifies twenty-two specific claims that have been made to support the proposition that Latter-day Saints are not Christian. The book then critically responds to each of those claims, primarily on historical, rhetorical, and linguistic grounds.

Each book does an admirable job supporting its arguments with appropriate historical sources. Both books are well written, but Robinson's is easier reading. Robinson presumes that his reader is basically familiar with, if not sympathetic toward, Latter-day Saint sources and concepts. Without encouraging contention, he hopes to help LDS Church members form "an intelligent and informed response" (viii). Peterson and Ricks have written to a more erudite audience with an interest in early Christian history, theology, and semantics. Both books are well documented, but *Offenders* is the more copiously footnoted of the two. Both volumes reason effectively against the objections some critics have

raised in urging that Mormons should not be called Christians. Each provides the reader with ample resources to reply to many common—and some not-so-common—arguments.

The books differ most significantly in the degree to which specific critics are identified and cited. Robinson rarely identifies the objectors. Sometimes he simply and effectively presents a personal experience in which he confronted a particular type of objection. Peterson and Ricks regularly identify the main critics and cite their publications.

Each approach has its advantages. By not citing specific critics, Robinson avoids promoting critics whose arguments are often insufficiently rational to warrant the serious attention of scholars. Were it not for the social influence of the critics and their effect on the uninformed, it is doubtful that such careful analysis of some of these objections would ever take place. By identifying specific critics, Peterson and Ricks facilitate further inquiry into the claims of these critics and give a clear sense of the hate motivating some of them. Such awareness dissipates complacency about maintaining religious freedom as a right.

But what of the central issue: Are Latter-day Saints Christian? This seems a simple question, one that should be easily answered in the affirmative. We could simply go to a dictionary to find explicitly stated common meanings of the term *Christian* and then examine whether Latter-day Saints meet this definition.

Robinson begins his book quoting the *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* definition of the word *Christian*. In part it reads: "One who believes or professes or is assumed to believe in Jesus Christ and the truth as taught by him" (1). Robinson's main point is that Latter-day Saints are Christians by this definition, since they believe in Jesus Christ and the truths taught by him (113–14). Thus, for example, excluding Mormons from the classification of Christian for a reason "that is [not] based . . . on one's belief in Christ" (43) is fallacious.

Given this definition, to deny that Latter-day Saints are Christian, one must either show that they do not believe in Jesus Christ or that they reject some truth taught by him. Nothing else will do. Yet contemporary critics regularly give other grounds for denying

that Latter-day Saints are Christians. Obviously, those critics are either illogical or have a different definition of *Christian* in mind; but if the focus of discussion can be kept to Webster's definition, it is very difficult for critics to defend logically the claim that Latter-day Saints are not Christian.

For example, if someone asserts that Latter-day Saints are not Christian because they reject the Nicene doctrine of the Trinity, the response is simple: *According to authoritative dictionaries, a Christian is one who believes in Jesus Christ and the truths he taught. Latter-day Saints do both. While they deny that Jesus taught the Nicene doctrine of the Trinity, can it be shown that Jesus taught this doctrine? He did not.* For good measure, one might add that the doctrine of the Trinity is not found in the teachings of the early Christians (Robinson, 88). But for Latter-day Saints to be Christian, it is only necessary to show that Jesus did not teach this doctrine.

The underlying issue, however, is often whether Webster's definition will suffice. And this is where Peterson and Ricks take up the argument. Most of their book is a study of definitions: How does the New Testament define *Christianity*? How do the Latter-day Saints compare with the earliest Christians? And if the early Christians were Christians, why aren't Latter-day Saints?

Offenders responds to the critics' claims in terms of what *Christian* means and who is in a position to determine its meaning. Allegations include assertions that Latter-day Saints worship a different Jesus, reject the divinity of Jesus, and believe in an anthropomorphic God; and that they believe man can become like God, the world was not created out of nothing, and human spirits had a premortal existence. These points overlap to a fair degree with several of Robinson's subsidiary points. *Offenders* then traces in considerable detail each supposedly non-Christian doctrine back to the teachings of early mainstream Christians or shows that the objection is otherwise ill conceived or illogical. The book ends with a hard-hitting essay on the abused and abusive term *cult* that many critics use propagandistically to stigmatize Latter-day Saints.

Both books clearly show that despite the newness of the claim that Mormons are not Christian, there is really nothing new in anti-Mormon literature. In the past, critics claimed that various Latter-day Saint doctrines and nondoctrines were false or strange. They now argue that Latter-day Saints are not Christian on account of such doctrines. The task of the defender of Latter-day Saint doctrine remains basically the same today as it was a century ago: show that the doctrines of the Restoration were taught anciently, are biblical, and are credible and true. What is new is the illogical allegation that on account of some Latter-day Saint doctrine, which is not shown to be inconsistent with the teachings of Jesus, Latter-day Saints are not Christian.

The thorough and clear examinations of these underlying criticisms make *Are Mormons Christians?* and *Offenders for a Word* exceptionally valuable additions to Mormon apologetics. These books will probably not put a stop to the efforts of extreme fundamentalists who seek to exclude by definition Latter-day Saints (as well as Catholics and many others for that matter) from the Christian fold. But the careful research and sincere expressions of Christian faith presented by the authors of *Are Mormons Christians?* and *Offenders for a Word* should provide answers to anyone who wonders how Latter-day Saints see themselves as Christian.

Brief Notices

*Ancient American Inscriptions:
Plow Marks or History?*

by William R. McGlone and others
(Early Sites Research Society, 1993)

The authors of this book have been actively studying for a decade and a half the apparent inscriptions throughout North America claimed by some (notably Barry Fell; see *BYU Studies* 17 [Spring 1977]: 373-75) to be in pre-Columbian scripts and languages from Europe and Africa. This "American epigraphy" and resulting purported decipherments have been condemned as fraudulent or ignorantly self-deceptive by conventional archaeologists. However, these archaeologists have not put forth serious effort to research the material firsthand.

These five authors (scientists in fields other than archaeology) have produced a genuinely critical book about American epigraphy as a basis for reliable investigation to replace past name-calling. They summarize what is known about scores of purported inscriptions, point out weaknesses in the arguments of the proponents, and make clear how baseless are many of the counterclaims of establishment experts. Despite serious problems they see with the evidence, they conclude it "is sufficiently strong to justify formal evalua-

tion . . . by conventional scholarship" (339). To that end, they make systematic, operational suggestions about methods for further study that could break the impasse.

Chapter 12 may be of particular interest to Utahns since it discusses an inscription panel from Rochester Creek in central Utah which includes "Egyptian"-looking elements. (The second of the authors is a Utahn but not a Mormon.)

—John L. Sorenson

The Quality of Mercy

by Eugene England (Bookcraft, 1992)

If there exists one quality at once capable of both bringing about world peace and enhancing individual spirituality, that quality is surely mercy, which England equates to charity. England's book is a collection of twelve personal essays on mercy tied together by the author's commentary every three chapters. The essays explore many facets of mercy, including the dichotomy between mercy and justice and Christ as our model of mercy.

In one essay, England challenges us to end world hunger by the year 2000, calling that goal our "primary human task" (120). He makes "two simple, if rather dramatic, proposals" for fulfilling this

goal: divert a percentage of existing arms budgets “to meet the third world’s basic needs” (131) with the hope that the money thus spent on food would be an investment in peace and would preclude the necessity to sustain large arsenals; and have those of us who live in earth’s wealthier nations make fast-offering-like contributions to people in impoverished nations, with the understanding that *any* effort is infinitely superior to *no* effort.

The book is weakened somewhat by too much emphasis on anecdotal information; the many resultant diversions from the topic of mercy might be distracting to some readers. Nevertheless, the book contains many nuggets of wisdom and is ultimately strengthened both by its organization and by a reasonable balance between descriptions of mercy and explanations of how to live a merciful life.

—Bruce R. Gelder

Great Basin Kingdom: An Economic History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830-1900

by Leonard J. Arrington (Reprint, University of Utah Press, 1993)

The University of Utah Press and Tanner Trust Fund deserve commendation for issuing an attractive reprint edition in paperback of *Great Basin Kingdom*, printed in a welcome, larger type size. A new preface by Arrington recounts the circumstances surrounding the writing of this book and places the book within the context of contemporary scholarship. Although

thirty-five years have passed since the original publication of *Great Basin Kingdom*, it remains the preeminent work in Mormon economic history and one of the best studies in western American economic history.

As Arrington notes in his preface, *Great Basin Kingdom* “anticipated some of the interests and concerns of the New Western History” (xvii). Important differences, however, separate this volume from most of the New Western History. *Great Basin Kingdom* is primarily a study of Mormon economic institutions and policies, and it was written largely—although not exclusively—from the top down. While most works within the New Western History place environmental degradation and conflict between ethnic and racial groups at the center of their analysis, such issues surface only fleetingly in Arrington’s work.

This book remains valuable for new generations of scholars not so much because it addresses issues at the forefront of fashionable, contemporary scholarly analysis, but because of its encyclopedic coverage and invigorating interpretation of Mormon economic history to 1900. Arrington’s riveting, near-tragic account of the “great capitulation”—the Mormon retreat from distinctive economic institutions and cooperative policies to economic individualism and private enterprise—remains essential reading for Mormons seeking to understand the values embedded in their religious heritage and culture.

—Brian Q. Cannon

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