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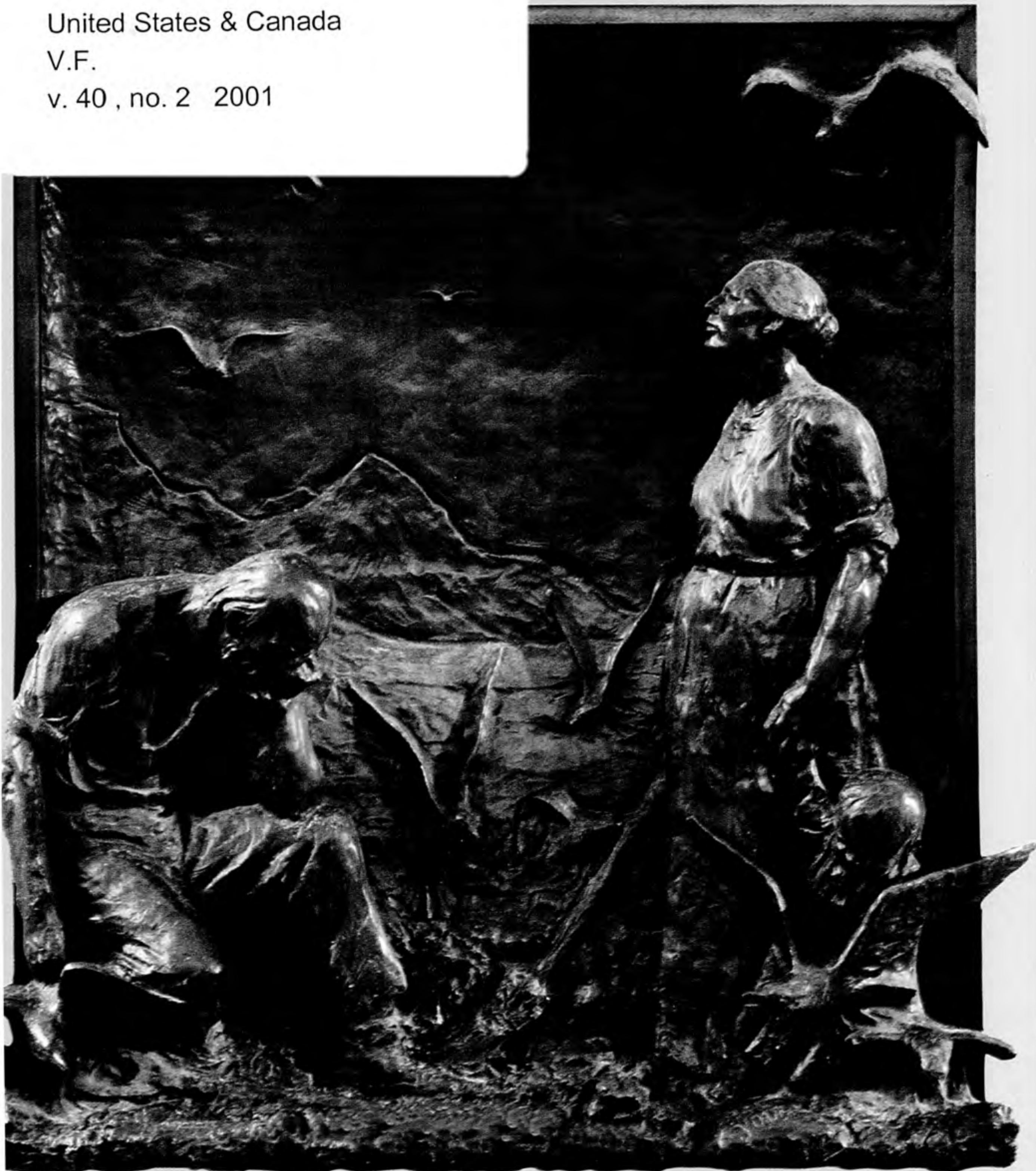


BRIGHAM, AN ABRAHAMIC FIGURE  
FATHER BRIGHAM AT HOME  
THE LION AND THE LIONESS  
NOVELS AND THE KINGDOM  
KIERKEGAARD AND THE APOSTLE  
MORMON ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

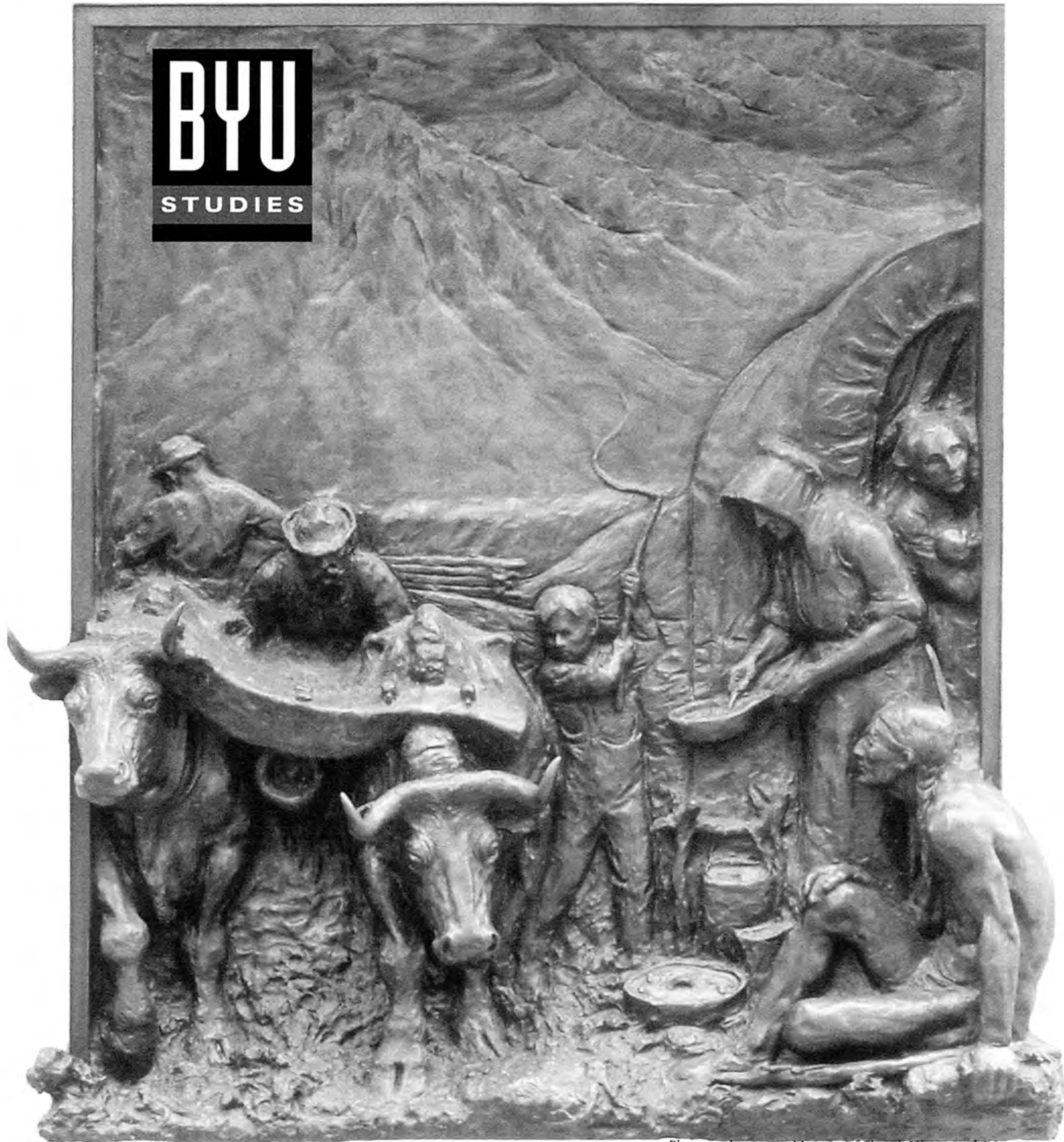
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**BYU**  
STUDIES



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**A MULTIDISCIPLINARY LATTER-DAY SAINT JOURNAL**

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*BYU Studies* is dedicated to the correlation of revealed and discovered truth and to the conviction that the spiritual and the intellectual can be complementary and fundamentally harmonious avenues of knowledge. This periodical strives to explore scholarly perspectives on LDS topics. It is committed to seeking truth “by study and also by faith” (D&C 88:118) and recognizes that all knowledge without charity is nothing (1 Cor. 13:2). It proceeds on the premise that faith and reason, revelation and scholarly learning, obedience and creativity are compatible; they are “many members, yet but one body” (1 Cor. 12:20).

Contributions from all fields of learning are invited. *BYU Studies* strives to publish articles that openly reflect a Latter-day Saint point of view and are obviously relevant to subjects of general interest to Latter-day Saints, while conforming to high scholarly standards. *BYU Studies* invites poetry and personal essays dealing with the life of the mind, reflections on personal and spiritual responses to academic experiences, intellectual choices, values, responsibilities, and methods. All personal essays received will be entered in our annual personal essay contest. Short studies and notes are also welcomed.

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*Back*: Robert Keiser (1939–), *Brigham Young*. Bronze, 1996. Photograph courtesy Museum of Church History and Art.

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Brigham Young, ca. 1864. Courtesy Brent F. Ashworth.



# Guest Editors' Introduction

Richard L. Jensen and Jed Woodworth

“Let us now praise famous men,” a line from Ecclesiasticus, a second-century B.C. Jewish text, directs attention to renowned leaders of ancient Israel. James Agee and Walker Evans’s 1939 publication, taking this same phrase for its title, alludes to common men and women whose silent deeds of heroism have been overlooked.<sup>1</sup> In Brigham Young, second president of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, these two images combine. A man of humble New England heritage, limited in formal schooling but mighty in public speaking, Brigham Young rose to prominence as a leader of tens of thousands. Yet even today, many of his silent, heroic deeds have gone unrecognized.

June 1, 2001, marked the bicentennial of President Young’s birth, and in commemoration this issue of *BYU Studies* features four essays and two edited documents about Brigham Young. Shorter versions of the essays were first presented at symposia sponsored by the Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for Latter-day Saint History, Brigham Young University, in 1998 and 1999.

We begin with a document that introduces Brigham Young’s assessment of Mormonism. A little-known Eastern periodical posed the question, “What is the mission of the Mormons?” and later published Brigham Young’s 1869 answer and his conclusion that “a happy, contented and united people” evidenced Mormonism’s divine origins.

Next, Elder John K. Carmack invites readers to see Brigham Young as an Abraham-like figure whose fatherly concern guided the Saints in their “Western Canaan.” While he finds the widely accepted comparison of Brigham Young with Moses “apt,” Elder Carmack locates the “fullest and most memorable” comparison in Abraham, the patriarch who established a covenant people in a new land. This comparison provides an insightful way of considering the entire scope of President Young’s ministry as a leader of the Latter-day Saints for three decades.

Dean C. Jessee continues with the theme of fatherhood. He argues that Brigham Young’s “strong sense of mission” guided his actions at home. Jessee’s portrayal of President Young as a parent shows a side of this pioneer prophet—a resolutely kind and attentive father—that may seem surprising in view of his public image as the “Lion of the Lord.” The tender words and acts that emerge in these paragraphs bring readers closer to understanding how very busy people can balance both public and private duties.

Jill Mulvay Derr investigates another dimension of family in Brigham Young's life. Writing on the relationship between Brigham Young and Eliza R. Snow, President Young's influential wife, Derr explores their relationship as poet and prophet, husband and wife, and president and presidentess. Derr shows how together these two established a model for a working partnership between men and women in the early history of the Church.

Although in many ways Brigham Young rejected the restrictive Puritanism of his own upbringing, he emphatically denounced the reading of novels. Richard H. Cracroft assesses the basis for that rejection. Arguing that Brigham Young's stance is best accounted for by his dislike of anything that would "distract" from the "central mortal purposes" of becoming a Saint and building Zion, Cracroft contextualizes antinovel views in American history. Cracroft's discussion suggests that what may yet be learned from President Young's views has as much to do with priorities in life as it does with novels themselves.

Concluding the material on Brigham Young is a newly discovered document written by Leopold Bierwirth, a German-American merchant, who recorded his impressions of Brigham Young while traveling through Salt Lake City in 1872. Donald Q. Cannon introduces the document and provides helpful footnotes for this insightful account.

Together, these essays and documents illuminate Brigham Young in ways that will help readers renew their appreciation for the rich legacy of his ministry. As a leader of modern Israel, Brigham Young's strong commitment to building God's kingdom has motivated Church members then and now. And as a husband, father, and teacher in his own family and throughout the Church, his words and actions give cause for introspection and emulation.

Let us now praise the name of Brigham Young!

---

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1. Ecclesiasticus 44:1; James Agee and Walker Evans, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men: Three Tenant Families* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1939).

# Brigham Young and the Mission of Mormonism

Jed Woodworth

For the most part, Brigham Young chose to ignore his critics, but on occasion he personally responded to them. The letter printed below contains Brigham Young's 1869 answer to a newspaper editor's question, "What is the mission of the Mormons?" Mormonism's fruits, Brigham attested, substantiated its faith claims.

This letter's context is rooted in social and economic change. In 1865, Brigham Young became a director of the Union Pacific Railroad Company. With this act, his desire to see a transcontinental railroad completed became public knowledge, giving unofficial notice to eastern financiers that he wanted Utah connected with the outside world. Brigham saw in the railroad an efficient way of transporting missionaries and immigrant converts. This purpose was largely lost on outsiders, many of whom saw in the railroad an opportunity to make money as well as a way to topple the Mormon kingdom.<sup>1</sup> "Mormonism Doomed," predicted the *Chicago Republican*. Elsewhere the naysayers' forecast was the same. Once completed, the railroad would intermingle peoples and interests sure to "crush the vile thing," Mormonism, by introducing a democratic civilization that would rid the nation of a "foul blot."<sup>2</sup> The editors had the plot scripted for the American reading public: relishing a freer world than they had ever known, the Saints would identify the shackles that held them down, rise up in disgust, and throw off the Mormon priesthood.

Brigham did not take these threats lightly. A guardian for the kingdom, he introduced a series of programs designed to protect the Saints against the coming days. Among these was a boycott of gentile merchants deemed hostile to the faith. Dissatisfied with the results, President Young intensified his efforts in October 1868 by inaugurating an ambitious system of cooperative merchandising. Every Mormon community, he announced, was to establish retail stores in which goods grown and manufactured by the Saints were to be sold. With this step, trading with outside merchants would be kept to a minimum, and the dependent economies that had stifled Mormon settlements in Ohio and Missouri could be avoided.<sup>3</sup>

Outside reaction to this new economic policy was predictable. Newspapers expressed displeasure in no uncertain terms. They saw the Saints, who had welcomed the railroad by offering their own labor, as now rejecting everything the railroad offered. Brigham Young never repudiated his

desire to see the road completed, but that mattered little to public perception. He was called “selfish,” and his followers were compared to minions of the “Grand Pasha of Turkey.” Long proclaiming themselves to be the persecuted, the Saints were now accused of being the persecutors.<sup>4</sup>

To correct these misimpressions, Brigham Young initiated a public relations campaign. While George A. Smith published answers to frequently asked questions, President Young explored ways to lay his own views before eastern readers.<sup>5</sup> When the *Religio-Philosophical Journal*, a spiritualist publication in Chicago, printed an editorial comparing LDS and RLDS traditions, President Young snatched the opportunity to respond. Except for minor punctuation changes, his letter was published as it was dictated.<sup>6</sup>

Brigham Young’s letter proclaims “peace and good will” to be Mormonism’s mission. By no means enemies to outsiders, the Saints sought to “unite the world in all that is good and praiseworthy.” Implicitly countering accusations that Mormonism suppressed the ignorant masses, Brigham described a “happy, contented and united people,” diverse in language and traditions but one in “hopes, desires and aims.” What more could a religion offer? Mormonism’s results, Brigham affirmed, attested to its inspiration: “by their fruits ye shall know them.” For Brigham Young, the unity that critics decried was actually evidence of Mormonism’s divine origins.

1. Brigham Young’s desire to see a transcontinental railroad completed was known to a limited number before this time. Previously, he had petitioned the federal government to build the road and subscribed \$5,000 in stock when the Union Pacific Railroad Company was organized. See Leonard J. Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom: An Economic History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830–1900* (1958; Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966), 236–37; “The Mormons,” *Salt Lake Weekly Telegraph*, April 29, 1869.

2. As quoted in Ronald W. Walker, *Wayward Saints: The Godbeites and Brigham Young* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1998), 98; and Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom*, 239.

3. Walker, *Wayward Saints*, 92–127; and Leonard J. Arrington, Feramorz Y. Fox, and Dean L. May, *Building the City of God: Community and Cooperation among the Mormons*, 2d ed. (1976; Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 79–91.

4. Journal History of the Church, November 12, 19, 29, 30, December 1, 1868, microfilm, copy in Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo.

5. George A. Smith’s “Answers to Questions” was published as *Deseret News* installments beginning November 10, 1868, and compiled in George A. Smith, *The Rise, Progress, and Travels of The Church . . .* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1869).

6. Brigham Young’s letter was published as “Voices from the People,” *Religio-Philosophical Journal* 5 (January 30, 1869): 3. A copy of the original letter can be found in Brigham Young Letter Books, 11:283–86, Brigham Young Office Files, Church Archives, Family and Church History Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City.

## Brigham Young's January 7, 1869, Letter

EDITOR OF THE RELIGIO-PHILOSOPHICAL JOURNAL—DEAR SIR:—A few days ago, a stray number of your interesting JOURNAL chanced to fall in my way. In its editorial columns, I noticed an article headed, "*The true Latter-day Saint's Herald*," which closed with the enquiry, "What is the mission of the Mormons is the question. Who will answer?" I now desire, with your permission, as a Mormon, and from a Mormon stand point, to state what we esteem to be our mission, and that of our holy religion.

The mission of Mormonism is distinctively one of peace and good will to the world. Its object is man's salvation; its basis is truth. All truth emanates from God, and is gauged by his word. The scripture says, "Thy word is truth." We not only regard all improvements marked in man's history as the result of inspiration, but also that all true religion is based upon continued divine direction. Those truths which more especially belong to man's religious nature, are generally termed the Gospel. The Gospel is God's plan for man's salvation. It teaches the perfect fatherhood of God, and the perfect brotherhood of man—that we all are the children of God, all the subjects of His care. It teaches us that as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive, and that through the grace of God, all by obedience to His word, can become inheritors to His promises, and that all His laws are in perfect harmony with man's nature, as he was created in the beginning and pronounced by the Creator, "very good." Further, that these laws teach men to be truthful, honest, chaste, sober, industrious, frugal and to love and practice every good word and work, consequently they elevate and ennoble man. Not only is man's spiritual part regarded by the Gospel, but his temporal nature also. He who called into existence the spirit of man organized his body also, and the laws of the Gospel, if fully obeyed, bring health and strength to the body, clearness to the perceptions, power to the reasoning faculties as well as salvation to the soul.

This is the Mission of "Mormonism;" what have the Mormons done to fulfill it?

It is now not quite thirty-nine years since our Church was established by revelation from heaven to Joseph Smith. The church then numbered six members. Since that time it has continued to grow and spread, notwithstanding the floods of persecution that have time after time threatened to overwhelm it. At last, driven from Illinois amidst untold privations and sorrows, the "Mormons" journeyed to the Great Salt Lake Valley, then one of the most desolate and barren portions of the great American desert. By industry and frugality, they have caused this desert to blossom as the rose; have filled its valleys with thriving towns and villages for hundreds of miles, and brought into cultivation the most feasible portions of the land.

This, of itself, difficult as the task has been, is not by any means our greatest labor or our chief success. A people possessing great enterprise, industry and frugality; might have brought about these same results, the most conspicuous of our toil; but when we turn to other phases of our mission and prove that "Mormonism" has sent forth its teachers to the ends of the earth, has gathered people of almost every tongue and creed under heaven, of the most varied educations and the most opposite traditions, and welded them into one harmonious whole, one in faith and in practice, with the same hopes, desires and aims, it is then we see the results that prove its divine inspiration, and its affinity to the Gospel taught by Jesus and his Apostles. A creed that can take the heterogeneous masses of mankind, and make of them a happy, contented and united people, has a power within it, that the nations know little of. That power is the power of God.

This labor to unite the world in all that is good and praiseworthy is the mission of the Latter-day Saints, and with the help of the Lord they intend to continue their labors until the knowledge of God shall cover the earth as the waters now cover the mighty deep, and His name shall be one in all the earth.

Such is our mission, and God will give us strength to fulfill it.

Very respectfully yours,

Brigham Young.

Salt Lake City, Utah Ter. January 7th, 1869.

# Father Brigham in His Western Canaan

John K. Carmack

If you were to paint a word picture of Brigham Young by comparing him to an earlier spiritual leader, to whom would you compare him? Maybe the most dramatic comparison comes from that pivotal moment when he spoke to nearly five thousand Saints gathered in Nauvoo to select those who would take the reins of leadership in the restored Church. To many, including my own forbears, as he delivered his address he looked and sounded like Joseph Smith.<sup>1</sup> Or perhaps, as Leonard Arrington did, you would compare him to Moses leading the children of Israel on a long and perilous exodus to a promised land.<sup>2</sup>

Despite those compelling candidates, the image I see is that of Father Abraham. Yes, the exodus from Nauvoo to the Great Salt Lake was vital and exciting and the comparison with Moses apt. We look back on that great event with pride much as the Jews have viewed the exodus of Israel from Egypt. But the portrait of President Young (fig. 1) that strikes me as being the fullest and most memorable is that of a great patriarch, a father like Abraham, presiding and directing the work of establishing a people, safe and free to follow their Prophet and gospel doctrines in the mountains and valleys that became their Western Canaan.

As great as was the achievement in transporting such a numerous people to these valleys, the successful establishment of a unique religious society in the desert seems even greater. President Young himself pointed out the Abrahamic nature of their quest and achievements:

We printed the first papers, except about two, set out the first orchards, raised the first wheat, kept almost the first schools, and made the first improvements in our pioneering, in a great measure, from the Mississippi river to the Pacific Ocean; and here we got at last, so as to be out of the way of everybody, if possible. We thought we would get as far as we could from the face of man; we wanted to get to a strange land, *like Abraham*, that we might be where we should not be continually wrong with somebody or other.<sup>3</sup>

In a stirring tribute, the Twelve who were serving with Brigham Young at the time of his death captured a compelling portrait of his leadership in this summary:

During the thirty three years that he has presided over the Church, since the martyrdom of the Prophet Joseph, his knees have never trembled, his hands have never shook; he has never faltered or quailed. However threatening the surroundings or prospects may have been, he has never been dismayed; but

at those times he has exhibited such serene confidence and faith, and uttered such words of encouragement, as to comfort and sustain all the people, and to call forth their love and admiration. The Lord, however, not only blessed him with valor, but He endowed him with great wisdom. His counsels, when obeyed, have been attended with salvation, and as an organizer and administrator he has no superior. . . .

His labors the Lord has crowned with most remarkable success, his words he has honored and fulfilled, and those who have obeyed his counsel he has blessed and upheld. The time will yet come when his presidency over the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints will be pointed to as an epoch of wonderful events.<sup>4</sup>

In this portrait, we see more than a man guiding a people through the wilderness; we see him in his Canaan exercising leadership, courage, wisdom, and counsel. We see a prophet organizing and administering a unique society. The father image seems to stand out.

### **Similarities between Abraham and Brigham Young**

Let's look at Abraham more closely to see if the comparison holds up under scrutiny. We first discover the scriptural Abraham in peril, in Ur of the Chaldees. In the midst of idolatry, apostasy, and unbelief, his life was in danger. In those circumstances, Abraham said in simplicity, "It was needful for me to obtain another place of residence" (Abr. 1:1). Jehovah spoke to him and thereafter guided him to safety. Abraham took his family, their goods, and the souls he had won to the gospel and departed his beloved homeland, traveling under Jehovah's protecting hand. The Lord showed him the land of his inheritance and gave it to him and his people. There, the Lord told him, he was to be "a minister to bear my name" (Abr. 2:6).

The comparisons here between President Young and Abraham are obvious. President Young and the Saints found themselves in peril in Illinois. Having been driven from Kirtland, Missouri, and now Illinois, it was needful for them to find another place of residence. The Lord Jehovah, having delivered them from their enemies (see D&C 136:40), guided them to a place far away from the nation that had rejected them and whose mobs, unchecked by rule of law or Constitution, threatened their destruction. Even the valley of the Great Salt Lake must surely have been reminiscent of Canaan with its salt sea. President Young described the spirit of revelation and vision that came over him as he entered the valley: "The spirit of light rested upon me and hovered over the valley, and I felt that there the Saints would find protection and safety."<sup>5</sup> They had found their Canaan! California, touted by Samuel Brannan, beckoned with its rich resources and fertile valleys, but California was not destined to be their Canaan. Brigham saw clearly that "this is a good place to make Saints."<sup>6</sup> Here he would minister as the Lord's prophet for another thirty years.



Daughters of Utah Pioneers



FIG. 1. Brigham Young, ca. 1867. Photographer Edward Martin.

Abraham, having found his Canaan, needed room for his growing family, fellow believers, flocks, and possessions. Because the land could not support all of them together, he implemented a plan for them to separate peacefully into differing areas. To build his great family, he followed Jehovah's direction by taking wives in addition to his beloved Sarah. "For I

know him," the Lord said, "that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord" (Gen. 18:19).

Following the Abrahamic pattern, President Young settled his people all over the Intermountain West. For example, President Young sent my great-grandparents to the muddy Little Colorado River area, where they helped found Joseph City, Arizona. The great-grandparents of my wife, Shirley, were sent to Oakley, Idaho. In that formative era, President Young established over four hundred communities in the American West. He also followed the principle of plural marriage that had been restored by divine command through Joseph Smith. As did Abraham, he set the example by raising a large family under the patriarchal order (fig. 2). The practice of plural marriage continued until its purposes were fulfilled. The Church, following revelation given to President Wilford Woodruff, returned to the general rule of monogamous marriage.

Jehovah could ask nothing that Abraham would not do, even to being willing to sacrifice his heir and only son through Sarah. With similar obedience and faith, President Young single-mindedly pursued the Lord's purposes:



**FIG. 2.** Brigham Young with some of his wives and children. In this engraving by J. S. Foy, Brigham Young is clearly perceived as a patriarch. The image was sold separately in Philadelphia and also printed in R. Guy McClellan, *The Golden State: A History of the Region West of the Rocky Mountains* (Philadelphia: William Flint, 1872), 525. Courtesy Gary L. and Carol B. Bunker.

I can say, truly and honestly, that the thought never came into my mind, in all my labors, what my reward will be, or whether my crown would be large or small, or any crown at all, a small possession, a large possession, or no possession. . . . All that I have had in my mind has been that it was my duty to do the will of God, and to labor to establish his Kingdom on the earth.<sup>7</sup>

As the society of Saints grew in the West, Brigham reestablished the Relief Society for women, organized the young women and young men for training and improvement, set up Sunday Schools, priesthood quorums, wards, and stakes. He sent people all over the world to preach the gospel and gave them minute instructions, conveying his fatherly concern. He confirmed the principle of tithing, set up special economic units called united orders, pounded away at Sabbath Day observance, required tremendous sacrifices of his people, and built a unified Abraham-like society.

To accomplish all he did, Abraham had to be down-to-earth and practical but also needed to have strong foundational values. When his nephew Lot and others were captured during a war, Abraham, in faith, took direct, practical action. He gathered his allies plus 318 of his own men to rescue the captives and regain the stolen goods. But in the context of the Lord witnessing his actions, he refused to retain for himself any of the spoils; he had foreseen what the results would be. Then he took the opportunity to offer tithes of all he had to Melchizedek, the keeper of the storehouse for the poor (Gen. 14; see also the JST version). Faith infused the realities of life.

President Young captured his own holistic, but practical, concept of religion in this familiar statement: “Our religion is simply the truth. It is all said in this one expression—it embraces all truth, wherever found, in all the works of God and man that are visible or invisible to mortal eye.”<sup>8</sup> He expanded on this practical view with these words:

If I am in the line of my duty, I am doing the will of God, whether I am preaching; praying, laboring with my hands for an honorable support; whether I am in the field, mechanic’s shop, or following mercantile business, or wherever duty calls, I am serving God as much in one place as another; and so it is with all, each in his place, turn and time.<sup>9</sup>

Through revelation, Abraham taught that life on earth is a time when God “will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them; . . . and they who keep their second estate shall have glory added upon their heads for ever and ever” (Abr. 3:25–26). In similar fashion, Brigham Young saw that life was a time to prepare for eternity and required constant improvement in the process:

The first great principle that ought to occupy the attention of mankind, that should be understood by the child and the adult, and which is the main spring of all action, whether people understand it or not, is the principle of improvement. The principle of increase, of exaltation, of adding to that we already possess, is the grand moving principle and cause of the actions of the

children of men. No matter what their pursuits are, in what nation they were born, with what people they have been associated, what religion they profess, or what politics they hold, this is the main spring of the actions of the people, embracing all the powers necessary in performing the duties of life.<sup>10</sup>

## A Fatherly Style

From documents in the Church's archives, a contemporaneous picture emerges of Father Brigham at work in his Western Canaan. The man we see is a practical Abraham-like father, with his eye on the establishment of a thriving and healthy Zion people. No detail was too small for his personal attention. A typical letter is one dated April 9, 1861, written to Bishop Hoagland of the Fourteenth Ward in Salt Lake City:

Dear Brother:—

I am informed that a Sister Huey, a small, blackeyed, widow woman, with five children, lately from South Africa, is living in br. Beatie's house in your Ward, and is in need of house room, a little land, and some assistance to give her a start toward enabling her to make a living. At your earliest convenience, I wish you to call upon her and see what assistance she needs, and what aid can be rendered toward giving her a start to earn her own livelihood, and oblige.

Your Brother in the Gospel,  
Brigham Young<sup>11</sup>

The archives are full of letters and documents showing this same care and concern for his people. He had little formal education, but through reading, conversation, and careful observation, he developed a vast store of knowledge about practical things.

Such knowledge and fatherly care are hallmarks of his journeyings. His itinerary included regular visits to the communities of southern Utah and all the villages and settlements along the way (fig. 3). George A. Smith, Church Historian and counselor to President Young, often accompanied him on those visits and in a letter dated October 30, 1854, shared President Young's counsel to the Saints of Manti: "He . . . instructed them how to deal with the Indians, showing them in what respects they had erred in their intercourse with them heretofore. He advised them to finish their city wall to the height of 15 feet."<sup>12</sup> He sometimes met with Indian leaders on these trips, such as a meeting with Squash just north of Springville.

In 1860 in Provo, he "reproved the brethren for not making a proper improvement of the facilities which were at their command." In Salt Creek, he recommended that the Saints "pull down the present meeting house and build a larger one." While in Manti, he officiated as umpire in a foot race. He "reproved the brethren at San Pete for not fencing their gardens and improving the streets." At Fort Ephraim, he "applauded the brethren for having so comfortable a meeting house." Reaching Salt Lake City after



FIG. 3. Brigham Young, traveling in caravan style. Some of the welcoming signs read, “The Lion of the Lord” and “God bless Brigham Young.” From T. B. H. Stenhouse, *The Rocky Mountain Saints: A Full and Complete History of the Mormons* (New York: D. Appleton, 1873), 647.

this 1860 trip, he had “travelled 280 miles, preached 20 times,” and “comforted the hearts of thousands of Saints who rejoiced to see him again.”<sup>13</sup>

The range and nature of Brigham’s instruction is detailed in an 1863 letter by George A. Smith:

The President’s sermons are complimented as eloquent, interesting, and instructive, and the congregations large; this is really true: the largest houses were insufficient to contain the people, the settlements turning out in mass and listened with eagerness, they were exhorted to live their religion, to humble themselves constantly before the Lord, pray in their families, to educate and instruct their children in the things of the Kingdom as well as in the common branches of education, to plant out grapes, figs, olives, and other fruits, and indigo, to make good gardens, imitating in that respect the garden of Eden, as near as they could.<sup>14</sup>

These little snapshots from President Young’s busy life paint a picture of him for us. The exodus was of crucial importance to Latter-day Saints, but the multitude of years in what I call the Western Canaan let us know Brigham’s Abrahamic focus. George A. Smith summed up the President’s loving labors on behalf of the people this way:

Cares multiply around him: he personally superintends every thing of a public nature, as far as possible: to conduct his private affairs would seem work

enough for anyone, his general appearance is careworn: he attends the balls every week, & is an accomplished dancer, . . . he personally superintends the theatre, visiting every portion of the house, almost every evening; he attends the Bishop's meetings; visits the endowment house on almost every occasion, . . . preserving in his communications with the brethren, the same simplicity of intercourse, and implicit dependence upon the Providence of God, as when he used to travel and preach without purse or scrip.<sup>15</sup>

Brigham Young's leadership style is most clearly seen in the Western Canaan years. Some think of Brigham as dictatorial and autocratic, but his was a fatherly or patriarchal style—an Abrahamic style—not a corporate one. As Leonard Arrington observed, "He was an extraordinary listener who gave those who spoke to him his total attention."<sup>16</sup> Brother Arrington also noted that the President "always sought others' opinions and the minutes of meetings show that people weren't afraid to differ vigorously with him."<sup>17</sup> He was common and direct in all he said and did but, like Abraham, wise and shrewd in his judgment of men and things.

### **Brigham Young and the Abrahamic Covenant**

Abraham's covenant with Jehovah was breathtaking in its scope. The promises went far beyond the patriarchal society Abraham established in Canaan. Those promises continue in effect today. The Lord promised him that his seed would be numerous; all nations of the earth would be blessed by his seed; Canaan would remain his home for an everlasting possession; Jehovah would bless his people with revelation from God and salvation for mankind. His grandson Jacob promised his great-grandson Joseph that his seed would spread "unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills" (Gen. 49:26). Thus the descendants of Abraham would eventually spread to the far reaches of the earth. The promises of the Abrahamic covenant applied to Brigham Young as well (as they can to us all): "This promise is yours also, because ye are of Abraham, and the promise was made unto Abraham. . . . Go ye, therefore, and do the works of Abraham" (D&C 132:31–32).

In contemplating those who have played a prominent role in fulfilling the promises made to Abraham, we think immediately of Moses, Isaac, and Jacob. We are less likely to think of modern events as part of the Abrahamic covenant, but Joseph Smith and Brigham Young have shouldered the latter-day burden of establishing a branch of Abraham in the top of the mountains at the utmost boundaries of the earth from Canaan. "And this shall be our covenant," Jehovah revealed to President Young before the westering journey, "that we will walk in all the ordinances of the Lord" (D&C 136:4). Like a latter-day Abraham, President Young became a great father to his people, a patriarch who taught them by example and precept to "enter ye into my law and . . . be saved" (D&C 132:32).

As part of establishing a righteous people and fulfilling the promises made to Abraham, Brigham Young built on his beloved Joseph's work by expanding missionary work, speeding up the gathering process, and constructing permanent temples wherein eternal families could be organized.<sup>18</sup> That he knew precisely what he was doing and building is evident in his words quoted here:

I have looked upon the community of the Latter-day Saints in vision, and beheld them organized as one great family of heaven; each person performing his several duties in his line of industry, working for the good of the whole more than for individual aggrandizement; and in this I have beheld the most beautiful order that the mind of man can contemplate, and the grandest results for the upbuilding of the kingdom of God and the spread of righteousness upon the earth.<sup>19</sup>

Surely President Young was in the Abrahamic pattern. The similarities in their roles are compelling. That is partly so because President Young was carrying on and fulfilling the promises made to our Father Abraham.

In the only revelation that came through Brigham Young and is included in the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord made known to him and to the Saints what had happened to them and what their place in dispensational history was. Note the tie-in with earlier gospel dispensations, including that of Abraham:

Thy brethren have rejected you and your testimony, even the nation that has driven you out. . . . Therefore, marvel not at these things, for ye are not yet pure; ye can not yet bear my glory; but ye shall behold it if ye are faithful in keeping all my words that I have given you, from the days of Adam to Abraham, from Abraham to Moses, from Moses to Jesus and his apostles, and from Jesus and his apostles to Joseph Smith, whom I did call . . . to bring forth my work; Which foundation he did lay, and was faithful; and I took him to myself. (D&C 136:34, 37, 38)

The Lord had placed his kingdom into Brigham's and the Saints' hands. The trust in President Young was not misplaced. He remained faithful and died with Joseph's name on his lips.<sup>20</sup>

## Conclusion

As Father Abraham had done, Father Brigham did a mighty work in removing his people from harm's way and establishing a firm, covenantal foundation for a growing Church that was destined to fill the earth. In many ways, he was a prophet like unto Moses who saved his people from a hostile community by leading them west to safety and security. But unlike Moses, Brigham was allowed to enter his Western Canaan, where this modern-day Abraham labored thirty years to put into practice the higher, revolutionary doctrines of salvation restored to the earth. Part of the

Abrahamic covenant to bless endlessly all kindreds on earth was fulfilled and expanded through President Young's leadership. The Church bears his stamp and has continued along the path he dug out of these mountains and valleys. As the Lord declared earlier to Abraham, "Through thy ministry my name shall be known in the earth forever" (Abr. 1:19). Like a latter-day Abraham, President Young became a great father to his people, a patriarch whose example and teachings will be remembered honorably as long as women and men exist.

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# “A Man of God and a Good Kind Father”

## Brigham Young at Home

Dean C. Jessee

On January 31, 1857, Brigham Young (fig. 1) walked into the Church Historian's Office in Salt Lake City and gave instructions that he wanted very little about his family included in the history of the Church.<sup>1</sup> His reticence no doubt stemmed from people's curiosity about the Mormon leader's polygamous lifestyle, which subjected his family to an inordinate amount of scrutiny and ridicule in the public press. Consequently, during his lifetime, the story of Brigham Young's family remained largely untold. Even now, the literature about Brigham Young focuses disproportionately on his public life, his accomplishments as Church President, colonizer, governor of Utah Territory, superintendent of Indian affairs, and businessman.<sup>2</sup> But in addition to these responsibilities, he was the patriarch of probably the largest family of any public figure in the history of the United States. Brigham Young's role as a parent is a subject that deserves closer scrutiny.

To appreciate what caring for Brigham Young's children entailed, it is necessary to define his family and consider his domestic experience in the context of his life as a whole. During the years plural marriage was practiced by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Brigham's family was one of the largest, consisting of fifty-six wives and fifty-seven children.<sup>3</sup> Sixteen of his wives bore his twenty-six sons and thirty-one daughters. He had no children with nine other wives, for whom he provided homes, support for their children from prior marriages, and an inheritance.<sup>4</sup> Two of these women divorced him, one in 1851 and the other in 1876. He exchanged eternity-only vows with thirty-one others who were not connubial wives. Many of these women received his support—some of them widows much older than he, such as Phebe Morton, the mother of his wife Mary Ann Angell; and Abigail Marks, the mother of his first wife, Miriam Works. Seven of these thirty-one, whose vows applied not for time but for eternity only, later asked for and received releases from their sealing.<sup>5</sup>

The sizable dimensions of his family extended far beyond anything he may have imagined at the time of his marriage to Miriam Works in Aurelius, New York, in 1824. His family with Miriam was rather small for its day. Two children were born to the couple before Miriam contracted tuberculosis and



FIG. 1. Brigham Young, ca. 1869. Daughter Susa Young Gates called this view her “favorite picture” of Brigham Young. Photographer Charles R. Savage. Courtesy Lurene Gates Wilkinson.

died in 1832. Thereafter, his domestic world would unfold in a context of unstable living conditions. The same year Miriam died, Brigham was converted to Mormonism, and three years later, he was appointed to the Church's Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Six more children were added to his family following his marriage to Mary Ann Angell in 1834. As a committed Apostle and diligent supporter of Joseph Smith, Brigham rose to the pinnacle of Church leadership within a decade. Demands upon his time and resources and the several moves that took the Church from New York to the Salt Lake Valley placed a heavy burden upon his household. Prior to his leading the Mormon migration to the Rocky Mountains in 1847, he had established successive homes in five states.

A major shift in the constitution of his family came in 1842 when he was introduced to the principle of plural marriage by Joseph Smith—a principle that tested Brigham Young severely. None “could have been more adverse to it than I was,” he stated.<sup>6</sup> But he became convinced that God required him to enter the practice, and by the time he settled in the Salt Lake Valley in 1848, he had exchanged marital vows with forty-three women and fathered eighteen children.

This enlarged family and Brigham Young's many Church duties restricted the time he was able to spend with his children. During the pre-Utah years, Brigham had been absent from his family for extended periods eleven times on Church proselytizing missions and other assignments, including a sojourn of nearly two years in England. In 1838–39, following the extermination order banishing the Latter-day Saints from the state of Missouri, Brigham Young supervised the exodus of the Church from that state in the absence of the Prophet Joseph Smith and other Church leaders, who were imprisoned. After Brigham's return from England, he took comfort in a revelation that informed him, “It is no more required at your hand to leave your family” and commanded him to take “especial care” of them “from this time, henceforth and forever” (D&C 126:1, 3). His ability to fulfill the revelation was severely taxed when the migration of the Saints from Illinois to the Salt Lake Valley created another major disruption for his family that lasted more than two years. Church and civic responsibilities during his Utah years would continue to limit his family time throughout the remainder of his life.

Despite these challenges, home was never absent from Brigham Young's consciousness. The welfare of his family was a constant concern.<sup>7</sup> From Philadelphia in 1843 he wrote to Mary Ann, “There is no place like home to me.” And while leading the pioneer company west in 1847, he commented, “I due [*sic*] think the Lord has blest me with one of [the] best famelyes that eney man ever had on the Earth.” Later the same year he lamented to another of his wives, “O that I had my famely here.” He said

that he would “rather be annihilated” than be deprived of his family. And his daughter Susa heard him say that if he failed in his family responsibilities he would arise in the morning of the Resurrection “to find that he had failed in everything.”<sup>8</sup> It was this strong sense of mission that guided Brigham Young’s words and actions as a committed and dedicated parent.

### **The Family Moved West**

The movement of Brigham Young’s family from Illinois to the Great Basin during the Mormon exodus of 1846–48 was an epic within an epic. Prior to 1846, Brigham had married twenty-one women, at least two of whom had died since the marriage ceremony. The fact that he was married or sealed to an additional nineteen women in 1846, the year he departed from Nauvoo to lead the exodus, added an overwhelming personal burden to his already immense public one. A glimpse of the challenge he faced in trying to care for his family while at the same time shepherding the exiled Saints across the plains is seen in surviving Church and family records. When Brigham left Nauvoo with fifteen wagons on February 15, 1846, to begin the migration west, fifty family members accompanied him.<sup>9</sup> The enumeration of the camp of Israel on March 27 at the Chariton River in Iowa reveals that among those traveling in the Young company were eleven of his wives, Mary Ann Angell’s six children, five other children from two of his wives’ previous marriages, and a handful of other relatives.<sup>10</sup>

According to prior arrangement, several of his wives traveled with their own parents or friends, while others remained in Nauvoo to come later. Eliza R. Snow, who had married Brigham Young in fall 1844, left Nauvoo on February 13, 1846, with the Steven Markham family and with them traveled across Iowa to the Missouri River. Along the journey west, she saw her husband on only rare occasions. Among those unable to leave Nauvoo with Brigham was Harriet Cook, who had given birth to an infant son (Oscar Brigham) just a few days before her husband’s departure. And Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner, who also remained behind, “had not means to go with the church, in fact, we could hardly get enough to eat.”<sup>11</sup> Other plural wives who were unable to leave Nauvoo with Brigham were Julia Foster Hampton, Mary and Margaret Pierce (Margarett Peirce), Elizabeth Fairchild, Augusta Adams Cobb, and Mary Ann Powers.

Emily Dow Partridge (fig. 2) was caring for an infant child (Edward Partridge Young, one of the first born in plural marriage) when she started the exodus west. Emily recalled being cold, hungry, and lonely, wandering from one campfire to another to obtain food and shelter. When the Brigham Young company left Mt. Pisgah, Iowa, on June 2, 1846, she and another plural wife, Zina D. Huntington, remained there to assist the Huntington family. They were not able to join the rest of the family at Winter



**FIG. 2.** Emily Dow Partridge Young (1824–99) and children. Like many of Brigham Young’s wives, Emily Dow Partridge Young faced incredible challenges as she traveled westward from Illinois while her husband shared time and energies with thousands of Saints attempting the same trek. Emily poses here (ca. 1851) with her son Edward Partridge Young and daughter Emily Augusta Young. Photograph attributed to Marsena Cannon.

Quarters until the following spring just before Brigham left to go further west at the head of the pioneer company. Even though reflecting upon her lonely plains experience after many years still brought tears, Emily explained that her husband was responsible for “the welfare of the whole people” and therefore “had not much time to devote to his family.”<sup>12</sup>

Nevertheless, Brigham’s correspondence during that time reveals his anxiety for those left behind and his efforts to find ways for them to join the rest of the family. For example, on March 15, 1846, he wrote to Harriet Cook:

Br. J. B. Noble will see that you are provi[d]ed for to come comfort[a]ble, and I want you to com[e] with him. . . . I expect Br. Babbott will get a good caredge or wagon and team for you and others. Br Noble will get a good man to drive it. It is likely Br. John Young and Even Greene, Sister Faney [Young] and others of my frends will come at the same time. I want you to see Sister

[Mary Ann Clark] Powers and have hir watch hir oportunity . . . and start with some one that will bring hir a peace with spead. . . .

I want you to see Sisters Mary and Margret Pears [Pierce], Br Robert Pears[']s daughters and see if ther Father is [coming]. If not get them along with you if you can. Br. Noble will bring the sister that is there. Sister Betsy [Elizabeth] Fairchilds [I] wish you could bring. give my love to them all. I want to see you and the little Boy. tell Sister Augusta Cobb I hope she will be blest[.] I want [to] see hir again. . . . be cherful and of good corouge Sister Hariott we shall soon meet again.<sup>13</sup>

The exodus uprooted families and upset routines. The Saints had to rely and depend upon one another to ensure the safety and welfare of each individual in the community. On the trek west, Brigham Young functioned as a father to all the Saints. Doing as much as he could for as many as he could, Brigham, in turn, had to rely on the assistance of others to care for many of his own wives and children until the Saints had all arrived in the Salt Lake Valley.

### **The Family Provided For**

Settlement in the Salt Lake Valley brought much-needed security to Brigham Young's family. There he gathered many of the scattered wives and children together. As a colonizer, Brigham Young was the moving force behind the founding of more than four hundred settlements in the American west. At the center of this domain was his own family enclosure, entered through a large gate crowned with an eagle and surrounded by a high adobe wall on the north side of Salt Lake City. To care for his family, Brigham built what could be described as a village within a city. This family complex eventually consisted of three residences, an office building, school, store, carpenter shop, shoe shop, blacksmith shop, carriage house, barns, a wood storage house, swimming pool, gardens, and orchards. As his family grew and their needs increased, he provided homes for some of them at other locations in Salt Lake City, Provo, and St. George.

When Brigham arrived in the Salt Lake Valley for good in fall 1848, a central objective was the care and comfort of his wives and children. Since the number of his wives and children had increased drastically in the recent years, he embarked on an ambitious building program to care for them. He selected for the settlement of his family an area east of the temple block. He established his wife Mary Ann Angell and her children in a storage building that later became "the corn crib" before he completed in 1851 a more substantial living space known as "the white house on the hill." He moved his younger wives and their children from the Old Fort (located in present-day Pioneer Park) to the Log Row, an L-shaped structure consisting of a long living room at the west end and five rooms in a row with openings

to the north. Meals for the family in that home were served in a common living room; a large brick oven was located a few steps from the door. The living room also served for a time as the meetinghouse for the Saints who lived in the upper part of the city, while Brigham Young's office occupied one corner of that room. At this early time, two other wives lived in three wagon boxes mounted on a stationary trellis adjacent to the Log Row. Another wife, Margaret Pierce, was housed in an upper room of a building that later became the milk house, which stood near the Log Row; she was living there when her son Brigham Morris was born in 1854. In a two-room adobe house west of the lot where the Lion House was later built, Brigham housed another two of his wives and his second eldest daughter. Upon completion of the White House (fig. 3), Mary Ann Angell resided there with her family, and it became a place where Brigham Young entertained visitors.

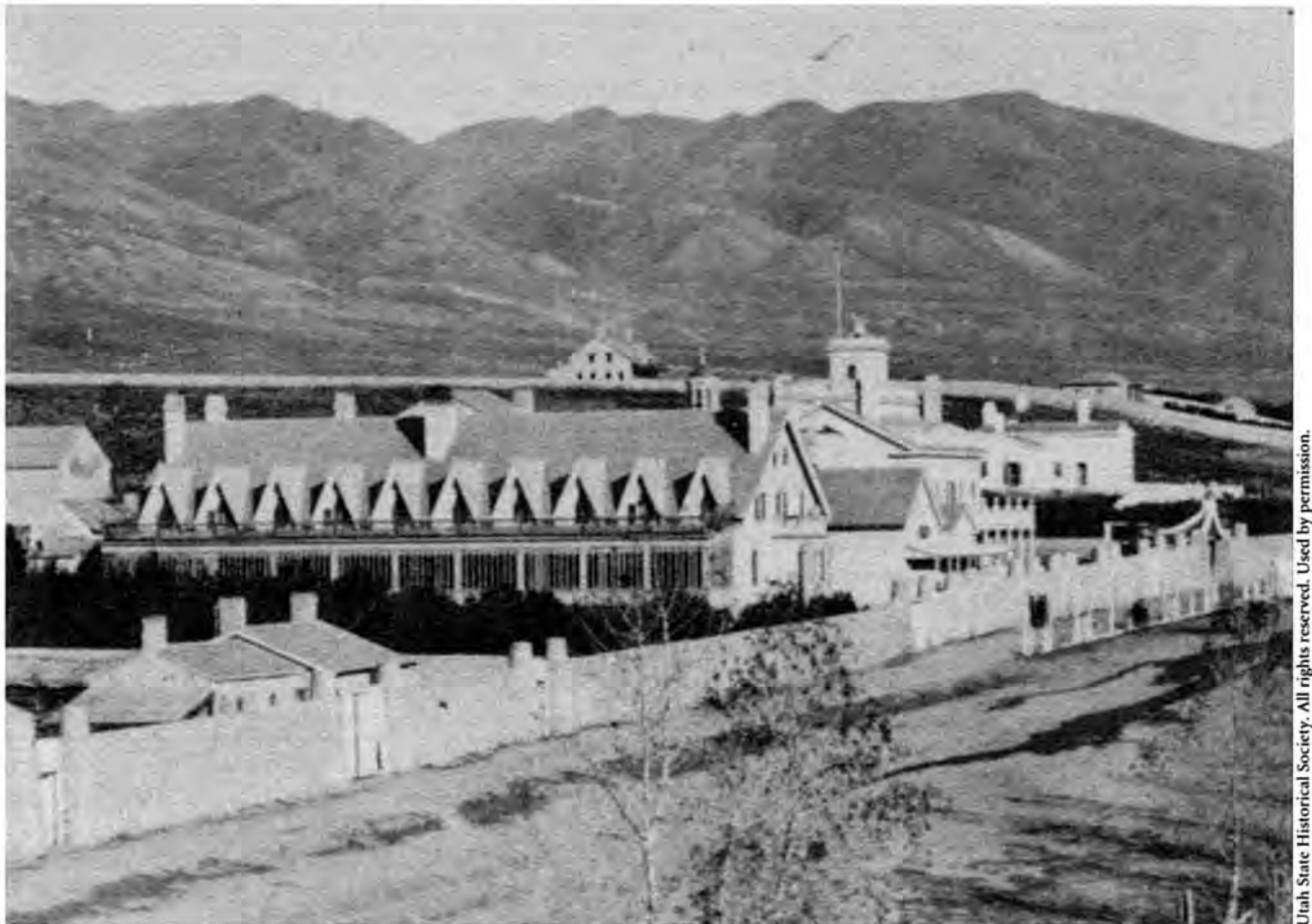
The block directly east of the temple was designated for Church purposes and included structures such as the tithing offices and the president's office. However, for convenient access to Church affairs and to his family, Brigham built on this block his official residence, the Beehive House, where Lucy Ann Decker, Brigham's first plural wife, was the primary resident. On the west side of his office he built the Lion House, a long, three-floor stone building with a ten-gable roof commenced in 1854 and completed in



**FIG. 3.** White House, ca. 1888. Brigham Young erected the White House from 1849 to 1851 as a residence for wife Mary Ann Angell and their five children. Standing on the north side of what is today South Temple between the Eagle Gate and A Street in Salt Lake City, the house was built of adobe bricks and covered with plaster. This photograph by Charles R. Savage shows the outlines of the shingled roof, said to be the first in Utah.

1856 (fig. 4). It became the home for his twelve other living wives who bore children and for a few who were childless. The lower floor contained a kitchen, a long dining room that accommodated from fifty to eighty people at a meal, and a schoolroom, where one of the wives, Harriet Cook, taught the children of the family and where recreational activities were carried out during winter months. The main floor consisted of nine sitting rooms or apartments for wives with young children and a large parlor for family gatherings; the upper floor contained twenty bedrooms occupied by childless wives and older children.

For about fifteen years, most of the family lived in the Lion House. But as the children multiplied and grew, Brigham built or bought separate homes for most of his wives.<sup>14</sup> First he provided a home nearby on State Street for Emily Partridge and her seven children, who later occupied a two-story residence on Fifth East. Then he provided homes for the various



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**FIG. 4.** Brigham Young family enclosure, ca. 1869. The Lion House's ten gables stand out prominently in this view of the Young family compound looking northeast from South Temple Street. Completed in 1856, the Lion House had more than two dozen rooms including a long dining room, where Brigham, his wives, and children ate and socialized together. Adjoining the Lion House was Brigham Young's office (immediate right), where he dictated to clerks and attended to visitors, and the Beehive House, his official residence.





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**FIG. 5.** Forest Farm. Located south of what is today Twenty-First South between Fifth East and Sugar House Park in Salt Lake City, Brigham Young's Forest Farm supplied his family with eggs, cheese, milk, and meat. The farm was occupied at various times by several of Brigham's wives and children but primarily by Susan Snively (1815–92), a wife with one adopted daughter. This view shows the large porch on which Brigham's children played and around which roses and hollyhocks bloomed.

wives at different locations: Emmeline Free and her family of ten slightly south on Main Street; Zina Huntington on Third South; Clarissa Decker on State Street near the Social Hall; Harriet Barney on South Temple near the temple gates; Mary Van Cott on South Temple across from Temple Square; and Susan Snively at the Forest Farm (fig. 5), located in the current-day Forest Dale area of Salt Lake City. He provided Eliza Burgess with a home in Provo and moved Lucy Bigelow and her children to St. George. Meanwhile, Lucy Decker and her children remained in the Beehive House, and Mary Ann Angell in the White House.<sup>15</sup>

With a family the size of Brigham Young's, the usual activities and complexities of life were multiplied. Illness and death were no strangers in pioneer homes and certainly not in his. In 1856, for example, seventeen of his children and one foster child were ill with measles.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, Brigham witnessed the death of twenty of his wives and fourteen of his children. Three of his wives died at a young age, and their surviving children were raised by the other wives. There were other complexities. The challenge of raising teenagers never seemed to diminish. At the age of sixty-seven, Brigham had twenty-two teenagers in his home: sixteen girls and

six boys. Even something as seemingly simple as nightly supper was no easy affair. Susa Young recalled that, with their family, hired men and girls, orphans, and other unfortunate persons whom her father took into his home and cared for, “we often sat down in the dining room with 80 [people] at the table.”<sup>17</sup>

Brigham Young’s 1850s decision to house his family essentially under one roof was primarily one of economics. It was cheaper than providing a separate dwelling for each of his wives and her children. Another advantage was the bonding and opportunities for interaction it provided for the entire family. Everyone benefitted from the skills of the individual wives. For example, Zina Huntington (fig. 6) served as a schoolteacher, midwife, and doctor. Aunt Clara Decker was regarded as a trusted friend, confidant, and “social mentor” for the children, a friend who “could wink at all kinds of youthful derelictions” and who had uncanny influence with Brigham Young when youthful interests were at stake. Zina Huntington, Eliza Snow, and Lucy Bigelow were regarded as the “spiritual props and guides” of the family. Lucy Bigelow and Susan Snively, a childless wife who raised an adopted child, made butter and cheese for the entire family from their residence at the Forest Farm.<sup>18</sup> Margaret Pierce, a talented cook and housekeeper, managed the domestic chores for the workers at the gristmill, later the site of Liberty Park. Another of the childless wives was a widow, Naamah Twiss, “an economical manager and first class cook,” a stern, no-nonsense woman who for many years managed the Lion House kitchen and dining room with two hired cooks and two dishwashers. She ran a very tight ship so far as meal times and children eating between meals were concerned—an important asset for a family of that size living in such close quarters. And Clara Decker and Lucy Bigelow served as the nurses for Brigham when he was ill, and presumably for other family members as well.<sup>19</sup>

With most of his wives and children under one roof, Brigham Young employed laborers to the benefit of the entire family. Brigham’s daughter Susa pointed out that, while her father was a “devout believer” in work, “he had seen his invalid mother bedridden for years, and his own cherished first wife was an invalid for four sad years and then died in his arms. These memories made him exceedingly careful of women. He guarded the physical strength and health of his wives and daughters as second only in importance to that of their spiritual welfare.” She concluded that for this reason he hired men to do the heaviest work and “always kept some strong girls in the kitchen who were glad and willing to earn good wages at the housework.”<sup>20</sup>

### **Challenges Created by Proximity**

But along with the advantages of having his family concentrated mostly under one roof, Brigham’s plan also had drawbacks. For one thing,



Church Archives

FIG. 6. “Aunt” Zina D. H. Young (1821–1901) with two Young children. Zina Young, a plural wife of Brigham Young, was skilled as a schoolteacher, doctor, and midwife. A resident of the Lion House, she devoted her many talents to the welfare of her sister wives and children. In this photograph (ca. 1862), Zina sits with Willard and Phoebe Young, the children she mothered after the death of sister wife Clarissa Ross.

in the case of his daughters, it did not allow the training in household and domestic skills that could have been provided in more conventional households without hired help and with less specialization of labor. Susa (fig. 7) noted that the daughters for the most part were

pretty giddy and gay. None of them did anything out of the way especially, but they . . . wanted nothing but fun and frolic. I think that they would have been better raised and indeed father said so himself, if each wife had had a home of her own and had brought up the girls in all the science of house-keeping, arts and labors. But having no particular kitchen work to do and going to school always, we wasted a good deal of the rest of our time in useless



FIG. 7. Susa Young Gates (1856–1933). A precocious and self-assertive Susa Young poses for this photograph (ca. 1875) taken a few years after she moved out of the Lion House. She recalled never having heard her father raise his voice in anger. Photograph by Charles R. Savage. Courtesy Lurene Gates Wilkinson.

frolic. Of course it was more economical to have us together and it cost a good deal you may be sure to feed and clothe from fifty to seventy-five people.<sup>21</sup>

Another possible drawback of concentrating the family under one roof was the increased potential for discord between the different wives and their children. Yet apparently such friction was rare. Born in 1856, the year the Lion House was finished, Susa Young witnessed the occupants of the home through the eyes of a child with many older siblings and many “aunts.” By age fourteen, she saw the family mature and the wives move with their children to separate dwellings, culminating with her departure with her own mother to St. George in 1870. From her perspective, written later in her life, the home was not a place of contention and division:

I never heard one of my father’s wives correct another woman’s child, much less strike it, in all my life. And certainly, never did I hear my father’s voice raised in anger

or even in reproof to one of his wives. I never saw him whip one of the children and I don’t know that he ever laid his hand upon one of his daughters in my life, unless to spank a child, perhaps when it was really needed on some sudden occasion.<sup>22</sup>

Susa recognized that a potential for tension existed within the Young household. But self-discipline seemed to prevent open display of conflict. She saw her father’s wives as

women of strong character, powerful wills. . . . I do not say that even I, as a child loved all my fathers wives alike. Some of them were queer even sarcastic [*sic*] and a few of them I had only respect for. . . . I have often said that I never heard a quarrel between my father’s wives in all my life. They may have had words with each other, I suppose they did have on occasions, but at least they had the decency and dignity to keep such differences from the ears and understanding of their children.

She concluded her assessment with the observation “Were it not for their religious convictions, which informed and inspired every waking hour of

their lives we would have had chaos instead of peace, constant bickering and hatred in place of comparative harmony and love.” The family unity and cohesiveness meant that there were no “half-brothers” and “step-sisters,” just brothers and sisters, and “their mothers were indeed ‘Aunts’ . . . and we loved them all, some better than others.”<sup>23</sup>

Nevertheless, the brood was not above occasional acts of juvenile meanness. Susa recalled one of her brothers who “took keen delight in torturing little girls and animals,” promising her “a little red box with five nails in it” if she would use her natural agility to steal some apples across a high fence. Upon doing so, she was felled by a slap to the head, followed by the comment, “I have given you the little red box on the ear with my five finger nails in it.”<sup>24</sup>

Even though by 1875 Brigham had provided individual homes for most of his wives and their children, he seriously considered bringing the families back together again. The need for greater unity in his expanding family weighed so heavily upon him that he addressed an epistle to his children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren on March 23 that year. “In the providences of God I am privileged to address you a few lines and lay before you a subject fraught with interest to ourselves and worthy of our mature consideration,” he began. He pointed out that being “advanced in years” he must “soon pass away from this stage of action.” He continued:

Reflection on the present condition of my family has caused me to consider the possibility of locating them more advantageously for their permanent support and spiritual advancement. The more perfect union of my family has occupied my thoughts for many years and a plan has been suggested which is practicable and in my Judgement will secure to them all the benefits of a home which I could desire.

Lying in Cache County I have a farm enclosed containing near 11000 acres of land which may be classed as Gravelly bench land especially adapted for city sites and raising hardy fruits also a large tract of farming land suitable for raising cereals [*sic*] and vegetables. Hay and pasture land in abundance all sloping gently to the west susceptible of irrigation from the Logan and Blacksmith fork rivers.

This large farm is amply stocked—short horned Durham and long horned Devon cattles, Spanish Merino and Cotswold sheep, which affords a fine opportunity to found a stock farm which will furnish employment at remunerative rates for a large number of people. Beside many other advantages in RR, communication &c. it is the most healthful climate found in these mountains. My plan will be to—

First Select a suitable site for a city and begin building it—the city—this season.

Second Move my family there as soon as suitable accommodations can be provided.

Third. Rent our property in Salt Lake City.

The rent roll will show a handsome income which will supply cash articles and furnish ample capital to improve our buildings[,] gardens[,] and farms. If this plan be adopted I am satisfied the wisdom of such a movement will be patent to all my family and with the blessings of God confirm peace and plenty upon our children and childrens' children so long as they obey me and forsake not the Lord.

Your loving husband and father.

(signed)

Brigham Young<sup>25</sup>

There is no evidence that this proposal was officially discussed or voted upon by the family. Circumstances in Brigham's own life probably prevented the immediate implementation of the plan. At the time he wrote the letter, he was in the midst of a divorce suit by Ann Eliza Webb, one of his plural wives, which would continue to require his attention. In addition, pressing Church responsibilities that occupied his mind included construction of the temple at St. George and plans for another at Manti, the establishment of settlements on the Little Colorado in Arizona, and the reorganization of stakes of the Church. It is unknown whether these events played a role in Brigham's decision to shift the proposal for his Cache Valley lands. In the end, a month before his death, he deeded most of that acreage for the establishment of Brigham Young College in Logan.<sup>26</sup>

### Kindness Shown

The expressions of love and commitment to God and His kingdom that surface in the correspondence between Brigham and his children suggest that something extraordinary must have taken place in his home to produce those feelings. For example, numerous letters to Brigham from family members during their absence from home contain statements such as these:

It is with more than ordinary interest and aff[e]ction that this letter is penned for your perusal.

My confidence, esteem, and love, can be three times estimated, First by the undying and unbounded confidence I have in your mission as a Prophet of God, bearing the Holy Priesthood. Second, by the duty I owe to an able, faithful leader of a Great People. Third, by the warmest affection that burns within my heart for a beloved Father.<sup>27</sup>

I cannot help thinking how much you have done for me and all the children, and how little we have repaid you for all your kindness. I feel I can never repay the great debt I owe you.<sup>28</sup>

I know the deep interest you feel for your children's welfare. . . . I have always felt grateful for having been blest with a father, who always inspired me with perfect confidence, who always felt so jealous a care for my well-being, and who always set so worthy an example for me to follow. . . . Since leaving home, I have felt a desire to worthily represent you and our people. . . . If I can

be the means of doing good in establishing God's kingdom on the Earth, and can succeed in doing all that is expected of me, I shall feel happy indeed.<sup>29</sup>

I am unable to convey to you on paper the thankful feelings that is in my heart for such a father, and for the care that you have shown me heretofore.<sup>30</sup>

And from one of Brigham's wives who accompanied the pioneers to Salt Lake Valley in 1847:

I can sit down and let my thoughts wander back to Winter Quarters and fancy I see you surrounded by your family enjoying their sweet society and they yours. . . . Your kindness to me the past summer will never be forgotten it shall live while memory lives with me.<sup>31</sup>

Considering, on the one hand, the size and structure of Brigham Young's family and the demands upon his time that took him away from them for extended periods and, on the other hand, the general good will and family fealty that seem to have existed, the question arises: What did Brigham Young do to inspire the feelings of devotion and loyalty that are frequently expressed in writings of family members? The origins of such sentiments cannot be ascribed solely to Brigham Young. During an era when Church responsibilities coupled with the demands of colonizing and building new settlements took fathers from their homes frequently and for extended periods of time, much of the responsibility for nurturing the minds as well as the bodies of the children rested upon their mothers. The respective responsibilities of the father and mother in the rearing of children was not defined in the same terms as it was for a later generation of Latter-day Saints living in more decadent social conditions. Brigham's pointed remarks to the mothers during the early settlement of Utah illustrate the emphasis of that time:

What faults do I discover in my neighbors' families? I can see their women go off visiting, riding on horseback, attending parties, while their little ones are neglected, and left to run at large in the streets, exposed to the pernicious examples of vile company. Hear it again! The blood of these wicked children will be required at the hands of their mothers! Should your husbands be called out to fight the Indians, or go to the islands of the sea to gather the poor, it is none of your business, when it is their calling to be away from home.

I want education to commence here. I wish you strictly to follow out this principle, and when children are old enough to labor in the field, then the father will take them in charge. If children are not taught by their mothers, in the days of their youth, to revere and follow the counsels of their fathers, it will be hard indeed for the father ever to control them. I know it is so, for it is too true. Mothers will let their children go to the Devil in their childhood, and when they are old enough to come under the immediate guidance of their fathers, to be sent out to preach the Gospel in the world, or to learn some kind of mechanism, they are as uncontrollable as the winds that now revel in the mountains.<sup>32</sup>

By this standard, much of the devotion and good will reflected in the writings of Brigham Young's children can be attributed to the "splendid women" whose religious convictions for the most part "informed and inspired every waking hour of their lives."<sup>33</sup> But in addition, Brigham Young himself made the best of the limited contact he had with his family. His attentiveness is reflected in such phrases as these from family letters previously cited: "how much you have done for me and all the children," "your kindness," "the deep interest you feel for your children's welfare," and "a father . . . who always felt so jealous a care for my well-being . . . who always set so worthy an example."

The traits revealed in these phrases are contrary to the popular image of Brigham Young characterized by the inherently aggressive symbol of the Lion on the portico of his home. In fact, at least where his family was concerned, Brigham Young was quite the opposite. On one occasion, President Young attended a Church court for a man in Salt Lake City. After one of the man's wives had threatened to leave him because of his quarrelsome, abusive nature, he had beat her in the head until blood ran from her ears and one eye was blackened. She testified that he had struck her "as though he was going to knock down an ox." In the course of the proceedings, Brigham Young commented, "I would not trust a dog with Brother [—] or put one in his Care for he does not know how to treat either man or beast." To emphasize his point, he added, "I govern my family by kindness. I tell them what is right & I get them to obey me without whipping them. If I cannot get my family to do as I wish them without Quarreling with them I will not say a word about it."<sup>34</sup>

Those who knew him and observed him at close range commented on his patience and kindness. His daughter Clarissa (fig. 8), for example, wrote that "no child ever loved, revered, and cherished a father more than I did mine. . . . He had the affection



FIG. 8. Clarissa Young Spencer (1860–1939). Brigham Young's daughter Clarissa Young, shown in an elaborately gathered dress (ca. 1866), affectionately described her years growing up in the Lion House as "one long round of happiness." Photograph by Charles R. Savage. Church Archives.



and tenderness of a woman for his family and friends. . . . Each day of my childhood stands forth in my memory as one long round of happiness.”<sup>35</sup>

Brigham Young’s close associates used his behavior at home as a model for others to follow. Lorenzo Snow, who had close personal contact with Brigham Young and his family, urged the seventies in 1857 to “arm yourselves with all the power of God you can get in order to save your families.” He told them that when domestic problems arose in their homes they would have to show themselves “master spirit[s]” in “Fathers care & kindness” in order to save their wives and children. As an example, he referred to Brigham Young: “Go into his house & take lessons. See him with his great family of wives & Children & see the God like Character & example of that man & the order which he manifests in his family. . . . They all respect him & obey his law for the wisdom of God is with him. Now brethren strive to bring yourselfs to the same standard.” He concluded, “Almost any fool can go & preach the gospel but it requires a vary wise man to be a patriarch & save his own household.”<sup>36</sup>

Brigham Young outlined his standard in an 1860 discourse:

I will relate a little of my course and experience in my family. I have a large family of children, many of them small, and yet I do not think that you ever saw even four children in one family live together with so little contention. Watch them, and their conduct will prove that there is a good spirit influencing them. I never knew one of them to be accidentally hurt, without more sympathy’s being extended to that one than the whole of them needed. You may ask how I manage to bring about this result. I seldom give a child a cross word; I seldom give a wife a cross word; and I tell my wives never to give a child cause to doubt their word. A child loves the smiles of its mother, but hates her frowns. I tell the mothers not to allow the children to indulge in evils, but at the same time to treat them with mildness. If a child is required to step in a certain direction, and it does not seem willing to do so, gently put it in the desired way, and say, There, my little dear, you must step when I speak to you. Children need directing and teaching what is right in a kind, affectionate manner.<sup>37</sup>

President Young’s children not only experienced firsthand the kindly qualities of their father’s personality but also saw the way he extended his kindness to widows, orphans, and others of limited circumstance as if they were his own kin. Jemima Angell Valentine, whose husband had died, leaving her with several children, was among the disadvantaged Brigham took into his family to support and provide for. In 1866 she wrote him, “I wish to hold you in reverenc[e] & true respect as a Man of God & a good kind Father to my children for you have be[e]n a good kind friend to me & may the Lord bless you for ever.”<sup>38</sup>

Heber J. Grant, whose father died when he was eight days old, spent much time in the Young household in his early years. Later in life, he wrote

to Brigham Young's daughter, "Never have I known a man more kind and loving to his children, and those of the saints generally, than was your father. . . . When I think of your father and his kind love for me and my brother Brigham F [Grant] I could easily write another 'continued story.'"<sup>39</sup> Heber's brother, Brigham Frederick, after the death of their father, was left with his grandmother and later was placed in a foster home, from which he ran away to work in the mines in Montana. He eventually returned to Salt Lake City and was working in a coal yard when Brigham Young learned about him and sent for him:

The president greeted B.F. with "a father's handshake," and learned what he had been doing. When Brigham offered him easier work—a job in one of his stores—B.F. replied, "I haven't got sense enough to work in a store—I can't read or write." "Tears rolled down the president's cheeks," wrote B.F. as he remembered the interview. "He took out his handkerchief, wiped them off, and said: 'My boy, come and live with me. I will give you a home, clothe you, and send you to school. You can work during the vacation for me.'"

B.F. accepted the offer and remained with the president's family for two years. He reported that there were six other orphaned boys and girls living in the family at that time, and he, for one, was "a real member of the family."<sup>40</sup>

The fact that additional acts of kindness can be documented in obscure sources suggests that Brigham Young's benevolence was probably more extensive than we will ever know. In a newspaper published in Hailey, Idaho, an immigrant woman whose husband was employed by Brigham wrote that after they were married by the President they lived for several months in his household. "I will say," she noted, "that during the time my husband and I were under that roof we never heard Brigham Young raise his voice in anger. He was kindly to everyone within his home."<sup>41</sup>

### **Guidelines Established**

Expressions of admiration and praise for kindness should not be taken to imply that regulations were unnecessary or that a firm hand was not needed in the Young household. To the contrary, precise rules regulated many aspects of life in the Lion House, including daily family prayer, school attendance, and Sabbath-day conduct. Mealtimes and the hours for arising and retiring followed a regular schedule. Card playing was strictly forbidden, as were "games of chance that encouraged or suggested gambling in any form." Checkers and chess provided enjoyable entertainment but were not permitted on Sunday; neither were secular reading, secular music, and "roaming the hills." The outer gates of the stone wall around the Lion House were locked each night at 10 P.M. Children out later than that gained access to their quarters only through the office door and faced the

prospect of being reported by the watchman.<sup>42</sup> Susa recalled that her father “could be very stern . . . and he maintained the utmost discipline in the family.” The only time she ever saw her father strike a child was when her baby sister became unruly during prayer time one evening. After the child twice disrupted the devotional by “running about . . . screaming with laughter,” Brigham interrupted his prayer, got up, caught her, spanked her lightly, laid her sobbing in her mother’s arms, then returned to his knees and finished the prayer.<sup>43</sup>

He occasionally exercised a firm hand with the older children. One Sunday night during the courting years of the older girls, eight or ten couples had gathered in the parlor of the Lion House to enjoy each other’s company. To increase their sense of privacy, they had darkened the room somewhat by slightly turning down the lamp and stacking books around it. A short time later the door opened, and the stout figure of Brigham Young emerged. Setting his candle on the table, he unstacked the books and dismissed the girls to their rooms with the announcement that he would say good night to the boys.<sup>44</sup>

Although strict rules and occasional stern measures were necessary to maintain order and stability in his home, Brigham Young did not rule with an iron hand. “I do not believe,” he declared, “in making my authority as a husband or a father known by brute force; but by a superior intelligence—by showing them that I am capable of teaching them.” He followed these ideals:

If the Lord has placed me to be the head of a family, let me be so in all humility and patience, not as a tyrannical ruler, but as a faithful companion, an indulgent and affectionate father, a thoughtful and unassuming superior; let me be honoured in my station through faithful diligence, and be fully capable, by the aid of God’s Spirit, of filling my office in a way to effect the salvation of all who are committed to my charge.<sup>45</sup>

Kind looks, kind actions, kind words, and a lovely, holy deportment towards them, will bind our children to us with bands that cannot easily be broken; while abuse and unkindness will drive them from us, and break asunder every holy tie, that should bind them to us, and to the everlasting covenant in which we are all embraced. If my family; and my brethren and sisters, will not be obedient to me on the basis of kindness, and a commendable life before all men, and before the heavens, then farewell to all influence.<sup>46</sup>

Using his own experience to illustrate, Brigham taught the Saints:

My children are not afraid of my footfall; except in the case of their having done something wrong they are not afraid to approach me. . . . I could break the wills of my little children, and whip them to this, that, and the other, but this I do not do. Let the child have a mild training until it has judgment and sense to guide it. . . . It is necessary to try the faith of children as well as of grown people, but there are ways of doing so besides taking a club and knocking them down with it. . . . There is nothing consistent in abusing your wives and children.<sup>47</sup>

Brigham Young could council the Saints on the subject of overcoming passion and anger because he had largely conquered these passions himself. He suggested that the Saints put a piece of India rubber in their mouths when they became angry and bite it until they could get control of themselves: "If you will keep your thoughts to yourself when you are angry they will not become the property of another." He added, "Any person who is acquainted with me knows that I have Controll over myself. I do not speak in anger to my wives, Children or the people. I make all my Passions be in subjection to the priesthood & the spirit of God."<sup>48</sup>

### **Regular Evening Prayer Held**

Limited as he was in the time he could spend with his family, Brigham Young sought to make those occasions meaningful, quality experiences. An important institution in this respect, one that added to the atmosphere of goodwill and was a focal point for instruction and bonding with his family, was the daily evening prayer, a ritual akin to family home evening for a later generation of Latter-day Saints. At about seven o'clock each evening, Brigham would ring the prayer bell to call his family to the large sitting room on the main floor in the Lion House. "No matter what we were doing or who was there, we dropped everything" and assembled for prayer, wrote a daughter. In addition to prayer, events of the day were discussed, "golden words of wisdom" were uttered, plans made, family policies reviewed, and sometimes "there were juvenile troubles to settle, with father as judge of the Juvenile Court."<sup>49</sup>

As the children grew and other activities came between them and this important family tradition, Brigham found it necessary in 1866 to remind his family members of their daily obligation:

There is no doubt but that my family, one and all, will acknowledge that my time is as precious to me as theirs is to them. When the time appointed for our family devotion and prayer comes, I am expected to be there; and no public business, no matter how important, has been able to influence me to forego the fulfilment of this sacred duty which I owe to you, to my self and my God.<sup>50</sup>

Not wishing to complain "without a cause," Brigham nevertheless felt he had a case that needed to be made. He observed that at prayer time only a portion of his family might be present: "My wives are absent visiting a sister, a neighbor, a mother or a relative; my children are scattered all over town, attending to this and that; and if at home, one is changing her dress, another her shoes, another getting ready to go to the theatre; another has

gone to see Mary, and another to see Emily, and I may add, etc., etc., etc.” He concluded with a “few words of counsel” that he expected his family to “receive kindly, and obey”: when prayer time came, everyone must be at home “ready to bow down before the Lord to make their acknowledgments to Him for His kindness and mercy and long-suffering towards us.” He closed with this assurance: “Your strict attendance . . . will give joy to the heart of your Husband and Father.”<sup>51</sup>

The seriousness with which President Young took the evening devotional is seen in instances when he interrupted other things to attend. Early one evening after the Church Historian called to see him, the President cut off the discussion and excused himself, remarking that “the hour for praying with his family had arrived.”

Brigham Young commented that he “always thought it would be of great benefit to his family . . . if he set the example to pray punctually with them.”<sup>52</sup> Another time, on a day when it was impossible for the Church leader to meet with his family at the appointed hour, he sent his son Brigham Jr. (fig. 9) to the Lion House “to attend prayers for him.”<sup>53</sup>

An eyewitness described the sense of urgency Brigham Young exhibited in the devotional hour. George A. Smith and his wife Bathsheba arrived at the Young home at prayer time. George A. reported that “after a very fervent prayer” Brigham addressed his family on the importance of living exemplary lives: “He said, the eyes of the world were upon them also the eyes of the Saints. The influence of his teaching was affected by [his family’s] example.” He also urged his family to live the Word of Wisdom and his wives and daughters to be examples in their dress, and “as far as possible to manufacture what they wore.” When he finished, his wife Mary Ann followed with an “interesting address,” and George A. and Bathsheba Smith “bore testimony.”<sup>54</sup>



Church Archives

FIG. 9. Brigham Young Jr. (1836–1903). Brigham Young Jr., or “Briggy,” as friends and family called him, was a life-long devotee of his father’s teachings. This photograph was taken in New York City in 1863, a year before he was ordained an Apostle. Photograph by Charles D. Fredericks Co.

## Education and Recreation Encouraged

Another binding element in the Brigham Young home grew out of his concern, not only for the spiritual welfare of his family, but for the development of their social and intellectual needs as well. He believed:

When parents whip their children for reading novels, and never let them go to the theatre, or to any place of recreation and amusement, but bind them to the moral law, until duty becomes loathsome to them; when they are freed by age from the rigorous training of their parents, they are more fit for companions to devils, than to be the children of such religious parents.<sup>55</sup>

Therefore, he assured his listeners, “My little children . . . shall go to the dance, study music, read novels, and do anything else that will tend to expand their frames, add fire to their spirits, improve their minds, and make them feel free and untrammelled in body and mind.”<sup>56</sup>

During the early years of Brigham’s married life, poverty, extensive periods of absence from his family, and disruptive conditions among the Saints limited the opportunities for social, recreational, and educational pursuits. Available sources pertaining to his pre-Utah years reveal little about the day-to-day activities of his children. His thirteen-year-old daughter Vilate studied music in Salem, Massachusetts, in 1843–44, where she learned to play the piano, but otherwise there appear to have been few exceptional cultural or educational opportunities for his children outside of the home.

After the family was established in Utah, one of Brigham Young’s concerns was the education and training of the youth. Addressing the legislature in 1852 in his capacity as governor of the territory, eager to build a thriving community, he lamented that he scarcely knew of apprentices in Utah in any trade—“no young mechanics arising to fill the places of those now at labor, when they shall have gone to their rest.” He added, “Deplorable indeed must be the situation of that People, whose sons are not trained in the practice of every useful avocation, and whose daughters mingle not in the hum of industry. . . . It well becomes us to give the proper direction to that labor.”<sup>57</sup>

For Brigham, the responsibility to educate lay squarely with parents. Thus, Brigham spared no effort to provide for his own children’s education. When the schoolteaching facilities in the lower floor of the Lion House became inadequate for his family, he built a family schoolhouse (fig. 10) and recruited the German educator Karl G. Maeser as tutor because he wanted the children to be “better schooled than they can be by schoolmistresses.”<sup>58</sup>

Brigham Young’s interest in education extended beyond the rudiments. After the University of Deseret reopened in 1867, his older children



Church Archives

FIG. 10. Young schoolhouse, 1868–69. The octagonal bell tower of the Brigham Young family schoolhouse rises in the background of this view. Here Brigham Young had his many children educated in reading, writing, and arithmetic. Several of his children went on for higher education. Photograph by Savage and Ottinger.

filled many of the desks. Records show that in the two-year period 1869–71 the Church leader spent more than \$1,500 on tuition for forty-six members of his household. He hired private tutors in French, shorthand, and music for “any and all of his children who cared to avail themselves of this privilege.”<sup>59</sup> In addition to local schooling, he gave his children who so desired the opportunity of studying professions of their choice at educational institutions in the East. Four of his sons did so. Comparatively few colleges were open to women at that time, and it was not expected that young women would be sent away to school, but at least six of his daughters did attend local academies and colleges.

Brigham also addressed his family's needs for physical exercise and recreation. After completion of the Lion House in 1856, when most of his family were living there, Brigham built porches along the west side, where "every contrivance" of that day was available for physical exercise. "We had horizontal ladders and straight ladders, horizontal bars, back boards to straighten our shoulders and make us walk upright, jumping ropes, wands, hoops, roller skates, wooden swords, dumbbells, swings, and big balls to kick and roll about," recalled Clarissa. Instructors were hired to teach gymnastics, fencing, and solo dancing. As a result, his daughters were in demand as dancers after the opening of the Salt Lake Theater in 1862. In addition to these forms of exercise, a family swimming pool was built, fed with water from a nearby canyon stream. Summarizing their recreational activities, Clarissa noted that "besides all the fun we had we gained poise and developed fine, strong bodies."<sup>60</sup>

For Brigham Young, deviation from strict daily routine was an important part of life:

Our work, our every-day labor, our whole lives are within the scope of our religion. This is what we believe and what we try to practice. Yet the Lord permits a great many things that He never commands. I have frequently heard my old brethren in the Christian world make remarks about the impropriety of indulging in pastimes and amusements. The Lord never commanded me to dance, yet I have danced; you all know it, for my life is before the world. Yet while the Lord had never commanded me to do it, He has permitted it. I do not know that He ever commanded the boys to go and p[l]ay at ball, yet He permits it. I am not aware that He ever commanded us to build a theatre, but He has permitted it, and I can give the reason why. Recreation and diversion are as necessary to our well-being as the more serious pursuits of life.<sup>61</sup>

In keeping with this conviction, Brigham found time to participate occasionally in a variety of social and recreational activities with his family. Reports have him taking his family to the Tabernacle to hear the organ, dancing with them to celebrate the New Year, and taking them to the territorial fair. Moreover, holidays and birthdays offered a break from the strains of everyday work. On three holidays in July 1863—the Independence Day celebration on the fourth, the Mormon Battalion Reunion on the sixteenth, and the Pioneer Day party on the twenty-fourth—Brigham and his daughters danced all night at the theatre. And on January 23, 1865, he visited Feramorz Little's place of entertainment in Salt Lake City with twenty-three of his daughters to celebrate one of their birthdays.<sup>62</sup> Susa Young related that her father was "so understanding in the vagaries of the child heart" and solicitous of his children's "childish needs in education, amusement and social ways" that they all loved him and even though he



was too busy to spend time with them on a daily basis he was their “hope and delight” at meal time, prayer time, and on holidays.<sup>63</sup>

For Brigham Young, recreation played an integral role in fulfilling the purposes for which mortals were created. His motto for the Latter-day Saints was not that they “prepare to die, . . . but prepare to live is the word with us, and improve all we can in this life that we may be the better prepared to enjoy a better life hereafter, wherein we may enjoy a more exalted condition of intelligence, wisdom, light, knowledge, power, glory, and exaltation. Then let us seek, to extend the present life to the uttermost, by observing every law of health, and by properly balancing labor, study, rest, and recreation, and thus prepare for a better life.”<sup>64</sup>

### Confidence in God Maintained

More than anything else, the guiding force behind Brigham Young’s commitment and dedication as a parent was his faith in the overruling providence of God. After his conversion to Mormonism, religion motivated his every act and colored everything he saw and did. None who knew Brigham were ignorant of what was important in his life. He declared:

I am proud of my religion. It is the only thing I pride myself in, on the earth. I may heap up gold and silver like the mountains; I may gather around me property, goods, and chattels, but I could have no glory in that, compared with my religion; it is the fountain of light and intelligence; it swallows up the truth contained in all the philosophy of the world, both heathen and Christian; it circumscribes the wisdom of man; it circumscribes all the wisdom and power of the world; it reaches to that within the veil. Its bounds, its circumference, its end, its height, and depth, are beyond the comprehension of mortals, for *it has none*.<sup>65</sup>

An authority on child behavior has noted that for children to increase their faith in God “they need to hear their parents render unto him that which is his. . . . Parents who themselves are filled with the consciousness of God’s hand in all things will transmit this feeling to their children.”<sup>66</sup> Brigham Young’s children had ample opportunity to cultivate this perception. As the Black Hawk War, Utah’s most costly confrontation between settlers and Indians, raged in the mid-1860s, striking fear and alarm in hearts of many of the Saints, Brigham shared with his namesake son his confidence that the hand of God was in the conflict:

I view this chastisement as necessary to unite the Saints and to cause them to pay more heed to counsel than they have been doing. Their hearts have gone after riches, and the lust of the world has blinded their minds. This is really but a light chastisement to what we might receive, and I would rather have the Lamanites stir us up to diligence than some other chastisements that might come upon us. The Lord has the hearts of the Lamanites, as well as the hearts of others, in his keeping. He can move them any way that he pleases to

suit his own good pleasure, and when he sees that enough has been done, and that his people are humble and penitent under his mighty hand, he can turn their hearts to peace.<sup>67</sup>

Even when circumstances as unhallowed as what Brigham called “that interminable alimony outrage” pressed upon his mind in the wake of divorce proceedings by a plural wife, he still saw the hand of God. Brigham Jr. reported visiting his father one day as the case was being adjudicated and finding him “in excellent spirits[,] confident in God and willing to submit to his providences.” He noted that his father had just paid \$3,000 to lawyers in the case “and [he] assures me that he will pay the [\$]9500. alimony if necessary without any fuss. He sayd the Lord has given me all I have. If He permits this why should I complain”?<sup>68</sup>

Brigham reminded his son Willard, who was serving in the military (fig. 11):

Our daily toil, however humble it may be, is our daily duty, and by doing it well we make it a part of our daily worship. But, whatever be our labor, calling, or profession, we should hold our skill, knowledge, and talents therein, subservient to the accomplishment of the purposes of Jehovah, that our entire lives, day by day, may be made to praise Him, and our individual happiness secured by the consciousness that we are fulfilling the purpose and design of our presence here on the earth.<sup>69</sup>

### Heartache Suffered

As diligent as he was in his role as family patriarch and kingdom builder, Brigham’s home life was not without sorrow and heartache. In addition to the anxiety associated with illness and death, some of his wives left him and not all of his children adhered to the teachings of their father. After his death, the settlement of his estate brought disunity and discord, which no doubt would have caused him much sorrow. The wrangling over the estate bespoke of deeper problems. On the seventh anniversary of his death in 1884, one of his sons lamented, “Seven years ago was a dark day for my father’s family. At the present writing there are some who have squandered the hard earnings which he left them, and are, worst of all infidel to the Gospel. I will not name them for they may see the error of their ways and I cannot perpetuate their unfaithfulness.”<sup>70</sup> But whatever heartache may have transpired in Brigham’s bosom due to waywardness of some in his family, he was buoyed by his faith in the mercy and justice of God. “I learned a long time ago,” he reportedly said, “not to die because my children go wrong. It has been revealed to me that every child and descendant will come to me some time, somewhere. What causes me great sorrow, however, is to know what some of them will have to go through before they get back.”<sup>71</sup>

## Conclusion

Few men have approached the realm of family responsibility on a more complicated level and with greater devotion and insight than did Brigham Young. “I can say that I am not prepared to bring up a child in the way he should go,” he remarked toward the end of his life, “and yet I probably come as near to it as any person that lives.”<sup>72</sup> Considering the ecclesiastical and secular responsibilities of his life, it is hard to comprehend just how he managed to provide such a high level of care and comfort for a family as large as his. Together, his many responsibilities carried a potential for extreme stress that could have easily spawned anger or violence in a lesser person. But through it all, Brigham Young maintained a level of composure that was a hallmark of his personality. He not only provided food and shelter for his family but effectively imparted the values of his faith through precept and example. As Susa concluded:

No other fact of father’s life was so profound a proof of his true nobility and greatness as his life at home and the influence which he radiated there. He was ever present in spirit. . . . The world knows Brigham Young as a statesman and colonizer; but to his children he was an ideal father. Kind to a fault, tender, thoughtful, just and firm. . . . None of us feared him; all of us adored him. . . . What his life and love meant to his family only their subsequent lives may testify.<sup>73</sup>

In the privacy of his children’s own homes, in their own relationships, in the lives of his 40,000 descendants, and in the precepts and example he left for generations to follow, the parental legacy of Brigham Young would live on.



FIG. 11. Willard Young (1852–1936). While a student at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, New York, Willard Young carried on a frequent and loving correspondence with his father Brigham Young. Taken sometime during his cadet years (1871–75), this photograph shows the dignified bearing that would help make Willard a university president. See also fig. 6. Church Archives.

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1. Historian's Office, Journal, January 31, 1857, Church Archives, Family and Church History Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter cited as Church Archives).

2. Helpful studies on Brigham Young's family and his views on parenting include the following: Susa Young Gates and Leah D. Widtsoe, *The Life Story of Brigham Young* (New York: Macmillan, 1930); Leonard J. Arrington, *Brigham Young: American Moses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985); Jeffery Ogden Johnson, "Determining and Defining a 'Wife': The Brigham Young Households," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 20 (fall 1987): 57–70; Clarissa Young Spencer and Mabel Harmer, *Brigham Young at Home* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1940); Dean C. Jessee, "Brigham Young's Family: Part I, 1824–1845," *BYU Studies* 18, no. 3 (spring 1978): 311–27; Dean C. Jessee, "Brigham Young's Family: The Wilderness Years," *BYU Studies* 18, no. 4 (summer 1979): 474–500; Dean C. Jessee, ed., *Letters of Brigham Young to His Sons* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1974).

3. Arrington, *American Moses*, 420–1; Jeffery Ogden Johnson, "Wives of Brigham Young," unpublished manuscript, copy in author's possession. Johnson includes Amanda Barnes among Brigham's wives. By comparison, Heber C. Kimball had 43 wives and 65 children; Christopher Layton, 10 wives and 65 children; John W. Hess, 7 wives and 64 children; and John D. Lee, 18 wives and 61 children. These figures can be found on AncestralFile.

4. Arrington, *American Moses*, 421.

5. Johnson, "Brigham Young Households," 57–70; Arrington, *American Moses*, 420–21; Jessee, *Letters of Brigham Young*, 357–59. In 1859, Brigham Young told New York newspaper editor Horace Greeley, "Some of those sealed to me are old ladies whom I regard rather as mothers than wives, but whom I have taken home to cherish and support." As cited in Arrington, *American Moses*, 324.

6. As cited in Jessee, "Brigham Young's Family: The Wilderness Years," 475. Regarding polygamy he added, "If any man had asked me what was my choice when Joseph revealed that doctrine, . . . I would have said, 'Let me have but one wife;' . . . It was the first time in my life that I had desired the grave, and I could hardly get over it for a long time. And when I saw a funeral, I felt to envy the corpse its situation, and to regret that I was not in the coffin." Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (Liverpool: F. D. Richards, 1855–86), 3:266, July 14, 1855.

7. For evidence of Brigham Young's constant concern, see Jessee, "Brigham Young's Family: Part I," 319–20; and Ronald O. Barney, "Letters of a Missionary Apostle to His Wife: Brigham Young to Mary Ann Angell Young, 1839–1841," *BYU Studies* 38, no. 2 (1999): 178.

8. Brigham Young to Mary Ann Young, August 17, 1843, Church Archives; Brigham Young to Mary Ann Young, April 20, 1847, Church Archives; Brigham Young to Clara Young, September 8, 1847, Church Archives; Minutes Collection, February 16, 1847, Church Archives; Gates and Widtsoe, *Life Story of Brigham Young*, 340.

9. Johnson, "Brigham Young Households," 65–68; John D. Lee, Journal, February 15, 1846, Church Archives.

10. "Record of the Organization of the Camp of Israel Which Took Place at Shariton Ford, I[owa] T[erritory] on Friday March 27th and Monday 31st 1846," Church Archives.

11. Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner, *Autobiography and Diary*, 25, Utah State Historical Society, Salt Lake City.

12. Emily Dow Partridge Young, *Diary and Reminiscences*, typescript, 3, Church Archives. See also Jessee, "Brigham Young's Family: The Wilderness Years," 475–500.

13. Brigham Young to Harriet Young, March 15, 1846, Church Archives.

14. Gates and Widtsoe, *Life Story of Brigham Young*, 350.

15. Susa Young Gates, "How Brigham Young Brought Up His 56 Children," *Physical Culture*, February 1925, 138; Spencer and Harmer, *Brigham Young at Home*, 64–86. See also the Salt Lake City directories for the 1860s and 70s.

16. Arrington, *Brigham Young: American Moses*, 171.

17. Susa Young Gates, "Brigham Young As I Knew Him," Susa Young Gates Papers, 1852–1932, Utah State Historical Society, Salt Lake City.

18. Forest Farm was a large plot of ground located on the south side of what today is Twenty-First South between Highland Drive and State Street in Salt Lake City.

19. Susa Young Gates, "Brigham Young and His Nineteen Wives," Gates Papers; Gates, "How Brigham Brought Up His 56 Children," 140.

20. Gates, "Brigham Young As I Knew Him."

21. Susa Young Gates, "My Recollections," Gates Papers. One of the reasons given by James H. Moyle for not seeking the hand in marriage of the popular and articulate Clarissa Young, one of Brigham's daughters, was her declaration to school friends that "she had never done any cooking or kitchen work even down to setting a table." James H. Moyle, *Mormon Democrat: The Religious and Political Memoirs of James Henry Moyle*, ed. Gene A. Sessions ([Salt Lake City]: Historical Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1975), 74.

22. Gates, "My Recollections."

23. Gates, "My Recollections."

24. Gates, "Brigham Young and His Nineteen Wives."

25. Brigham Young, "An Epistle to My Wives and Children, Grand Children and Great Grand children," March 23, 1875, Brigham Young Office Files, Church Archives.

26. More than 9,600 acres was deeded to Brigham Young College on July 24, 1877. See Jed L. Woodworth, "Refusing to Die: Financial Crises at Brigham Young Academy, 1877–1897," *BYU Studies* 38, no. 1 (1999): 107 n. 5.

27. John W. Young to Brigham Young, April 2, 1875, Brigham Young Office Files.

28. Willard Young to Brigham Young, May 22, 1875, Brigham Young Office Files.

29. Willard Young to Brigham Young, December 25, 1876, Brigham Young Office Files.

30. Brigham Young Jr. to Brigham Young, February 4, 1863, Brigham Young Office Files.

31. Clara Decker Young to Brigham Young, October 3, 1847, Brigham Young Office Files.

32. Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 1:68, April 8, 1852. On another occasion he said:

Mothers, remember that when your husbands are engaged in the service of the Church, and are all the time occupied in the duties of the Priesthood, so that they have not time to instruct their children, the duty devolves upon you. Then bring your children up in the ways of truth, and be to them both a father and mother, until they are old enough to perform duties by the side, and under the immediate eye, of their father. (Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 2:21, July 24, 1854)

33. Gates, "My Recollections."

34. Wilford Woodruff, *Wilford Woodruff's Journal, 1833–1898, Typescript*, ed. Scott G. Kenney, 9 vols. (Midvale, Utah: Signature Books, 1983–84), 5:211–13 (August 21, 1858).
35. Spencer and Harmer, *Brigham Young at Home*, 16–17.
36. Woodruff, *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, 5:15–16 (February 2, 1857).
37. Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 8:74, April 22, 1860.
38. Jemima Angell Young to Brigham Young, August 15, 1866, Brigham Young Office Files.
39. Heber J. Grant to Susa Young Gates, December 30, 1899, Church Archives.
40. Arrington, *Brigham Young: American Moses*, 338.
41. Sophia Brasse, as quoted in Claudia L. Leach, “A Bit of History Full of Human Interest,” *Wood River News-Miner* (Hailey, Idaho), February 4, 1918.
42. Gates and Widtsoe, *Life Story of Brigham Young*, 336–37; Gates, “How Brigham Young Brought Up His 56 Children,” 141.
43. Gates, “My Father As His Forty-Six Children Knew Him,” Gates Papers; Gates and Widtsoe, *Life Story of Brigham Young*, 355.
44. Gates, “Brigham Young As I Knew Him.”
45. Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 9:307, June 15, 1862.
46. Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 10:358–65, November 6, 1864.
47. Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 9:195–96, February 9, 1862. Brigham Young taught the Saints on this occasion that “kindness, love, and affection are the best rod to use upon the refractory. . . . I can pick out scores of men in this congregation who have driven their children from them by using the wooden rod. Where there is severity there is no affection or filial feeling in the hearts of either party; the children would rather be away from father than be with him” (195–96).
48. Young, as cited in Woodruff, *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, 5:7 (January 11, 1857). Brigham acknowledged, “I may sometimes chastise my brethren, and speak to them in the language of reproof,” but, he added, “There is not a father who feels more tenderly towards his offspring, and loves them better than I love this people; and my Father in heaven loves them; my heart yearns over them with all the emotions of tenderness, so that I could weep like a child; but I am careful to keep my tears to myself.” Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 1:49, April 9, 1852.
49. Spencer and Harmer, *Brigham Young at Home*, 31; Gates and Widtsoe, *Life Story of Brigham Young*, 333–34.
50. Brigham Young to his family, April 2, 1866, Church Archives.
51. Brigham Young to his family, April 2, 1866.
52. Historian's Office, Journal, December 23, 1863, Church Archives.
53. Brigham Young Jr., Diary, January 21, 1867, Brigham Young Jr. Collection, Church Archives.
54. Historian's Office, Journal, May 25, 1870.
55. Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 2:94, February 6, 1853. For further discussion of Brigham Young's views on novel reading, see Richard H. Cracroft, “‘Cows to Milk Instead of Novels to Read’: Brigham Young, Novel Reading, and Kingdom Building,” in this issue of *BYU Studies*.
56. Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 2:94, February 6, 1853.
57. Brigham Young, Address to the Utah Legislature, December 13, 1853, Church Archives.
58. Brigham Young to Karl G. Maeser, May 20, 1865, Church Archives.
59. Susa Young Gates, “From Impulsive Girl to Patient Wife: Lucy Bigelow Young,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 45 (summer 1977): 282. This posthumous publication was written many decades earlier.
60. Spencer and Harmer, *Brigham Young at Home*, 29–30.

61. Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 13:60–61, July 18, 1869.
62. Historian's Office, Journal, July 12, 1857; December 31, 1859; October 2, 1862; January 23, 1865; George A. Smith to John L. Smith, July 30, 1863, Church Archives.
63. Gates, "My Father As His Forty Six Children Knew Him."
64. Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 11:132, August 1–10, 1865.
65. Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses* 1:39, July 11, 1852.
66. Elliott D. Landau, "How to Teach the Ten Commandments to Your Children," *Ensign* 3 (October 1973): 52.
67. Brigham Young to Brigham Young Jr., July 5, 1866, Church Archives.
68. Brigham Young Jr., Diary, March 12, 1875.
69. Brigham Young to Willard Young, November 11, 1875, in Jesse, *Letters of Brigham Young*, 191.
70. Brigham Young Jr., Diary, August 29, 1884. For further discussion of this issue, see Leonard J. Arrington, "The Settlement of the Brigham Young Estate, 1877–1879," *Pacific Historical Review* 21 (February 1952): 1–20; and Arrington, *American Moses*, 422–30.
71. Gates and Widtsoe, *Life Story of Brigham Young*, 370.
72. Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 14:193, June 3, 1871.
73. Gates and Widtsoe, *Life Story of Brigham Young*, 355–56.



Church Archives

Brigham Young, 1855. Photograph attributed to Marsena Cannon.



**FIG. 1.** Eliza R. Snow, ca. 1868–69. Photograph by Charles R. Savage. Church Archives.



Brigham Young, possibly March 11, 1869. Photograph by Charles R. Savage. Courtesy Gary and Carolynn Ellsworth.



# The Lion and the Lioness

## Brigham Young and Eliza R. Snow

Jill Mulvay Derr

He was born in 1801, she in 1804. He was a man known for his humor and gruffness, she a woman known for her sobriety and refinement. He preached unforgettable sermons, though he never learned to spell. She wrote reams of poetry and songs. He provided her a home as one of his wives for thirty years, but she never took his name. Both he and she were passionately devoted to the Prophet Joseph Smith and his expansive vision of eternity. President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and presidentess of its Relief Society, Brigham Young and Eliza Roxcy Snow formed a couple whose marriage eludes simple description (fig. 1). Though no children were born to their union and nothing suggests that the two were ever “one flesh,” Brigham and Eliza were of “one heart and one mind.”<sup>1</sup>

Patriarch, prophet, and president, colonizer and community planner, Brigham Young was unique among religious leaders in nineteenth-century America. Revered among Latter-day Saints for her spiritual gifts, temple ministry, and long tenure as president of Mormon women’s organizations, Eliza Snow was likewise distinctive among nineteenth-century female religious leaders.

Extraordinary and fiercely strong individuals, Brigham and Eliza also worked unitedly as partners. They functioned as yokefellows in ways similar to a cadre of nineteenth-century Protestant ministers and their wives—women who, like Eliza, helped organize and manage church organizations for women. Yet in significant respects Brigham and Eliza were different from these couples. Brigham and Eliza’s close association and cooperation embodied the pattern of familial and organizational bonds revealed by Joseph Smith in Nauvoo, bonds authorized and sanctified by priesthood authority. Brigham and Eliza drew upon the mutual respect and trust they had developed in their marriage to establish a model of men and women working together harmoniously in the Church organization. Their complementary leadership bore abundant institutional fruit as ward and stake organizations expanded to include not only priesthood quorums but also Relief Society and young women’s organizations.

## The Context of Their Marriage

The thirty-three-year partnership of Brigham Young and Eliza Snow was marked by reciprocal respect and solicitude, familial love, and the “unity of purpose and action” that Brigham so often preached.<sup>2</sup> The dimensions of their family and working relationship must be explored primarily through Eliza’s eyes—through the poems, diaries, letters, and speeches in which she refers to Brigham, since his references to her are far fewer than hers to him. Yet though the documentary record is somewhat sparse, it is clear that their multifaceted relationship deepened significantly from the time they were married in 1844 until Brigham’s death in 1877.

While they shared several common experiences, the nature and extent of personal interactions between Brigham and Eliza before their marriage is not evident from existing records. Almost a year and a half after his April 1832 baptism, Brigham moved from his home in Mendon, New York, to Kirtland, Ohio, to join other Latter-day Saints gathering to be with the Prophet Joseph Smith and build a temple. Eliza would arrive there two and a half years later. She left her home in Mantua, Ohio, and moved the twenty-nine miles to Kirtland in January 1836, about nine months after she was baptized. After two momentous years, both Eliza and Brigham had moved with the body of the Church to Far West, Missouri. If they had not met earlier, certainly they became acquainted in Nauvoo, Illinois, the Mississippi River town that burgeoned as Latter-day Saints gathered there between 1839 and 1846.

Eliza R. Snow and Brigham Young were married by priesthood authority on October 3, 1844, at the Nauvoo, Illinois, home of Stephen and Hannah Markham, where Eliza then resided. It was a private and confidential ceremony. “Brother H. C. Kimball and my Self was at B<sup>r</sup> Steven Marcoms Sisters Eliza Snow & Betsey Farechil[d]es was there,” Brigham noted in his journal, inscribing the mark he used to indicate that a marriage had been performed.<sup>3</sup> Eliza was Brigham’s eighth plural wife. The Prophet Joseph Smith had first introduced the Old Testament principle of plural marriage to a small circle of his close associates in 1840 and 1841. Rumors of such marriages and other innovations in Nauvoo exacerbated both dissension within the Church and tensions between the Saints and their neighbors. The turmoil culminated in the assassination of the Prophet Joseph and his brother Hyrum at Carthage on June 27, 1844. Thirteen weeks later, Brigham, president of the Quorum of the Twelve and Joseph’s successor, married Eliza, one of Joseph’s plural wives.

Brigham Young, whose first wife, Miriam Works, died in 1832, married Mary Ann Angell two years later. The couple had had four children by the time Joseph Smith taught Brigham Young and select others the principle of plural marriage. With spiritual assurance that the principle came by divine

commandment, Brigham overcame his initial abhorrence and on June 14, 1842, complied with Joseph Smith's call by entering into plural marriage with twenty-year-old Lucy Ann Decker.<sup>4</sup> He would marry six other women before his marriage to Eliza; five of these women would bear him children, as would eight more of the wives he married between 1846 and 1865.<sup>5</sup>

Like Eliza, Brigham Young's wives Emily Partridge, Louisa Beaman, and Zina Huntington had been married to the Prophet Joseph during his lifetime. Brigham and other Apostles followed a practice similar to the Old Testament levirate requirement by offering marriage to Joseph's widows after his death to care for them and "raise up seed" to him.<sup>6</sup> Brigham married eight of Joseph's wives and had children with three of them. Like others of these women, Eliza's marriage to Brigham was for time only.<sup>7</sup>

Indeed, there was no requirement that such marriages performed by priesthood authority be consummated. Mormon theology made these unions—even marriages for time—something more than the term "marriage" alone might suggest. "It might be argued," observed anthropologist Rex Eugene Cooper, "that within the context of the patriarchal order, the union between husband and wife is conceptualized in terms of patriarchal priesthood power rather than in terms of lawful sexual intercourse . . . the root symbol of American kinship."<sup>8</sup> Thus, Brigham married a number of women with whom he may or may not have had sexual relations and who bore him no children.<sup>9</sup> Biographer Leonard J. Arrington characterizes these marriages as "caretaker" marriages.<sup>10</sup> Brigham provided these women with a home and listed them in his will. Yet beyond providing these temporal benefits, Brigham made them part of his covenant family. A man and a woman bound together in the "new and everlasting covenant of marriage" could receive the fullness of priesthood blessings, blessings unavailable to individuals alone. Bound to God and to one another by covenant, they became part of a covenant community composed of interconnected covenant families.

These theological understandings—indeed the whole of Mormonism—framed the full context of the marriage partnership that Brigham Young and Eliza R. Snow developed over the course of thirty-three years. Within that framework, three distinct expressions of their partnership can be identified: their alliance as prophet and poetess, their relationship in an extensive family as husband and wife, and their cooperation as president and presidentess.

### **Prophet and Poetess**

Both Brigham and Eliza were prominent public figures in Nauvoo and their alliance as prophet and poetess grew out of their public roles. Joseph Smith appointed Eliza Snow, Nauvoo's "well known and talented poetess,"

to write poems for, about, and on behalf of the Latter-day Saints, and she did so with a keen sense of “mission and calling.”<sup>11</sup> During the seven years the Saints occupied Nauvoo, she published eighty poems in Illinois newspapers.<sup>12</sup> She also served as secretary of the Female Relief Society of Nauvoo. Meanwhile, Brigham Young left Nauvoo in 1839 to serve a mission in England with other members of the Twelve, presided over the mission there until April 1841, and then returned to Nauvoo to shoulder the new responsibilities Joseph assigned the Twelve. He was in New England promoting Joseph Smith’s presidential candidacy when he learned of the assassination of Joseph and Hyrum at Carthage, Illinois.<sup>13</sup>

In their own distinct ways, Brigham and Eliza mourned the loss of their beloved Joseph. Brigham returned to Nauvoo, a city still grieving, on August 6, 1844. Five days later, he described the prevailing mood in a simple, heartfelt letter to his daughter Vilate: “It has been a time of mourning. The day that Joseph and Hyrum were brought in from Carthage to Nauvoo it was judged by men both in and out of the church that there was more than five barrels of tears shed. I cannot bear to think of any thing about it.”<sup>14</sup>

No existing letter or diary records Eliza’s sorrow at Joseph’s death. Her eighty-four-line funerary poem, “Lines on the Assassination of Generals Joseph Smith and Hyrum Smith,” was elevated in tone—a dramatic, formal dirge on behalf of the whole community of Latter-day Saints:

Ye heavens, attend! Let all the earth give ear!  
Let Gods and seraphs, men and angels hear:  
The worlds on high—the Universe, shall know  
What awful scenes are acted here below!

Dated just four days after the martyrdom, the poem was published both as a broadside and as an item in the Nauvoo *Times and Seasons*.<sup>15</sup> The poem’s stilted form belies more tender feelings. According to one of her close associates, Eliza “was prostrated with grief” following the martyrdom.<sup>16</sup> In her own public statements, Eliza was less explicit about her grief, but her depth of feeling for her “beloved husband” Joseph is unmistakable. He was, she said, “the choice of my heart and the crown of my life.”<sup>17</sup>

Eliza never spoke of Brigham in the same passionate terms. Nonetheless, she wrote poetry and prose sustaining him in his role as prophet, as leader of the Saints, precisely as she had employed her pen to support Joseph in his prophetic calling. While she continued to write poems for and on behalf of the Latter-day Saints in general, some twenty-nine poems written between 1845 and Brigham’s death in 1877 directly express her support for Israel’s “Chieftain,” the “Servant of God,” the “Lord’s anointed.” This was an era when the role of the poet was both to articulate and to shape public sentiment. Eliza’s poems were intended to express and to reinforce Saints’ loyalty to Brigham Young. The poems reflected her loyalty to him—loyalty that was a critical element in building her relationship with him.

“To President Brigham Young,” her first poem honoring Brigham, appeared in the February 15, 1845, issue of the *Times and Seasons*. He had assumed leadership on August 8, 1844, when thousands of Church members gathered in Nauvoo assented to follow the Twelve and its president over rival claimants such as Sidney Rigdon. “The church was of one hart and one mind,” Brigham recorded in his diary that day. “They wanted the twelve to lead the church as Br Joseph had dun in his day.”<sup>18</sup> As the Twelve assumed the duties of Joseph and his counselors, dissenters continued debating the question of who should legitimately succeed Joseph as head of the Latter-day Saints. Eliza’s February 1845 poem declared that the prophetic “mantle of Joseph” rested upon Brigham Young:

An important station is truly thine,  
 And the weight of thy calling can none define:  
 Being call’d of the Lord o’er the Twelve to preside,  
 And with them over all of the world beside.

.....  
 Thou hast gain’d, like Elisha, a rich behest,  
 For the mantle of Joseph seems to rest  
 Upon thee, while the spirit and pow’r divine,  
 That inspir’d his heart, is inspiring thine.

The great work which he laid the foundation to  
 Is unfinished, and resting on thee to do—[.]<sup>19</sup>

These lines do not read as smoothly as most of Eliza’s poetry. Like other Latter-day Saints in Nauvoo, she was unaccustomed to bearing witness of a prophet other than Joseph. She may also have felt an awkward unfamiliarity in writing about the man she had married four months earlier; they may not have known one another very well at that time.

However, writing as a poetess for Zion, Eliza found numerous occasions to refine her public support of Zion’s prophet. She dedicated five more poems to President Young between February 1846, when she left Nauvoo with the Saints, and September 1848, when Brigham brought most of his family into the Salt Lake Valley. A sixth poem, though not dedicated to Brigham, praised and sustained him. It was titled, as were several of her trail songs, “Song for the Camp of Israel,” signaling the journeying Saints’ thorough identification with ancient Israel’s exodus from Egypt. Recorded in Eliza’s diary and dated April 5, 1846, the song was written about ninety miles from Nauvoo, near Shoal Creek in Iowa. The first stanza addresses the camp:

O, ye toss’d to and fro, and afflicted!  
 Rejoice in the hope of your lot;  
 For you’re truly the children of Israel  
 But the Gentiles know it not;

And it matters not when or whither  
 You go, neither whom among;  
 Only so that you closely follow  
 Your leader, Brigham Young.

The second and third stanzas salute not only Brigham but also his longtime friend Heber C. Kimball, who was second to Brigham in seniority in the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and who essentially served as his first counselor even before the First Presidency was reorganized in 1847. “The blessings of heaven will attend you / Both in time and eternity / If you strictly adhere to the counsel / Of Brigham and Heber C.”<sup>20</sup>

Some of the songs Eliza penned for fellow travelers to sing around their evening campfires were written at Brigham’s request. He had a fine bass voice, loved to sing, and undoubtedly joined in the singing whenever he could. She matched the meter of her verses to popular tunes of the era that Church members already knew or could readily learn. For example, on March 18, 1847, as Brigham prepared to leave Winter Quarters to trek to the Great Basin with the vanguard company of pioneers, Eliza wrote at his request “A Journeying Song for the Camp of Israel,” to be sung to the tune of “Auld Lang Syne.” In April, following the Pioneer Company’s departure, she composed verses for a second song, entitled “The Twelve, To Prest. B[righam] Young,” to be sung to “Indian Hunter,” a tune she employed for at least four of her songs:

They have gone—they have gone new privations to share  
 Gone as Abraham went when he knew not where  
 They have gone like the deer when pursued in the chase  
 To secure to the saints a safe hiding place.<sup>21</sup>

Eliza’s songs consistently looked not only to a place of refuge but also to a place of beginning “where the kingdom of God / Will be seen in its order extending abroad.”<sup>22</sup> The task of building the kingdom was for all of modern Israel, not Brigham Young alone.

Six weeks after the Pioneer Company arrived in the valley of the Great Salt Lake, Brigham and others headed east to Winter Quarters to retrieve their families. Already on the westward trail, Eliza and her company crossed paths with Brigham at the Sweetwater. In her song saluting “ye mighty men of Israel, / Who the hiding place have found,” she attested that their work was divinely sanctioned, for they had been blessed by “The Eternal God” and “stood on holy ground.”<sup>23</sup>

Much of Eliza’s poetry reads like a chronicle of critical moments in nineteenth-century Church history. She was on hand to write commemorative verses that interpreted the present and often the future significance of historic beginnings, changes, and decisions. On December 5, 1847, Brigham Young was sustained President of the Church at Kanessville, Iowa. The First Presidency was reorganized with Heber C. Kimball and Willard

Richards as President Young's counselors. Nine months later, when the new First Presidency returned to the Salt Lake Valley, Eliza composed a song that welcomed them and testified of their authority to preside. "To our chieftain all hail!; to his counsellors too," she wrote.

You have come, you have come, to the valley once more,  
And have landed your train like a ship on the shore;  
You great father in Israel, with hosts you have come,  
To this beautiful valley we welcome you home.

Anticipating a bright future under Brigham Young's leadership, Eliza concluded:

When good order's established and all with accord,  
Adhere to the precepts and law of the Lord,  
Which are given and, through Brigham, hereafter will come  
In this beautiful valley we will all feel at home.<sup>24</sup>

Over the next three decades, Eliza continued to champion her prophet-husband through her writing. A prose piece she wrote in 1849 on behalf of the "aged fathers in Israel" celebrated the entry of the pioneers into the Salt Lake Valley. "What must be the feelings, this day, of Pres<sup>t</sup> Young, the leader of that noble band of Pioneers; while he contemplates the results of the last two years?" she asked. Then she looked back:

What must have been his feelings when, with a little band . . . he started forth into the wilderness in search of a home for his people, like Abraham of old, not knowing whither he went? But he knew that God had call'd him—he trusted in the arm of Omnipotence, and by the unseen hand of the Almighty Jehovah, their feet were directed across a trackless desert to this place.

And in this place, she continued, Jehovah's prophet would establish equality, justice, and liberty. "To you, Pres<sup>t</sup> Young, as the successor of Pres<sup>t</sup> Smith; do we now look, as to a second Washington, so far as political freedom is concerned."<sup>25</sup> Like other Latter-day Saints, Eliza anticipated the establishment of the semi-autonomous State of Deseret, whose leaders would govern in righteousness. In 1854 she affirmed that the Saints could rejoice in having "a Washington / And Moses too, in Brigham Young."<sup>26</sup> Her Fourth of July and Twenty-fourth of July prose and poetry helped establish the ritual story of the pioneer trek and the building of Zion in the Rocky Mountains. She placed Brigham Young at the center of the narrative. Indeed, her April 1853 song celebrated the laying of cornerstones for the Salt Lake Temple "in peace, in the City of Brigham."<sup>27</sup>

Eliza's national songs and anthems composed for the sought-after, but unrealized, State of Deseret praised Brigham's theocratic leadership and fiercely denounced his enemies. In the valleys of the mountains, the Saints were gathering to become a holy people with guidance from God's prophet—"Brigham Young, the Lord's anointed, / Lov'd of heav'n, and fear'd of hell"—she wrote in 1851.<sup>28</sup>

A decade later, Eliza's 1861 anthem to Brigham Young echoed the same themes:

O God, bless Brigham Young;  
 Bless him, and all that bless him:  
 Waste them away, O God, we pray,  
 Who, rising to oppose him,  
 Contend with Thee.

.....  
 Long, long live Brigham Young,  
 To battle with tradition—  
 To break in twain each yoke and chain,  
 And give the world its freedom  
 And truth its throne.<sup>29</sup>

In October 1868, Eliza published, on behalf of Latter-day Saints, a “people’s prayer” for “our prophet Brigham.” Probably the fullest expression of her witness of her husband’s sacred calling as prophet and President of the Church, it begins:

O God of life and glory,  
 Hear Thou a people’s prayer:  
 Bless, bless our prophet Brigham,  
 And let him, Thy fullness share.  
 He is Thy chosen servant,  
 To lead Thine Israel forth;  
 Till Zion, crown’d with joy, shall be  
 A praise in all the earth.

He draws from Christ, the Fountain  
 Of everlasting truth,  
 The wise and prudent counsels  
 Which he gives to age and youth.  
 Thyself in him reflected,  
 Through mortal agency—  
 He is Thy representative,  
 To set Thy people free.<sup>30</sup>

Thus the poet supported the prophet. And the prophet lent his support to the poet. An enthusiastic patron of her art, Brigham enlarged her influence and reputation. Reflecting her call from Joseph Smith to write poems for Zion, Eliza was widely known by the 1850s as Zion’s poet laureate, “Zion’s Poetess.”<sup>31</sup> Not only did Brigham request that she write poems and songs for particular occasions, but he sometimes ordered their printing and distribution. In 1861, for example, he “directed that a piece of poetry composed by E R. Snow for the 4<sup>th</sup> of July should be taken to E Smith and 50 copies struck off.”<sup>32</sup> He obviously liked her poems, songs, and hymns. Her composition “O my Father, thou that dwellest” was reportedly his favorite hymn.<sup>33</sup> He was proud of her 1856 volume of poetry, *Poems:*



*Religious, Historical, and Political*, which he described as “properly executed and got up in good style.”<sup>34</sup> On several occasions, in response to requests for Church literature, he sent her volume along with the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and works of Parley P. Pratt, Orson Pratt, and others.<sup>35</sup> When she published a second volume of her poetry, it began with a poem dedicating the volume to Brigham Young, “Servant of God, most honor’d—most beloved.”<sup>36</sup>

Brigham and Eliza were united in their commitment to build the Kingdom of God and to bring forth Zion, and each honored the other’s role in that sacred endeavor. The prophet-poet combination served both of them well. It was a public manifestation of their unified vision and mutual esteem.

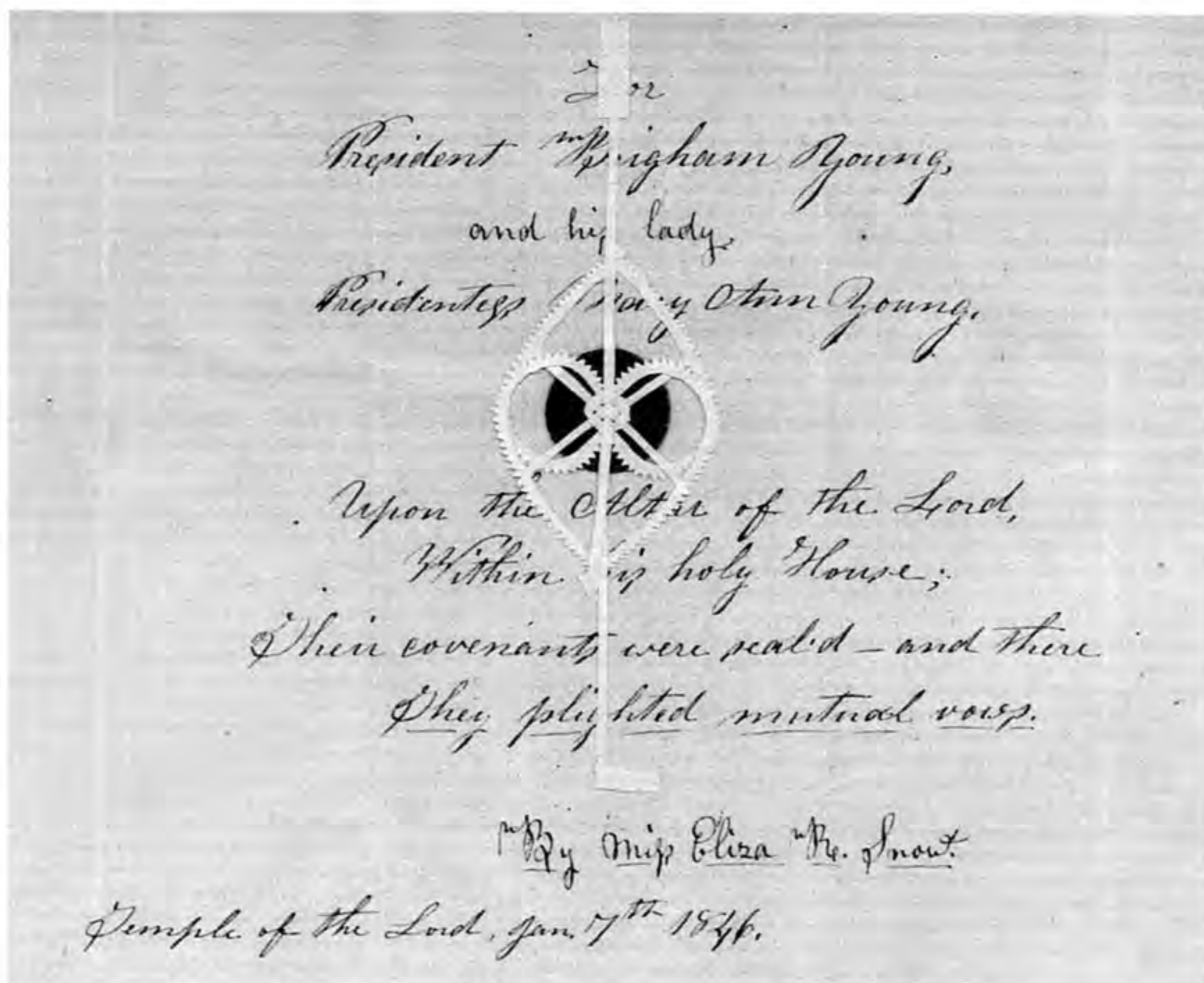
### **Husband and Wife**

The connection between Brigham Young and Eliza Snow also had a private dimension. Their alliance as prophet and poet developed within the context of their relationship as husband and wife. They married in their early forties, and both lived in the same household into their seventies. Over the span of three decades, they grew from being awkward acquaintances who respected one another to becoming comfortable confidants who counseled with each other and laughed together. Over the years, their reciprocal love, admiration, and trust increased within the new and everlasting covenant that brought them together in the extensive Young family and household. The communication, cooperation, and unity they established in their marriage laid the foundation for their extraordinary partnership in the Church’s organization.

**Early Years.** The two-volume diary Eliza kept between 1846 and 1849 traces their developing relationship (fig. 2) during those early years. Their marriage in October 1844 did not effect any immediate change in Eliza’s circumstances. She continued living in the home of Stephen and Hannah Markham in Nauvoo. The first group of Saints left Nauvoo on February 4, 1846. Nine days later, Eliza crossed the Mississippi River with the Markhams, joining the Saints’ encampment at Sugar Creek, Iowa.

On the evening of February 15, Brigham arrived at Sugar Creek with fifteen wagons and some fifty members of his family. He had made various other arrangements for family members who, like Eliza, did not accompany him. She was at least on the trail; others remained for a time in Nauvoo or traveled in less comfortable circumstances than she. Dean C. Jessee’s thorough study of Brigham Young’s family during this period shows the enormous challenge Brigham faced as he tried to keep in touch with all of his wives and children during the westward trek.<sup>37</sup>

While letters between Brigham and a number of his wives exist for this period, there is no extant correspondence between Eliza and Brigham,



Church Archives

**FIG. 2.** Eliza R. Snow poem, 1846. This poem, written in Eliza R. Snow's own hand, celebrates the Nauvoo Temple sealing of Brigham Young and his wife Mary Ann Angell Young on January 7, 1846, the day four couples were sealed over a new altar. In this poem, an arrow and cut paper key interlace to form a heart—perhaps symbolizing authority, eternity, and love. The terms “President” and “Presidentess” are used to identify this leading couple.

perhaps because their paths crossed fairly frequently during the trek. On March 27, 1846, at the Chariton River in Iowa, the loosely organized Camp of Israel was reorganized into three new companies of one hundred wagons each, which were further divided into groups of fifty and ten. Brigham Young was president of the First Fifty, and Heber C. Kimball was president of the Second Fifty, in which Eliza traveled. She noted in her diary her encounters with Brigham, however brief—a handshake, visit, discussion, carriage ride, or supper. Their “interviews,” as she often termed them—and she recorded at least thirty-four of them—meant a great deal to her. “Had the pleasure of the first interview with Prest [Brigham] Y[oung] since we left the City,” she wrote on March 9, 1846.<sup>38</sup> Three weeks later, on March 29, he came to her wagon and “said in the name of the Lord I should get my health.” This blessing was a comfort, no doubt, to Eliza, who suffered ill health and personally prayed “for health that I may be useful.”<sup>39</sup>

The tens, fifties, and hundreds did not travel at the same pace, and separations were frequent. In mid-June 1846, while Eliza and others lingered at Mt. Pisgah, Iowa, Brigham and Heber pressed ninety miles ahead to the Missouri River to establish temporary settlements at Winter Quarters, Nebraska, and nearby Kaneshville. By then, the Saints had established a provisioning camp in Mt. Pisgah. When Brigham returned briefly to Mt. Pisgah in July—to raise volunteers for the United States' war with Mexico—Eliza expressed her concern about being left behind. She found, she wrote earlier, “a trial to my feelings in being separated from those with whom I have ever been associated in the church.” So, she noted on July 9, “I told B[righam] I wanted his promise that we shall come—he said we shall if we obey counsel.”<sup>40</sup>

**Winter Quarters.** Eliza arrived at Winter Quarters in August 1846. There she and Brigham visited on at least eight occasions before his departure for the Great Basin in April 1847. Some of these visits were brief conversations, but others involved time spent with him and his wives, whom Eliza called “the female family.”<sup>41</sup> The sense of disconnectedness apparent in her Iowa crossing diary faded during her ten-month stay at Winter Quarters as she developed a closer association with Brigham's other wives. They did not all live together, but they visited one another and gathered together often enough that Eliza began to feel connected to the family for the first time.

Caring for one another helped the wives to create a permanent bond. For example, when Eliza fell ill with chills and fever shortly after she arrived at Winter Quarters, “Sister Young”—Mary Ann Angell Young—was among those who nursed her back to health. The kindness of Mary Ann and six other friends was “indelibly inscrib'd” upon her memory.<sup>42</sup> Two other wives, Louisa Beaman and Clarissa Decker, visited her “with kindnesses” in November. “And by far the highlight of the year,” as Dean Jessee has effectively summarized Eliza's diary entries,

was five days between Christmas and New Year's that Eliza spent with “the girls.” At President Young's on 27 December [1846] she had “the pleasure of supping on a bak'd turkey,” and on the thirtieth spent an “agreeable” afternoon with Brigham, Mary Ann Angell, and Louisa Beaman. The climax of the week came on New Year's Eve: “To describe the scene . . . would be beyond my pow'r. Suffice it to say, the spirit of the Lord was pour'd out and we receiv'd a blessing thro' our belov'd mother Chase and Sis. Clarissa [Ross] by the gift of tongues.” Eliza concluded her five-day visit with “the female family” on New Year's Day with the remark, “my love [for them] seems to increase with every day's acquaintance.”<sup>43</sup>

What healing balm these days must have provided to Eliza, who had not lived with her own parents and younger brothers for five years and had received on December 22 news that her mother had died in Illinois.<sup>44</sup>

The shared exercise of the spiritual gifts of tongues, prophecy, and healing among Brigham's wives and other women at Winter Quarters provided spiritual renewal and refreshment for sisters who were exhausted from travel, sickness, privation, and the death of loved ones.<sup>45</sup> With a playful reference to the small cabins in which her sister wives resided, Eliza celebrated the gift of tongues in a poem addressed "To all the Ladies who reside in the 2d mansion of Prest B[righam] Young." The poem began, "Beloved sisters all unite. / In music's sweetest strains."<sup>46</sup> These frequent gatherings of women at Winter Quarters, described by Eliza as "a glorious time," "a rejoicing time," a "refreshing time," bound her to her sister wives. On June 12, 1847, when she left Winter Quarters to begin the journey to the Salt Lake Valley, she wrote, "Bade farewell to many who seem dearer to me than life."<sup>47</sup>

In addition to the gatherings of "the female family," Eliza shared experiences with individual wives that further strengthened her family ties. Brigham seems to have arranged for Eliza to be present on January 15, 1847, when he blessed his and Louisa Beaman's six-day-old son, Moroni. Eliza then remained with Louisa and the baby for a week.<sup>48</sup> Forty-three years old, childless, and fatigued by the "family discord" she experienced traveling with the Markhams, Eliza must have welcomed the change.<sup>49</sup>

At the end of March 1847, Stephen Markham told Brigham that he would take Eliza "on to the west" that summer—"a great accommodation to [Brigham] as he was short on it for wagons."<sup>50</sup> But a more attractive possibility presented itself and won the endorsement of Brigham's wife Mary Ann Angell, whom Eliza loved and respected. Eliza would travel west with twenty-four-year-old Margaret Peirce (or Margaret Pierce), another of Brigham's wives, and Margaret's parents, Robert and Mary Harvey Peirce. Eliza left with the Peirces in June 1847 and spent three and a half months on the trail with a woman young enough to be her daughter yet one whom she came to love "with the tenderness / That sister spirits love."<sup>51</sup>

Eliza and Brigham last met on the trail in September 1847, on the Sweetwater River about 250 miles from the Salt Lake Valley. She was traveling west with the Peirces in the first of ten westward moving companies directed by John Taylor and Parley P. Pratt. Brigham and other Apostles who had reached the valley with the vanguard company were headed back to Winter Quarters to shepherd their families and other Saints to the valley. The reunion had personal significance for the husband and wife, who knew that a full year would pass before they would see one another again. Eliza recorded their September 10 conversation in her diary: "Before the P[eirce]s left B[righam] came to the carriage blest us—I ask'd who was to be my counsellor for the year to come—he said E[liza] R. S[now] I said 'she is not capable'—he said 'I have appointed her president[']—said he had

conversation with br. P[eirce] about provision—that he will furnish me & all will be right.”<sup>52</sup> This brief diary entry discloses Eliza’s vulnerability, economically and emotionally. In this era when women rarely lived independently of father, husband, brother, or son, Eliza looked to Brigham as provider and protector. He both arranged for her support and expressed confidence in her ability to act independently. And she proved worthy of his trust. While writing, sewing, ironing, cooking, picking currants, and even submitting her journal to assist “in making up the history of the Camp from W. Quarters,” Eliza traveled to the Salt Lake Valley and there took charge of her life, despite her continued ill health.<sup>53</sup>

**Salt Lake Valley.** The bonds established in Winter Quarters held fast in the Salt Lake Valley. After Eliza arrived in the valley in October 1847, she moved into a room in the “Old Fort,” a temporary housing complex of some 450 dirt-roofed log cabins spread over three, ten-acre blocks.<sup>54</sup> There she shared a fourteen-by-sixteen-foot cabin with Brigham’s wife Clarissa (Clara) Decker, who had been in the valley since July, having traveled west with Brigham and the vanguard pioneer company. “Have my things put into Clarissa’s room, who said Prest. Y. wrote her that I would live with her,” Eliza noted on October 3. The same day, Clara wrote Brigham, “Sister Eliza Snow is coming in the morning to live with me I was much pleased with the arrangement.”<sup>55</sup> Eliza and Clara lived together for nearly a year before Brigham arrived with his other wives and children in September 1848. Sister wife Margaret Peirce moved into that room, and Eliza and Clara moved to other rooms in the fort, Clara joining her sister and sister wife Lucy Decker and Eliza staying with Jonathan and Elvira Holmes, old friends from Nauvoo.<sup>56</sup>

After Brigham’s return to the Salt Lake Valley in fall 1848, his visits to Eliza were not frequent but they indicated his desire to keep her connected to the family, a connection that satisfied her own deep needs. This is reflected in brief excerpts from her journal from November 1848 to June 1849, while she was living in the Old Fort:

[**Wednesday, November 1, 1848**] Prest. Y[oung] invited me to a carriage ride with him—we din’d at his house after conversing on some particulars.

[**Thursday, November 3, 1848**] Spent the eve. very pleasantly at Prest. Y[oung]’s with most of his wives. . . .

[**Sunday, December 3, 1848**] B[righam] call’d after meeting. . . .

[**Monday, December 25, 1848**] Christmas, I staid at home & read newspapers which Prest. Y[oung] sent me, he having call’d last eve. . . .

[**Sunday, January 25, 1849**] Very sick yest. & today—B[righam] administer’d to me—felt reliev’d for which I thank the Lord.

[**Monday, January 26, 1849**] B[righam] propos’d a carriage ride to his house in few days. . . .

[**Thursday, March 1, 1849**] B[righam]'s folks move out of Fort[.]

[**Friday, March 2, 1849**] B[righam] call'd to see me. . . .

[**Friday, April 13, 1849**] [Last] Wed. B[righam] Y[oung] come for me to visit his family, which he commenc'd organizing for living together. I spent the night & he took me to Br. [Heber C.] K[imball]'s the next day—told me to go home from there & he should soon come & move me up. He call'd this eve. with Loisa, Margaret & Clara. . . .

[**Tuesday, June 19, 1849**] This eve. I rode to Prest. Y[oung]'s in carriage[.]

[**Thursday, June 21, 1849**] return'd home. . . .

[**Wednesday, June 27, 1849**] This day is 5 years since Joseph's death!

[**Thursday, June 28, 1849**] Mov'd to Prest. Y[oung]'s Log. row[.]<sup>57</sup>

Eliza's move into Brigham Young's home represented a full embrace into the Young family. The row of log dwellings Brigham built on his lot adjacent to City Creek—on what is now First Avenue in downtown Salt Lake City—housed his wives and children for six or seven years. Residences for the Young family gradually spread to both sides of what is now State Street and included the White House (1851), where Mary Ann Angell lived with her five children; the Beehive House (1855), which served as Brigham Young's official residence and housed Lucy Decker and her seven children; and the Lion House (1856), which had over two dozen rooms and housed several wives with their children as well as wives who had no children. After Eliza moved into the newly completed Lion House, she remained there until her death.<sup>58</sup>

Brigham and Eliza were part of a complex family whose size, structure, and interconnectedness varied over time as wives aged and died, children were born and grew to maturity, and living arrangements changed. Brigham Young did not simply provide for his family, he organized them according to cherished principles of unity and harmony. Susa Young Gates, daughter of Brigham and Lucy Bigelow, explained:

The Lion House, named for the stone lion on its front porch, was an economic and spiritual experiment on my father's part to house his numerous wives comfortably, with the least expenditure of means—for that was a tremendous problem—where each wife and child should have equal treatment, and where father could see all his dear ones every day at meal time . . . and his wives and his growing children could partake intimately of the spirit of comradeship and fellowship with him and with each other, which is the real spirit of Christ and His Gospel. But he later moved the mothers of large families into homes of their own.

Susa indicated that at the end of his life her father regretted not having earlier deeded “each wife her own home and let her pay her own tithing and have her own belongings around her.” And yet, Susa observed, “the experiment” of family communal living was a beautiful success to Brigham's

children.<sup>59</sup> It was also a “beautiful success” for Eliza, who found in the extended Young family not only a home but love and fellowship and abundant opportunities to be, as Eliza desired, “useful.”<sup>60</sup>

Without children of her own, Eliza was free to employ her time in ways most of the other wives could not. Clarissa Young Spencer, daughter of Brigham and Lucy Ann Decker, observed that the Young wives who had no children “naturally took a heavier part in the running of the entire establishment, such as supervising the cooking or working in the weaving and spinning rooms. Each one worked, also, according to her talents.”<sup>61</sup> Before Eliza took charge of Relief Society work in the late 1860s, she exercised her nursing and her sewing talents. “She was as faithful at the bedside of sickness as even aunt Zina [Huntington] could be and her cool hand laid upon the fevered brow of a fevered child was like a heavenly benediction,” Susa remembered. Eliza was also a reader: “she spent all of her spare time in study of great and good books, beginning with the Bible and Book of Mormon, with which she was intimately familiar, and ending with the classics of the ages past.”<sup>62</sup>

She used her hands as well as her mind. “To relieve the nervous pressure of too much study, Eliza embroidered temple aprons or made burial clothing,” Susa recalled. “She was an exquisite needle woman and her embroideries were real works of art.”<sup>63</sup> During the westward trek and her early years in the Valley, Eliza had paid for some of her provisions through the labors of her needle and thread. Susa remembered Eliza organizing an embroidery class with several sister wives and friends, who may have also included some of Brigham’s daughters. “The women taught each other new stitches for ‘bell sleeve’ of dainty muslin, or daintier swiss ‘front aprons’ or collars, and talked restrainedly and cheerfully of high prospects and great spiritual possibilities.”<sup>64</sup> Perhaps this group helped Eliza initiate an early dress reform effort that introduced the “Deseret Costume,” described by one of Brigham Young’s daughters as “a hideous affair consisting of bloomers and full skirts, without trimming, hoops, or trains.”<sup>65</sup> Whether the design piqued or supported Brigham’s own commitment to simplified, homemade dress has yet to be determined.

Beyond the time they spent together in the Lion House at family meals and family prayers, Brigham and Eliza, on occasion, attended the Salt Lake Theater or a ball or social together. In 1865, for example, Brigham escorted two wives, Eliza and Amelia Folsom, to a dinner party at the home of Salt Lake merchant William Jennings. In September 1864, Eliza accompanied Brigham and Amelia, six Young children, and a large party of Brigham’s associates, including Eliza’s brother Lorenzo, on a month-long tour of Southern Utah settlements.<sup>66</sup> Presumably, such events provided Eliza and Brigham opportunities for conversing more extensively, for sharing ideas

and deepening mutual understanding, and for finding greater pleasure in one another's company.

It is difficult to trace how much time Brigham and Eliza spent together, let alone assess their feelings for one another as husband and wife. The emotional content of their relationship remains partially hidden. Little if anything in the public discourse of either Brigham or Eliza would hint that they were married. Eliza never attached "Young" to her name and, indeed, she was known by her well-established penname of "Miss" Eliza R. Snow. Following the etiquette of the era, she referred to Brigham publicly as President Young, never as "my husband." Likewise, he spoke of her not as "my wife," but as Sister Snow or Miss Eliza Snow.<sup>67</sup> And when either of them spoke of marriage publicly, he or she generally discussed marriage doctrine, offered advice, or defended the misunderstood practice of plural marriage. Both Brigham and Eliza made occasional mild remarks about the challenges of marriage, but these do not necessarily point to challenges in their own relationship. "Where is the man who has wives, and all of them think he is doing just right by them?" Brigham asked. "I do not know such a man," he continued; "I know it is not your humble servant."<sup>68</sup> And for her part, Eliza asked Relief Society women in Provo, "Who can try a wife like a husband?"<sup>69</sup>

Mormons generally and plural families particularly lived under a cloud of criticism that sometimes became a maelstrom. Ministers' sermons, travelers' accounts, popular novels, and newspaper cartoons lampooned "Utah and the Mormons" and particularly Brigham Young and his wives. The first federal antipolygamy legislation, the Morrill Act, was passed in 1862, and Congressional and judiciary efforts to put an end to the practice escalated until the end of the century when Church leaders finally forbade it. The popular assumption was that plural marriage degraded women and that wives and children suffered. Brigham repeatedly affirmed otherwise, as did Eliza, though she implied that her appreciation for plural marriage developed gradually: "As I increased in knowledge concerning the principle and design of Plural Marriage, I grew in love with it, and today esteem it a precious, sacred principle—necessary in the elevation and salvation of the human family in redeeming woman from the curse, and world from corruptions."<sup>70</sup>

What exists of Eliza and Brigham's private discourse regarding one another, most of it hers, is more revelatory, though not completely revealing. Both were guarded about expressing emotion. Nevertheless, the surviving documents convey familiarity, gratitude, humor, affection, and concern. Ever present is the sense that family bonds are intertwined with the family's bond to God and his work. For example, a letter Eliza wrote in 1865 to another of Brigham's plural wives, Mary Elizabeth Rollins, closed



with the following: "I will repeat President Young's words, as follows. 'When you write, give my respects to sister Mary, and tell her I am here full of faith, and the kingdom is moving on, and if she and I stick to it, when that goes up, we shall all go up with it.'"<sup>71</sup>

Brigham regularly carried out his official and personal correspondence through scribes. Maybe his own lack of facility with writing gave him greater appreciation for Eliza's literary talents, particularly when they were exercised on his or his family's behalf. Writing via a scribe to his son Willard at West Point in June 1871, Brigham described the family gathering for his seventieth birthday and his gratitude for Eliza's service in articulating family sentiment:

A surprise was prepared for me which, though it has been in preparation several days, was kept entirely from me. I stepped into dinner as usual, suspecting nothing, and was greeted by a concourse of children in the lobby, neatly dressed and each bearing a bouquet. I was ushered into the parlour where to my astonishment I was met by not less than 80 persons assembled to congratulate me on the occasion. We all proceeded to the dining room and 87 persons sat down to table. An address prepared by Sister Eliza R. Snow was then read to me, which embodied in a beautiful composition the affectionate sentiments of my family and immediate relatives and friends.<sup>72</sup>

For this occasion, Eliza's address to "Pres. Brigham Young, Beloved Hus[band,] Fath[er] & Friend" read in part:

It is a subject of mutual congratulation that your eventful life has been prolonged, to this period; and no testimonial that we can confer is capable of truthfully representing our appreciation of your worth & goodness. If the world knew you as we know you all parts of the inhabited, civilized earth would this day echo one grand, universal expression wishing you long life and happiness; and your broad heart overflowing with love & kindness, would meet a corresponding warm response from the appreciative bosom of humanity.

. . . May you live till the rulers of every nation on earth shall acknowledge the wisdom of God in your administration—seek unto you for counsel & recognize you as you truly are the friend of God and man.

May you live till your soul is satisfied.<sup>73</sup>

Brigham Young was not the only one stirred by Eliza's sentiments. "While it was being read," Brigham wrote, "many were moved to tears, and altogether it was a really pleasant time which will not easily be forgotten by those who were present."<sup>74</sup> The kindnesses shown at birthday parties worked both ways. A few months later, in January 1872, Brigham attended a surprise birthday party for Eliza and spoke for thirty minutes, though no record of his remarks has survived.<sup>75</sup>

Despite the high-blown rhetoric in Eliza's birthday tribute and some of her other poems, there is a sense of family connectedness in this tribute

that is magnified in letters Eliza wrote to Brigham. So far, I have located none he wrote to her. The letters she wrote to him suggest that to say she was wife “in name only” or that he married her to be her “caretaker” does no justice to the warmth that marked their interchanges, which can be seen clearly in her 1872 correspondence written while traveling through Europe and the Middle East with her brother Lorenzo, George A. Smith, and others. During the American and European legs of this journey, Eliza wrote Brigham regularly. Her November 4 letter from New York was filled with news of a visit to Niagara Falls, a meeting with the German consul, and confidential questions about funding another member of the party (“all would depend on your decision in the matter”). She closed, “If the family would like to know how I stand the trip so far, I can say that my health was never better. With love to all, I conclude this hasty, already too lengthy letter.”<sup>76</sup> Conscious of keeping letters to her busy husband short, she perpetually apologized for their length. “I well know you have no time for long letters,” she wrote.<sup>77</sup>

A letter written on board the steamer *Minnesota* on November 17, 1872, reported her reunion with Willard at West Point. He “was very very glad to see us. When we left he accompanied us to the ‘limits’ and with mutual kisses, we departed.” She described the steamer and the seasickness of her fellow voyagers and noted the Episcopal worship services on board (“we are all devout attendants”). “Br. [George A.] Smith wishes to be kindly remembered to you,” she wrote; “—says his health is now good But I think it is difficult to judge of his health by his face, for he has not shaven since leaving N.Y. and, of course, by this time there is but little of his face to be seen.” She closed “with love to yourself & family.”<sup>78</sup>

Eliza wrote to Brigham from London and Paris and sent to him from Venice a delightfully descriptive letter filled with gratitude for news from home and enthusiasm for the Italian landscape (“it seemed sociable to see the hills rising over above another, resembling our own mountain home”). She was pleased that Brigham would be making his annual winter trip to Utah’s southern settlements, this time with his old friends, sympathetic non-Mormons Thomas and Elizabeth Kane.<sup>79</sup> Eliza concluded, “My constant prayer is that you may enjoy a season of rest this winter—undisturbed by that kind of annoyance, which so signally characterized the last.”<sup>80</sup> She was referring to the legal actions against Brigham Young by James B. McKean, chief justice of Utah’s supreme court.<sup>81</sup>

Public issues fascinated Eliza, and her letters to Brigham from Europe included observations on government officials and systems of transportation and education. From her youth, Eliza had eagerly followed news of political events at home and abroad. Brigham respected her interest, having once made her a Christmas present of newspapers. He did not discourage

her emotionally charged political poetry and, judging from the content of her letters, may well have discussed politics more frequently and intensely with her than with his other wives. Private and public concerns came together in Eliza's letters as they came together in her marriage. She developed strong and loving ties to the Young family and household, but both she and Brigham looked outward to a larger covenant family, the community of Saints. As husband and wife, they conversed about the progress of that community in establishing the kingdom of God. She upheld him in moving that kingdom forward and succored him both privately, in ways that are typically never fully understood, and publicly, in such ways as writing poetry and acting politically on his behalf. After 1867, he would support her in enlisting women to move the kingdom still further forward.

The public issues they worked on together included legal wrangling. In 1875, Brigham Young again faced a hostile Justice James B. McKean when Ann Eliza Webb, among the last women Brigham married (1868), initiated divorce proceedings. McKean held Brigham in contempt of court for refusing to pay Ann Eliza's legal fees and alimony and sentenced him to a day in prison. Rallying to her husband's defense, Eliza gathered the signatures of 829 women, who petitioned territorial governor Samuel B. Axtell "for and in behalf of President Brigham Young," protesting that "the indignity imposed upon him was prompted by feelings of malevolence" and pleading for his immediate release "in consideration of the advanced age and feeble health of this venerable philanthropist."<sup>82</sup> President Young went to prison for twenty-four hours, a cold and stormy day in March, and—after McKean was removed as chief justice by President Ulysses S. Grant—eventually agreed to a judicial compromise in which he paid a small fraction of the alimony.<sup>83</sup>

### **President and Presidentess**

Eliza raised her voice publicly "for and in behalf of President Young" on many occasions from 1867 to 1877, the last decade of his life. Her activism moved her beyond her poems, beyond the Young family and household, to the "social duties" she believed to be "incumbent upon us as daughters and mothers in Zion."<sup>84</sup> For the last two decades of her life, from 1867 to 1887, she directed several Latter-day Saint organizations, overseeing the work of the Relief Society, the Young Ladies' association, and the Primary for children. "She walked out into the world of active things," recalled Susa Young Gates, "and did more for the Womanhood of the Church than any woman, before or since her time"<sup>85</sup> (fig. 3). Susa's high praise may seem exaggerated, but it points to the critical role Eliza played in integrating women into the Church's organizational structure, where they could



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**FIG. 3.** Eliza R. Snow seated between two of her close friends, 1868. In a year of intense activity, she traveled from ward to ward, at Brigham Young's request, to assist bishops in reorganizing Relief Societies. Sixty-four-year-old Eliza (center) pauses for a photograph with Elizabeth Anderson Howard (*left*) and poet Hanna Tapfield King (*right*), both of whom were students of the scriptures and active Relief Society workers.

assume the responsibilities Latter-day Saint women still carry in ministering to women, young women, and children.

Eliza did not provoke the change single-handedly. It was the crowning achievement of her partnership with Brigham. President of the Church and presidentess of Relief Society, the two of them worked together to usher in a new era for Latter-day Saint women. They put into effect the pattern of familial and organizational partnership Joseph Smith had introduced in Nauvoo, an ideal that was not fully realized until Brigham and Eliza united to achieve it. The trust, respect, and rapport the two of them had developed as prophet and poetess and as husband and wife enabled them to overcome the misunderstandings that clouded women's work in the 1840s and 1850s and to establish the Relief Society as a permanent and integral part of the organization of the Church.

Even though Eliza was not officially designated or set apart as the second general president of the Relief Society until 1880, more than a decade before that she began presiding over the work of the women's organizations by the calling and authorization of Brigham Young.<sup>86</sup> In this capacity, she was both known and remembered as "presidentess." The term was the title nineteenth-century Latter-day Saint women used for their local and

general Relief Society presidents.<sup>87</sup> In Utah, Brigham Young also used the term.<sup>88</sup> Presidentess was the title Eliza had ascribed to Brigham's first wife, Mary Ann Angell, in 1846 (see fig. 2), anticipating, perhaps, that Mary Ann would be as Joseph's first wife, Emma, had been: the leader of Latter-day Saint women ecclesiastically (through the Relief Society) and liturgically (in temple ordinances). But, despite the precedents, "there was no assumption of power" in the behavior of Mary Ann Angell.<sup>89</sup> Intelligent, highly cultivated, dignified, and spiritually sensitive, "Mother Young" guarded her privacy. She chose to live apart from the extended family in the busy Beehive House and Lion House, preferring to reside in the nearby White House (see fig. 3, p. 29). She was a loving, supportive companion to her husband but was not a woman to move into public life as a writer of petitions, organizer, and speaker. Eliza was just one year younger than Mary Ann Angell, and both of them were older than most of the other wives by one or two decades. This seniority and her experience and inclination fitted her for a public role, the role of presidentess that Brigham eventually accorded her.

When in 1867 Brigham called Eliza to firmly reestablish lapsed and waning Relief Societies, he had absolute confidence in her loyalty. As poet and as his wife of twenty years, she had proven herself an unfailing supporter. Brigham and Eliza exemplified the harmony they expected from the men and women they were teaching to work together institutionally—harmony that would enable the Relief Society to expand its responsibilities and accomplish good for its female members and the community as a whole. The Relief Society aided the bishops in relieving the poor—a particular concern during wintertime as immigrants continued to pour into Utah. It served as a parallel organization to the School of the Prophets in promoting the Saints' economic self-sufficiency. It furnished Latter-day Saint women new opportunities for self-expression and, as Eliza explained, for "cultivation . . . physically, mentally, morally, and spiritually."<sup>90</sup> And it provided mutual support for women living the principle of plural marriage.

In her life sketch, Eliza recounted the circumstances surrounding her initial calling:

As I had been intimately associated with, and had officiated as Secretary for the first [Relief Society] organization, Pres. Young commissioned me to assist the Bishops in organizing Branches of the Society in their respective Wards; for, at that time, the Bishops had not acquainted themselves with the movement, and did not know how to proceed. To me it was quite a mission, and I took much pleasure in its performance. I felt quite honored and much at home in my associations with the Bishops, and they appreciated my assistance.<sup>91</sup>

President Young announced from the Tabernacle pulpit in December 1867 his intention to firmly reestablish Relief Societies in local wards. In doing so, he was encouraging bishops to establish a partnership with their own spouses similar to the one he was creating with Eliza. Mixing humor with earnest counsel, he entreated:

Now Bishops, you have smart women for wives, many of you; let them organize Female Relief Societies in the various wards. We have many talented women among us, and we wish their help in this matter. Some may think this is a trifling thing, but it is not; and you will find that the sisters will be the mainspring of the movement.<sup>92</sup>

Brigham understood the power of women to forward the movement just as thoroughly as he understood the potential for conflict as they exercised that power. He had not forgotten the episodic and sometimes turbulent history of the Relief Society and of Mormon women's gatherings over the previous twenty-five years. Nor had Eliza forgotten. The fact that Brigham chose Eliza to synthesize a new movement among Latter-day Saint women at this time suggests his deep confidence in her abilities and her loyalty. Although this is not the place for a full treatment of the early history of the Relief Society, some understanding of its operations in the 1840s and 1850s is essential to comprehending the significance of the mission Brigham later entrusted to Eliza. These were years of important learning for both of them.

**The Nauvoo Relief Society.** The Prophet Joseph Smith established the precedent for including women in the organizational structure of the Church. Eliza's close friend and fellow Relief Society worker, Sarah M. Kimball, recalled that in the spring of 1842 Joseph persuaded her and her group of Latter-day Saint women in Nauvoo to abandon the "Ladies' Society" they had independently organized following the model of the female benevolent, sewing, and missionary societies typical in other churches. Eliza had written a constitution for the group. But at Joseph's invitation, the women gathered instead under his direction to be organized "in the order of the priesthood after the pattern of the Church."<sup>93</sup> Consequently, on March 17, 1842, Eliza was one of twenty women who assembled in the upper room of Joseph's red-brick store to be organized as Latter-day Saint priesthood quorums were structured: with a president and two counselors. Emma Smith, wife of the Prophet, became the first president of the "Female Relief Society of Nauvoo," as the group voted to call themselves. She selected two counselors, and this presidency "like the first Presidency of the church," Joseph instructed, would "continue in office during good behavior, or so long as they shall continue to fill the office with dignity."<sup>94</sup> Eliza was elected secretary.

Though ministers' wives normally led the benevolent societies established in their congregations, this presidency was distinctively Mormon in

form and tenure. Its officers were voted in and then set apart by the laying on of hands by priesthood leaders. “This society is not only to relieve the poor but to save souls,” Joseph Smith taught Relief Society sisters on one of the several occasions he addressed them. The new organization’s purposes were spiritual as well as temporal. Joseph introduced to the women sacred doctrines related to temple worship and told them their society “should move according to the ancient Priesthood.” He declared on April 28, 1842, “I now turn the key to you in the name of God,” granting women, as Elder Joseph Fielding Smith later affirmed, “some measure of divine authority particularly in the direction of government and instruction in behalf of the women of the church.”<sup>95</sup> Eliza recorded Joseph’s remarkable teachings in her minutes. She also registered the society’s two years of successful operation and significant labor on behalf of the poor. However, she did not record nor did she later discuss the conflict that arose in 1844 that would set the limits of women’s new authority.

Relief Society president Emma Smith, “severely tried in her mind about the doctrine of Plural Marriage,” recalled John Taylor, “made use of the position she held to try to pervert the minds of the sisters in relation to that doctrine.”<sup>96</sup> Meetings were officially suspended at some point after the last recorded meeting on March 16, 1844, at which Emma made a forceful declaration of her authority. Whether the move was made by the women themselves or at the order of Joseph Smith or, later, of Brigham Young is not clear. Certainly, however, following Joseph’s martyrdom, Emma became increasingly resistant to the leadership of Brigham Young and the Twelve, due largely to their continuing commitment to plural marriage.

Emma may have attempted to call a meeting of Relief Society sisters in late February or early March 1845—about the time Eliza published her first poem in support of Brigham. Whether it was Emma’s action or not, something stirred Brigham Young about that time. Indignant, he addressed a meeting of priesthood officials on March 9, 1845, delivering strong words “relative to things in which many of our Sister[s] have been engaged.” He declared:

They have no right to meddle in the affairs of the kingdom of God[.] outside the pale of this they have a right to meddle because many of them are more sagacious & shrewd & more competent to attend to things of the financial affairs. the[y] never can hold the keys of the Priesthood apart from their husbands. When I want Sisters or the Wives of the members of the church to get up Relief Society I will summon them to my aid but until that time let them stay at home & if you see Females huddling together veto the concern.<sup>97</sup>

Brigham Young and the Quorum of the Twelve found it imperative to assert their priesthood authority in a divided Nauvoo community, where a number of claimants still disputed the Quorum’s leadership. Regarding the

sisters, Brigham may also have been influenced by the prevailing cultural ambivalence regarding the religious role of American women. One historian has observed that women's benevolent societies "did not always go according to plan—the plan of male benefactors, that is." Women's groups could function as "a church within a church" and exert "a divisive force within the congregation,"<sup>98</sup> and it seems that this threatened to be the case in Nauvoo. Affirming that "one ounce of preventive is better than one pound of cure," Brigham voiced his determination to "stay these proceedings."<sup>99</sup> The Relief Society remained inoperative until 1854.

**Women's Organizations in Early Utah.** The tension that surfaced in Nauvoo was still evident in subtle ways after the Saints arrived in the Salt Lake Valley. Eliza heard in December 1847 "many reports calculated to discourage the sis[ters] in their efforts for improvement." She was referring to the informal meetings where women were gathering, as they had at Winter Quarters, to pray and receive spiritual gifts such as speaking in tongues. "But," she noted with characteristic faith and resilience, "all things will tend to the instructions of those that will be profited & hold fast to the principles of righteousness." The sisters' meetings continued into February, often with "breth[ren] present," and in most instances Eliza listed a sister as the one who presided.<sup>100</sup>

In the early 1850s, some women in the Salt Lake Valley assembled in new service groups without provoking opposition. The Female Council of Health, established in 1851 with a cluster of midwives at its core, was formally organized with a president and counselors, apparently with the endorsement of Church leaders. Open to all women interested in health matters, it resembled the Female Relief Society of Nauvoo in its organizational form and some of its purposes. According to Richard L. Jensen, members "heard lectures by local physicians, discussed the use of faith and herbs in healing, attempted to design more healthful female fashions, spoke and sang in tongues, and enjoyed a social and spiritual interchange."<sup>101</sup> To meet the health needs of the poor in the city, the council appointed representatives to most of the city's nineteen wards. Their assignment differed only slightly from the work of the Nauvoo Relief Society's visiting committees.

Looking beyond the poor in Salt Lake City, Matilda Dudley, Mary Hawkins, Amanda Smith, and Mary Bird initiated and formally organized in 1854 a society for the purpose of making clothing for destitute Indian women and children.<sup>102</sup> Membership of this fledgling society, which operated outside official Church channels, continued to grow. Manifesting an increased openness to women meeting together, President Young did not "veto the concern." Rather, he introduced two safeguards to forestall the development of autonomous and potentially divisive women's societies.



First, in June 1854, he encouraged widespread organization of Relief Societies to provide clothing for Indians and relief for the poor, directing that these groups be organized within ward units and under the direction of bishops. Before the year had ended, some twenty-two ward societies were organized, primarily in Salt Lake City. Members of Matilda Dudley's group dispersed to their various ward societies. Apparently, by the fall of 1855, the work of the Female Council of Health also merged with that of ward Relief Societies, and its meetings ceased.<sup>103</sup>

Second, Brigham Young published an authoritative statement regarding Relief Society's relationship to priesthood leaders. In spring 1855, Church historians were compiling the official history of the Church for serial publication in the Salt Lake City *Deseret News*. In March, as the compilers examined documents for 1842, Brigham asked Eliza to submit to the Historian's Office the minutes she had kept as secretary of the Female Relief Society of Nauvoo and personally brought with her to Utah. Included in these precious minutes—a record that Joseph Smith had called Relief Society's "Constitution and law"<sup>104</sup>—was the Prophet's expansive address of April 28, 1842, wherein he conveyed to Relief Society women new authority and responsibility. Under Brigham's direction, Heber C. Kimball, George A. Smith, and others substantially revised Eliza's transcription of Joseph's April 28 sermon. They clarified the presiding authority of husbands and priesthood leaders and minimized the possibility of women claiming independent authority in connection with their organization, thereby averting any replay of the conflict with Emma in Nauvoo.<sup>105</sup> In September 1855, the officially revised version of Joseph's sermon was published in the *Deseret News*,<sup>106</sup> removing any doubt that ultimate authority in matters concerning the Relief Society rested not with its female officers, but with their priesthood leaders.

**The Question of Woman's Place.** How Eliza reacted to the editing of her minutes one can only surmise.<sup>107</sup> She did not take an active role in establishing local Relief Societies in 1854 and 1855. Indeed, evidence suggests that Eliza did not even participate in these early Relief Society meetings, though some of Brigham's other wives, including Mary Ann Angell, attended.<sup>108</sup> However, her 1854–57 poems reveal a persistent concern with woman's status and destiny. An important cluster of these poems, written in the first person for a small audience of friends, provide a window on questions Eliza explored in the decade before Brigham called her to direct the work of Relief Societies.<sup>109</sup> "And what is woman's calling? where is her place? / Is she destined to honor or disgrace?" Eliza asked in her January 1855 poem "Woman."<sup>110</sup>

Latter-day Saints were aware of the national debates regarding woman's role and sphere that permeated American culture during the last half

of the nineteenth century, raising questions about women's political rights and economic opportunities and women's religious authority. The revivals of the Second Great Awakening that had sparked young Joseph Smith's prayerful inquiry landed thousands of women in Evangelical Protestant congregations, where they continued to pray and testify and to organize the sewing circles and benevolent societies that gave them limited access to the "public sphere." The notion of separate spheres for men and women flowered in nineteenth-century America, where, as a result of increasing industrialization and urbanization, men had gradually moved away from home and farm to workplace and market place (the "public sphere"), while women—at least middle-class women—remained in the home ("the private sphere"). New ideas about women's spiritual superiority and moral authority came into conflict with older traditions that required women to be submissive to their husbands or to "keep silent in the churches," though church membership was predominantly female.<sup>111</sup>

The religion of the Latter-day Saints did not officially assume that women were spiritually or morally superior to men. Women and men were admonished to obey the same commandments, receive the same gifts of the Spirit, and participate in the same holy ordinances. Men and women alike honored the power and authority of the holy priesthood, though women were not ordained to priesthood offices as were their fathers and brothers, husbands and sons.

Inveterate reader of newspapers that she was, Eliza could not have escaped noticing the national debates regarding women's rights. She would have felt, too, the sting of the epithets, such as "degraded" and "subjugated," hurled at Mormon women in the popular press with increasing frequency after the Church's 1852 public announcement that some of its members practiced plural marriage.<sup>112</sup> Inclined to intellectual and theological exploration, Eliza spent the 1850s pondering and writing about the questions that swirled around her. Words she employed repeatedly in her poems—"calling," "station," "state," "position," "lot"—point to her preoccupation with maintaining a sense of dignity and finding her place within the Church's structure and theology.

In "Woman," Eliza defended her people while asking probing questions. Addressing woman's rights and woman's sphere, Eliza was quick to affirm that Latter-day Saint women needed no further rights, no broader sphere. She believed that well-meaning worldly reformers lacked the essential ingredient of true, revolutionary reform: the holy priesthood. Her poems explicitly express her respect for priesthood leaders, but she indicated an underlying tension when she gently hinted that women are "at times, neglected now— / Misjudged and unappreciated too."<sup>113</sup> Eliza's poetry provided her a means of exploring her questions, but it did not fully

resolve them, nor could it in and of itself prepare her for the increased responsibilities she would assume in 1867 in connection with Relief Society.

**The Endowment House.** Resolution of her earlier questions and preparation for her future responsibilities seem to have come during the twelve years from 1855 to 1867 as Eliza fulfilled a different assignment. President Young, who held the keys to all priesthood ordinances, called her to serve in the Endowment House and to officiate in holy temple ordinances to be administered there until a temple could be completed. She referred to the Endowment House in Salt Lake City as the “House of the Lord” and was present at its dedication May 5, 1855—“a privilege that cannot be too highly estimated,” she noted. “From that time, when I have been in the city, I have been a constant officiate in that House,” she wrote in 1885.<sup>114</sup> Brigham, who also officiated in temple ordinances himself, perhaps understood how much the calling would come to mean to Eliza.

Her labors there, as often as four days a week, helped her focus more intently on the theology that crowned the teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, teachings Joseph had shared in part with the Female Relief Society of Nauvoo. It was a theology of eternal covenants and ties communicated most fully through priesthood ordinances administered in the temple. These holy ordinances bound disciple to God, husband to wife, parent to child, generation to generation.

Through temple ordinances, Eliza comprehended priesthood as the power to bring together, to forge continuities and connections, to create, to order, and to heal. Through the leadership role Eliza assumed in women’s ordinance work, she experienced—in a way she never could have otherwise—women’s power to minister and bless. The assignment expanded her opportunities for praying together with faithful Saints and for blessing her sisters, mostly, though not entirely, within the context of formal ritual. “Thousands of the daughters of Zion, have received blessings under her hands, and therefore with the utmost propriety she may be called a Mother in Israel,” one of her associates later wrote.<sup>115</sup> In modern temples, the term used for a similar position is “matron,” traditionally the wife of the temple president. Eliza’s sacred work “as a Priestess in the House of the Lord” was different from her experience a few years earlier in informal gatherings where women met to pray and exercise spiritual gifts.<sup>116</sup> She prized both experiences and encouraged women to be receptive to the Spirit in both settings. Most importantly, her ministry in the Endowment House enlarged her vision of woman’s eternal stature and destiny. A patriarchal blessing given her in 1857 promised her

the greater gift of enjoyment & of appreciating the blessings of the everlasting Priesthood[.] for the principles & knowledge of the everlasting Priesthood shall be increas’d upon thy mind for thou shalt enjoy & obtain an understanding

how all intelligences attain to their exaltations & have wisdom & knowledge to communicate to thy sex how they are to attain to an exalted station & upon what principle they are to dwell & associate with the sanctified.<sup>117</sup>

These promises were realized, both in experiencing the endowment and through Eliza's teaching women in the Endowment House and later in Relief Society meetings. Ritual is by its nature experiential, not merely philosophical or theological. As Eliza ministered to women in the Endowment House, she experienced the authority and order of the priesthood and learned the importance of order and obedience for all who hoped to receive the fullness of priesthood blessings.

### **Priesthood Authority and the Reorganization of Relief Society.**

From the 1855 dedication of the Endowment House until 1877, when a temple was dedicated in St. George, the Endowment House was the only place Saints could go to perform temple ordinances. Eliza's leadership role there brought her into contact with thousands of women. Meanwhile, women's leadership in the ward Relief Societies established in 1854 had virtually disappeared since the societies for the most part had lasted only three or four years. The 1858 Move South in the wake of the Utah War had disrupted ward structure and activities. The Relief Societies, dependent on bishops for direction, had faltered.<sup>118</sup> But in the years following the Civil War, as Brigham Young and other Church leaders commenced significant organizational refinements, Brigham felt the need to "summon [the women] to my aid." He knew Eliza could help him. Secretary of the Relief Society in Nauvoo, she had preserved its minutes and was familiar with its organization and operations. Women throughout the Church knew and respected her. And Brigham knew he could trust her.

Whatever the conversation or conversations between Brigham and Eliza in 1867 when he commissioned her to help bishops reorganize ward Relief Societies, the two of them shared an understanding of the nature of priesthood power and of the importance of united effort. And they both knew the magnitude of the latter-day work and its ramifications for men and women in Zion and abroad, in the present and the future, in time and in eternity. They must have agreed, as Eliza later articulated, that "in the church and Kingdom of God the interests of men and women are the same; man has no interests separate from that of women, however it may be in the outside world, our interests are all united."<sup>119</sup> The different restraints within which both men and women would have to operate were crystal clear, but the possibilities for their mutual achievement, growth, and contribution must have been equally evident.

The importance of women working under the direction of priesthood leaders and sustaining rather than resisting their counsel would become standard elements of Eliza's addresses to Relief Society. "No Society can

overstep the counsel of its Bishop—his word is law, to which, all its doings are amenable.” Her unqualified support of priesthood leaders might be viewed as mere acquiescence to male domination, reducing the Relief Society to what one writer in the 1970s has called the “sisterhood of the brotherhood.”<sup>120</sup> However, for Eliza, as for Brigham, the priesthood was far greater than any bishop or even the prophet himself, all of whom labored within its order. It was power from God—power to govern, order, and minister in pure righteousness, power to sanctify relationships and generate unity. The Relief Society, Eliza wrote in April 1868, “is an organization that cannot exist without the Priesthood, from the fact that it derives all its authority and influence from that source. When the Priesthood was taken from the earth, this institution [that is, Relief Society] as well as every other appendage to the true order of the church of Jesus Christ on the earth, became extinct” until restored by Joseph Smith.<sup>121</sup>

In the nineteenth century, supporting priesthood leaders and their counsel meant supporting plural marriage. Active opposition to polygamy had adjourned the Female Relief Society of Nauvoo in 1844. Such a thing was not to happen on Eliza’s watch. She continually affirmed that the reinvigorated Relief Society would rally support for rather than opposition to plural marriage. “Let the sisters be careful not to speak against POLYGAMY,” she counseled women in Ephraim.<sup>122</sup> “I was mortified last conference to hear president Young say, he was affraid to call A vote to see if the Sisters would sustain poligamy,” a scribe recorded her telling women in Lehi. Taking Brigham’s rhetorical device quite seriously, Eliza “told him he had not faith in the Sisters and if he had Called the vote he would have found that the Sisters would have sustained that principle.”<sup>123</sup> Whether the principle was plural marriage or the program was grain storage, Eliza affirmed that Relief Society sisters would do as their priesthood leaders directed. “We will not quarrel with the Priesthood, altho’ it is in ‘earthen vessels,’” she would tell one Relief Society president.<sup>124</sup>

Seemingly, Brigham and Eliza had reached a mutual understanding about restraints by learning from past difficulties, but more importantly, they had come to share a vision of the future, an expansive vision of the potential of Relief Society and the possibilities for Latter-day Saint women. Ten days following President Young’s December 8, 1867, announcement that bishops should now organize Relief Societies, a *Deseret News* editorial expressed optimism that “in the sphere which the President proposes [the sisters] should occupy, there is room for extended usefulness.”<sup>125</sup> Eliza herself wrote enthusiastically for the *News* that the positions offered women through Relief Society were “replete with new and multiplied possibilities.” She promised, “If any of the daughters and mothers in Israel are feeling in the least circumscribed in their present spheres, they will now

find ample scope for every power and capability for doing good with which they are most liberally endowed.”<sup>126</sup>

Just as Eliza learned the importance of working according to the order of the priesthood, Brigham Young learned the importance of giving women considerable independence in their Relief Society work. Indeed, he concluded that female dependence could actually stifle initiative and confidence. Expressing his faith in the abilities of the sisters of the Church, he counseled them in August 1869, “The females are capable of doing immense good if they will, but if you sit down and say ‘husband, or father, do it for me’ or ‘brother, do it for me, for I am not going to do it,’ when life is through you will weep and wail, for you will be judged according to your works, and having done nothing you will receive nothing.”<sup>127</sup> When he addressed Salt Lake City’s Fifteenth Ward Relief Society a few months earlier, he encouraged the women to develop an entrepreneurial spirit, to consider entering into “book keeping, telegraphing, music, knitting, clothing, millinery, basket and foot-mat making” and to call on him “at any time” for counsel. It was “gratifying” to him “to see such marked signs of a lively action,” he said.<sup>128</sup>

**A Partnership of Leaders.** Energy abounded as this new partnership between Brigham and Eliza emerged, and their unity of mind and harmony of purpose was publicly pronounced. Following the end of the Civil War in 1865, Church leaders pondered their plans for the future and implemented significant changes. The impending completion of the transcontinental railroad intensified efforts at economic cooperation and self-sufficiency. Because the Civil War had shaken but not destroyed the United States government, the anticipated imminence of the millennium receded, and long-term strategies for building the kingdom of God moved to the forefront. Completing a temple, strengthening the Saints, and raising up a new generation in righteousness received increased emphasis. Culminating with Brigham Young’s priesthood reorganization of 1877, structural refinement actually began a decade earlier with the establishment of the Parent Sunday School Union, the School of the Prophets, and the reorganization of Relief Society. The decade from 1866 to 1876 witnessed the expansion of the Relief Society and Sunday School and the organization of Mutual Improvement Associations for young men and young women, organizations of the Church that have continued to the present. Eliza was involved in forwarding all of these organizations as well as the Primary Association for children, which she helped establish in 1878, the year following Brigham’s death. These institutions would help shape the second and third and successive generations of Latter-day Saints, who did not experience the gathering and persecution that had shaped Mormonism’s first generation but upon whom still rested the injunction to be “an holy nation” (1 Pet. 2:9).

The possibility of building generation upon generation of righteous Saints was the vision Brigham and Eliza shared and worked to carry forth with their brothers and sisters in priesthood quorums and the newly reorganized Relief Societies. The partnership they welded as president and presidentess was a public partnership similar in some respects to the relationship between many Protestant ministers and their wives in nineteenth-century America. Historian Leonard I. Sweet explains that “the nineteenth century saw the minister’s wife emerge from the crowd to become the institutional leader of church women and to occupy one of the most coveted careers available to American women.”<sup>129</sup> Indeed, Eliza Snow emerged among Mormon women as such an institutional leader. At sixty-three years old, she assumed leadership of her sisters with amazing energy. She visited Latter-day Saint settlements throughout the Intermountain West, helping bishops organize the women in their wards. And the sisters arose by the dozens and then by the hundreds to take up their new responsibilities. She shared and articulated her husband’s vision, which she felt reached far beyond that of other American Christians.

The first responsibility of local branches of Relief Society, as indicated by their name, was to provide relief to the poor. President Young encouraged them in this endeavor, particularly in finding for those in need “something to do that will enable them to sustain themselves.”<sup>130</sup> In 1876, Eliza R. Snow reported that 110 branches of the Relief Society had collected and disbursed \$82,397 over a period of seven to eight years, 73 percent of which was to relieve and support the poor, 16 percent for building purposes, 7 percent to help the poor immigrate, and the remainder to support other charities and missionary work.<sup>131</sup>

Economic self-sufficiency was Brigham’s objective, not only for the poor, but for the entire Mormon community. He challenged the women to sustain the self-sufficiency of the Mormon community through retrenchment. Wanting to maintain Mormon identity by asserting independence from outside market forces, Brigham Young challenged women to make and wear homemade hats and clothes rather than goods imported from the eastern states. They were to set their own fashions, to be thrifty in their households, and to find ways to do their own carding, spinning, weaving, and knitting. “What is there in these respects that the members of the Female Relief Society cannot accomplish?” he asked.<sup>132</sup>

Everywhere she went, Eliza quoted Joseph Smith’s counsel to the original Female Relief Society of Nauvoo as well as Brigham Young’s current counsel. “President young Said to me I want the Relief Society to step forward and help to sustain ourselves,” she told the women in Lehi. “We have been Called out of Babylon that we might not pertake [*sic*] of her sins but I think Some of us have brought Babylon with us and hug it to our hearts.”

Eliza rallied the women around the prophet's program. "Sisters," she said in Lehi, "the time has Come for us to stop this waste and sustain ourselves. the Lord is Calling on us through President young to Establish home industries, it is time the Sisters of the Relief Society awake up and Show that they are Energetic Handmadins of the Lord that will be Saviours on mount Zion."<sup>133</sup>

She wholeheartedly endorsed President Young's campaign to reject materialistic excess, writing a full article for the *Woman's Exponent* in praise of the virtue of simplicity and lives that exemplified it:

For instance, is there a greater [one] than Brigham Young? Is there, one on whom rests a broader fold of imperial dignity, as recognized by the upper nobility? (By the way[, ] we do not consult the opinion of the lower courts.) And is there a more striking example of plainness and simplicity? Does not this very simplicity in him, beget love and admiration in the hearts of this people?<sup>134</sup>

With vigor, Eliza pushed the home industries that Brigham Young deemed so important for preserving the Saints' distinctiveness. She urged the raising of silk and the home manufacturing of cloth and clothing, carpets, hats, brooms, soap, and other goods Saints might be tempted to buy from "Babylon" and thereby diminish the financial means of the Saints. "Pres. Young recommends silk culture as one very profitable branch for the sisters, and offers, free of charge, all the cuttings they wish, from the Mulberry orchard on his farm," she editorialized in the *Mormon Woman's Exponent* in 1875.<sup>135</sup>

Education was part of the campaign for self-sufficiency. "President Young wishes the Sisters to get a number of girls to learn Type setting and A number of the Sisters to learn medicine," she said in Payson.<sup>136</sup> Romania Bunnell Pratt, the first Mormon woman to get professional training in medicine, returned to Utah with her finances depleted following her freshman year at the Woman's Medical College in Philadelphia. She paid a visit to President Young, who, turning to Eliza R. Snow, who was present in the interview, said, "See to it that the Relief Societies furnish Sister Pratt with the necessary money to complete her studies." "We need her here," said President Young, "and her talents will be of great use to this people." Eliza fulfilled the task; her Relief Society sisters donated the necessary funds. Graduating from Woman's Medical College in 1877, Dr. Pratt returned to Utah to practice medicine and teach courses for women in anatomy, physiology, and obstetrics. She later served as resident physician at the Relief Society's Deseret Hospital in Salt Lake City.<sup>137</sup>

Eliza saw Joseph's and Brigham's views of women as intertwined. "President Young has turned the key to a wide and extensive sphere of action and usefulness," she declared, using words reminiscent of Joseph



Smith's pronouncement to the Female Relief Society of Nauvoo.<sup>138</sup> Giving full honor to Joseph Smith for his role in organizing Relief Society according to divine revelation, she continued to honor President Young as his successor, the man chosen of God to continue the latter-day work for women and men. To sisters in Provo, she testified, "Joseph Smith considered [Relief Society] of importance, as not only relieving the poor, but he said it was to [do] our souls good, and attached much consequence to its moral influence. President Young manifests the same interest in behalf of the cooperation of the sisters and prays for them daily."<sup>139</sup>

She credited Brigham with extending Joseph's program for women to the young. "About five years ago president young requested me with others to organize the young ladies,"<sup>140</sup> she explained with reference to the Retrenchment Association she had helped organize among the Young daughters in 1869. It was quickly renamed the Young Ladies Mutual Improvement Association, and she helped forward its organization in wards throughout the territory. In 1878, Eliza affirmed:

The organization of these Associations is as much a revelation as that of the Relief Societies; the one came through Joseph Smith, the other through Brigham Young, and if I was to choose between the two organizations, I should choose the one for the young, so many of whom, for the want of such spiritual culture, have gone to destruction.<sup>141</sup>

Eliza Snow functioned as a confidante and advisor to President Young with regard to women's organizations and issues. Communication between them regarding women's work seems to have been close, frequent, and significant. With that work came a particular place of honor in the Lion House. "She held a most honored place in our household," recalled Clarissa Young Spencer. "She always sat on Father's right at the dinner table and also in the prayer room. He valued her opinion greatly and gave her many important commissions."<sup>142</sup> Remarking on this arrangement, Susa Young Gates observed, "No wife was ever jealous of the seat of honour accorded to Aunt Eliza. Her superior gifts and tender spiritual sympathy endeared her to the wives and children as well as making her a womanly counsellor for father."<sup>143</sup>

Expressing his full confidence in Eliza, Brigham extended to her a calling similar to that Emma had received in Nauvoo: "to teach the female part of the community."<sup>144</sup> It was a call to preach, and it became one of the ways in which Eliza fulfilled the promise given her in a patriarchal blessing that she would "communicate to thy sex how they are to attain an exalted station."<sup>145</sup> She later recorded the circumstances of the calling with conspicuous pleasure and pride:

“Not long after the re-organization of the Relief Society, Pres. Young told me he was going to give me an other mission,” she recalled.

Without the least intimation of what the mission consisted, I replied, “I shall endeavor to fulfil it.” He said, “I want you to instruct the sisters.” Altho’ my heart went “pit a pat” for the time being, I did not, and could not then form an adequate estimate of the magnitude of the work before me. To carry into effect the President’s requisition, I saw, at once, involved public meetings and public speaking—also travel abroad.<sup>146</sup>

She became well known for her sermons. In addition to admonishing the sisters to succor the poor, to support the movement for self-sufficiency, and to sustain their bishops and priesthood leaders, she also took great care to teach her sisters regarding their access to the Holy Spirit and their divine destiny as daughters of God. Her understanding of woman’s place in the eternal scheme was creative and expansive. “Do we keep in view that God sent us here to hold high and responsible positions? We? Yes, we! The daughters of the Most High God. Do we realize our responsibilities? And that we have as much to do with the salvation of our souls as the brethren?”<sup>147</sup> Eliza had considerable freedom as she taught women in local settings. For example, to women in Payson in 1871, she expressed an idea that she enunciated often:

Before the Fall it seemed Man and Woman were one. The same as the Father and Son are one. After the Fall A curse came upon Woman She became subservient to Man. Since that time Woman has differed in feeling some times even in interest which should not be. . . . The Gospel is calculated to bring back the Union which was the day before the Fall. . . . Wee anticipate through the Gospel that Woman will hold the same Position as Eve did before the Fall.<sup>148</sup>

**Disagreement and Resolution.** Women responded to Eliza’s sermons with enthusiasm. Brigham seems to have strongly supported her instruction, although in one instance he publicly rejected her interpretation of doctrine. The disagreement tested the strength of their personal relationship and the durability of the new institutional partnership of men and women under priesthood authority. Both proved to be solid.

On December 1, 1873, Eliza published an article discussing the Resurrection in the *Woman’s Exponent*. Her “Mortal and Immortal Elements of the Human Body: A Philosophical Objection to the Resurrection Removed” was so often requested by readers that it was reprinted in the *Exponent* of September 1, 1875. Though the article raised no public objection from Brigham Young when it first appeared in 1873, in 1875 it drew from him the following response:

In your issue of Sept. first, I notice an article written by Miss E. R. Snow, entitled “Mortal and Immortal Elements of the Human Body,” republished from No. 13, Vol. 2, of your Journal. The cause assigned for its reproduction

in your paper is, that Saints and strangers were so interested “in its statements, and it had been so often called for that republication was decided upon.”

I sincerely regret that this demand would have arisen, I had hoped that after its first publication it should have slept and never been awakened; but the fact of its having been so repeatedly called for, placed me under obligation to correct the minds of the Latter-day Saints in relation to the doctrine contained therein.

On some future occasion when I have time I may possibly take up the article in detail, but at present shall simply say, as the prophet Joseph Smith once told an Elder who asked his opinion of a, so called revelation he had written,—[“]It has just one fault and that one fault is, it is not true.”<sup>149</sup>

Eliza’s article attempted to answer objections to the idea of resurrection raised by “the worldly wise philosopher” who, observing the decomposition of the body and the recycling of its elements into other plants and animals, maintained the impossibility of restoring to all bodies the original elements of which they had once been composed. Her solution divided matter into “two distinct classes or grades,” one of which would be subject to change and decay, and the other “capable of resisting every law of infraction or dissolubility.” The mortal body “borrowed” from the first, but the resurrected body would be composed of the second, a “pure, invisible, intangible” substance that could not be seen except by “organs of sight formed of the same pure matter.” For Eliza, the tangible elements of a mortal body were borrowed from an inferior form of matter. These elements would not be resurrected.<sup>150</sup>

Brigham saw it differently. He believed in one class of matter, not two. In his view, every element of the mortal body would be resurrected: “These very identical particles that now compose our bodies will be resurrected and come together by the power of the trump of God.” Giving less credence to the worldly philosophies than Eliza, Brigham cast a skeptical eye at the goal of harmonizing. “There are many things which science, with all its tests, cannot find out,” he said. “It is beyond the power of man, without revelation from God, with all his science to know whether these particles that compose our bodies go into other creatures to form the component parts of their bodies.” Unlike Eliza, he affirmed that resurrected bodies were tangible. He contended that particles taken into the body gave energy but would not rise with the body in the Resurrection.<sup>151</sup>

Perhaps the respect with which the community regarded Eliza R. Snow triggered the concerted effort to correct any misunderstanding her article might have spawned. Brigham Young’s letter rejecting her theory appeared in the September 15, 1875, issue of the *Woman’s Exponent*. Two days later, the *Deseret News* published an article wherein John Taylor, at President Young’s request, explained the President’s position. Wanting to treat Eliza with the utmost respect, he declared her “beautiful theory, pleasing and

poetic," to be "in conflict with all the revelations and teachings we have had on this subject."<sup>152</sup>

Brigham Young, as promised, responded at length but did not address his public remarks directly to his wife. At the October general conference, George Q. Cannon read Brigham Young's discourse entitled "The Resurrection." It included several pages of clarifying references from the Bible, the Book of Mormon, and the *History of Joseph Smith*, and was published both in the *Deseret News* and as a separate pamphlet for distribution.<sup>153</sup>

As one might expect of a loyal supporter like Eliza Snow, in the wake of President Young's pronouncement she retracted the ideas she had earlier expressed. "To whom it may concern," she wrote in an open letter published in the *Woman's Exponent* and reprinted in the *Deseret News*:

It will be recollected that an article written by me, entitled "Mortal and Immortal Elements of the Human Body—A Philosophical Objection to the Resurrection Removed," was published in the WOMAN'S EXPONENT in September, 1875, and that subsequently an article written and signed by Pres. Young appeared in the WOMAN'S EXPONENT in which the former was pronounced untrue.

Permit me to say that I fully concur in the views expressed by Pres. Young, and withdraw everything contained in my article at variance therewith, and trust that no Latter-day Saint may be led into erroneous doctrine through anything written by me.<sup>154</sup>

The only surprising thing about her disclaimer was its timing. This letter was dated March 19, 1876, six months after Brigham Young had declared her theories false. Resolution of this theological question in the public arena provides no suggestion of what occurred privately during those intriguing months. On that issue, the historical record is silent. Whatever fracture, if any, the episode provoked in the relationship between the two does not seem to have been long-lived.<sup>155</sup> Brigham had exercised the authority of his office in safeguarding doctrine. Recognizing this, Eliza acceded to his correction. There seems to have been no lingering suspicion on Brigham's part, no foreclosure of Eliza's administrative and teaching responsibilities. The pattern of mutual trust and cooperation had been firmly established.

**Denouement.** In 1876, with Brigham's encouragement and full support, Eliza moved forward with a new venture. In October, when Relief Society women had just completed a summer-long display of their home-made goods in commemoration of the nation's centennial, President Young formally addressed them:

It would be very gratifying to us if you could form an association to start business in the capacity of disposing of Home-made Articles such as are manufactured among ourselves. . . . If you can not be satisfied with the selection of Sisters from among yourselves to take charge, we will render you

assistance by furnishing a competent man for the transaction of the financial matters of this Establishment.<sup>156</sup>

The Relief Society Mercantile Association opened the Woman's Commission House within a month and operated it by themselves, not with the assistance of "a competent man," but under the personal supervision of Eliza. Brigham helped support the enterprise with goods from the Provo Woolen Mills. Eliza's last letter to her husband, then wintering in St. George, addressed questions related to the Woman's Commission House. Eliza worked to clear up the question of what commission should be granted on goods from Brigham's enterprises. The letter is most striking for the window it provides on the merging of the husband-wife relationship with that of the president-presidentess. In the letter, as in the relationship between the correspondents themselves, public and private concerns merged. Spunk and forthrightness were mixed with love and concern:

Dear President Young

The Commission Store has, so far, received better patronage and, as a general thing, a better spirit has been manifested towards it than we anticipated at its opening. . . .

Papers abroad make gratifying comments on the Store, and the self-sustaining movement in connexion with it, by the Mormon women of Utah. . . .

Realizing that your time, strength and brains are all overtaxed, I should not have troubled you by introducing these matters, but it seems that somebody has written you and in doing so, made a mistake, which I think should be corrected. . . .

One evening, in the parlor, (but, sick as you were then, and with so much crowding your mind, it is not at all strange that you do not recollect it) without my mentioning the subject, you proposed allowing 20 percent com. on your Goods, and again, when you were reclining in your chair in your room, I went in to see you on some business concerning the Store, you sent for br. John Haslem, and while giving him instructions about sending the Goods down, you repeated the same to him. Another consideration—we never should allow him or any other clerk to dictate terms of commission on your Goods. Although we are novices in the mercantile business, we are not green enough for that kind of management. . . .

With love,

E[liza] R. Snow

P.S. It makes us all happy to learn that your health continues to improve.<sup>157</sup>

Although Eliza resigned after supervising the Woman's Commission House for one year, the enterprise continued until 1879, was revived in the 1890s, and was reborn again in the 1930s as Mormon Handicraft. Eliza would serve the Relief Society as its general president until her death in 1887. By then, she was widely considered the head of all the women of the Church and their organizations, the Relief Society, the Young Ladies

Mutual Improvement Association, and the Primary. Under Brigham's direction, she had begun a work whose ramifications are still felt in the Church around the world.

During the year Eliza supervised the women's store, there hung among the homemade rag carpets, straw bonnets, and quilts a large blue banner with a motto embroidered in white: "In Union Is Strength."<sup>158</sup> It captured the essence of the movement for economic self-sufficiency and cooperation, the spirit of the women's organizations, the substance of Zion itself where Saints would be of "one heart and one mind" (Moses 7:18). And it characterized Eliza's partnership with Brigham. By trusting her, Brigham expanded his own ministry far beyond what he could have done himself. By following his counsel, she acquired responsibilities of a magnitude she had never imagined. The success of their cooperation indeed signaled for their contemporaries and for future generations the principle that "our interests are all united."<sup>159</sup> As a couple they had no posterity. But Latter-day Saint women and men working together are the spiritual descendants of this enduring partnership and have inherited from this father and mother in Israel a legacy of mutual esteem, solicitude, and collaboration.

Brigham Young died August 28, 1877. Eliza worked on tirelessly for another decade. Brigham's death came two weeks after she had submitted to the press her second volume of poems, a volume she had dedicated to him. She wrote a long poem describing Brigham's funeral and sent it on to the press so the book could begin and end with tributes in honor of President Young. There is little else to suggest the intensity of her mourning. Nearly a year after his death, as she met with sisters in Moroni, Utah, she recalled that "when last she met with the Saints of this place, our dearly and much beloved Prest. Brigham Young was present. But the Lord in his wisdom, has called him from our midst."<sup>160</sup> Eliza died December 5, 1887. The name on her grave marker is Eliza R. Snow Smith. But her interment in the private cemetery of Brigham Young would insure that her loyalties to both Joseph and Brigham would never be forgotten.

## Conclusion

Brigham Young was the Lion of the Lord, and his wife Eliza R. Snow was the Lioness. With dignity, skill, and ferocious dedication and determination, they did all in their power to defend and protect the kingdom of God, to bring it forth in its fulness on the earth preparatory to the coming of Jesus Christ. They were forceful personalities whose talents and styles differed greatly. Yet, because of their shared faith in and love for the restored gospel of Jesus Christ, there was remarkable strength in their union. Over the years, as Eliza wrote dozens of poems and songs sustaining Brigham in his prophetic role, he developed an abiding appreciation for

her loyalty and skill. Welcomed into Brigham's extended family with charity, compassion, and friendship, Eliza learned that Brigham was a caring husband with confidence in her abilities. The warm affection, trust, and respect they developed in their marriage became the basis for a unique and fruitful institutional partnership. Joseph Smith had integrated women into the Church organization by founding the Relief Society. With mutual love for the Prophet and his expansive vision and with a belief in God and one another, Brigham and Eliza's "unity of purpose and action" brought the Relief Society to life, as well as an organization for young women.<sup>161</sup> They thereby built an enduring organizational partnership between Latter-day Saint men and women that has continued to bless Church members down to the latest generation.

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1. Moses 7:18. Brigham Young's daughter Clarissa Young indicated that Eliza was her father's wife "in name only." Clarissa Young Spencer and Mabel Harmer, *Brigham Young at Home* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1940), 76. William Hepworth Dixon, a traveler and adventurer, wrote regarding Eliza: "I am led to believe that she is not a wife to Young in the sense of our canon; she is always called Miss Eliza; in fact, the Mormon rite of sealing a woman to a man implies other relations than our Gentile rite of marriage." William Hepworth Dixon, *New America*, 2 vols. (Leipzig: Bernhard Tauchnitz, 1867), 1:241.

2. For example, Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (Liverpool: F. D. Richards, 1855–86), 18:356, April 6, 1877.

3. Brigham Young, Journal, October 3, 1844, Brigham Young Office Files, Church Archives, Family and Church History Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter cited as Church Archives). Brigham Young's journal uses the initials "M. E." (marriage for eternity) and "M. T." (marriage for time) to mark the performances of his marriage ceremonies. Elizabeth Fairchild (1828–1910) was married for eternity to Brigham Young on the same day he married Eliza for time, and the only symbol used on that day is "M. E." See Jeffery Ogden Johnson, "Determining and Defining a 'Wife': The Brigham Young Households," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 20 (fall 1987): 60, 66.

4. Brigham Young's struggle in accepting the practice is described in Leonard J. Arrington, *Brigham Young: American Moses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), 100–102.

5. Aside from Lucy Ann Decker, the six other plural wives married to Brigham Young before Eliza were Augusta Adams, Harriet E. Cook, Clarissa Decker, Emily Dow Partridge, Clarissa Ross, and Louisa Beaman. All of these but Augusta bore him children. The eight Brigham married between 1846 and 1865 who bore him children were

Margaret Maria Alley, Emmeline Free, Margaret Peirce (Margaret Pierce), Zina D. Huntington, Lucy Bigelow, Eliza Burgess, Harriet Barney, and Mary Van Cott. Arrington, *American Moses*, 420–21; Johnson, “Brigham Young Households,” 66–70. Following Jeff Johnson’s listing, I have included Louisa Beaman as a pre-1846 wife. I have followed Leonard Arrington’s practice of listing wives by their maiden names, even though some of them were married and bore their husbands’ names before marrying Brigham Young.

6. Matthew 22:24; Deuteronomy 25:5. See also M. Guy Bishop, “Eternal Marriage in Early Mormon Marital Beliefs,” *Historian* 53 (autumn 1990): 76–88.

7. The four widows of Joseph Smith mentioned in this paragraph lived in Brigham Young’s Utah households. In addition to these women married to Brigham for time only, he took eternity-only vows with three other of Joseph Smith’s widows: Olive Frost, Rhoda Richards, and Mary Elizabeth Rollins. Brigham also married for eternity Olive Andrews, who had been sealed by proxy to Joseph Smith after Joseph’s death. Historians Jeff Johnson and Todd Compton both conclude that Mary Elizabeth Rollins married Brigham Young after Joseph Smith’s death. Todd Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness: The Plural Wives of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1997), 4–9, 214–15, 558; Johnson, “Brigham Young Household,” 57–70. Arrington seems to have interpreted the evidence differently and does not list her as one of Brigham’s wives. Arrington, *American Moses*, 420–21.

8. Rex Eugene Cooper, *Promises Made to the Fathers: Mormon Covenant Organization* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1990), 123.

9. Besides Eliza R. Snow, the women Brigham Young married who bore him no children include Augusta Adams, Susannah Snively, Martha Bowker, Ellen A. Rockwood, Naamah K. J. Carter (Twiss), Mary Jane Bigelow (divorced, 1851), Harriet Amelia Folsom, and Ann Eliza Webb (divorced, 1876). These women Brigham married for time only. The list of childless marriages also includes those of the thirty-one women—who were not generally part of Brigham Young’s household—whom he married for eternity only. Arrington, *American Moses*, 420–21; Jeffery Ogden Johnson, “Wives of Brigham Young,” copy of unpublished manuscript in my possession.

10. As quoted in Arrington, *American Moses*, 120.

11. “Ladies’ Relief Society,” *Times and Seasons* 3 (April 1, 1842): 743; [Emmeline B. Wells], “Pen Sketch of an Illustrious Woman: Eliza R. Snow Smith,” *Woman’s Exponent* 9 (February 1, 1881): 131. Emmeline B. Wells indicated that Eliza “was designated by Joseph Smith the Prophet, ‘Zion’s Poetess,’” but I have not located this title in any document dating to the Nauvoo period. [Emmeline B. Wells], “Eliza Roxie Snow Smith: A Tribute of Affection,” *Woman’s Exponent* 16 (December 15, 1887): 109. Non-Mormon newspapers of that period called her a “Mormon girl” or “the Mormon Poetess.” See editor’s introduction to Eliza R. Snow, “Replication to Shawnee Bard,” *Wabash Courier* (Terre Haute, Indiana), July 17, 1841. For a discussion of the role of “Zion’s Poetess,” see Jill Mulvay Derr, “Form and Feeling in a Carefully Crafted Life: Eliza R. Snow’s ‘Poem of Poems,’” *Journal of Mormon History* 26, no. 1 (spring 2000): 15.

12. Eighteen of these poems, according to my calculations, were published in the *Quincy Whig*, a non-Mormon newspaper.

13. Arrington, *American Moses*, 79–97, 110–12.

14. Brigham Young to Vilate Young, August 11, 1844, as quoted in Arrington, *American Moses*, 112.

15. Eliza’s poem “The Assassination of Generals Joseph Smith and Hyrum Smith, First Presidents of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Who Were Massacred by a Mob, in Carthage, Hancock County, Ill., on the 27th of June, 1844,” was published as a broadside dated July 1, 1844. A copy is located in the Church Archives. The



text was reprinted in "Poetry," *Times and Seasons* 5 (July 1, 1844): 575; and in Eliza R. Snow, *Poems: Religious, Historical, and Political*, 2 vols. (Liverpool and Salt Lake City: Franklin D. Richards and Latter-day Saints Printing and Publishing Establishment, 1856 and 1877), 1:142–45, from which the line count is taken. Varying slightly in title from previous versions, the text in *Poems* includes the second line of a couplet that had obviously been mistakenly dropped in the earlier publications.

16. L[ouisa] G[reene] R[ichards], "Snow, Eliza Roxey," *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia*, 4 vols. (Salt Lake City: Andrew Jenson History Company, 1901), 1:695.

17. Eliza R. Snow, "Past and Present," *Woman's Exponent* 16 (August 1, 1886): 37. Eliza R. Snow and Joseph Smith were sealed as husband and wife June 29, 1842. Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, 313. The marriage is also described in Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, ed., *The Personal Writings of Eliza Roxcy Snow* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1995), 49–51. In her "Sketch of My Life," Snow wrote with regard to seeing the bodies of Joseph and Hyrum following the martyrdom: "What it was for loving wives and children, the loyal heart may feel, but let language keep silence!" Beecher, *Personal Writings*, 17.

18. Brigham Young, *Diary*, August 8, 1844, as quoted in Lynne Watkins Jorgensen and BYU Studies Staff, "The Mantle of the Prophet Joseph Passes to Brother Brigham: A Collective Spiritual Witness," *BYU Studies* 36, no. 4 (1996–97): 130.

19. Eliza R. Snow, "To President Brigham Young," *Times and Seasons* 6 (February 15, 1845): 815. It is perhaps not coincidental that Snow's poem appeared eleven days after Brigham Young convened the Council of Fifty, which sustained him as its chairman. Andrew F. Ehat, "'It Seems Like Heaven Began on Earth': Joseph Smith and the Constitution of the Kingdom of God," *BYU Studies* 20, no. 3 (spring 1980): 268.

20. Snow, *Poems*, 1:165; Beecher, *Personal Writings*, 125.

21. Beecher, *Personal Writings*, 165; originally published in Snow, *Poems*, 1:173–74.

22. Beecher, *Personal Writings*, 122; originally published as "Song for the Camp of Israel.—Let Us Go," *Millennial Star* 10 (June 1, 1848): 176.

23. Snow, *Poems*, 1:183–84.

24. Eliza R. Snow, "The Welcome Hymn," *Millennial Star* 11 (August 15, 1849): 255–56; republished with some revisions in Snow, *Poems*, 1:196–97.

25. E[liza] R. Snow, "To Our Honorable President and This Respectable Audience [1849]," Eliza R. Snow Papers, ca. 1834–1875, Church Archives.

26. "Celebration," *Deseret News*, July 13, 1854; Eliza's "Revolutionary Song" was republished in "Thirty-Eighth Semi-Annual Conference," *Millennial Star* 16 (October 28, 1854): 678–79. The standard source on the State of Deseret is Dale L. Morgan, "The State of Deseret," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 8 (April 1940): 65–239.

27. E[liza] R. Snow, "The Temple," *Deseret News*, April 16, 1853; republished in Snow, *Poems*, 1:225.

28. E[liza] R. Snow, "For the Pioneers," *Deseret News*, August 19, 1851. Appearing also as part of the broadside "Songs for the 24th July, 1851," Church Archives, the song was republished in Snow, *Poems*, 1:203–5.

29. E[liza] R. Snow, "Anthem," *Deseret News*, March 12, 1862.

30. "Thirty-Eighth Semi-Annual Conference," *Deseret News Weekly*, October 14, 1868, 282.

31. An introduction to Eliza R. Snow's poem "The Press," *Deseret News*, February 15, 1855, contains the first reference to "Zion's Poetess" in connection with her published poems, a title frequently used after that. Traveler Emily Faithfull indicated Eliza Snow was "known as 'Zion's poet-laureate.'" Emily Faithfull, *Three Visits to America* (New York: Fowler and Wells, 1884), 160.

32. Brigham Young Office, Journal, July 2, 1861, Brigham Young Office Files, Church Archives. Several copies of the March 1847 "Journeying Song" are preserved in the Church Archives. One appears to be in the handwriting of Thomas Bullock, the other in the hand of William Clayton, both of whom were Brigham Young's clerks, suggesting that this trail song was distributed among members of the pioneer camps. See E[liza] R. Snow, "A Journeying Song for the Camp of Israel"; and E[liza] R. Snow, "A Journeying Song," William Clayton Collection, 1814–79, Church Archives.

33. "Deseret Theological Institute," *Deseret News*, June 20, 1855.

34. Brigham Young to Sarah E. Carmichael, April 17, 1866, Brigham Young Letter Books, 8:299, Brigham Young Office Files.

35. George Reynolds to J. Winsor, January 10, 1871, Brigham Young Letter Books, 12:485; Historian's Office, Journal, September 1, 1862, Church Archives.

36. Snow, *Poems*, 2:1.

37. Dean C. Jessee, "Brigham Young's Family: The Wilderness Years," *BYU Studies* 19, no. 4 (summer 1979): 474–500.

38. Eliza R. Snow, Diary, March 9, 1846, as quoted in Beecher, *Personal Writings*, 119. All entries from Snow's diary subsequently cited can be found under the given date in Beecher, *Personal Writings*.

39. Snow, Diary, March 29 and June 24, 1846.

40. Snow, Diary, June 1 and July 9, 1846.

41. Snow, Diary, January 1, 1847.

42. Snow, Diary, undated entry following August 29, 1846.

43. Jessee, "Brigham Young's Family," 487–88.

44. Snow, Diary, June 29, 1842, December 22, 1846.

45. See Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, "Women at Winter Quarters," *Sunstone* 8 (July/August 1983): 11–19.

46. Snow, Diary, January 26, 1847.

47. Snow, Diary, May 26, June 6, 12, and 18, 1847.

48. Snow, Diary, January 1 and 15, 1847.

49. Snow, Diary, undated entry following August 29, 1846.

50. Snow, Diary, March 18, 1847.

51. Snow, Diary, June 6 and 12; October 2 and 17, 1847. Margaret's first husband, Morris Whitesides, died in July 1844, just seven months after they were married.

52. Snow, Diary, September 8 and 10, 1847.

53. Snow, Diary, January 4, 1848.

54. Leonard J. Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom: An Economic History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830–1900* (1958; Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966), 45–47.

55. Snow, Diary, October 2, 1847; Clara Young to Brigham Young, October 9 [4?], 1847, in Beecher, *Personal Writings*, 291–92.

56. Snow, Diary, October 3, 1847; September 20, October 23, 1848.

57. Snow, Diary, November 1, 1848–June 28, 1849.

58. Brigham Young's dwellings are described in detail in Arrington, *American Moses*, 168–71; and Susa Young Gates, "Early Homes of Brigham Young," Susa Young Gates Papers, 1852–1932, Utah State Historical Society, Salt Lake City. Eighteen children were born to Brigham Young and his wives between 1849 and 1854, crowding the Log Row and requiring adjustments in living arrangements. In May 1854, Brigham arranged for a room to be built for Eliza in the Salt Lake City home of her brother Lorenzo. "Memorandum of Sundries" Book, 1853–54, Brigham Young Office Files. She may have lived there until the Lion House was finished.

59. Susa Young Gates, "My Life," Gates Papers.
60. Snow, Diary, June 24, 1846.
61. Spencer and Harmer, *Brigham Young at Home*, 65.
62. Susa Young Gates, "Life in the Lion House," Gates Papers.
63. Gates, "Life in the Lion House."
64. Susa Young Gates, "The Lion House Memories," Gates Papers.
65. Spencer and Harmer, *Brigham Young at Home*, 85–86.
66. Emily Ellingham Hart, Diary, January 24, 1862, Church Archives; Journal History of the Church, January 27, 1865, 1, microfilm of holograph, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah; Solomon F. Kimball, "President Young's Excursion Party," *Improvement Era* 14 (January 1911): 188–201, and continued in the *Era* of February, March, and April 1911.
67. For etiquette of the era, see Emily Thornwell, *The Lady's Guide to Perfect Gentility* (1856; San Marino, Calif.: The Huntington Library and Art Gallery, 1979).
68. Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 17:159–60, August 9, 1874. See also Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 2:90, October 6, 1854.
69. Provo Second Ward, Utah Stake, Relief Society Minute Book, 1869–82, September 1869, microfilm of holograph, Church Archives.
70. Snow, "Sketch of My Life," 17. This sketch is dated April 13, 1885.
71. Eliza R. Snow to Mary Elizabeth Rollins, April 3, 1865, Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner Collection, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo.
72. Brigham Young to Willard Young, June 17, 1871, in Dean C. Jessee, ed., *Letters of Brigham Young to His Sons* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1974), 167.
73. [Eliza R. Snow], "Pres. Brigham Young," June 1, 1871, Snow Papers.
74. Brigham Young to Willard Young, June 17, 1871, 167.
75. Historian's Office, Journal, January 22, 1872.
76. E[liza] R. Snow to Pres[ident] B[righam] Young, November 4, 1872, Brigham Young Office Files.
77. Eliza R. Snow to President [Brigham] Young, November 17, 1872, Brigham Young Office Files.
78. Snow to Young, November 17, 1872.
79. Brigham Young's trip was chronicled in Elizabeth Kane, *A Gentile Account of Life in Utah's Dixie, 1872–73: Elizabeth Kane's St. George Journal* (Salt Lake City: Tanner Trust Fund, University of Utah Library, 1995).
80. E[liza] R. Snow to Pres[ident] Brigham Young, January 3, 1873, Brigham Young Office Files.
81. Brigham was accused of "lascivious cohabitation"—overtly living with and having children by multiple wives—and of allegedly instigating an 1857 murder at the mouth of Echo Canyon. In order to appear in court, as was unexpectedly required, President Young had been forced to cut short his annual winter visit to southern Utah and hurry back to Salt Lake City through harsh midwinter weather. Then, having been refused bail, he remained under arrest in his own home from early January to late April 1871, when he was finally granted bail. Just days later, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that McKean's grand juries had been illegally drawn, and the two indictments against Brigham Young were invalidated, along with 128 others that were also pending. Thomas G. Alexander, "Federal Authority versus Polygamic Theocracy: James B. McKean and the Mormons, 1870–1875," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 1 (autumn 1966): 87, 89, 93; Orson F. Whitney, *History of Utah*, 4 vols. (Salt Lake City: George Q. Cannon and Sons, 1893), 2:592–604, 629–61, 681–89.

82. Ladies of Utah to His Excellency S. B. Axtell, March 11, 1875, petition signed by Eliza R. Snow and 828 other women, Snow Papers, Church Archives.

83. See Arrington, *American Moses*, 372–73.

84. Eliza R. Snow, “Address,” *Woman’s Exponent* 2 (September 15, 1873): 63.

85. Gates, “Life in the Lion House.”

86. President John Taylor set apart Eliza R. Snow as general president of the Relief Society on June 18, 1880, the jubilee year of the Church’s organization. At that time, Latter-day Saint women apparently understood that the general president of the Relief Society was to serve for life. The first general president, Emma Smith, who had not actively served in that capacity since 1844, died April 30, 1879. See Derr, Cannon, and Beecher, *Women of Covenant*, 42, 121–22, 222–23.

87. Spencer and Harmer, *Brigham Young at Home*, 83. In keeping minutes of the meetings of the Female Relief Society of Nauvoo, Eliza initially referred to Emma Smith as “presidentess” but later as “Mrs. President.” “A Record of the Organization and Proceedings of the Female Relief Society of Nauvoo, 1842–1844,” March 17 and May 19, 1842, Church Archives. In setting forth the organizational structure of Salt Lake City’s Fifteenth Ward Relief Society in 1868–69, Sarah Kimball included not only a “presidentess” but also “deaconesses” and a “commission merchantess.” Jill Mulvay Derr, Janath Russell Cannon, and Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, *Women of Covenant: The Story of Relief Society* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992), 98–99; Jill C. Mulvay [Derr], “The Liberal Shall Be Blessed: Sarah M. Kimball,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 44 (summer 1976): 213. The *ess* suffix was in popular use among benevolent societies. “Deaconesses” (parish helpers) were common in some denominations. Leonard I. Sweet, *The Minister’s Wife: Her Role in Nineteenth-Century American Evangelicalism* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1983), 102.

88. “An Address to the Female Relief Society, Delivered by President Brigham Young, in the Fifteenth Ward Meeting House, Feb. 4, 1869,” *Deseret News Weekly*, February 24, 1869, 32.

89. Emmeline B. Wells, “LDS Women of the Past,” *Woman’s Exponent* 36 (May 1908): 66.

90. Snow, “Sketch of My Life,” 36.

91. Snow, “Sketch of My Life,” 35.

92. Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 12:115, December 8, 1867.

93. The story of the original “ladies society” was later recounted by Sarah M. Kimball, who initiated it in connection with her seamstress, Margaret Cook. See Derr, Cannon, and Beecher, *Women of Covenant*, 25–31.

94. “A Record of the Organization and Proceedings of the Female Relief Society of Nauvoo,” March 17, 1842, as quoted in Derr, Cannon, and Beecher, *Women of Covenant*, 42.

95. Joseph Smith and Joseph Fielding Smith, as quoted in Derr, Cannon, and Beecher, *Women of Covenant*, 37, 43, 47, 50.

96. John Taylor, as quoted in Derr, Cannon, and Beecher, *Women of Covenant*, 63.

97. General Record of the Seventies, March 9, 1845, typescript, Church Archives. For more on the relationship between Brigham Young and Emma Smith, see Valeen Tippetts Avery and Linda King Newell, “The Lion and the Lady: Brigham Young and Emma Smith,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 48 (winter 1980): 81–97.

98. Sweet, *Minister’s Wife*, 154, 157.

99. General Record of the Seventies, March 9, 1845.

100. Snow, *Diary*, December 12, 1847.

101. Richard L. Jensen, "Forgotten Relief Societies, 1844–1867," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 16, no. 1 (spring 1983): 107.

102. See Jensen, "Forgotten Relief Societies," 105–25. The movement is also discussed in Derr, Cannon, and Beecher, *Women of Covenant*, 75–80.

103. Patty Sessions was named "Presidentes[s]" of her Bountiful Ward Relief Society on June 10, 1854, and "presidentess" of the Female Council of Health on March 14, 1855. "Much good done in both societies over which I presided," she noted. However, her diary entry for September 1, 1855, contains her last mention of attending a meeting of the health council. Patty Bartlett Sessions, *Mormon Midwife: The 1846–1888 Diaries of Patty Bartlett Sessions*, ed. Donna Toland Smart (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1997), 205 (June 10, 1854), 213–14 (March 14, 1855), 243 (September 1, 1855).

104. "A Record of the Organization and Proceedings of the Female Relief Society of Nauvoo," March 17, 1842.

105. See Derr, Cannon, and Beecher, *Women of Covenant*, 74–75.

106. Joseph Smith's April 28, 1842, address to the Relief Society was published in "History of Joseph Smith," *Deseret News*, September 19, 1855. Other excerpts from minutes of the Female Relief Society of Nauvoo were featured in the *Deseret News* of August 22, September 5, October 3, and December 19, 1855. The history featured in the *Deseret News* became the basis for the treatment of Relief Society found in Joseph Smith Jr., *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2d ed., rev., 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1971), 4:602–7.

107. I have suggested elsewhere that Snow's unpublished poem "The Will" contains her response to this difficult situation. See Jill Mulvay Derr, "The Significance of 'O My Father' in the Personal Journey of Eliza R. Snow," *BYU Studies* 36, no. 1 (1996–97): 84–126; and Derr, "Form and Feeling," 1–39.

108. See Jensen, "Forgotten Relief Societies," 113, 123.

109. The small audience of friends was the Polysophical Society, a study group sponsored by Eliza and her brother Lorenzo at the "hall" in his Salt Lake City home. See Maureen Ursenbach [Beecher], "Three Women and the Life of the Mind," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 43 (winter 1975): 26–40.

110. Snow, *Poems*, 2:175.

111. 1 Corinthians 14:34. See Sweet, *Minister's Wife*, 27–43; Lori D. Ginzberg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence: Morality, Politics, and Class in the Nineteenth-Century United States* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 11–35; Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood, 1820–1860," *American Quarterly* 18 (summer 1966): 151–74; and Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture* (New York: Knopf, 1977).

112. See, for example, the depictions countered in "Great Indignation Meeting," *Deseret Evening News*, January 14, 1870.

113. Snow, *Poems*, 2:176.

114. Snow, "Sketch of My Life," 32. Eliza may have been involved in ordinance work even earlier, assisting in work in the upper story of the Council House in Salt Lake City, where some 2,222 members received their endowments between February 21, 1851, and May 5, 1855. Lamar C. Berrett, "Endowment Houses," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow, 4 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1992): 2:456.

115. [Wells], "Pen Sketch of an Illustrious Woman," 131.

116. [Wells], "Pen Sketch of an Illustrious Woman," 131.

117. Patriarchal Blessing of E[liza] R. Snow, undated, but notated "recorded in book E, Page 185," [1857], Snow Papers.

118. Derr, Cannon, and Beecher, *Women of Covenant*, 81.

119. Melinda Cook, "Minutes of the Organization Meeting of the Young Ladies Retrenchment Association of Cedar Fort Held in Meetings House April 21st, 1875," *Woman's Exponent* 4 (June 1, 1875): 2. For further discussion on Eliza's work among the Relief Societies, see Derr, "Form and Feeling," 22–29, 32–35.

120. Marilyn Warenski, *Patriarchs and Politics: The Plight of the Mormon Woman* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1978), 107.

121. Eliza R. Snow, "Female Relief Society," *Deseret News Weekly*, April 22, 1868, 81.

122. Agnes S. Armstrong to Editor, July 26, 1875, in *Woman's Exponent* 4 (August 15, 1875): 42.

123. Lehi Ward, Utah Stake, Relief Society Minute Book, 1868–79, October 1869, microfilm of holograph, Church Archives.

124. Eliza R. Snow, as quoted in Kristen Hacken South, "Introduction to the Journal of Emma Lorena Barrows Brown," *BYU Studies* 34, no. 4 (1994–95): 38. See also Derr, "Form and Feeling," 22–23.

125. "Female Relief Societies," *Deseret News Weekly*, December 18, 1867, 354.

126. Snow, "Female Relief Society," 81.

127. Brigham Young, "Remarks," *Deseret News Weekly*, August 11, 1869, 320.

128. "An Address to the Female Relief Society," February 24, 1869, 31–32.

129. Sweet, *Minister's Wife*, 3.

130. Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 14:107, August 8, 1869.

131. Eliza R. Snow, "The Relief Society," 1876, Special Collections, Manuscripts Division, Marriott Library, University of Utah, Salt Lake City.

132. Snow, "The Relief Society."

133. Lehi Ward, Utah Stake, Relief Society Minute Book, April 23, 1875.

134. Eliza R. Snow, "Simplicity: To the Saints in Zion," *Woman's Exponent* 6 (June 1, 1877): 6.

135. Eliza R. Snow, "To Every Branch of the Relief Society in Zion," *Woman's Exponent* 3 (April 1, 1875): 164.

136. Payson Ward, Utah Stake, Relief Society Minute Book, 1868–1877, August 22, 1873, microfilm of holograph, Church Archives.

137. Susa Young Gates, "A Biographical Sketch of R. B. Pratt," *Young Woman's Journal* 2 (September 1891): 533–35.

138. Snow, "Female Relief Society," 81; Derr, Cannon, and Beecher, *Women of Covenant*, 47.

139. Provo Second Ward, Utah Stake, Relief Society Minute Book, September 1869.

140. Lehi Ward, Utah Stake, Relief Society Minute Book, April 23, 1875.

141. Eliza R. Snow, as quoted in L. D. Alder to Editor, January 17, 1878, in *Woman's Exponent* 6 (February 15, 1878): 138.

142. Spencer and Harmer, *Brigham Young at Home*, 82–83.

143. Susa Young Gates and Leah D. Widtsoe, *The Life Story of Brigham Young* (New York: Macmillan, 1930), 331.

144. "A Record of the Organization and Proceedings of the Female Relief Society of Nauvoo," March 17, 1842. See also Doctrine and Covenants 25:7.

145. Patriarchal Blessing of E[liza] R. Snow.

146. Snow, "Sketch of My Life," 35.

147. E. Howard, "Salt Lake Stake," *Woman's Exponent* 16 (October 1, 1887): 70; Armstrong to Editor *Exponent*, 42–43.

148. Payson Ward, Utah Stake, Relief Society Minute Book, September 9, 1871. See also Derr, "Form and Feeling," 26–27.

149. Brigham Young to Editor, September 8, 1875, in *Woman's Exponent* 4 (September 15, 1875): 60.

150. Eliza R. Snow, "Mortal and Immortal Elements of the Human Body: A Philosophical Objection to the Resurrection, Removed," *Woman's Exponent* 2 (December 1, 1873): 99.

151. Brigham Young, *The Resurrection: A Discourse by Brigham Young, President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Delivered in the New Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, at the General Conference, October 8th, 1875* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1884), 3–4. In fall 1875, Brigham had reason to reflect personally on the Resurrection. Over a period of six weeks, he lost three loved ones: his wife Emmeline Free Young on July 15; his oldest and beloved son Joseph A. on August 5; and George A. Smith, his good friend and First Counselor in the First Presidency on September 1.

152. John Taylor, "Remarks on the Resurrection," *Woman's Exponent* 4 (October 1, 1875): 65–66; John Taylor to President B[righam] Young, September 13, 1875, in *Deseret Evening News*, September 17, 1875; Historian's Office, Journal, September 19, 1875, Church Archives.

153. President Young's sermon was published as *The Resurrection: A Discourse by Brigham Young* (see n. 151).

154. Eliza R. Snow, To Whom It May Concern, March 19, 1876, in *Woman's Exponent* 4 (April 1, 1876): 164; and *Deseret News Weekly*, April 5, 1876, 152.

155. Eliza's retraction may have been timed to coincide with April conference, but her six-month delay raises other possible questions such as the following: Did a humble and contrite Eliza make immediate personal apologies? Did a wounded and humiliated Eliza temporarily withdraw from the cordiality that had marked her relationship with Brigham? Did a stubborn Eliza demand the chance to argue the point? Did Eliza and Brigham continue to privately discuss the intricacies of Joseph's teachings until she was persuaded Brigham was right?

156. Brigham Young to the President and Members of the Relief Societies in Meeting Assembled at the Council House This Afternoon, October 4, 1876, Brigham Young Letter Books, 14:533–34.

157. E[liza] R. Snow to Pres[ident] B[righam] Young, February 10, 1877, Brigham Young Office Files.

158. Derr, Cannon, and Beecher, *Women of Covenant*, 83.

159. Cook, "Minutes of the Organization Meeting," 2.

160. Moroni Ward, Sanpete Stake, Relief Society Minute Book, 1872–1881, June 22, 1878, microfilm of holograph, Church Archives.

161. Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 18:356, April 6, 1877.

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No. 4.

## The Kidnapper; <sup>Or, the Great</sup> Shanghai of the Northwest.

By Philip S. Warne, Author of "Tiger Dick," "A Hard Crowd," etc.



BEARING BLANCHE AWAY.

FIG. 1. *The Kidnapper; or, The Great Shanghai of the Northwest* (1877/78). Original size, ca. 13" x 9"; reduced. A novel about a child kidnapped by Sioux Indians. Set around the borders of Minnesota. From Albert Johannsen, *The House of Beadle and Adams and Its Dime and Nickel Novels: The Story of a Vanished Literature*, 3 vols. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1950), 1:197, 198. Used by permission.



# “Cows to Milk Instead of Novels to Read”

## Brigham Young, Novel Reading, and Kingdom Building

Richard H. Cracroft

*To read true books in a true spirit, is a noble exercise.*

—Henry David Thoreau

*Read the true and the wise. The perusal of the rest is worse than time wasted, it is time abused.*

—Brigham Young

It is instructive to observe how literarily sophisticated Latter-day Saints scramble to defend the contemporary, universal embrace of imaginative fiction in general and the novel in particular against the single-minded, single-eyed, and vigorous attacks of President Brigham Young. During his thirty-year tenure as President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Brother Brigham, as he was affectionately called, made his views on novel reading unmistakably clear: he dismissed novels as “nonsense,”<sup>1</sup> called reading them a waste of life, and reminded the Saints that they have more important ways to spend their time—that, like the daughters of Zion, they “have got cows to milk instead of novels to read”<sup>2</sup> (fig. 1).

In an era when the Latter-day Saints have become a novel-reading as well as a scripture-reading people, it is important to understand how Brigham Young and his associates among the General Authorities became such adamant opponents of the novel; why his position on novel reading changed from an early, benign toleration to a prolonged, steadfast opposition; how at least some drama escaped Brigham’s opprobrium; what events may have triggered his antinovel bombast; how his views on the novel paralleled those of many of his nineteenth-century contemporaries; and, ironically, how Church leaders after Brother Brigham undertook to transform the once maligned novel into a literary force for the kingdom of God. Above all, it is important for present-day, novel-reading Saints to understand that the deeper reason for Brigham Young’s antipathy toward novel reading arose from his dislike of any distraction that might prevent the fledgling Saint from his or her central mortal purposes: to become a Saint and to build Zion. Brigham Young’s own mission was to establish a people

of God in a place that approximated his inspired dream of a latter-day Zion. To this end, he taught the Saints to keep one spiritual eye cocked heavenward and the other eye affixed on the founding of the earthly kingdom—and woe be unto anyone or anything which might deflect the Latter-day Saints from that purpose! And that *anything* included novels and novel reading (fig. 2).

### Brigham Young Tolerates Novel Reading

In the early years of his administration, Brigham Young's stance toward novel reading and related pastimes was benign and even permissive. There was no blanket condemnation of novels. When John Bernhisel, acting on Brigham's behalf, assembled Utah's first territorial library, he justified the purchase of two novels—*Don Quixote* and *The Vicar of Wakefield*—on the premise that they did not fall into the category of “literary trash with which the press is teeming and the country is flooded.”<sup>3</sup> In an 1853 address given in the Old Tabernacle in Salt Lake City, President Young recalled with some dismay his own father's repressive and oppressive wielding of religion as a club in rearing Brigham and his siblings. He related that, in his boyhood,

I was kept within very strict bounds, and was not allowed to walk more than half-an-hour on Sunday for exercise. The proper and necessary gambols of youth having been denied me, makes me want active exercise and amusement now. I had not a chance to dance when I was young, and never heard the enchanting tones of the violin, until I was eleven years of age; and then I thought I was on the high way to hell, if I suffered myself to linger and listen to it. I shall not subject my little children to such a course of unnatural training, but they shall go to the dance, study music, read novels, and do anything else that will tend to expand their frames, add fire to their spirits, improve their minds, and make them feel free and untrammelled in body and mind.<sup>4</sup>

Reflecting upon the debilitating repression he experienced in his youth, President Young urged Latter-day Saint parents to accord their children the pleasures and amusements of life. Even here, however, he made clear that he was not encouraging the children of Latter-day Saints to read novels; instead, he was cautioning their parents to be aware of the consequences of repressing agency in the name of religion:

Now understand it—when parents whip their children for reading novels, and never let them go to the theatre, or to any place of recreation and amusement, but bind them to the moral law, until duty becomes loathsome to them; when they are freed by age from the rigorous training of their parents, they are more fit for companions to devils, than to be the children of such religious parents.<sup>5</sup>



FIG. 2. *Lone Star, the Texan Scout; or, The Jarocho's Sister* (1870). Natural size (the standard dime novel size). Set within the context of the war between Mexico and Texas, 1835. From Johannsen, *The House of Beadle*, 1:155, 158. Used by permission.

## Brigham Young Condemns Novel Reading

By 1862, however, Brigham Young had altered his stance. Nine years after he had declared that his children “shall go to the dance, study music, read novels, and do anything else that will . . . add fire to their spirits,” he had changed his mind—dramatically and irrevocably—about the effect of novel reading on his children and the Latter-day Saints. In remarks delivered in the Tabernacle on the necessity of the Saints becoming independent as a people, he said, “I believe in indulging children, in a reasonable way,” and counseled parents to give the girls dolls but urged that the girls make the doll clothes themselves. Likewise, he counseled that parents give the boys the materials and tools to make sleds and wagons—and through such calculated “indulgence” direct their minds “in the right direction to the most useful result.”<sup>6</sup> Then, from within this practical context, President Young suddenly launched a surprising rhetorical question: “Novel reading—is it profitable?” With apparent approval, he answered his own question: “I would rather that persons read novels than read nothing.” But any momentary comfort that might have washed over the novel-reader is immediately dispelled by the rolling tetragrammatons to follow:

There are women in our community, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, and sixty years of age, who would rather read a trifling, lying novel [fig. 3] than read history, the Book of Mormon, or any other useful print. Such women are not worth their room. It would do no good for me to say, Don't read them; read on, and get the spirit of lying in which they are written, and then lie on until you find yourselves in hell. If it would do any good, I would advise you to read books that are worth reading; reliable history, and search wisdom out of the best books that you can procure. How I would be delighted if our young men would do this, instead of continually studying nonsense.<sup>7</sup> [See figs. 1, 2, 7, 9.]


A decade later, confronted by a very real Gentile inundation and its very real threat to the religious, economic, and political homogeneity of Zion, Brigham Young described for the Saints the way things would be in an ideal stake of Zion conducted after the Order of Enoch.<sup>8</sup> His idealism recalls Plato's banning poets and storytellers from his ideal and theoretical republic because they willfully tell lies and create “falsehood as much like truth as [they] can” and thereby lead their readers, without “any shame or self-control,” to “be always whining and lamenting on slight occasions.”<sup>9</sup> In a similar manner, the righteous and focused learning of Brigham's paradisiacal City on a Hill would be prescribed and novel reading proscribed. In this city, on a Sunday morning, Brigham projected, “every child would be required to go to the school room, and parents to go to meeting or Sunday school; and not get into their wagons or carriages, or on the railroads, or lounge around reading novels.” In fact, he intoned, “If I had charge of [this ideal] society, . . . I would not allow novel reading.” He admitted, however,

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FIG. 3. *The Bug Oracle* (1866). Natural size. By S. J. C. Whittlesey. A temperance tale. When placed on a flour-covered plate on May first, a "bug oracle," or snail, is supposed to leave a trail that will reveal the initials of the young woman's future husband. From Johannsen, *The House of Beadle*, 1:143, 148. Used by permission.



FIG. 4. *The Maiden Martyr* (1864). Natural size; yellow book cover. By Mary Stevenson Gaskellis, originally published as *Lois, the Witch*, in 1859 in London. Revealed the dark and foreboding secrets of a woman's past. From Johannsen, *The House of Beadle*, 1:136, 138. Used by permission.

that in the present state of Zion the siren songs of Babylon hovered near, and novel reading, he moaned, “is in my house, in the houses of my counselors, in the houses of these Apostles, these Seventies and High Priests, in the houses of the High Council in this city, and in the houses of the Bishops, and we permit it,” even though it was “ten thousand times worse” a practice than allowing outsiders to enter Zion in order to teach morals to Latter-day Saint children.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, novels were found in Brigham’s house: his daughter Susa later confessed that she had read *Arabian Knights* thirteen times by the time she was thirteen years old.<sup>11</sup>

In this same 1872 address, President Young clarified the reasons for his antipathy toward fiction, as well as the perceived consequences of frivolous novel reading:

You let your children read novels until they run away, until they get so that they do not care—they are reckless, and their mothers are reckless, and some of their fathers are reckless, and if you do not break their backs and tie them up they will go to hell. . . . You have got to check them some way or other, or they will go to destruction. They are perfectly crazy. Their actions say, “I want Babylon stuck on to me; I want to revel in Babylon; I want everything I can think of or desire.” If I had the power to do so, I would not take such people to heaven. God will not take them there, that I am sure of.<sup>12</sup>

A year later, on June 30, 1873, Brigham Young returned to what he perceived to be the jarring incongruity of reading novels in a Zion society ostensibly founded on the pattern of heaven:

Another thing, I will say to the young ladies especially, that if I should live to have the dictation of a stake of Zion that would live according to the Order of Enoch, this nonsensical reading would cease. This “yellow-covered” literature [figs. 2–4, 9] would not come into the houses of the Saints. We should dispense with this, and cast it from us. . . . Here are our young women—now I am not going from home to get this experience. I hope that my children know as much about the Bible, Book of Mormon or the Doctrine and Covenants as they do about yellow covered books.<sup>13</sup>

In an effective mimicry, a device he used on occasion, he ridiculed novel-readers by mocking their synthetic and sentimental transports:

But you ask many of our young people about these stories: “What a beautiful story there is in” such and such a paper! Or “what a beautiful story there” is in this paper or that in that. They know all about it. The proprietors of these papers get men and women to write stories with no other foundation than the imaginations of their own hearts and brains, and our young women and boys read these lies until they get perfectly restless in their feelings, and they become desperate, and many of our girls [should] . . . pay attention to their business a little better, *they have got cows to milk instead of novels to read*—but in our part of the land many of our young women just hope and pray, if they ever thought of prayer, “I do wish some villain would come along and break open my room and steal me and carry me off; I want to be stolen, I want to be carried away, I want to be lost with the Indians, I want to be shipwrecked

and to go through some terrible scene, so that I can experience what this beloved lady has experienced whom I have been reading about" [fig. 5; see also figs. 1, 3]. Oh, how affecting! and they read with the tears running down their cheeks, until their books become perfectly wet, and they do so wish that somebody or other would come and steal and carry them off. If I had the dictation of a society, all this would stop, you would have none of it. I would have every person learning something useful.<sup>14</sup>

There was no letting up. On Pioneer Day, 1877, just one month before his death, President Young struck for the last time in public discourse the now familiar note: "Study . . . the standard works," he told the Sunday School children of the Church. "Such reading will afford you instruction and improvement." Then, summing up and driving future generations of Latter-day Saint novel-readers and English teachers to head-scratching rationalizing, he delivered his last public statement on the subject: "Novels allure the mind and are without profit."<sup>15</sup>

On August 23, 1877, less than a week before his death, Brigham Young wrote to his son, Feramorz L. Young, formerly a U.S. Navy cadet at Annapolis, Maryland, and then a student at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Troy, New York, his final mortal position on novel-reading: "You must permit me, my dear son, in the love that I bear for you and your brothers and sisters, to say that I do not esteem the perusal of novels a wise means of increasing your desire to read." He explained, "I should be very foolish if because I had a poor appetite I took to making my meals of poisonous herbs or berries because they tasted sweet or were otherwise palatable. It would be better for my appetite to remain poor than that I should destroy my vitality." Novel reading, he continued, "appears to me to be very much the same as swallowing poisonous herbs; it is a remedy that is worse than the complaint." He then presented and countered the standard reasons given for novel reading:

Some excuse novel reading on the grounds that it gives them insight into the ways of the world, its life and society, others on the ground that they thus become acquainted with the best authors, their various styles and peculiar beauties. To the first plea I would say that the views of life given in most works of fiction are greatly strained or entirely false, and every elder in the Church . . . who performs his duty will have enough experiences in the vicissitudes of real life to satisfy him. . . . To the second excuse I would answer that the Bible and many works of history &c. contain as good, graceful, grand, unadulterated English as any romance that was every written.<sup>16</sup>

President Young concluded this (apparently) final letter to any of his sons with the admonition to "avoid works of fiction; they engender mental carelessness and give a slipshod character to the workings of the mind. . . . [R]ead the true and the wise. The perusal of the rest is worse than time wasted, it is time abused." Then he added: "Sell your Dickens' works and get Stephens' & Catherwoods' *Travels in Central America*, or Josephus's or Mosheim's *History*."<sup>17</sup>



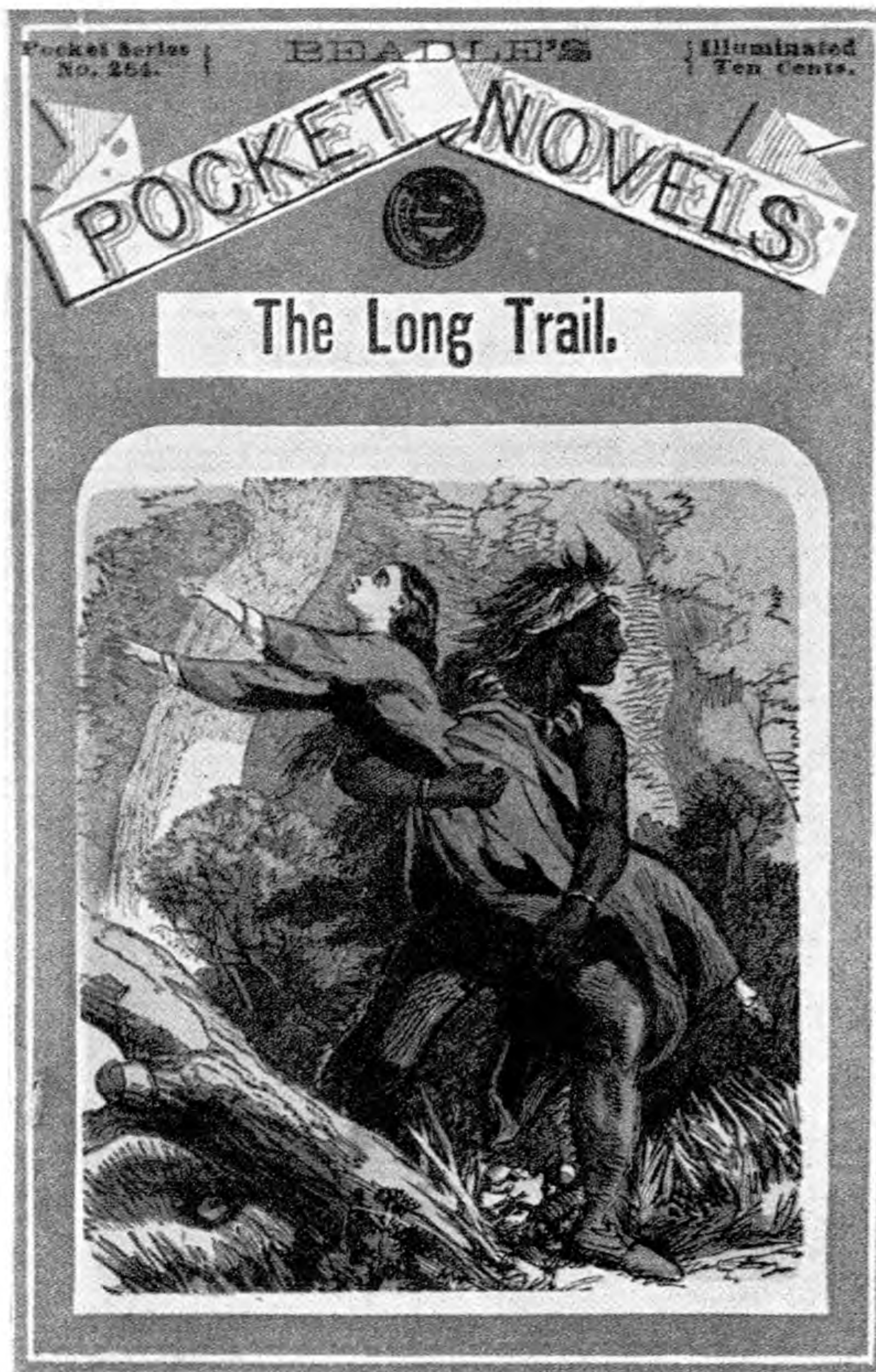


FIG. 5. *The Long Trail: A Legend of the Far West* (1884). Natural size. By Edward S. Ellis. From Johannsen, *The House of Beadle*, 1: facing 180, 183. Used by permission.

## Brigham Young Enjoys Theater

Amidst this vehement antagonism against the novel and novel reading as a waste of precious life and time and a willful evasion of divine duty, what are modern-day Saints to do with Brigham Young's well-known affinity for the theater, which remained a personal pleasure and a life-long indulgence? Perhaps it was an accepted vice, like that of Huck Finn's Widow Douglas, who did not condemn anyone's taking a bit of snuff "because she done it herself."<sup>18</sup> While some might view Brigham Young's enjoyment of the "lies" of the theater as inconsistent with his distaste for the "lies" of the novel, his affection for the kind of theater he felt was fit for the kingdom of God illustrates not inconsistency but his steadfast adherence to principle, pointing to the deeper reasons behind his condemnation of the novel.<sup>19</sup>

Of drama he said as early as February 6, 1853, "It is pleasing and instructing to see certain characters personified upon the boards of a theatre," if that theater "is managed upon righteous principles." Such a theater can provide a "platform upon which to exhibit truth in all its simple beauty," if good men and women will "sift out . . . the chaff and folly that has encumbered it, . . . and profit by that which is truly good and great."<sup>20</sup> Consistent with his philosophy is his determination, voiced at the dedication of the Salt Lake Theatre on March 6, 1862, that the Saints "shall endeavor to make our theatrical performances a source of good, and not of evil," and shall present plays which delight, refresh, and "happify" the viewer.<sup>21</sup>

He believed, however, that tragedy, like the novel, could never uplift the human soul. For this reason, his daughter Susa Young Gates related, he banned the stage play of Charles Dickens's *Oliver Twist* from the Salt Lake Theatre stage after only one upsetting performance.<sup>22</sup> In fact, Young inveighed against tragedy almost as vigorously as he inveighed against the novel and for the same reasons. "If I had my way," his daughter Clarissa Young Spencer recollected him saying, "I would never have a tragedy played on these boards. There is enough tragedy in every day life and we ought to have amusement when we come here."<sup>23</sup> While "tragedy is favoured by the outside world," he granted, "I am not in favour of it." Why? For basically the same reason that he shunned the novel—the possibility of bruising tender spirits, implanting unworthy thoughts, and otherwise diverting mortals from purposely and productively plodding their true, original course:

I do not wish murder and all its horrors and the villany [*sic*] leading to it portrayed before our women and children; I want no child to carry home with it the fear of the fagot, the sword, the pistol, or the dagger, and suffer in the night from frightful dreams. I want such plays performed as will make the spectators

feel well; and I wish those who perform to select a class of plays that will improve the public mind, and exalt the literary taste of the community.<sup>24</sup>

### Latter-day Saint Apostles Condemn Novel Reading

About the evils of the novel, Latter-day Saint leaders contemporary to Brigham Young also spoke as with one voice. Less than a year before President Young's death, Elder Wilford Woodruff, who would become the fourth President of the Church (1889–98), urged the brethren at the general priesthood meeting on October 8, 1876, to set their houses in order—especially in regard to reading fiction:

It is time for us to teach our wives & Children to lay aside the New York Ledger [which serialized novels] and all other novels and store up in our minds with the Revelations of God. And we Should stop sending thousands of Dollars out of the Country to buy Novels to teach our Children vanity and Sustain our own press and Evry family in Zion should take the Juvenile Instructor and our own papers.<sup>25</sup>

Throughout his administration as President of the Church, Brigham Young was vehemently seconded and even bested in his antifiction rhetoric by the loudest and longest-resonating of Mormon antifictionists, Elder George Q. Cannon, an influential Apostle and counselor to four Church Presidents. However, it was in his roles as general superintendent of the Church's Sunday Schools (1867–1901) and as publisher, owner, and editor of the *Juvenile Instructor* (1866–1901) that Cannon exerted his greatest influence on Mormon attempts to keep fiction out of Utah Territory. Typically, in an 1869 editorial, "What Shall Our Children Read?" Elder Cannon closely followed file leader President Young in describing the contents of novels and setting the earnest, yet mocking, tone he would take in four decades of inveighing against fiction reading among the Saints:

These romances must appeal to the lowest and most brutal passion. . . ; they must abound with sensational outrages, . . . deal with the terrible, and be crowded from beginning to end with adultery and arson, murder and mystery, gloom and ghastliness, bastardy and bloodshed, perjury and profligacy; in fact must be seasoned with every sin denounced in the Decalouge [*sic*], and a few never [before] thought of.<sup>26</sup>

In his "Editorial Thoughts" for January 8, 1870, he wrote:

Let children have such reading [as novels], and it will not be long before the plain truth will not satisfy them. Their appetites will be spoiled for it, they will grow up novel-readers. This habit of novel reading is very common in these days, and is the cause of many of the evils which prevail in the world.<sup>27</sup>

Novels, he asserted, containing such "unnatural and grossly improbable exaggerations" as they did, would lead to destruction of human character.<sup>28</sup>

CHEAP EDITION OF POPULAR AUTHORS.

# ERMINIE; OR, THE GIPSY QUEEN'S VOW

BY MRS. MAY AGNES FLEMING,  
Author of "The Dark Secret," "An Awful Mystery," "Victoria," etc., etc.



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BEADLE AND ADAMS, PUBLISHERS,  
98 WILLIAM STREET.

Price Twenty-five Cents.

FIG. 6. *Erminie; or, The Gipsy Queen's Vow* (1876). Original size ca. 8.5" x 5"; reduced. By May Agnes Fleming. From Johannsen, *The House of Beadle*, 1:184, 185. Used by permission.

With a momentum that would continue for nearly a quarter century after Brigham Young's death, Cannon wrote in an 1881 issue of the *Juvenile Instructor*:

As you value your children's future, banish novels from your habitations. Discourage the reading of fiction. It poisons the mind; it destroys the memory; it wastes valuable time; it warps the imagination; it conveys wrong impressions; it unfits the person indulging in it for the stern and important duties of life.<sup>29</sup>

"Novel reading" is addictive and seductive, he editorialized in an 1884 issue, and has "the same effect on the mind, . . . as dram drinking, or tea drinking has upon the body. It is a species of dissipation." Novel-readers "become day-dreamers," he explained:

They are only happy when they can take refuge, as a dram-drinker would to liquor, in novel reading. They bury themselves in their novels and allow their feelings to be wrought upon by the painful trials and woes of their heroes and heroines, who only exist in the imagination of their authors<sup>30</sup> [fig. 6].

### Brigham's Contemporaries Condemn Novel Reading

The inevitable triumph of the novel, regionally and nationally, over the likes of Brigham Young, George Q. Cannon, and associates was not always deemed inevitable. In fact, as Bruce W. Jorgensen points out, nationally, there were more influential voices than those of the Latter-day Saints decrying in the wilderness of early- and mid-nineteenth-century America.<sup>31</sup>

As Richard Hofstadter shows in his study *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life*, the young American nation, grounded in common sense and practical democracy and seeking selfhood, had, like the early Mormons, stigmatized "literature . . . as the prerogative of useless aristocracies."<sup>32</sup> In spite of the stigma, as early as 1818, Thomas Jefferson remarked on "the inordinate passion prevalent for novels" among the American people. He insisted, long before Brigham Young used the same image to castigate novel reading, that "when this poison [of novel reading] infects the mind, it destroys its tone and revolts it against wholesome reading. Reason and fact, plain and unadorned, are rejected. . . . The result is a bloated imagination, sickly judgment, and disgust towards all the real business of life."<sup>33</sup> Social critics such as Jefferson believed that history and biography had more truth to recommend than sentimental fiction, whose questionable values could all too easily transfer into real life.<sup>34</sup>

Jorgensen shows how Mormon leaders found common cause with many practical-minded, democratic early nineteenth-century American intellectuals. Thomas Jefferson, for example, was joined in condemning the ill effects of novel reading "by such luminaries as Timothy Dwight,

Noah Webster, and Benjamin Rush.” As late as 1891, William Dean Howells, the father of American literary realism and a major novelist, cited General Ulysses S. Grant’s confession that “whatever in my mental make-up is wild and visionary, whatever is untrue, whatever is injurious, I can trace to the perusal of some work of fiction.” Grant continued that the “high-strung and super-sensitive ideas of life” found in novels make “one who has wept over the impossibly accumulated sufferings of some gaudy hero or heroine” oblivious to the everyday distresses of the poor and needy.<sup>35</sup>

The American transcendentalists, who share with Mormonism a reverence for the reality of transcendent spirituality, shared Brigham Young’s views about imaginative fiction as an obstacle to self-realization and to harmony with what they called the Over-Soul. Although he may not have specifically attacked the novel as a form, Ralph Waldo Emerson, in his essay “The Poet,” praised high-minded poetry, which enables poets to become “liberating Gods,” by urging fellow mortals, “standing on the brink of the waters and truth,” to plunge into Universal Truth. Nowhere here, however, did the Sage of Concord suggest that access to such transcendent truth could be attained via the novel, with its sensuous, sensual, and earthy purposes.<sup>36</sup>

And in his chapter on reading in *Walden* (1854), Henry David Thoreau, Emerson’s high-minded friend, not only echoed Brigham Young in praising good books but also chastened those who “dissipate their faculties in what is called easy reading.” In a manner akin to President Young’s mocking mimicry, Thoreau skewered readers of romantic novels:

They read the nine thousandth tale about Zebulon and Sophronia, and how they loved as none had ever loved before, and neither did the course of their true love run smooth,—at any rate, how it did run and stumble, and get up again and go on! how some poor unfortunate got up on to a steeple, who had better never have gone up as far as the belfry; and then, having needlessly got him up there, the happy novelist rings the bell for all the world to come together and hear, O dear! how he did get down again!<sup>37</sup>

Thoreau mused, “For my part, I think that they had better metamorphose all such aspiring heroes of universal noveldom into . . . weather-cocks, . . . and let them swing round there till they are rusty, and not come down at all to bother honest men with their pranks.” He opined that “the next time the novelist rings the bell I will not stir though the meeting-house burn down.” He concluded that “our story-books,” and “our reading, our conversation and thinking, are all on a very low level, worthy only of pygmies and manikins.”<sup>38</sup>

Faintly but clearly, a reader may hear Brigham chuckling approvingly from his perch in the Over-Soul, as Thoreau thunders that novel reading begets “dulness of sight, stagnation of the vital circulations, and a general delirium and sloughing off of all the intellectual faculties. This sort of

gingerbread,” he avered sadly, “is baked daily and more sedulously than pure wheat or rye-and-Indian in almost every oven, and finds a surer market.”<sup>39</sup> Whether reading mere “gingerbread” with Thoreau or “swallowing poisonous herbs” with Young, novel-readers are deemed to be in grave spiritual danger.

### Scholars Account for Brigham Young’s Views

Whence, then, amidst general antipathies, came what Susa Young Gates would call her father’s “Puritan’s prejudice”<sup>40</sup> against the novel? There is no tidy chain of causation for the dramatic shift in attitude of Brigham Young and his associates between 1853, when President Young benignly countenanced the novel and other pastimes, and 1862, when he resoundingly denounced the novel as evil. Certainly, internal events and outside pressures had urged upon President Young the need for reform, retrenchment, and a general hunkering-down before menaces from both within and without. The ensuing defensive isolationism led to the Mormon Reformation of 1856–57 and contributed to the isolation-shattering Mountain Meadows Massacre of September 1857 and the Utah War of 1857–58. The war, in turn, led to de facto integration of Utah Territory into the Union and, ultimately, to the loss of the dream of independence asserted in Charles W. Penrose’s battle hymn, “Up, Awake Ye Defenders of Zion,” in which the Saints defiantly sang:

Soon “the Kingdom” shall be independent;  
In wonder the nations will view  
The despised ones in glory resplendent;  
Then let us be faithful and true!<sup>41</sup>

Increasing communications and commerce with the East, intensified by the Gold Rush of 1849 and the rising importance of Salt Lake City as “the crossroads of the West” for westering Americans and for the gentile-driven mining industry, culminated in the opening of the transcontinental railroad. Joined at Promontory Point, Utah Territory, in 1869, the railroad brought outsiders and eastern commodities to Utah in increasing numbers. With increased access to eastern merchants came an influx of publications of all varieties, from “yellow literature” and dozens of popular magazines and journals to the ancient and modern classics—and certainly the English (and American) novel.<sup>42</sup>

The novel in English first appeared in England in the guise of morally instructive, cautionary novels or romances written by such authors as Daniel Defoe (*Robinson Crusoe*, 1719; *Moll Flanders*, 1722), Samuel Richardson (*Pamela*, 1740), Henry Fielding (*Tom Jones*, 1749), and Sir Walter Scott (*Rob Roy*, 1818; *Ivanhoe*, 1819). In the first quarter of the nineteenth century,

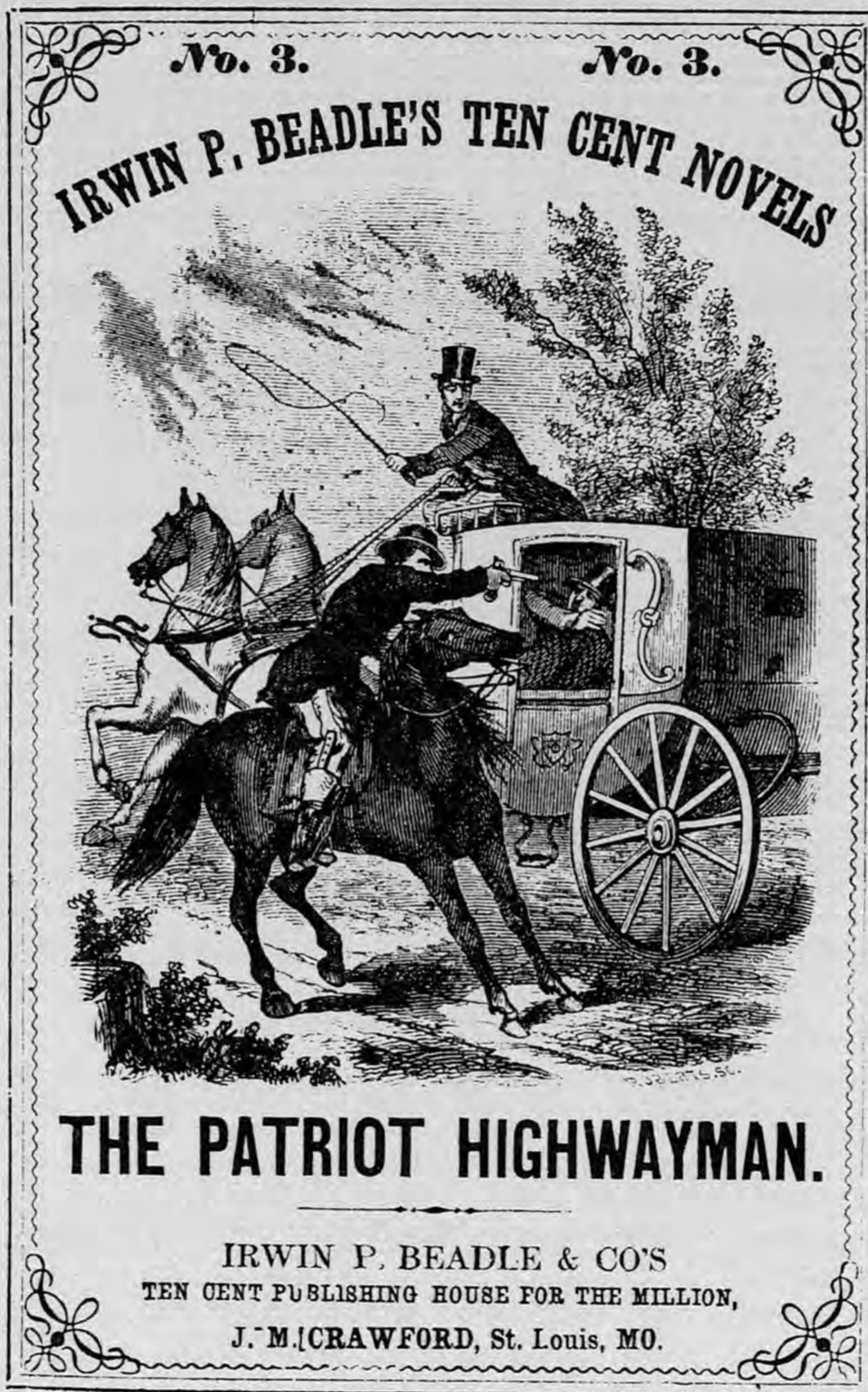


FIG. 7. *The Patriot Highwayman, a Story of the Revolution* (1863). By Edward S. Ellis (pseudonym Latham C. Carleton). A noble renegade terrorizes British invaders in New York City during the Revolutionary War. From Johannsen, *The House of Beadle*, 1:125, 126. Used by permission.



novel reading spread throughout the United States with increased literacy, political independence, and the rise of the popular press. The purchase of novels blossomed with the United States' first worldwide best seller, Washington Irving's *Sketch Book* (1819–20), and bloomed in the 1830s with James Fenimore Cooper's five-volume *Leatherstocking Tales* (1823–41), Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Twice-Told Tales* (1837), and his daring classic, *The Scarlet Letter* (1850). Harriet Beecher Stowe's antislavery novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), which everyone read—and viewed in countless stage performances—appeared soon after Herman Melville's dark and questioning *Moby Dick* (1851), which few read until its rediscovery in the 1920s. Hawthorne and Melville mark the beginnings of a shift to the darkening of romance, which ushered in, on the heels of the Civil War and the “new science” of evolutionary biology, American literary realism and literary determinism—which Brigham Young might have found less foolish than fictional romances but certainly more troubling.

Karen Lynn Davidson asserts that Brigham Young's reactions against novel reading were—as Latter-day Saint objections have “always” been—“objections to particular content,” to sensational, yellow-backed dime novels or sentimental “story papers,” and not “to narrative or fictional forms.” She claims that “the genre itself was not suspect.”<sup>43</sup> In fact, however, the antinovel statements of Presidents Young, Woodruff, and Cannon reveal not only their condemnation of the “yellow-paper” school of romantic and sentimental journalism but also demonstrate a Thoreau-like rejection of the “trifling” and “lying” nature of imaginative fiction, whether romantic or realist, sentimental or sensational (fig. 7). Brigham Young seems to have turned a deaf ear not only to popular fiction but, with Cannon, also to the “novels of the old school.”<sup>44</sup> President Young not only mocked the typical plots that characterize the whole of noveldom but also closed his life with that specific and damning counsel to his son Feramorz to “sell his Dickens.”

Another important and generally overlooked explanation for Brother Brigham's antipathy to the novel may be found in his irritation at the increasing number of aggravating anti-Mormon novels depicting the evil and heinousness of himself, Heber C. Kimball, and other Mormon leaders, as well as the supposed follies of the misguided and lascivious Mormon people. While Leonard J. Arrington and Jon Haupt see such outrageous propaganda as a source of irritation for President Young and his successors, they do not suggest that such sensationalism intensified the repudiation of the novel by Mormon leaders. Still, it is likely that General Authorities' views of the genre as being shot through with “the spirit of lying” were enhanced by the novelists' lurid and fanciful tales about the Latter-day Saints.<sup>45</sup>

In *The Viper on the Hearth: Mormons, Myths, and the Construction of Heresy* (1997), an important study of the impact of anti-Mormon literature



CEPHYSIA BECOMES INSANE.

heavily, as if dead. The whole deception was favored by the gloom of the apartment.

“Great heavens!” exclaimed Howard, “she has killed herself!” He then approached me, and after gazing at me a moment, while I assumed the fixed features of a corpse, he rushed out of the room.

I rose instantly to my feet, ran to the curtain. I there found the iron grating of a balcony opening upon a flight of steps which led to the ground. By this entrance Howard had entered the apartment, but had left it by a large door on the left.

I soon reached the ground, and running along close to it, like a lapwing, I found that I was in a lonely spot; at a little distance from me rose a mountain. I bent my steps in the direction of this mountain, with the intention of hiding myself in some of the woods; if danger threatened, I had determined to mount some tree.

After walking a long while, palpitating with fear and fatigue, I arrived at a cave, wherein I entered. In the calm moonlight which bathed the spot, I surveyed myself. My dress appeared saturated with blood. I now occupied myself with removing the broken glass, which had cut me severely.

FIG. 8. Page from *Boadicea, the Mormon Wife* (1855), a lurid, anti-Mormon novel written by Alfreda Eva Bell.

upon the worldwide image of the Latter-day Saints in both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Terry L. Givens makes a convincing case on behalf of Mormon repulsion at the nonsense found in the fifty or so anti-Mormon novels published between 1853 and the turn of the century. Lurid novels such as John Russell's *The Mormoness; or, The Trials of Mary Maverick* (1853), and Alfreda Eva Bell's *Boadicea, The Mormon Wife* (1855; fig. 8) were calculated, Givens demonstrates, to make Mormons appear as Other, Oriental, Outside, and Ostracized, as a people who were not only Christian heretics but also demonic, evil, wicked, and perverse.<sup>46</sup>

Nor would certain sly accounts of the Mormons have been any more appreciated by the people who were the objects of the authors' wit. Brigham Young was doubtless not amused by the treatment of himself and his people in the humorous fiction of Artemus Ward (Charles Farrer Browne), who visited Salt Lake City in 1864 and lectured in the United States and Great Britain on the "much-married Saints" until his untimely death in 1867, or in Mark Twain's comic manhandling of things Mormon in *Roughing It* (1872).<sup>47</sup>

### Brigham Young's Critique Is Fueled by His Zion Vision

While such sociological, religious, and literary reasons may help explain Brigham Young's antipathies for novel reading, they fall short of explaining the deeper reasons for his antagonism, which lie, finally, less in the novels themselves, than in his all-consuming vision of the destiny of the kingdom of God and the urgency of founding and establishing a Zion people in preparation for the Coming Lord. Without understanding his Zion vision, one can have no thorough understanding of the man—or of his antipathies for anything that might vitiate that vision. Emerging from the vast body of his discourses, journals, and letter books is the image of a man with a mission, a prophet impelled by profound faith and utmost confidence in his God. President Young's writings and discourses attest to his fundamental, purposeful, and principle-based theology, which shoots a gridline from South Temple and Main Streets deep into the universe, where he seems to anchor his every discourse, decision, or act.<sup>48</sup>

Understanding something of his purposes not only enables insight into his mistrust of the worldly and earth-bound novel but also provides a deeper look into his comprehensive vision of the destiny of the Latter-day Saints. Reviewed contextually, Brigham Young's urgings, after 1862, that the Latter-day Saints shun novel reading for the sake of their mortal and immortal souls follow a predictable pattern that is consistent with his own vision for building Zion and with his practical and workmanlike plan for shaping a people worthy to live there. For him, novel reading of any kind was a waste of time and an obstacle to schooling and refining the human

soul. President Young's heaven and earth were seamlessly joined at the soul. His conversion to Mormonism together with his unshakeable belief in the Prophet Joseph Smith and his revelations were unchanging facts that led Brigham Young to join into one both the Kingdom of God—Salt Lake City and the Kingdom of God—Kolob.<sup>49</sup> This knowledge of the destiny of humankind, learned at Joseph Smith's knee, set in Brigham's soul the divine patterns against which he would measure every decision and act of his long life. He saw the plan clearly and expressed it with simplicity and power. In June 1860, for example, he told the Saints, as he would tell them repeatedly in the future, that it is the plan of God

to organize an earth, people it with intelligent beings, present to them the principles of eternal life, and bestow upon them the keys thereof, that they may be able to prepare themselves to dwell to all eternity, and to bring forth their increase to dwell with them. This is our belief.<sup>50</sup>

In fulfilling God's plan of happiness, President Young asked the Saints on the same occasion, "What is our duty?" and answered, "To promote the kingdom of God on the earth." He continued, "Every sentiment and feeling should be to cleanse the earth from wickedness, to purify the people, sanctify the nations, gather the nations of Israel home, and build up Zion, . . . and establish the reign and kingdom of God on the earth. Let that be the heart's desire and labour of every individual every moment."<sup>51</sup> In the context of such purpose, novel reading would diminish and divert, being a mere "lusting after the grovelling things of this life which perish with the handling"<sup>52</sup> (fig. 9).

In addition to the first principles and ordinances of the Church, four other principles seem central to Brigham Young's theology:

**Urgency.** "If I spend a minute that is not in some way devoted to building up the Kingdom of God and promoting righteousness, I regret that minute, and wish it had been otherwise spent." And it is, he insisted, "the Spirit of the Lord" that reminded him of his purpose.<sup>53</sup> Motivated by such intensity and focused purpose, it is no wonder that Brigham saw novel reading, or any pastime which does not advance the cause of God and teach His mortal children, as a waste of mortality. Even recreation and amusement, which Brigham Young strongly advocated, was to teach fundamental principles such as kingdom building, personal refinement, "opposition in all things," and the human need to relax in order to conserve and focus one's strengths and abilities toward consecrated ends.<sup>54</sup>

**Sacrifice.** Brigham Young learned from the Prophet Joseph Smith of the necessity of personal sacrifice as a manifestation of faith. President Young repeatedly tested the mettle of the Latter-day Saints pouring into the Great Basin by reminding them—even as he sent the Swiss Saints into the sand dunes of Santa Clara or called a husband and father to leave his

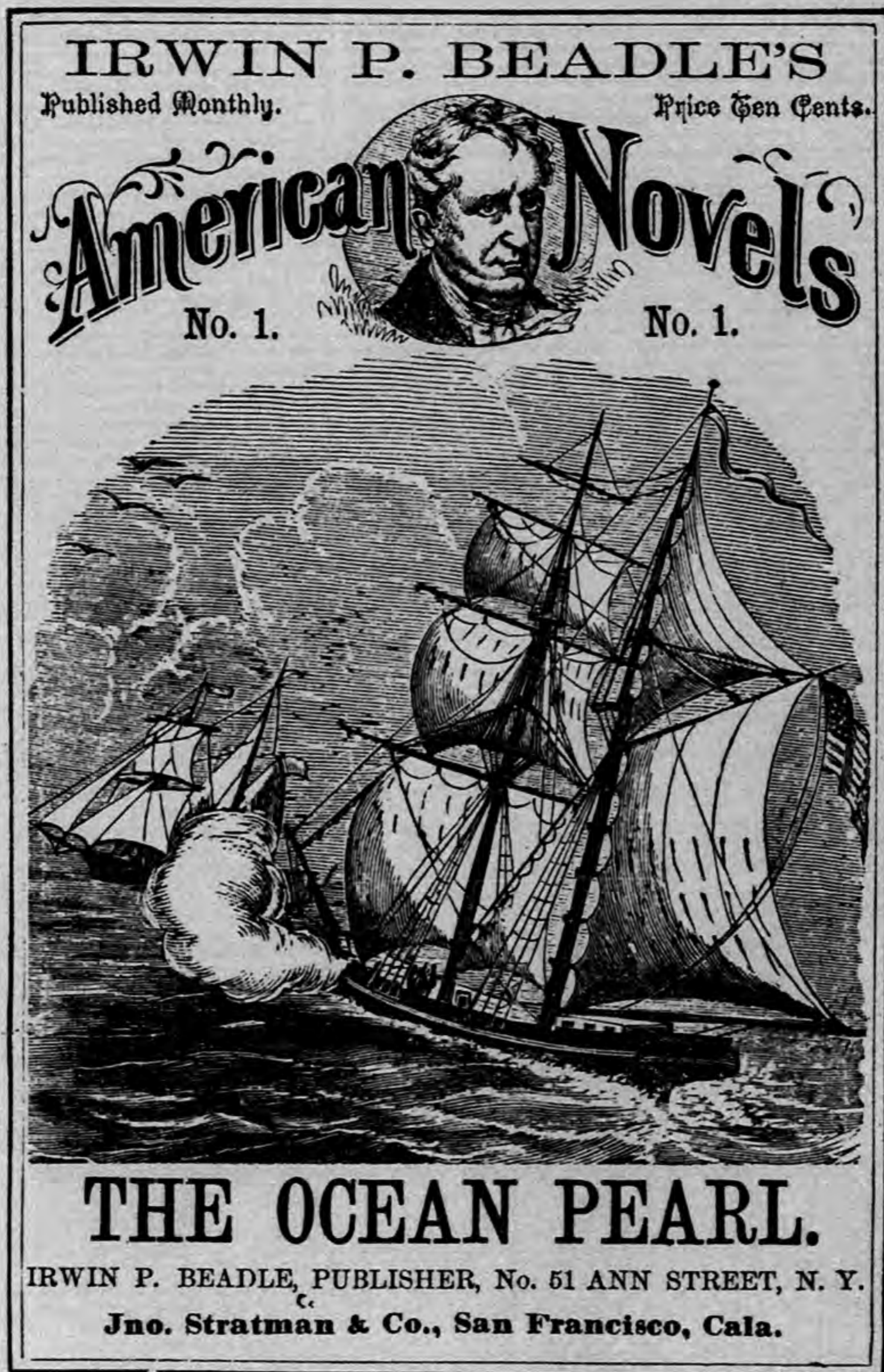


FIG. 9. *The Ocean Pearl: A Tale of the Tropics* (1865). Natural size. A story of action and romance set in the tropical seas shortly after the War of 1812. From Johannsen, *The House of Beadle*, 1:142, 147. Used by permission.

family for yet another proselytizing mission abroad—of Joseph Smith’s teaching that “a religion that does not require the sacrifice of all things” is a false religion.<sup>55</sup>

**Learning.** Brigham Young told the Saints in 1853, and regularly thereafter, “Inasmuch as the Lord Almighty has designed us to know all that is in the earth, both the good and the evil, and to learn not only what is in heaven, but what is in hell, you need not expect ever to get through learning.”<sup>56</sup> In addition to reading the standard works, Brigham repeatedly counseled the Saints to “read good books,” adding, “Although I cannot say that I would recommend the reading of all books, for it is not all books which are good. Read good books, and extract from them wisdom and understanding as much as you possibly can, aided by the Spirit of God, for without His Spirit we are left in the dark.”<sup>57</sup> And he urged the Saints to avoid “every study that only tends to perplex the student and waste his valuable time.”<sup>58</sup> But he did not limit the boundaries of scholarship. “It is your duty,” he told the Saints, “to study to know everything upon the face of the earth, in addition to reading [the scriptures]. We should not only study good, and its effects upon our race, but also evil, and its consequences.”<sup>59</sup>

Brigham Young’s vision of Zion-in-the-mountain-tops drove his desire to teach the Saints to keep their eyes peeled on heaven while inspecting the flow of their irrigation ditches. He wanted them to understand the order and plan of God, and their places in it. And he desired to teach soul-saving humility by testing their willingness to sacrifice their all for the building of the kingdom of God and to “Learn! Learn! Learn!” during every mortal moment.

Controlling the impulse to read novels or view tragedies or race horses was seen as a positive step up from self-indulgence to self-mastery. Brigham Young proclaimed that the “greatest mystery a man ever learned is to know how to control the human mind and bring every faculty and power . . . in subjection to Jesus Christ; this is the greatest mystery we have to learn while in these tabernacles of clay.”<sup>60</sup> Finding the spiritual solution to this mystery is for the Latter-day Saints something “lovely, . . . of good report [and] praiseworthy.”<sup>61</sup>

**Craftsmanship.** Brigham Young’s respect for order lies at the heart of his insistence on organization, obedience, and the laws of God. Such “fitly framed” craftsmanship underlies his reliance upon planning, organization, practicality, common sense, hard work, and continuing sensitivity to the Holy Spirit.

In short, Brigham’s vision was of the kingdom of God as a Zion society built by competent craftsmen who wielded well-honed tools—both temporal and spiritual—skillfully and exactly. The master Saint-maker envisioned the kingdom of God as “workmanlike, the building through”<sup>62</sup> and

tolerated neither lessening nor diminution of that vision of the City on a Hill. He had a clear-eyed vision of an earthly kingdom of God, and keeping that vision clear made him intolerant of the myopic skewings of romantic novels, harmful tragedy, or visionless Saints.

### The Saints Write Their Own Fiction

But Church leaders' stand on the undesirability of novel reading would collapse by the end of the nineteenth century, undermined by the Latter-day Saints' need to accommodate the nation, the world, and a new century. In light of the polygamy raids of the 1880s, the Manifesto of 1890, the disbanding of the Church's political party in 1891, and the long-delayed arrival of statehood in 1896, a new generation of Latter-day Saints desired to downplay their "peculiar people" status and assimilate into mainstream America without, their leaders fervently hoped, compromising the integrity of the restored gospel.

Such accommodation, however, brought them into confrontation with the flourishing movements of American literary realism and literary naturalism and necessitated a kind of literary compromise by the Mormon people. The answer of *fin-de-siècle* Latter-day Saint leaders to the increasing interest in fiction was the development of Mormon home literature.<sup>63</sup> The movement was spurred into being by four influential leaders: Elder Orson F. Whitney, poet, writer, bishop of Salt Lake City's Eighteenth Ward, and later a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles (1906–31); Elder B. H. Roberts, historian, theologian, member of the First Council of the Seventy (1888–1933), and among many things the author of fiction based on the Book of Mormon and of one short novel, *Corianton*, which was adapted as a stage play;<sup>64</sup> Susa Young Gates, Brigham Young's influential daughter, writer of fiction, and founding editor of the *Young Woman's Journal* (1889–1929); and Nephi Anderson, Church genealogist and editor of several Latter-day Saint journals including the short-lived *Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine* (1910–14). Anderson followed the lead of Whitney, Roberts, and Gates in writing his landmark Mormon novel, *Added Upon* (1898, and still in print), to which he added nine popular and still quaintly readable Mormon novels.

Through the influence of these four and others, the home literature movement turned the irrepressible popularity of the novel into a didactic forum for teaching Mormon truths via "the good, pure, elevating kind" of literature that centered on Mormon themes, reflected Mormon ideals, and encouraged the Saints to look to the day when they would have, on Latter-day Saint terms, "Miltons and Shakespeares of our own."<sup>65</sup> Home literature proffered the most ennobling pleasures of contemporary novel reading and could be indulged in as literary spoons-ful of sugar—to sweeten and lighten

the rigors of righteousness while teaching and illustrating sound Mormon principles and values. Writing in the first issue of the *Improvement Era*, Anderson explained that “if one has a message to deliver, he puts it into a novel, into a living breathing thing.”<sup>66</sup> So why not, he asked, put the message of the Restoration into such an acceptable package, thereby harnessing and directing the powers of literature to the ends of Saint making.

And nobody even asked Brigham Young. Bowing before the inevitable incursions of the novel into the City on a Hill—even into his own home—Brigham Young, when and wherever he heard about this startling development, may have grumbled his acquiescence, especially when he learned that daughter Susa had her hand in it. I am less confident about George Q. Cannon’s response—but he was, it turns out, a great compromiser.<sup>67</sup>

## Conclusion

Brigham may one day be permitted to inquire from beyond the veil about present-day (and novel-reading) Saints, “How sails the good ship *Zion*?” Then, peering quizzically at the John Grisham novel in my hand and the Louis L’Amour in yours, he may launch his favorite test question: “Novel reading—is it profitable [—yet]?”

Were we able to answer him, we would hasten to explain that Gerald Lund’s nine-volume *The Work and the Glory* series is next on our “must-read list,” and we would update him on the advent and continuation of contemporary home literature. “Sounds just like something my Susa would do,” he would sigh, and then, raising his eyebrows, he would add, with a deeper sigh, “Won’t you ever learn that ‘there is nothing but the Gospel to hang on to[?]’”<sup>68</sup> Then, peering over my shoulder at my new sixty-four-inch virtual reality television console with voice-activated remote, ice-maker, popcorn popper, and pizza warmer, Brigham would ask, “Television—is it profitable?” And, seeing my guilty face, he would mutter, familiarly, “[View] on, and get the spirit of lying in which [these stories] are written, and then lie on until you find yourselves in hell.”

“Your time,” I’m afraid he would say, looking directly in my eyes, “is far spent; there is little remaining. . . . How are you going to use it, buster?”

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1. Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (Liverpool: F. D. Richards, 1855–86), 9:173, January 26, 1862. Standard biographies of Brigham Young include Leonard J. Arrington, *Brigham Young: American Moses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985); Eugene



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FIG. 10. *Hurricane Nell, the Girl Dead-Shot; or, The Queen of the Saddle and Lasso* (1877). Natural size. About outlaws in Colorado. From Johannsen, *The House of Beadle*, 1:195, 196. Used by permission.

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2. "Discourse," *Deseret News Weekly*, July 23, 1873, 388; Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 9:173, January 26, 1862.

3. John M. Bernhisel to Brigham Young, November 12, 1851, Brigham Young Office Files, Church Archives, Family and Church History Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City.

4. Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 2:94, February 6, 1853.

5. Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 2:94, February 6, 1853.

6. Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 9:173, January 26, 1862.

7. Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 9:173, January 26, 1862.

8. See Leonard J. Arrington, Feramorz Y. Fox, and Dean L. May, *Building the City of God: Community and Cooperation among the Mormons*, 2d ed. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 135–54.

9. Plato, *The Republic*, book II, in Benjamin Jowett, trans., *The Dialogues of Plato* (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1952), 324, 326.

10. Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 15:224, October 9, 1872.

11. [Susa Young Gates], "Brigham and His Nineteen Wives," 7, Susa Young Gates Papers, Utah State Historical Society, Salt Lake City.

12. Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 15:224, October 9, 1872.

13. See Jorgensen, "Heritage of Hostility," 75–94, for a discussion of what George A. Smith called, in 1872, "twenty-five cent yellow covered literature" and of the popular four-to-eight-page "story papers," "Sunday papers," and "Saturday papers," "full of fiction, usually lurid, sensational, or sentimental" (as quoted on p. 82).

14. "Discourse," July 23, 1873, 388; italics added. Brigham Young's preaching style is discussed in Ronald W. Walker, "Raining Pitchforks: Brigham Young as Preacher," *Sunstone* 8 (May–June 1983): 4–9.

15. Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 19:64, July 24, 1877.

16. Brigham Young to Feramorz Little Young, August 23, 1877, in Dean C. Jessee, ed., *Letters of Brigham Young to His Sons* (Salt Lake City, Deseret Book, 1974), 314.

17. Brigham Young to Feramorz Little Young, August 23, 1877, 314.

18. Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1923), 3.

19. For Brigham Young and theater, see Roberta Reese Asahina, "Brigham Young and the Salt Lake Theater, 1862–1877" (Ph.D. diss., Tufts University, 1980); and Harold I.

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23. Clarissa Young Spencer and Mabel Harmer, *Brigham Young at Home* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1961), 167.

24. Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 9:245, March 6, 1862.

25. Wilford Woodruff, *Waiting for World's End: The Diaries of Wilford Woodruff*, ed. Susan Staker (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1993), 310–11 [October 9, 1876].

26. [George Q. Cannon], "What Shall Our Children Read?" *Deseret Evening News*, April 21, 1869.

27. [George Q. Cannon], "Editorial Thoughts," *Juvenile Instructor* 5 (January 8, 1870): 4.

28. George Quayle Cannon, *Writings from the "Western Standard," Published in San Francisco, California* (Liverpool: By the author, 1864), 504.

29. [George Q. Cannon], "Editorial Thoughts," *Juvenile Instructor* 16 (April 15, 1881): 90. See also "Works of Fiction—Their Effects," *Millennial Star* 22 (February 18, 1860): 110–11.

30. [George Q. Cannon], "Editorial Thoughts," *Juvenile Instructor* 19 (October 15, 1884): 312. Elder Cannon's guidelines for choosing good books can be found in [George Q. Cannon], "Editorial Thoughts," *Juvenile Instructor* 19 (April 15, 1884): 120.

31. See Jorgensen, "Heritage of Hostility," 75–94.

32. Richard Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963), 51.

33. As quoted in Jorgensen, "Heritage of Hostility," 78.

34. Richard L. Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), 287–88.

35. As quoted in Jorgensen, "Heritage of Hostility," 78–79. See also G. Harrison Orians, "Censure of Fiction in American Romances and Magazines," *PMLA* 52 (March 1937): 195–214.

36. Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Selected Essays*, ed. Larzer Ziff (New York: Penguin, 1982), 259–84.

37. Henry David Thoreau, *Walden and Other Writings*, ed. William Howarth (New York: Modern Library, 1981), 95.

38. Thoreau, *Walden and Other Writings*, 95, 97.

39. Thoreau, *Walden and Other Writings*, 95–96.

40. [Gates], "Brigham and His Nineteen Wives," 7.

41. The hymnal in which this song first appeared is *Sacred Hymns and Spiritual Songs for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 12th ed., rev. (Liverpool: George Q. Cannon, 1863), 73–74. The words read slightly differently in the current hymnal, *Hymns of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1985):

Soon the kingdom will be independent;  
In wonder the nations will view  
Our Zion in glory resplendent;  
Then let us be faithful and true. (no. 248)

For more information on the role of this hymn, see Richard H. Cracroft, "'Oh, What Songs of the Heart': Zion's Hymns as Sung by the Pioneers," in *Nearly Everything Imaginable: The Everyday Life of Utah's Mormon Pioneers*, ed. Ronald W. Walker and Doris R. Dant (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1999), 149–51.

42. For more on Brigham Young's concerns during this period, see Arrington, *Brigham Young: American Moses*, 363–81.

43. Karen Lynn [Davidson], "The Mormon Sacred and the Mormon Profane: An Aesthetic Dilemma," in *Arts and Inspiration: Mormon Perspectives*, ed. Steven P. Sondrup (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1980), 44; Jorgensen, "Heritage of Hostility," 82–84.

44. "What Shall Our Children Read?" April 21, 1869.

45. Leonard J. Arrington and Jon Haupt, "'Intolerable Zion': The Image of Mormonism in Nineteenth Century American Literature," *Western Humanities Review* 22 (summer 1968): 243–60; Leonard J. Arrington and Jon Haupt, "The Missouri and Illinois Mormons in Ante-bellum Fiction," *Dialogue* 5 (spring 1970): 37–50; Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 9:173, January 26, 1862.

46. Terryl L. Givens, *The Viper on the Hearth: Mormons, Myths, and the Construction of Heresy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 108–26.

47. See Richard H. Cracroft, "Distorting Polygamy for Fun and Profit: Artemus Ward and Mark Twain among the Mormons," *BYU Studies* 14, no. 2 (winter 1974): 272–88; Richard H. Cracroft, "'Ten Wives Is All You Need': Artemus, Twain and the Mormons—Again," *Western Humanities Review* 38 (autumn 1984): 197–211; Richard H. Cracroft, "The Gentle Blasphemer: Mark Twain, Holy Scripture, and the Book of Mormon," *BYU Studies* 11, no. 2 (winter 1971): 119–40.

48. On the origins of this vision, see Ronald K. Esplin, "Discipleship: Brigham Young and Joseph Smith," in *Joseph Smith: The Prophet, The Man*, eds. Susan Easton Black and Charles D. Tate Jr. (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1992), 241–69.

49. In the theology and scripture of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Kolob is the star "nearest unto the throne of God" (Abr. 3:2–4).

50. Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 8:294, June 12, 1860.

51. Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 8:294, June 12, 1860.

52. Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 10:266, October 6, 1863.

53. Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 12:217, May 17, 1868.

54. See, for example, Larry V. Shumway, "Dancing the Buckles off Their Shoes in Pioneer Utah," *BYU Studies* 37, no. 3 (1997–98): 21–22; and Spencer and Harmer, *Brigham Young at Home*, 191–208.

55. N. B. Lundwall, comp., *A Compilation Containing the Lectures on Faith as Delivered at the School of the Prophets at Kirtland, Ohio* (Salt Lake City: By the author, [ca. 1943]): 58.

56. Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 2:94, February 6, 1853.

57. Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 12:124, December 29, 1867.

58. Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 9:369, August 31, 1862.

59. Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 2:93–94, February 6, 1853.

60. Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 1:46, April 9, 1852.

61. Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 10:266, October 6, 1863; Article of Faith 13.

62. John Sterling Harris, *Second Crop: Poems by John Sterling Harris* (Provo, Utah: BYU Studies and Charles Redd Center for Western Studies, 1996), 79.

63. See Whitney's landmark sermon, "Home Literature," first published in the July 1888 *Contributor* and reprinted in *A Believing People: The Literature of the Latter-day*

*Saints*, eds. Richard H. Cracroft and Neal E. Lambert (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1979), 129–33. See also Richard H. Cracroft, “Nephi, Seer of Modern Times: The Home Literature Novels of Nephi Anderson,” *BYU Studies* 25, no. 2 (spring 1985): 3–15; and the two-part series by Richard H. Cracroft, “Seeking the Good, the Pure, the Elevating: A Short History of Mormon Fiction,” *Ensign* 11 (June 1981): 56–62, and (July 1981): 56–61. Gates was also the founding editor, in 1914, of the *Relief Society Magazine* (1914–70).

64. See Richard H. Cracroft, “The Didactic Heresy as Orthodox Tool: B. H. Roberts as Writer of Home Literature,” in *Tending the Garden: Essays on Mormon Literature*, eds. Lavina Fielding Anderson and Eugene England (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1996), 117–33.

65. Orson F. Whitney, “Home Literature,” 132.

66. [Nephi Anderson], “A Plea for Fiction,” *Improvement Era* 1 (January 1898): 188. See also Nephi Anderson, “Purpose in Fiction,” *Improvement Era* 1 (February 1898): 269–71.

67. See Davis Bitton, *George Q. Cannon: A Biography* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1999).

68. Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 15:136, August 24, 1872.

L. Tom Perry Special Collections



Brigham Young, ca. 1875. Photograph by Charles W. Symons.

## Destination

Whenever I leave home,  
I choke on the aftertaste of shortbread  
and tear my clothes in an open field;

I drift in the dust of country stores  
and make grass rise out of my cheek. It's better  
when I return a cub to its den. It's better

when the sky is mauve blankets.  
It's better that the bush isn't consumed.  
It's better when I write autobiography.

My mind is the late Sabbath candle.  
My temple burns with reasons to exist.  
A cup of water is just within reach. I put

my hand to the plow in a field of wheat.  
I weep at the color green. I taste  
salt in lemon cake. I offer myself

to the ancient texts, words strong  
as leviathan and robe,  
words full of hammers and lamps. As soon

as they are spoken, an angel flies  
with the sound of a trumpet; I will study  
that air a little; I will not agitate it. I am a child

of eternal mirrors. I was born in a seal;  
I breathe because of fervor, because  
of the watchmen's grace; I forget

creation has not ended. I seek for  
the condition of the hat's shelter, the mime's  
speaking shadow. I harvest olives and grapes.

I confess *noonday* in the Book of Mormon:  
it is Joseph's front door, it is a vial of oil, one  
of the psalms in a dead man's quiver, one child  
poking through the straw and leaves.  
On the eve of new knowledge, on the eve  
of an open shrift, I cook husks primed

for a sheep's belly, I gurgle a cup of brack  
from the Great Salt Lake; I recall that home  
will diminish the moon, candles will die

in the bushel, fields will reap the dusk's glaze.  
I stand with white cloth reading  
Young and Smith. I look for a shortcut

to Temple Square. A stranger grabs  
the back of my feet. I tell him of the sweet roll  
in my stomach. I point to the vanilla

between my teeth. I say, *It's what I taste  
before sleep; what I wake up to.* He says,  
"It's the altar you can't forget."

—Mark Bennion

# Leopold Bierwirth's Impressions of Brigham Young and the Mormons, 1872

Donald Q. Cannon

Tourists frequently passed through Salt Lake City after the trans-continental railroad was completed in 1869. Many visitors recorded their impressions of the city and its inhabitants. One visitor, Leopold Bierwirth, a New York City merchant, kept a diary during his 1872 railroad journey from New York to San Francisco. The diary is similar to other travel narratives but contains much more detail and insight than most others.<sup>1</sup> Bierwirth's observations are particularly valuable because they were written during his visit rather than later. The portion of Bierwirth's diary reporting his visit to Salt Lake City, including his impressions of Brigham Young, is reproduced below.

## Short Biography of Leopold Bierwirth

Leopold Bierwirth was born near Bremen, Germany, in 1801. Starting as a representative for a prominent German shipping house in Charleston, South Carolina, at the age of twenty-seven, Bierwirth spent his entire career as an international merchant. In 1832 he moved to New York City and involved himself in export trade with Europe, joining the firm Faber and Merle, which soon became Faber and Bierwirth. He later entered into a partnership known as Bierwirth and Rocholl, in which he remained until his death. His multiple business interests led him to serve for twelve years as president of the Orient Mutual Insurance Company. At the time of this journey, his business interests were primarily directed toward cotton.<sup>2</sup>

Aside from his business pursuits, Bierwirth was greatly interested in immigration and humanitarian aid. Having noticed the extent to which foreign immigrants were mistreated, he, with a few friends, appealed to the U.S. government to organize a committee for countering the problems

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1. For a discussion of other travelers' accounts of Salt Lake City during the nineteenth century, see Thomas K. Hafen, "City of Saints, City of Sinners: The Development of Salt Lake City as a Tourist Attraction, 1869–1900," *Western Historical Quarterly* 28 (autumn 1997): 343–77.

2. "Leopold Bierwirth," *New York Times*, October 31, 1874, 12; "Distinguished Party," *Salt Lake Daily Herald*, October 1, 1872.

immigrants faced. The committee was approved, and Bierwirth became one of the founding members of the Commission of Emigration and sat on the commission for its first three years. He also served for many years as a member of the New York Chamber of Commerce and as the consul for Württemberg, Germany.<sup>3</sup>

If the records are accurate in showing that he married Emily Goudain on November 6, 1841, in the Trinity Church of New York City and that by 1850 his oldest child, Leopold G., was 12, then Bierwirth was either married previously or had a child out of wedlock. His other two children in 1850 were Ida, age 9, and Emily, 3. Census records for that year include two additional individuals in the Bierwirth household: Cora Goudain (probably Mrs. Bierwirth's sister), 40; and Charlotte Grosenhold, 19, from Germany (possibly a maid). Bierwirth's wife and her sister were both natives of New York.<sup>4</sup>

Already seventy-one years old when he undertook the arduous journey across the country, Bierwirth died at his Brooklyn residence less than two years after he returned home. His obituary in the October 31, 1874, issue of the *New York Times* calls him an "old and highly respected merchant."<sup>5</sup>

### The Trip to Utah

Immediately after the completion of the railroad in 1869, riding the rails across the United States became a popular fad in New York and other eastern cities. Some travelers wanted to see California, Colorado, and Wyoming, but many were primarily interested in visiting the Mormons. Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, having escaped persecutions in Ohio, Missouri, and Illinois in the 1830s and 40s, had established impressive settlements throughout the Intermountain West, including their headquarters in Salt Lake City. With the Civil War over and slavery in the southern states crushed, much political attention focused on the remaining "pillar of barbarism": the Mormons' "peculiar" practice of plural marriage, or polygamy. Incited in large measure by anti-Mormons in Utah who were jealous of the political and commercial power of the Church, newspapers throughout the country expressed various opinions of the practice. Congress had already begun to enact antipolygamy legislation.

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3. "Leopold Bierwirth," October 31, 1874, 12; Friedrich Kapp, *Immigration and the Commissioners of Emigration* (New York: Arno, 1969), 86.

4. U.S. Census of Population, Manuscript Schedules for Third Ward, Brooklyn, Kings County, New York, 1850; marriage record for Leopold Bierwirth extracted from Trinity Church Parish records, New York, New York, as listed in International Genealogical Index 4.01.

5. "Leopold Bierwirth," October 31, 1874, 12.



Hence, many had a great desire to visit Utah and see for themselves the institutions and material progress of the Mormons.

One of the earliest dignitaries to make such a visit was former Secretary of State William H. Seward (1801–72), who visited Salt Lake City August 19–23, 1870, while on the first leg of a tour around the world. His impressions were dictated during the trip and were published posthumously in 1873 as *William H. Seward's Travels around the World*. The book, which “records his political, social, moral, and philosophical observations and reflections, in his own words,” gives a fair-minded summation of the general sentiments of the day. Seward’s account serves as a backdrop to Bierwirth’s observations, for Bierwirth carried to Salt Lake City letters of introduction from Seward, apparently a trusted associate. Bierwirth likely consulted with Seward sometime during 1871 or 1872 concerning his journey to the West and may have even read Seward’s manuscript prior to undertaking his own journey.<sup>6</sup>

Bierwirth had two close friends as traveling companions: Herr von Schleiden, then a member of the German parliament, who had served for thirteen years as the minister plenipotentiary to Washington from the Hanseatic cities, and later was sent to the Court of St. James; and Herr Johannes Rosing, L.L.D., consul general of the German Empire at New York.<sup>7</sup>

### The Diary

The Salt Lake City entries of Bierwirth’s diary came to light in April 1999.<sup>8</sup> The diary is located in the New-York Historical Society, New York City, which also holds letters Bierwirth sent to various correspondents. The diary measures 6¼" x 7" x ¾" and displays penmanship that is steady for Bierwirth’s age. It covers the entire trip from New York to San Francisco.

As the group traveled by train across the Kansan plains, Bierwirth recorded his first encounter with Indians. He made special mention of the clean, “exhilarating” air, a welcome change from the industrial smog of New York. Shortly after a stop at Salina, Kansas, he saw his first buffalo. Bierwirth also described a stop in Denver and the beauty of Colorado. After a short side trip to Colorado Springs, the group continued on to Cheyenne, which Bierwirth described as being located “in a dreary plain.” He noted the magnificence of Echo and Weber Canyons. Leaving from

6. [William H. Seward], *William H. Seward's Travels around the World*, ed. Olive Risley Seward (New York: D. Appleton, 1873), 4; “Distinguished Party,” October 1, 1872.

7. “An Excursion,” *Deseret Evening News*, October 1, 1872.

8. The author of this introduction followed a lead suggested by his son Kelly Cannon, a librarian at Muhlenberg College.

Ogden by rail, Bierwirth and his party arrived in Salt Lake City on September 28, 1872, remaining there for three days.

Written in the past tense apparently shortly after events transpired, Bierwirth's Salt Lake City entries are published below. Original spelling, punctuation, and grammar has been preserved. Bierwirth's own above-line insertions are marked with < >. Strike outs are noted in ~~this way~~. My own editorial additions are marked with [ ]. Material that has been scratched out and thus rendered illegible is marked this way: [—]. Question marks indicate words that can be read different ways.

## Leopold Bierwirth's Diary, September 28, 29, 30, and October 1, 1872

By 8 o'clock A.M.<sup>9</sup> [Saturday, September 28, 1872] we were at the "Townsend House" [fig.1] in the great Mormon Capital. It was Saturday. We had been told that, when Brigham Young knows "distinguished foreigners" to be in the city on a Sunday, he generally seized the opportunity to preach; and as we were naturally anxious to hear him, we immediately after our arrival sent him our cards with a letter of introduction from Mr. [William H.] Seward.—The answer brought back to us was that President



Church Archives

**FIG. 1.** The Townsend House. Located on the corner of West Temple and First South Streets, the Townsend House was Salt Lake City's leading hotel in the early 1870s. Built by Peter Townsend in 1867–68, it featured a kitchen, dining room, and cellar refrigerator room. Many prominent visitors in addition to the Leopold Bierwirth party stayed in the Townsend House. William H. Seward described the Townsend House in these terms: "Wearied and worn with mountain-travel, a hostelry even less neat and cheerful than the Townsend House, managed by an Englishwoman, the second of four wives, would have been acceptable to us." *Travels around the World*, 17. The structure was torn down in 1923. See "Pioneer Hotels in the West," in *Heart Throbs of the West*, comp. Kate B. Carter, 12 vols. (Salt Lake City: Daughters of Utah Pioneers, 1939–51), 5:330–31.

9. This time is likely meant to be 8:00 P.M. A local newspaper substantiates this point by saying that the party arrived at the Townsend House in the "evening." "Distinguished Party," October 1, 1872.

Young had gone to the theatre<sup>10</sup> and would not receive our cards until the following morning (Sunday).—When the next day [Sunday, September 29, 1872] the time arrived, we went to the Tabernacle<sup>11</sup> and entering the building a Gentleman stepped up to us and courteously but silently led us to (grand) seats, not far from where in our churches the pulpit or reading desk is placed. Soon the tones of an excellent organ,<sup>12</sup> well played, filled the vast building and then a choir of about 50 singers,<sup>13</sup> seated on a platform in front of the organ arose and with a degree of perfection I have never heard excelled in any of our churches, sang one of Mozart's grand cantata[s]. This was followed by a few words from one of the "apostles" introducing a young man,<sup>14</sup> who had just returned from a missionary tour in Europe. He gave an account of his work, first in Swedish and then in English, endeavoring to show that his mission had reasonably been successful. His remarks were remarkable only for the evidence of his sincere belief in ~~the truths of~~ Mormonism. After this the "apostle" gave out a hymn, commencing in the words:

How beautiful are their feet  
who stand on Zions hill;<sup>15</sup>

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10. Showing on Saturday evening was a popular American play called *The Octoroon; or, Life in Louisiana*, written by Dion Boucicault. According to theater critic Arthur Hobson Quinn, "*The Octoroon* represented so truly the actual conditions in Louisiana that it won the sympathy of Northerners and Southerners alike." Arthur Hobson Quinn, ed., *Representative American Plays: From 1767 to the Present Day*, 7th ed., rev. (New York: Appleton-Century Crofts, 1953), 371–72. That such a play should be playing in Salt Lake at the time shows the rapid cultural advancement of the wilderness city. See "Theatre," *Deseret Evening News*, September 30, 1872.

11. The Tabernacle was completed five years earlier. Paul L. Anderson, "Tabernacle, Salt Lake City," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow, 4 vols. (New York: MacMillan, 1992), 4:1433–34.

12. This organ was the original installed by Joseph Ridges in 1867. It had 700 pipes, rather than the current 11,000 of its expanded descendant. Orpha Ochse, *The History of the Organ in the United States* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1975), 188–90, 309–11.

13. In 1869, George Careless was appointed the director of a small choir that had been singing for most of the Utah conferences to that date. The Salt Lake Tabernacle Choir had about 85 members. K. Newell Dayley, "Mormon Tabernacle Choir," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 2:950–52.

14. The identity of this "young man" is unclear. Anders C. Grue was the first speaker in the morning session, but whether he is the speaker to which Bierwirth refers is unknown. "Services in the Tabernacle," *Deseret Evening News*, September 30, 1872. Other possibilities are Elders P. O. Thomassen and Arne Christiansen, the two returned missionaries the *Deseret News* lists as returning that week from missions to Scandinavia. "Returned Missionary," *Deseret Evening News*, September 30 and October 2, 1872.

15. The author of this hymn is listed as [Isaac] Watts. The hymn actually begins, "How beauteous are their feet." *Sacred Hymns and Spiritual Songs for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 14th ed. (Salt Lake City: George Q. Cannon, 1871), 118, 419.

and while the organ preluded, the Gentleman who had shewn us to our seats, brought me a hymn book, enabling me to follow the choir. The hymn was sung with exquisite taste, none of the voices attempting to predominate at the expense of harmony, though some of them, as we had noticed while listening to the cantata, were really splendid.—

The hymn was followed by a discours of nearly an hours duration from one of the Bishops in defence of polygamy.<sup>16</sup> His language and manner did not show a high degree of culture, but the speaker made up for it in violence, not to say ferocity of denunciation, expressing his convictions in thunders like these: “There are not men enough this side of hell to put us down!” No one pronounced a prayer or blessing; the service closed with singing by the choir of the hymn: “Ere long the veil will rend in twain, the King descend with all his train . . .”<sup>17</sup>

After leaving the tabernacle, we strolled along the beautiful street in which is Brigham Youngs residence.<sup>18</sup> It is a low building in midst [of] a square covering probably 10 ~~to 15~~ acres, surrounded by a stone wall 10 to 12 feet high. With the gates closed, the place seemed strong enough to withstand an attack of Indians, or of a mob of Gentiles; but I do not think it could resist a minutes firing of General Morrow's artillery.—A short distance from one of the gates, some one rapidly followed and overtaking us, politely inquired, if we were the Gentlemen who had sent our cards to President Young. Being answered in the affirmative, he gave us the President's compliments with the request “to step in.” Following the invitation we entered a rather large <square> room, the walls of which were covered with the portraits of all the great Saints, from Joe Smith to the present time, and

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16. A note here inserted by Bierwirth and written out at the bottom of the page reads: “The government of the Mormon Church in Utah comprises 3 Presidents, 12 apostles and 70 Bishops.”

Jesse C. Little was the second speaker in the morning session. At this time he was the second counselor to the Presiding Bishop, Edward Hunter. 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), 1:242–43.

17. This hymn was written by Parley P. Pratt. *Sacred Hymns*, 17, 417.

18. This street, then known as Brigham Street, is now South Temple Street. President Young's official residence was the Beehive House. Leonard J. Arrington, *Brigham Young: American Moses* (New York: Alfred K. Knopf, 1985), 169. For more information about President Young's homes, see Dean C. Jessee, “‘A Man of God and a Good Kind Father’: Brigham Young at Home,” in this issue of *BYU Studies*. Seward described the interior of the Beehive House: “The furniture and appointments of the ‘Bee-hive,’ like those of the other houses, are frugal but comfortable, and order and cleanliness prevail in them all.” Seward, *Travels around the World*, 21–22.

near a table in the center were seated, ready to receive us, the three Presidents of the Mormon Church of Utah: [Brigham] Young, [First Counselor George A.] Smith and [Second Counselor Daniel H.] Wells. We introduced ourselves and then President Young presented us to his colleagues. Instead of entering into general conversation, each one of the high dignitaries engaged one of us, and when after our instructive chat of 15 to 20 minutes we rose to depart, we were offered a glass of ice water, which my companions at once and I with some hesitation accepted. My collaborator [?] in the sanctum was President Smith, [—] a man apparently beyond the meridian of life, free and easy in his manners, and his great bulk and a countenance the reverse of pale and pensive, did not weaken, on the contrary strengthened the impression hi[s] conversation made on me, that he must be very good-natured.<sup>19</sup> When the water was offered to me, I asked him, whether I might take it with impunity?<sup>20</sup> “Look at me! I drink nothing but water,” was his reply. We all drank the water and then President Young dismissed us with his blessing.

In the afternoon we again went to the tabernacle, expecting to hear Brigham Young; but he did not preach.<sup>21</sup> The attendance was much larger than in the morning; [—] all the seats in the enormous edifice seemed occupied, and if the statement be true, that as many as 10,000 people can be and frequently have been crammed into the building, then the estimate of the number present that afternoon, 7000 to 8000, was no exaggeration, and indeed when after service we saw the crowd come out and considered the time it took to clear the court and the adjacent streets, we were quite willing to admit the estimate as correct.<sup>22</sup> The Mormons unquestionably are a church-going people.

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19. George A. Smith (1817–75) was renowned for his excellent memory and his somewhat comic antics, such as giving extraordinarily brief prayers and sermons and wiping sweat from his face with his wig while speaking in general conference. Approximately two weeks after this encounter with Bierwirth, President Smith left on an eight-month mission to the Holy Land, which he rededicated for the gathering of the Jews. Merlo J. Pusey, *Builders of the Kingdom: George A. Smith, John Henry Smith, George Albert Smith*, Studies in Western History and Culture (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1981).

20. Bierwirth was not impressed by the spartan refreshments and may have also had concerns about the safety of drinking the water.

21. Bierwirth's expectations may have been piqued by William H. Seward's account of a Brigham Young sermon: “After a kind allusion to Mr. Seward's presence, the sermon ran to incoherent and pointless exhortation.” Seward, *Travels around the World*, 20.

22. The downstairs of the Tabernacle was originally built to seat 6,000; the gallery seated an additional 3,000. Anderson, “Tabernacle, Salt Lake City,” 4:1433–34.

The service was similar to the one we had been present at in the morning: the music of organ and choir was excellent; we had again a discourse on doctrinal points,<sup>23</sup> during the delivery of which the Lords supper was served, not in a manner however, I am sorry to say, to make the rite impressive. There were 12 plates and 12 cups and 12 deacons or Bishops first distributed the bread and then the wine <or rather the water,> and they had to come repeatedly for fresh supplies to serve all. The act resembled more the performance of a job, than the administering [*sic*] of a holy ordinance.<sup>24</sup>

In the evening we received a note from President Young, placing his carriage at our disposal during our stay in the city; and a little later President Wells,<sup>25</sup> with two of the more prominent [*sic*] citizens of the place, all connected with the church, paid their respects and wished to know, how they could serve us. It again so happened that we did not engage in general conversation, but each one of us was taken hold of by one of our visitors. The Gentleman, who devoted his special attention to me [—]. I afterwards found out, -was the husband of two of Pres<sup>t</sup>. Young's daughters.<sup>26</sup> He was a man of more than ordinary intelligence, but also a strong believer in Mormonism. He related a great many interesting incidents ~~relating to~~ <connected with> the early history of the church, spoke of the many hard struggles of the colony in the first dozen years in Utah; how for 6 months they had to suspend work on their dwellings, because they had no nails + c. [etc.] But their severest trial was in later years. They had, by means of irrigation, made their ~~fields remarkable~~ <soil reasonably> productive, the fields began to look beautifully, gladdening the hearts of all, when the grasshoppers and locusts appeared and soon threatened total destruction. Seeing that the insects moved in one direction and would soon arrive at one of the ditches made for the purpose of irrigation, the people placed straw along

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23. George Q. Cannon (1827–1901), a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, delivered this sermon. "Services in the Tabernacle," September 30, 1872.

24. Seward's observation was less critical: "The ceremony, though attended with less solemnity, is conducted in the same manner as in the more popular Protestant denominations, with the difference that water is used in place of wine, a special prayer being offered that the substitution may be approved." Seward, *Travels around the World*, 18–19.

25. Daniel H. Wells (1814–91) also served as mayor of Salt Lake City (1866–76). Lawrence R. Flake, *Prophets and Apostles of the Last Dispensation* (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2001), 255–58.

26. Although both George Thatcher and Hiram B. Clawson married two of Brigham Young's daughters, the gentleman mentioned here is probably the latter. Clawson (1826–1912) managed President Young's private business affairs for many years and so would have been constantly near him. Orson F. Whitney, *History of Utah*, 4 vols. (Salt Lake City: George Q. Cannon and Sons, 1892–1904), 4:201–3.

the trench expecting the grasshoppers would get entangled therein. And indeed such was the case! The straw was then set on fire and millions of the insects were burned.—But the joy of the people at the happy deliverance was short-lived; soon fresh swarms of locusts appeared and nothing now remained for the sorely tried Mormons but their trust in Providence—and that saved them. They prayed and lo! the next day <suddenly> the sky was darkened by many thousands of white gulls coming from the lakes and, pouncing upon the locusts, made short work of them. <In the words of my informant:> “They gobbled them as fast as the hen picks up the grains of corn <and immediately threw them up again.>” and the following morning the gulls had disappeared leaving behind the inanimate remains of millions of locusts, which caused no serious inconvenience, but might be used as a fertilizer.<sup>27</sup> —Perhaps my features expressed incredulity—I felt that I could not altogether control them. “May be, you will call this a big story?” added my informant. “It sounds extravagant,” I said[,] but do you speak of your own knowledge? “I do,” he replied, “I have seen with my own eyes, have witnessed myself all I have told you.” —This, of course, silenced me; I no longer expressed any doubts as to the truth of the Gentlemans statement.

At 10 o'clock the next morning [Monday, September 30, 1872] President Young's carriage was at the door, with my good-natured, not to say jolly friend, President Smith in it, who took us all to see all that he thought worth seeing. There was the new temple, now in course of construction, and if ever finished, will be one of the most magnificent edifices in the United States. The theatre<sup>28</sup> and the courthouse are structures that would be creditable to any city; the water works and many other public works + improvements give highly satisfactory evidence of the public spirit, the good sense, the energy of the people and of a wise and faithful administration of

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27. The crickets swarmed into the Salt Lake Valley as early as May 22, 1848. The seagulls flew to the rescue beginning June 9, 1848. See Davis Bitton and Linda P. Wilcox, “Pestiferous Ironclads: The Grasshopper Problem in Pioneer Utah,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 46 (fall 1978): 336–55; and William Hartley, “Mormons, Crickets, and Gulls: A New Look at an Old Story,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 38 (summer 1970): 224–39.

28. Architect William H. Folsom designed the Salt Lake Theater to be a close duplicate of the Drury Lane Theatre in London. Completed in 1862, the theater had a capacity of 1,500. Ila Fisher Maughan, *Pioneer Theatre in the Desert* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1961), 93. In 1865, Samuel Bowles, editor of *Springfield Republican*, visited Salt Lake City in company with U.S. Vice-President Schuyler Colfax and had this to say about the theater:

The building is itself a rare triumph of art and enterprise. No eastern city of one hundred thousand inhabitants,—remember Salt Lake City has less than



the affairs of the community.—An uncommonly pleasant drive was that to Camp Douglas,<sup>29</sup> a couple of miles away from the city. It is beautifully situated on a slope of the Wasatch mountains, high enough to afford a good view of Salt Lake City and the surrounding country. Nothing can be more charming; the city with its wide streets lined with shade trees giving it ~~an~~ ~~air~~ at this distance an air of quiet repose; the fields for many miles around carefully cultivated, rivulets and trenches filled with sparkling water crossing them in all directions, and, beyond the whole, the imposing mountain range, many of the higher peaks covered with glittering snow—surely, the panorama is lovely!

President Smith introduced us to the commandant of the Camp, General Morrow, in whom we found an exceedingly pleasant Gentleman;<sup>30</sup> indeed with his commanding figure, noble countenance, most courteous and at the same time dignified bearing, he realized the beau ideal of an American officer. His great collection of Indian weapons, dresses, utensils + c [etc.] was as curious and interesting, as his remarks on Indian character and warfare and his account of personal adventures among the savages

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twenty thousand,—possesses so fine a theatrical structure. It ranks, alike in capacity and elegance of structure and finish, along with the opera-houses and academies of music of Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Chicago and Cincinnati. (Samuel Bowles, *Across the Continent: A Summer's Journey to the Rocky Mountains, the Mormons, and the Pacific States, with Speaker Colfax* [Springfield, Mass.: Samuel Bowles, 1865], 103)

29. Established October 26, 1862, Fort Douglas had several buildings including a pair of two-story red sandstone barracks capable of holding 480 men. The fort served as headquarters for the Thirteenth Regiment. In 1871, deeming that a Mormon uprising was imminent, the U.S. president ordered the headquarters to be removed to Fort Fred Steele in Wyoming. In 1873, as no uprising had occurred, the base was shifted back to Fort Douglas under a new colonel. Hence, when Bierwirth's party came to the camp in 1872, they were greeted by General Henry A. Morrow (a lieutenant colonel) rather than General Philip De Trobriand (the colonel of the Thirteenth Legion), who had met with Seward two years earlier. U. G. McAlexander, *History of the Thirteenth Regiment, United States Infantry* (Salt Lake City: Regimental Press, Thirteenth Infantry, 1905), 73; Lyman Clarence Pedersen Jr., "History of Fort Douglas, Utah" (Ph.D. diss., Brigham Young University, 1967), 47–220.

30. A letter General Morrow wrote in 1874 says this of his relationship with the Mormons: "I assure you I left Salt Lake with great good feelings towards its industrious and frugal population. I shall always remember the many acts of courtesy and kindness I received, and I will never cease to wish prosperity and happiness to a city which attracted me so much by the beauty of its people." As quoted in "U.S. Troops in Utah," in *Our Pioneer Heritage*, comp. Kate B. Carter, 20 vols. (Salt Lake City: Daughters of Utah Pioneers, 1958–77), 18:27.

were entertaining and instructive, while the charm of his communications was greatly enhanced by the <total> absence of boasting or self-laudation.

Returning to the city our amiable guide related many interesting episodes in the history of the people. He had a ready and frank answer to all our questions, some of which we might have hesitated to ask of a less good-natured Gentleman. He spoke freely of the criminal suits now pending against Brigham Young and other Mormon leaders, whom he declared, and no doubt honestly believes, entirely innocent of all the accusations against them. He denounced an apostate, or rather a fellow who was expelled from the church, as the cause of all the trouble, relating many of the villain's atrocious [*sic*] acts; and on my expressing surprise that justice had not yet got hold of him, our humorous friend replied: "The fellow always manages to get some one else's neck between his own and the rope."<sup>31</sup>

When drawing near the city, President Smith informed us that for the afternoon an excursion had been arranged on a newly opened RRd to Lehi;<sup>32</sup> about 40 miles distant;—that the trip would give us the opportunity to see Utah Lake and the River Jordan and that a special train had been provided for the trip. —Soon after 1 o'clock P.M. a carriage came for us to the Hotel to take us to the depot, and entering the cars we were received by half a dozen Gentlemen, among them President Young. Soon the car became filled by the elite of the city's population, including quite a number of ladies,<sup>33</sup> to all of whom we were introduced. President Young took a seat next to me and I had 10 minutes conversation with him, when he left me to

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31. This "apostate" is undoubtedly William Hickman (1815–83), who was excommunicated in 1868 for reasons that remain unclear. Faced with a sure conviction in 1870 for the murder of Frank Moreno, Hickman was supposedly promised immunity if he implicated several leaders of the Church in an unsolved 1857 murder. Hickman's statements before a grand jury in fall 1871 brought about charges of incitement to murder against Brigham Young, Daniel H. Wells, and seven other Latter-day Saints. All pled not guilty. Awaiting trial, Mayor Wells and President Young were placed on house arrest for 120 days, while the others were jailed for six months in the Fort Douglas prison. Hickman also served time but was later released. When the United States Supreme Court discovered the anti-Mormon tactics the chief justice and his predecessors had used, they invalidated all criminal proceedings in Utah during the previous eighteen months. Charges in the murder case were dropped. Richard S. Van Wagoner and Steven C. Walker, *A Book of Mormons* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1982), 118–24; Hope A. Hilton, "Wild Bill" Hickman and the Mormon Frontier (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1988), 123–28, 133–34, 138; Arrington, *Brigham Young*, 372–73.

32. This stretch of the railroad was completed just four days before. "Conference Trains," *Deseret Evening News*, September 28, 1872.

33. The gentlemen on this excursion included Brigham Young, George Q. Cannon, George A. Smith, Daniel H. Wells, and Orson Pratt. "Distinguished Party," October 1, 1872. The only lady who can be identified is the wife of Hiram B. Clawson.

bestow the favor and honor of his company upon some on [*sic*] else. —In stature he is not above the middle-size, but well-made and, considering his age, upwards of 71 years, remarkably elastic in his movements. He looks 15 to 20 years younger than he is. —There is nothing plebeian in his appearance; on the contrary, his rather <handsome,> intellectual, not decidedly masculine features, his hands, his feet—all seem to point to patrician origin, while by his dress and manners he might readily be taken for an English Gentleman. He is courteous and yet with a touch of hauteur; in his conversation he is studiously guarded and—more than seemed to me consistent with good taste—he endeavors to give his utterances a sanctimonious turn. This however may be the natural promptings of a Saint with more than a dozen wives.

I had half an hour's talk with one Mrs. Young and did not find it tedious; rather greater exertion was required to prevent pauses in the conversation with a daughter of President Young's + one of Genl. Clasen's wives, a really beautiful young woman, but reserved, not to say shy in her manners. The thought struck me to inquire after her children and then she spoke with a mother's eloquence. I could readily believe that her daughter, <the one> 5 years old, was "a dear little thing,"—and no doubt a perfect beauty— I added, to which with a sweet smile, she replied: "I am sure you would say so, if you were to see her."<sup>34</sup>

Every one in the car shewed a desire to make the trip pleasant to us; whatever deserved notice along the road: the irrigation of the fields, the natural reservoirs from which the water was drawn, Utah Lake and the river Jordan; the mines that had been recently opened + c. [etc.]—all was pointed out to us; and by order of President Young the train stopped to give us the opportunity of examining some smelting works<sup>35</sup> near the road. Well pleased with our trip, but rather tired by the day's work we returned to our hotel in time for supper, soon after which nothing had greater attraction for me than my bed.

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34. Bierwirth was speaking either with Alice Young Clawson (1839–74) about her daughter Luna (1866–?) or with Emily Young Clawson (1849–1912) about her daughter Carlie Louine (1869–1965), whose age he would have incorrectly recorded.

35. The *Deseret Evening News* made a point of the smelting works:

On the return of the company the car stopped at the Saturn Smelting Works. . . . Mr. G. W. Gerrish, Superintendent of the work, explained the process of smelting to the visitors. Some idea of the results that are being accomplished there may be formed from the statement of Mr. Gerrish, that from 7 o'clock on Saturday morning until the same hour on Sunday morning they ran off forty-two tons of ore, only 29 per cent of which was lead, and the per centage of slag was very small, not exceeding from one to one and a quarter. ("An Excursion," *Deseret Evening News*, October 1, 1872)

One little incident of the trip I still wish to mention. Passing the entrance to the Emma Mines,<sup>36</sup> I told a Gentleman at my side, that I had been trying to get specimens of Utah ores, had been for the purpose to the Bureau of Mines, but had not been successful. He with a smile inquired, if I wished to speculate in mines? I replied that nothing was further from my thoughts; but I had wished to get the ores for my son's cabinet of minerals.—When we were near the end of our journey, he asked when I intended to leave? and on my saying that it would be at 1 o'clock the next day, he bade me good night with the remark that he would have the pleasure of seeing me once more before my departure.—And sure enough, by 11 o'clock a.m. the next day he appeared with a parcel in his hands containing half a dozen specimens of Utah ores, all properly labeled, which he handed me, apologizing that want of time had not allowed him to collect a larger number; but that he had requested a friend and had sent his son to find a few more. Soon thereafter the two messengers arrived bringing what they had been sent for, thus ~~completing the collection and~~ making me the owner of a really valuable collection of minerals <Utah ores>.—I have related the circumstance to show that Mormonism does not destroy, nor weaken the inducements to gentlemanly attention and courtesy.

On the 1<sup>st</sup> of October [1872] we left the beautiful city of the Saints. Again at the dépôt we found several of our friends, who had come there to bid us Good bye. Our thanks were not mere façon de parler.<sup>37</sup> We felt indebted to them for a highly interesting experience in our journey. And now, after our return from places much farther west, we still consider the visit to the Mormons on the whole the most satisfactory part of our voyage inasmuch as, besides making us acquainted with one of the richest and loveliest sections of the country, it has enabled us to form our own opinion of a people, of whom our knowledge was based on more or less incorrect and often altogether false reports.

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The *Salt Lake Daily Herald* added: "The visitors expressed themselves highly pleased with the progress which had been made in the development of this valley." "Distinguished Party," October 1, 1872.

36. The Emma Silver Mines are in the Little Cottonwood mining district at Alta, nineteen miles southeast of Salt Lake City. These mines were the first in the area. The major tunnel collapsed on June 3, 1872; due to this accident and mismanagement, the mine became largely idle thereafter. W. Turrentine Jackson, "The Infamous Emma Mine: A British Interest in the Little Cottonwood District, Utah Territory," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 23 (October 1955): 339–62.

37. That is, facades for the purpose of diplomatic conversation.

In order not to be misunderstood I may as well here mention what I told one of the "apostles," that I had been twice to the tabernacle, & had heard two of their prominent men deliver elaborate discourses on doctrinal points; but that they had failed to convince me of the truth of their religion and that I surely could never become a Mormon. I feel so still; but candor compels me to say that, apart from the abomination of Polygamy, there is nothing in the doctrines of Mormonism deserving condemnation, tho' there is no doubt a good deal in them that unbelievers will treat with derision. And Polygamy is not one of the original tenets of the church, but was palmed upon it in later years to the disgust and horror of its right-thinking members, as conclusively shewn by Mrs. Stenhouse in her recently published highly interesting book.<sup>38</sup>

Judging of the people by what we saw of them, considering the circumstances under which about a quarter of a century ago they were driven from Illinois, the hardships they had to endure before they reached the "land of promise" which however was then not a "land flowing with milk and honey," but a barren valley without a tree in it, without water courses, enclosed by a range of towering [?], snow-capped mountains; bearing in mind that they brought with them only a few carts and mules and not by any means a full supply of human food, nor clothing to resist the rigor of the rapidly approaching winter; imagining their position when, in obedience to a revelation from on High (as they humbly believed) they pitched their tents in the wilderness—and then beholding what in a score of years they have made in this wilderness: one of the best cultivated & most prosperous section of the Union, with a capital rivaling in attractions the loveliest inland cities and with numerous settlements all giving proof of earnest thrift;—regarding and considering all this, the conclusion to me is irresistible that, nothing but entire and abiding faith in the truth of their

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38. Fanny Warn Stenhouse was the first wife of T. B. H. Stenhouse. Together, the couple helped open the Italian Mission of the Church. Afterwards in Utah, T. B. H. Stenhouse worked as a reporter for the *Deseret News* and married a second wife, Belinda Pratt. When Zina Young, Brigham Young's daughter, did not reciprocate Stenhouse's romantic interest, the reporter's activity in the Church began to wane. He affiliated with the Godbeites, divorced Belinda Pratt, and apostatized with Fanny, with whom he penned several anti-Mormon works. Ronald W. Walker, "The Stenhouses and the Making of a Mormon Image," *Journal of Mormon History* 1 (1974): 51–72. The book to which Bierwirth refers is Mrs. T. B. H. Stenhouse, *A Lady's Life among the Mormons: A Record of Personal Experience as One of the Wives of a Mormon Elder, during a Period of More Than Twenty Years*, 2d ed. (New York: Russell Brothers, 1872).

religion could have given the people the strength and patience and power of endurance that have been required to accomplish, what they now are able to exhibit to the visitor from afar.

In thus endeavoring to do justice to the people who still have to suffer from violent and in some respects ~~certainly~~ unjust prejudices, I must say once more that nothing can, nor should, mitigate the abhorrence of Polygamy. But I may say, the death knell of that detestable institution is heard throughout the territory and loudest in Salt Lake City. The voices of common sense, of decency, of Christian morality, have begun to find attentive listeners, and when they speak in manner and words like Mrs. Stenhouse in her good book, they cannot fail to have a salutary effect. The people still have pluck enough to resist brute attacks, but they will not and do not obstinately shut their ears to the honest admonition of reason, nor will they remain insensible to the gentle tones of Christian sympathy. Already there are churches of various Christian denominations in Salt Lake City: Episcopal, Presbyterian, Baptist & Methodist, with steadily increasing congregations exercising a salutary influence;<sup>39</sup> and since the opening of the mines, the successful development of which is powerfully assisted by the opening of RRoads, there is a rapid increase of the Gentile population, whose votes will no doubt ere long determine the elections. The heads of the Mormon Church will be deprived of the direction of affairs, and the loss of political power will be fatal to their influence upon both society & religion. Mormonism, as originally taught, may live in Utah—and I do not see why it should not as well as the other countless dilutions of our Lord's teachings; but Polygamy is dead and will soon ~~be buried~~ be buried.

Now for California!

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39. The Episcopalians entered Utah in 1867 and had within three years built the Cathedral Church of St. Mark. The First Methodist Church was organized in Salt Lake City in 1870. Presbyterian and Baptist congregations were organized in Salt Lake City the following year. See *World's Fair Ecclesiastical History of Utah* (Salt Lake City: George Q. Cannon and Sons, 1893), 191–203, 222–23, 258, 276–77; and Robert Joseph Dwyer, *The Gentile Comes to Utah: A Study in Religious and Social Conflict (1862–1890)* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press of America, 1971), 38–41, 162–63.

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# Of Men and Mantles

## Kierkegaard on the Difference between a Genius and an Apostle

John S. Tanner

I was once asked to introduce Elder Neal A. Maxwell to a group of BYU English majors. This assignment caused me some concern. I feared that my audience might be inclined to revere Elder Maxwell for the wrong reasons, or at least for secondary reasons—namely, for his considerable gifts as a writer rather than for his apostolic authority. So rather than rehearse Elder Maxwell’s résumé, I decided to frame my introduction with insights borrowed from a remarkable essay by Søren Kierkegaard entitled “The Difference between a Genius and an Apostle.” In it, Kierkegaard emphasizes that human genius does not confer genuine religious authority. Thus, to honor an Apostle like Paul as a profound thinker or notable stylist is to miss the point. Paul’s brilliance is no more relevant to his real claim on us than is his skill as a tentmaker.<sup>1</sup>

I reminded my audience of fellow English majors that likewise, although we may properly admire Elder Maxwell for his metaphors, we ought to heed his message for his mantle. Moreover, we need to remember that the intent of his turning a phrase is to turn our hearts to God, that his rhetoric is meant not to impress but to bless, not to be marveled at but to move us. Years later, I made the same point in an exchange of letters with a Church leader:

[D]isciples don’t hearken to Christ because his teachings are more eloquent or beautiful or profound than those of Buddha or Lao-Tzu, but because he is the Son of God. The same applies to apostles and to all those called of God. They make a claim on us not because they are the most clever people but because they speak as ones having authority.

We who love Elder Maxwell treasure his talents, rejoice that God has called one with gifts that fire the mind, please the ear, and fill the heart. But fundamentally his words command our attention because he is, in very fact, an apostle.<sup>2</sup>

And once again, I shared a copy of Kierkegaard’s insightful essay “The Difference between a Genius and an Apostle.”

## Shared Views of Kierkegaard, Religious Philosopher, and Erastus Snow, Apostle

Søren Kierkegaard's analysis of what qualifies a man as an apostle deserves to be better known among Latter-day Saints than it is. So does his work generally, for much of it agrees with and illuminates the restored gospel. Often considered the father of modern existentialism, Kierkegaard did not regard himself as the founder of a philosophical movement but as a religious writer.<sup>3</sup> He sought to reconceive philosophy (which was then dominated by Hegel) according to Christian rather than Greek premises. He also strove to reintroduce genuine Christianity into the moribund but nominally Christian culture of nineteenth-century Denmark, which Kierkegaard felt possessed a form of godliness but lacked genuine religious passion. In this latter role especially, his message to the Christian world can resemble Joseph Smith's—except Kierkegaard repeatedly insists that he himself is no prophet, that he writes “without authority.”<sup>4</sup>



FIG. 1. Erastus Snow (1818–1888). In 1850, Elder Snow attended an ordination of a priest in the Vor Frue Kirke, where he was surrounded by statues of Christ's Twelve Apostles. Elder Snow, a modern Apostle, reflected that were those Apostles alive, they would likely be rejected by traditional nineteenth-century Christianity. Photograph by Charles R. Savage, 1850. Church Archives.

A contemporary of Joseph Smith, Kierkegaard knew of Mormonism but likely not much about it.<sup>5</sup> Although he lived in Copenhagen when the missionaries first arrived in 1850 and may have seen them about town, there is no evidence that he ever met a Latter-day Saint. Nevertheless, he understood what it meant to be a Christian in much the same way as they. The story of a possible near encounter with Elder Erastus Snow serves to highlight similarities in the way both Kierkegaard and a latter-day Apostle regarded such fundamental matters as apostles, authority, and revelation.

On Friday, July 19, 1850, Erastus Snow (fig. 1), an Apostle newly arrived in Denmark, went to the Vor Frue Kirke to watch Bishop J. P. Mynster ordain a priest. There, surrounded by Bertel Thorvaldsen's famous statues of the Christus and the



Twelve Apostles (fig. 2), Elder Snow reflected on the apostate condition of the State Church of Denmark. His journal entry reads as follows:

19<sup>th</sup> July I attended an ordination of a Priest in “Frue Kirke” (Ladys Church) Which was attended with much pomp and show. This “Frue Kirke” . . . is truly an elegant & costly building. At the head of the main Saloon before the Alter [*sic*] stands Jesus in Statuary in the act of preaching & on either side of the room are the full size statues of the 12 Apostles which were carved in marble in Rome: and while viewing this scene & the curious ceremonies of the day, I had such feelings as I never before had. How long (thought I) if these were liveing [*sic*] figures teaching & acting as they did 1800 years ago; would they be permitted to grace this temple of the “Great Whore” or even suffered to exist among this people. But a short time ago these very Priests who with their long robes are now officiating were the chief instruments in imprisoning [*sic*] P. C. Mönster [a Baptist minister] for teaching the people to repent & be baptised in the name of Jesus, (infant sprinkling being then the only baptism in Denmark).

It would seem . . . that after the “Great Mother of Harlots” had made war with the Saints & overcome them slain Jesus and his apostles—“transgressed their laws & changed their ordinances” that now she had placed their Statues in her Temples to “Grace her Triumph.”<sup>6</sup>



FIG. 2. Four of the life-size statues of the Twelve Apostles sculpted by Bertel Thorvaldsen and housed in the Vor Frue Kirke (Our Lady's Chapel), Copenhagen, Denmark. Courtesy John W. Welch.

Subsequently, in a report of his first year in Denmark, Elder Snow expanded upon these reflections, with even more pointed comments about Bishop Mynster (fig. 3) and the established church:

While the chief Bishop, surrounded by his clergy, in sacerdotal robes, was engaged in the services of the occasion, I asked myself these questions: If these [statues] were living figures, what would be their language to these men and this assembly? were they to give utterance to the doctrines they taught while living, how long would they be permitted to grace this building? I reflected that by the influence of these clergy, and at the instigation of this Bishop, was P. C. Mönster repeatedly imprisoned for preaching to the people that they must follow Jesus down into the water and be baptized. This was the Bishop that thought it the duty of government to protect the people from this “dangerous sect”—the Latter-day Saints. These are the men, who, while they allow the people to have access to the Bible, put a padlock upon it and pocket the key. I exclaimed in my heart at the scene before me, surely the great mother of abominations, with her numerous progeny of the protestant family, after their fathers martyred Jesus and his apostles, transgressed his laws, changed his ordinances, broke his everlasting covenant, and drove the last vestige of his kingdom from the earth, have now placed their statues in her temples to grace her triumph.<sup>7</sup>



FIG. 3. Bishop J. P. Mynster (1775–1854). Mynster officiated in an ordination witnessed by Erastus Snow, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve. Kierkegaard rejected the claim that Mynster was a true witness of God in the mold of the Apostles. Painting by C. A. Jensen (1792–1870). Courtesy of The Royal Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Copenhagen, Denmark.

These reflections regarding the Danish church and its probable reaction to living Apostles are remarkably congruent with the sentiments of Søren Kierkegaard. Although Kierkegaard appears to have remained entirely unknown to the early Mormon missionaries, he may very well have sat in the shadows of Thorvaldsen’s apostles with Erastus Snow that July day.<sup>8</sup> For Kierkegaard lived in an apartment at Norregade no. 43, only a short distance from the Vor Frue Kirke.<sup>9</sup> And he faithfully attended the cathedral to hear Bishop Mynster preach. Indeed, Walter Lowrie says that Kierkegaard never “missed a single sermon of Mynster’s except the last.”<sup>10</sup> This means that Kierkegaard would have regularly

attended ordination services, for Bishop Mynster delivered many sermons on such occasions, as is evident from the fact that Mynster published three volumes of ordination sermons between 1840 and 1851.<sup>11</sup>

Whether or not Kierkegaard shared the *Vor Frue Kirke* with Erastus Snow that day, he certainly shared similar views about apostles and the established church. These similarities became increasingly evident in his writings during the late 1840s and 1850s. In 1849, Kierkegaard (fig. 4) published his remarkable essay “The Difference between a Genius and an Apostle”; this essay resonates strongly with a Latter-day Saint understanding of living prophets and apostles.<sup>12</sup>

In 1850, Kierkegaard published *Training in Christianity*, setting forth the way authentic Christianity differed from its lifeless, modern imitation.<sup>13</sup> In that book Kierkegaard, like Snow, implicitly critiques both Bishop Mynster and the state church by imagining what it would mean to be a disciple if Christ and his Apostles were to come back to life in nineteenth-century Denmark. True disciples in every age, Kierkegaard avers, must follow Christ as though they were his contemporaries. Christianity requires “contemporaneity” with Christ as a despised man who is also God and, by implication, with his disciples as common men who are also Apostles of God.

And in 1855, shortly after Mynster’s death, Kierkegaard launched a frontal attack on the state church, explicitly rejecting the claim that Mynster (and much less his successor, Professor Martensen) was a true witness of God in the mold of the Apostles. On the contrary, he asserted, “The Christianity of the New Testament simply does not exist.”<sup>14</sup>

In many respects Kierkegaard’s critique of Christendom resembles that delivered by the early Mormon missionaries. Like them, he raised a voice of warning against the established church. Like them, he measured modern Christian practice against the conditions for discipleship that obtained in Christ’s day and found conventional Christians wanting. Like them, he became a figure of controversy and scorn, expecting to be persecuted and perhaps executed for his attack.<sup>15</sup> And like them, he attempted to reintroduce authentic Christianity into its flaccid simulacrum, which he derisively called Christendom: “Christendom has done away with Christianity, without being quite aware of it,” he proclaims. “My *one* thesis is that Christianity no longer exists . . . my task is to reintroduce Christianity into Christendom.”<sup>16</sup>

The first Mormons came to Copenhagen with substantially the same mission. Had they known Kierkegaard’s views on such matters as apostles, authority, and revelation, they might have enlisted his work in support of their cause. As it was, Kierkegaard seems to have been entirely unknown by the first missionaries and remains too little appreciated among Latter-day Saints even today.

## The Authority of an Apostle

Kierkegaard's "Difference between a Genius and an Apostle" is his best brief statement about apostles, authority, and revelation. The essay derives from his *Book on Adler*, a work unpublished in Kierkegaard's lifetime and first translated in English under the title *On Authority and Revelation*. According to Kierkegaard's preface, this book "is basically an ethical inquiry into the concept of a revelation, into what it means to be called by a revelation. . . . Or, what amounts to the same thing, the whole book is basically an inquiry into the concept of authority."<sup>17</sup>

Nominally, the book is aimed against Adolph Peter Adler, a Danish priest who in 1842 claimed to have received a revelation from Christ only to hedge this claim when threatened with suspension from his position in the state church. "Revelation was perhaps too strong an expression," he later conceded.<sup>18</sup> In a larger sense, the book is about not only Adler but the modern age.<sup>19</sup> It anticipates *Training in Christianity* as well as Kierkegaard's attack on Professor Martensen's claim that Bishop Mynster was a "genuine witness to the truth."<sup>20</sup> Further, Kierkegaard's reflections on the nature of an apostle may have been influenced by sculptor Thorvaldsen's depiction of the apostles as martyrs, "standing there with the instruments of their martyrdom in their hands, silently fac[ing] the Christus," who paradoxically bids them, "Come unto me . . . and I will give you rest."<sup>21</sup>

The Adler case illustrated to Kierkegaard how fundamentally confused both Adler and his age were about what it would mean to be called by a revelation.<sup>22</sup> Having domesticated revealed religion, his age fashioned a faith void of fear and trembling, forgetting that the God it nominally worshipped could require radical, inexplicable,



FIG. 4. Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855). The established church, Kierkegaard asserted, lacked apostles who were divinely appointed and who displayed three significant characteristics of Christian discipleship. True apostles command our attention, Kierkegaard believed, because of that authority (their mantle), not because of any genius, skills, or talents they may possess. Courtesy The Royal Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Copenhagen, Denmark.

paradoxical discipleship—such as that manifest in the command that Abraham sacrifice Isaac. Religion must not be confused with a system of ethics, Kierkegaard warned, though it encompasses morality; nor conflated with esthetics, though its teachings may be beautiful.<sup>23</sup> Likewise an apostle must not be confused with a brilliant philosopher or eloquent poet such that an apostle “becomes neither more nor less than a genius.”<sup>24</sup> Human genius has nothing to do with one’s divine authority as an apostle. As Kierkegaard wryly observes, Paul’s beautiful metaphors are no more relevant to his apostleship than are his tent-making abilities. The essential fact is that Paul was called by a divine revelation.<sup>25</sup>

### **Critical Differences between a Genius and an Apostle**

Let me briefly summarize Kierkegaard’s essay, highlighting aspects that resonate with Mormonism. A genius belongs to the finite realm of the temporal (the realm of immanence), while an apostle belongs to an infinite and eternal order (the transcendent). Thus a “genius *is born*,” while an “apostle is not born” but “is called and appointed by God and sent by him on a mission,” as the term “apostle” denotes.<sup>26</sup> Likewise, the genius may develop over time, becoming a greater or lesser genius according to how he develops his gifts, while the apostle is either called by God or is not; there is no question of degree. Further, an apostle does not necessarily become more intelligent or accomplished by his call, nor is he necessarily “distinguished by natural gifts.” Indeed, “perhaps he was what we call a simple person, but by a paradoxical fact he was called to proclaim this new thing.”<sup>27</sup> The genius may be ahead of his time, but eventually he will be assimilated by history in such a way that his words no longer seem new or paradoxical, for they are the fruits of immanence, not transcendence. The apostle, by contrast, will never be assimilated; what he has to proclaim will forever remain “just as new and just as paradoxical,” because his doctrine came into the world by revelation.<sup>28</sup>

The distinguishing feature of the genius is that his words are profound, beautiful, eloquent, or brilliant; the distinguishing fact about an apostle is his authority. “I am not to listen to Paul because he is brilliant,” writes Kierkegaard, “but I am to submit to Paul because he has divine authority.” An apostle’s authority makes the hearer “eternally responsible” for how he heeds the message.<sup>29</sup> Kierkegaard illustrates this distinction by contrasting the utterances of a king to those of a poet or philosopher. A royal command exercises a claim upon us that is categorically distinct from its poetic eloquence or philosophical profundity:

When someone who has the authority to say it says to a person, Go! and when someone who does not have the authority says, Go! the utterance (Go!) and

its content are indeed identical; evaluated esthetically, it is, if you like, equally well spoken, but the authority makes the difference.<sup>30</sup>

To ask if a king is a genius, and in that case be willing to obey him, is basically high treason. . . . To honor one's father because he is exceptionally intelligent is impiety.<sup>31</sup>

Likewise, “to ask whether Christ is profound is blasphemy and is an attempt (be it conscious or unconscious) to destroy him in a subtle way.”<sup>32</sup> When Christ proclaims that life is eternal, the issue is not if the doctrine is profound or eloquent but if it is true. Hence, *who* speaks is decisive: Christ or a professor of theology.<sup>33</sup> These same principles apply to the apostle, who “is what he is by having divine authority.”<sup>34</sup>

The end (or *telos*) of the apostle's life is to bear witness (“bear” is used here in its literal sense of “to convey”). Kierkegaard compares the apostle to a postman or envoy to a foreign court, whose job is not to invent the content of the message but to convey it properly: “The doctrine communicated to him is not a task given to him to cogitate about; it is not given to him for his own sake. On the contrary, he is on a mission and has to proclaim the doctrine and to use authority.”<sup>35</sup> The apostle “exists entirely for the sake of others” but is accountable only to God. His life is determined by a *telos* beyond itself: he exists “in order to.” In the apostle's case, he exists in order to proclaim a revealed message, a duty which remains unchanged throughout his life and which requires that he sacrifice his life, either literally or spiritually, for it.<sup>36</sup>

Finally, his life and his word are all that the apostle personally has to validate his authority; he cannot demonstrate it externally or objectively: “If he could demonstrate it *physically*, he would simply be no apostle.”<sup>37</sup> Entrusted with a message from God, the apostle offers believers no “physical certainty” of his calling—not even miracles, which are themselves the objects of faith.<sup>38</sup> The apostle thus has no way to demonstrate his authority that does not require faith in his testimony—a witness for which he must be willing to die:

An apostle has no other evidence than his own statement, and at most his willingness to suffer everything joyfully for the sake of that statement. His speech in this regard will be brief: “I am called by God; do with me now what you will; flog me, persecute me, but my last words will be my first: I am called by God, and I make you eternally responsible for what you do to me.”<sup>39</sup>

Such is Kierkegaard's analysis of the difference between a genius and an apostle. Although couched in philosophical language unfamiliar to Mormons and based on a categorical distinction between human capability and divine calling sometimes blurred in Mormon culture, Kierkegaard's essay nevertheless accords remarkably well with a Latter-day Saint understanding of apostolic authority. Latter-day Saint doctrine also recognizes a

similar fundamental distinction between the mantle and the man.<sup>40</sup> Had Erastus Snow known and understood Kierkegaard's essay, he doubtless would have found much in it to applaud. After all, Snow himself was to counsel the Saints in a way that bespeaks a similar understanding of what it means to be a witness:

If we are called upon to bear the vessels of the Lord, to be witnesses of those things that we have seen and heard, and to go forth to a gainsaying and reviling world, we have got to lay aside personal considerations . . . and go forth trusting in God, and have all confidence in him, taking our lives in our hands, like the disciples of Christ went, as lambs in the midst of wolves, and bear witness of the truth, nothing wavering or flinching.<sup>41</sup>

Moreover, as the first modern Apostle to Scandinavia, Elder Snow knew full well that he was not called for his profundity or eloquence—which were initially far beyond his reach in Danish in any event, forced as he was to speak “more with my eyes and fingers than with my tongue.”<sup>42</sup> He was called for what he knew by revelation, namely, that God had spoken to a new prophet.

### **Joseph Smith as an Apostle in the Kierkegaardian Sense**

Joseph Smith exemplifies Kierkegaard's concept of apostle even more conspicuously than Elder Snow, for Joseph received his calling as prophet in an open vision of God and his ordination as Apostle under the hands of the resurrected Peter, James, and John.<sup>43</sup> Unlike Adler, the Prophet Joseph betrayed no hint of backpedaling about his claim to revelation. From first to last, his testimony was “I am called of God”—a statement for which he was willing to die.

An uneducated farm boy, Joseph Smith claimed divine authority, not by virtue of human profundity or eloquence, but by virtue of divine revelation. The Prophet's doctrine remains essentially new and paradoxical “however long it is proclaimed in the world,”<sup>44</sup> for it is not the product of human genius but of divine revelation. It belongs essentially to the realm of transcendence, not of immanence. Hence, neither Joseph nor his revelations can be assimilated into history simply as American originals. Rather, they are essentially paradoxical—situated in the immanent but ultimately inexplicable by history, sociology, psychology, literary genius, or any other naturalistic explanation.

As an authentic Apostle, Joseph is a man like other men but at the same time one “made paradoxically different from all other human beings” because he is sent by God.<sup>45</sup> As an Apostle, he makes an absolute religious claim upon the world, rather than an esthetic one. The question of the beauty or profundity of his teachings is, from this point of view, completely

beside the point. Rather, the fundamental questions are, “Are they true?” “Are they from God?” As one who has been sent, the Prophet Joseph Smith renders the world eternally responsible for how it receives his testimony. Yet he offers no proof of his divine authority that does not require faith and the immaterial evidence of the Spirit.

Steven M. Emmanuel summarizes Kierkegaard’s understanding of the nature of an apostle as follows:

The true religious exception will not only have been entrusted with a new doctrine to communicate, but he will act in the service of God and devote his life entirely to the mission upon which he has been sent. Such a person will speak with divine authority, calling attention to the revelation as his justification. Furthermore, he will be a witness of unusual conviction, prepared to endure ridicule and personal sacrifice for the sake of the truth.<sup>46</sup>

This assessment reflects unfavorably on Adler, but it compares very well to Joseph Smith. To cite but one example, consider the Prophet’s response to the disbelief and persecution he faced when, as a boy, he recounted his first vision:

However, it was nevertheless a fact that I had beheld a vision. I have thought since, that I felt much like Paul . . . before King Agrippa . . . ; some said he [Paul] was dishonest, others said he was mad; and he was ridiculed and reviled. But all this did not destroy the reality of his vision. . . . So it was with me. I had actually seen a light, and in the midst of that light I saw two Personages, and they did in reality speak to me; and though I was hated and persecuted for saying that I had seen a vision, yet it was true; . . . I knew it, and I knew that God knew it, and I could not deny it, neither dared I do it. (JS–H 1:24–25)

While Kierkegaard may or may not have accepted such a testimony,<sup>47</sup> he surely would have conceded its consistency with the Prophet’s claim to be an apostle. It is unlike the religious discourse of either an Adler or a Mynster. It rings with authority, precisely the sort of religious authority Kierkegaard felt was missing from Denmark in his age. The early Mormon missionaries recognized the same absence of genuine religious authority in Denmark. It is no wonder, then, that among the earliest Mormon tracts translated into Danish is Orson Pratt’s *Divine Authority; or, The Question, Was Joseph Smith Sent of God?*<sup>48</sup>

### Three Dimensions of Authentic Christian Discipleship

Those who responded to the Mormon message that Joseph was indeed a prophet courted scandal and scorn. They became the “ugly ducklings” of Scandinavia.<sup>49</sup> Ironically, however, this standing put them into a more authentic religious position than that of their more respectable neighbors, according to a Kierkegaardian understanding of Christian discipleship.<sup>50</sup> Mormonism forced its early converts into an existential position analogous to that required of disciples in the New Testament with respect to three



dimensions of authentic Christian discipleship. These Kierkegaard discusses under the rubrics “contemporaneity,” “scandal,” and “incognito.”

Those who were contemporary with Christ had to follow Jesus before he became universally admired and before his movement became a triumphant world religion. The same was true of the Danes who first embraced Joseph Smith and Mormonism. They did not need to exercise much imagination to feel a sense of contemporaneity with a despised and rejected living Christ, for they experienced a similar predicament in following his despised and rejected living prophet. Moreover, those who first embraced Mormonism embraced scandal.

Christ’s message that he is God’s only begotten son was a scandal, an offense. The same is true of Joseph’s claim to be the Lord’s chosen prophet. So, too, are his claims to have translated gold plates, to have conversed with God and angels, and to have restored the “only true and living church” (D&C 1:30). So, too, are many of his doctrines on the nature of God, man, and marriage. The scandal of Mormonism to the nineteenth century is captured by Charles Dickens, who with a contemptuous sniff—“visions in the age of railways”—dismissed Joseph Smith’s claim to revelation.<sup>51</sup>

Likewise, Christ came to earth incognito. No nimbus or other physical sign betrayed his divinity. Just the reverse: outwardly he appeared as a “lowly man who at the same time . . . declared that He was God.”<sup>52</sup> Similarly, Joseph Smith and the first modern Apostles arrived incognito, as very ordinary men from the lower classes, men who at the same time declared that they had been sent by God. To follow apostles and living prophets is perforce to look beneath the man to the mantle, much like Jesus’ first followers had to see the God beneath the incognito of a carpenter’s son.

In these three ways, Mormonism reintroduced Christianity into Christendom, not merely doctrinally, but also existentially. The early missionaries to Denmark proclaimed that Mormonism restored primitive Christianity in doctrine, ordinance, and apostolic authority. Kierkegaard implicitly points to another dimension of the Restoration: Mormonism restored for its converts the original dynamics of Christian discipleship, which had been lost, ironically, by the success of Christendom. To follow a living prophet is to be reeducated in scandal, contemporaneity, and incognito.

Or at least it was when the Mormons first arrived on Danish shores. With the passage of time and the success of Mormonism as a world religion, it may *seem* less scandalous now to believe in the Restoration, especially since the Church has dropped such “offensive” practices as polygamy. Fundamentally, however, I think this perception is mistaken. By laying claim to miraculous origins (visions, gold plates, angels), continuing revelation (living prophets), and singular authority (as the only “true and living”

church), Mormonism is inherently offensive to both the secular and sectarian world. It cannot be fully assimilated by the world—even though as a social phenomenon Mormonism can degenerate into mere Mormondom, particularly for Mormons themselves. It is all too easy, for example, for contemporary Latter-day Saints to begin to regard a living prophet mainly as a celebrity—to focus almost exclusively on his talk-show appearances and best seller. Likewise, it is possible to regard today's Apostles, who are now far more outwardly accomplished than were the early Apostles, as geniuses—especially when they are regularly introduced with long citations of their accomplishments, a practice that I fear may offend the Spirit and mislead the audience about the essential character of the Apostles' holy calling.

## Conclusion

Early in this article, I referred to an anecdote about Erastus Snow's experience in the Vor Frue Kirke. Let me conclude by recalling the visit of another Latter-day Saint Apostle to the same cathedral. Here is the story as recounted by Elder Boyd K. Packer:



**FIG. 5.** Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985). In 1976, while viewing Thorvaldsen's statues of Christ's Twelve Apostles, President Kimball noted, "These are the dead Apostles." Then pointing to Elders Boyd K. Packer, Thomas S. Monson, L. Tom Perry, and himself, he testified, "We are living Apostles." Courtesy Visual Resources Library, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

In 1976 an area general conference was held in Copenhagen, Denmark. Following the closing session, President Kimball [fig. 5] expressed a desire to visit the Vor Frue Church, where the Thorvaldsen statues of the Christus and of the Twelve Apostles stand. . . .

The church was closed for renovation, nevertheless arrangements were quickly made for us to be admitted for a few minutes. There were just a few of us.

To the front of the church, behind the altar, stands the familiar statue of the Christus. . . . Along each side stand the statues of the Apostles, Peter at the front on the right side of the church, and the other Apostles in order. It is not a large building, and these beautiful statues make an impressive sight indeed.

Most of the group were near the rear of the chapel, where the custodian, through an interpreter, was giving some explanation. I stood with President Kimball . . . and President Bentine, the stake president, before the statue of Peter [fig. 6]. In his hand, depicted in marble, is a set of heavy keys. President Kimball pointed to them and explained what they symbolized.

Then, in an act I shall never forget, he turned to President Bentine and with unaccustomed sternness pointed his finger at him and said with firm, impressive words, “I want you to tell every Lutheran in Denmark that they do not hold the keys! . . . We hold the real keys and we use them every day.” . . .

We walked to the other end of the chapel where the rest of the group were standing. Pointing to the statues, President Kimball said to the kind custodian who was showing us the building, “These are the dead Apostles. Here we have the living Apostles.” Pointing to me he said, “Elder Packer is an Apostle.” He designated the others and said, “Elder Monson and Elder Perry are Apostles, and I am an Apostle. We are the living Apostles. . . .”

The custodian, who to that time had shown no particular emotion, suddenly was in tears.<sup>53</sup>

Erastus Snow had wondered what Thorvaldsen’s apostles might say if they could come to life. President Kimball’s actions suggest an answer—an answer consistent with Kierkegaard’s concept of apostleship. A living Apostle might challenge the establishment and boldly testify of his authority: “You do not hold the keys! I hold the keys! I am an Apostle.” When he bore witness, he would address his hearers not primarily in the role of a genius but as one having authority. Beyond this, an Apostle might not look quite as impressive as Thorvaldsen’s massive figures. Rather, he might look like President Kimball—a little man with a raspy voice; God’s servant incognito. I only wish that Kierkegaard had been there with the custodian that day to have heard a genuine apostolic witness—unvarnished by the esthetic polish of a Mynster sermon and unmarred by the religious confusion of a bogus Adler “revelation.”



FIG. 6. Bertel Thorvaldsen’s statue of Peter holding the keys to the Christian church. Located in the Vor Frue Kirke, Copenhagen, this statue inspired President Spencer W. Kimball to declare, “We hold the real keys and we use them every day.” Courtesy the Diocese of Copenhagen.

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1. Søren Kierkegaard, "The Difference between a Genius and an Apostle," in *Without Authority*, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 93–94.
2. John S. Tanner, letter to Henry B. Eyring, April 20, 1993, copy in author's possession.
3. See Walter Lowrie, introduction to *The Point of View, Etc.*, by Søren Kierkegaard, trans. Walter Lowrie (London: Oxford University Press, 1939).
4. See, for example, Søren Kierkegaard, *Practice in Christianity*, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 226, 256, 341; Søren Kierkegaard, *For Self Examination/Judge for Yourself!* ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 17, 21, 140–41.
5. I have found only one reference by Kierkegaard to Mormonism. It is a positive comment about a report that Mormons believe God is not omnipresent but moves from one star to another. Søren Kierkegaard, *Søren Kierkegaards Papirer*, ed. P. A. Heiberg and others, 16 vols. (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1968–78), 11A: 591.
6. Erastus Snow, "Papers: 1836–1888," L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah. For a brief account of Mynster's conflict with the Baptists, see Niels Thulstrup, "Mynster," in *Kierkegaard's Teachers*, ed. Niels Thulstrup and Marie Mikulová Thulstrup (Copenhagen: C. A. Reitzels Forlag, 1982), 15–69.
7. Erastus Snow, *One Year in Scandinavia* (Liverpool: F. D. Richards, 1851), 20. Elsewhere Snow indicates that the "chief bishop" (Mynster) wrote a pamphlet in opposition to a bill that would have liberalized laws relating to dissenting religions. According to Snow, the pamphlet contained a "catalogue of transatlantic lies" about the Mormons. See Snow, *One Year*, 13. Snow is probably alluding here to the Veisenhuuset, a law that gave the clergy the exclusive right to distribute the Bible. Snow, *One Year in Scandinavia*, 20; William Mulder, *Homeward to Zion: The Mormon Migration from Scandinavia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1957; reprint, with a foreword by William Mulder, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press in cooperation with Brigham Young University Press, 2000), 40.
8. Eric Andersen, who also speculates that both Kierkegaard and Snow may have been in the Vor Frue Kirke on July 19, 1850, was able to locate only one direct mention of Kierkegaard in early Mormon journals. Eric Andersen, "Kingdoms in Conflict: The Founding of Mormonism in Denmark" (senior thesis, Brigham Young University, 1974), 33–34.
9. E. Skjoldager, "His Residences," in *Kierkegaard as a Person*, ed. Niels Thulstrup and Marie Mikulová Thulstrup (Copenhagen: C. A. Reitzels Forlag, 1983), 72.
10. Walter Lowrie, *A Short Life of Kierkegaard* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1942), 243. See also Thulstrup, "Mynster," 65.
11. Thulstrup, "Mynster," 25; *Taler ved Praeste-Vielse* (n.p., 1840, 1846, 1851).
12. Kierkegaard, "A Genius and an Apostle," 93–108.
13. Walter Lowrie, introduction to *Training in Christianity*, by Søren Kierkegaard, trans. Walter Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1941), xxv.
14. Søren Kierkegaard, *Kierkegaard's Attack upon "Christendom," 1854–1855*, trans. Walter Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1946), 32.
15. Hohlenberg, *Søren Kierkegaard*, 240.
16. Kierkegaard, *Training in Christianity*, 39 n. 1; italics in original.
17. Søren Kierkegaard, *The Book on Adler*, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 3–4.

18. Walter Lowrie, preface to *On Authority and Revelation: The Book on Adler, or a Cycle of Ethico-Religious Essays*, by Søren Kierkegaard, trans. Walter Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955), ix.

19. Kierkegaard, *Book on Adler*, 4–6.

20. Kierkegaard, *Attack on "Christendom,"* 5–55.

21. Roger Poole, *Kierkegaard: The Indirect Communication* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1993), 23. Poole argues at length that Kierkegaard was deeply influenced by the paradoxical relationship between Thorvaldsen's Christus, which beckons believers with the great invitation "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," and the Apostles, who suffered martyrdom as they heeded the call to become witnesses of Christ to all the world (23, 233–61). See also David J. Gouwens, *Kierkegaard as Religious Thinker* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 129–30; and Lowrie, *Short Life of Kierkegaard*, 217–18.

22. For a good discussion of this issue, see Steven M. Emmanuel, *Kierkegaard and the Concept of Revelation* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 113–27.

23. See also Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling: A Dialectical Lyric*, trans. Walter Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1941).

24. Kierkegaard, "A Genius and an Apostle," 93.

25. Kierkegaard, "A Genius and an Apostle," 93–94.

26. Kierkegaard, "A Genius and an Apostle," 95; italics in original.

27. Kierkegaard, "A Genius and an Apostle," 95–96.

28. Kierkegaard, "A Genius and an Apostle," 95–96.

29. Kierkegaard, "A Genius and an Apostle," 96–97.

30. Kierkegaard, "A Genius and an Apostle," 98–99.

31. Kierkegaard, "A Genius and an Apostle," 101.

32. Kierkegaard, "A Genius and an Apostle," 102.

33. Kierkegaard, "A Genius and an Apostle," 103.

34. Kierkegaard, "A Genius and an Apostle," 96.

35. Kierkegaard, "A Genius and an Apostle," 106.

36. Kierkegaard, "A Genius and an Apostle," 106–8.

37. Kierkegaard, "A Genius and an Apostle," 105; italics in original.

38. Kierkegaard, "A Genius and an Apostle," 97–98.

39. Kierkegaard, "A Genius and an Apostle," 105.

40. See Boyd K. Packer, "The Mantle Is Far, Far Greater Than the Intellect," *BYU Studies* 21, no. 3 (1976): 259–78; reprinted in *Let Not Your Heart Be Troubled* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1991), 101–2.

41. Erastus Snow, in *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (Liverpool: F. D. Richards, 1855–86), 8:219, August 26, 1860; see Andrew Karl Larsen, *Erastus Snow: The Life of a Missionary and Pioneer for the Early Mormon Church* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1971), 214.

42. Erastus Snow, in *Journal of Discourses*, 7:129, September 18, 1859; see Larsen, *Erastus Snow*, 214.

43. According to Lowrie, Kierkegaard recognized a distinction between apostle and prophet that echoes the difference between Erastus Snow and Joseph Smith. Lowrie adds that Kierkegaard "alone in his age had an eye open to the possibility of the recurrence of this extraordinary ministry" of prophet. Lowrie, *Short Life of Kierkegaard*, 194.

44. Kierkegaard, "A Genius and an Apostle," 95–96.

45. Kierkegaard, "A Genius and an Apostle," 95.

46. Emmanuel, *Concept of Revelation*, 125. Emmanuel is paraphrasing Julia Watkin, in preface to *Nutidens Religiøse Forvirring*, by Søren Kierkegaard, ed. Julia Watkin (Copenhagen: C. A. Reitzels Forlag, 1984), 18–23.

47. On June 25, 1878, Lawrence Christian Mariger, a Danish convert, presented himself in the St. George Temple and was baptized by proxy for Søren Kierkegaard. St. George Temple Records of Baptisms for the Dead, 210–11, microfilm of typescript, Family History Library, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City. Mariger had emigrated from Denmark as a boy of eleven. His father, a Lutheran chaplain, divorced his mother when she converted to Mormonism. She smuggled her children out of the country under false names and brought them to Zion; she died in Nebraska on the way. Davis Bitton, *Guide to Mormon Diaries and Autobiographies* (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1977), 226. Mariger must have remained proud of his Danish heritage. According to his journal, he was baptized for “all the Kings of Denmark . . . and also for many of [the] leading men of Denmark and Skandinauia [*sic*] who had died without a knowledge of the Gospel.” Lawrence Christian Mariger, Journal, Church Archives, Family and Church History Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, as extracted by Church Archives staff. Among those for whom Mariger was baptized on June 25, 1878, were not only Søren Kierkegaard but Bertel Thorvaldsen, J. P. Mynster, and N. F. S. Grundtvig. St. George Temple Records, 210–11.

Coincidentally, Erastus Snow lived only a few blocks away from the St. George Temple at the time, although he spent June 25, 1878, at a political convention, where he was chosen as a delegate to the Territorial Convention. “Local and Other Matters, Washington County Convention,” *Deseret News Semi-weekly*, July 10, 1878, 361. We can only hope that by now Elder Snow has met this remarkable Dane and fellow disciple in Christ.

48. Orson Pratt, *Divine Authority; or, The Question, Was Joseph Smith Sent of God?* (Liverpool: R. James, 1848); *Guddommeligt fuldmagt, eller det spørgsmaal, var Joseph Smith sendt af Gud?* (Copenhagen: n.p., [1857?]).

49. See Mulder, *Homeward to Zion*, 102–34.

50. See Kierkegaard’s *Training in Christianity* for his discussion of Christian discipleship.

51. Charles Dickens, “In the Name of the Prophet—Smith!” *Household Words* 3 (July 19, 1851): 385. For a book-length study of the scandal of Mormonism in the nineteenth century, see Terryl L. Givens, *The Viper on the Hearth: Mormons, Myths, and the Construction of Heresy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

52. Kierkegaard, *Training in Christianity*, 40.

53. Boyd K. Packer, *The Holy Temple* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1980), 83–84.

# “A Man That You Could Not Help Likeing”

## Joseph Smith and Nauvoo Portrayed in a Letter by Susannah and George W. Taggart

Ronald O. Barney

The Prophet Joseph Smith's call for members of The Church of Jesus Christ Latter-day Saints to gather to Nauvoo, Illinois, had a wide effect once the settlement acquired the trappings of civilization. What had been the obscure riverside village of Commerce soon evidenced expansion and progress: new inhabitants and bustling construction. Among those who gathered to Nauvoo were Washington and Susannah Taggart, who converted to Mormonism in 1841 or 1842 in Peterborough, Hillsborough County, New Hampshire.<sup>1</sup> Taught the gospel by Elder Eli P. Maginn,<sup>2</sup> the Taggarts soon planned their departure for the Mormon capital. Their eldest son, George Washington Taggart (age 25), and a younger son, Oliver (18), also embraced Elder Maginn's teachings of the Restoration. But three sons—Albert (23), Samuel (21), and Henry (16)—revolted at what they saw as the family's credulity. The converted Taggarts moved to Nauvoo in mid-1843, while the other three sons remained behind.

The document reproduced here is Susannah and George's letter to those three young men, describing the experiences the converted Taggarts had in Nauvoo. Included in the letter are comments on the unfortunate deaths of father Washington and son Oliver in September 1843, just months after settling in Nauvoo; an appraisal of the city; and, perhaps most significantly, a contemporary description of Joseph Smith. A discussion of the Taggart family and the brief but remarkable missionary career of Eli P. Maginn, the elder who raised a base of Mormon strength in southern New Hampshire, introduces the Susannah and George Taggart letter.<sup>3</sup>

### Elder Maginn in New Hampshire

Latter-day Saint missionaries initiated their search for “the elect” in New Hampshire in 1832, when Elders Orson Pratt and Lyman E. Johnson, both twenty-one years old, began their ministry in the Granite State. New Hampshire already had a connection to the Saints that made it important in the collective memory of Church members. The Prophet Joseph Smith's

mother, Lucy Mack Smith, hailed from Gilsum in southwestern New Hampshire. Her extended family and her husband's paternal grandfather, Asael Smith, also once lived in the area. The restoration message that spread in this region was embraced by such converts as Amasa Lyman and Hazen Aldrich, who would become important Church leaders. A branch of the Church was raised in New Hampshire by mid-1833. Two more were organized by 1835. However, the migration of Mormon converts to central gathering places during the 1830s drained the New Hampshire branches of vital strength.<sup>4</sup> Then, in 1841, a spark of regeneration in the person of Eli P. Maginn, an Englishman and missionary sent from Nauvoo, touched the south-central village of Peterborough, revitalizing New Hampshire's Mormon presence.

Elder Maginn made a significant impression upon many of the nearly nine hundred villagers when he walked into Peterborough in 1841, heralding the truth of Mormonism.<sup>5</sup> Standing "six feet in height, and of rather a commanding appearance," the young missionary with "an honest, happy smile" was described by one of his hearers as "truly astonishing," quoting "the scriptures from memory, giving chapter and verse, with the greatest ease and correctness."<sup>6</sup> This young missionary with a "magnetic personality attracted people from far and near to his meetings." In time, the Latter-day Saint meetings in Peterborough provoked interest among the local residents and often were "so crowded that the speakers were accustomed to stand at the windows and address the larger overflow crowds waiting outside as much as they did the people who filled the hall to capacity."<sup>7</sup> Maginn served in Peterborough on and off for at least two years while simultaneously spreading the message in other parts of New England.<sup>8</sup>

Elder Maginn's commitment was remarkable. Writing to Joseph Smith on March 22, 1842, Maginn described his proselyting endeavors. In the three years since leaving Nauvoo, he had "travelled through eighteen States and British [Canadian] Provinces." Soliciting donations for the Nauvoo Temple and gathering subscriptions to the *Times and Seasons*, he "preached from one to three times almost every day," though he was unable to satisfy all of the "one to twenty of the calls for preaching." And his message was compelling. His letter stated that several dozen people had joined the Church in New Salem, Massachusetts, and Gilsum, New Hampshire, and another thirty-six had embraced the gospel in Peterborough since the previous fall.<sup>9</sup> Most of these converts resulted from Maginn's tireless efforts. Within six months of Maginn's letter to the Prophet, the number of members in Peterborough tripled to one hundred souls, "all in good standing." More than a dozen came into the Church over the next few months.<sup>10</sup>



## The Taggarts, Divided over Mormonism

Drawing many Peterborough residents into the gospel net, Maginn was countered by local religious rivals who had been jousting for converts for decades.<sup>11</sup> The town's religious community refused to acknowledge the Church's place. One Peterborough resident, George Bryant Gardner, a Mormon convert and blacksmith, was warned that his affiliation with the Saints would cause the loss of customers and his business. But he would not be constrained. "I burst those bands and was baptized by Elder Eli P. Maginn, on Monday, November 20, 1841, in the Cantacook [Contoocook] River," Gardner rejoiced.<sup>12</sup>

Maginn's message divided the villagers and polarized families. One unconverted Taggart son, Samuel, wrote to another, Albert, who was living in nearby Wilton. Samuel expressed his disgust with Elder Maginn's influence among the Peterborough townspeople. He closed his letter in verse:

let mormonism be forgotton  
and never brought to mind  
let mormonism be forgotton  
in the days of old magin.<sup>13</sup>

Several weeks later, an impetuous Henry complained to Albert that their family was "full of Mormonism." George had been baptized in December 1841, and now the Taggart parents appeared on the verge of joining him.<sup>14</sup> Asking that Albert "excuse the writing for it is bad and i am Mad," Henry demurred, "I have got a little some thing to tell you that will make you Swear[, ] i guess[, ] for it did me[.] the old Man [Washington Taggart] is a going into the Drink [waters of baptism] next friday." It galled him that his parents and brothers had, in his eyes, been duped, but he assured his brother that "by God i don't work out to get Money to give to Joe Smith no how."<sup>15</sup> The resistance of their children did not deter Washington and Susannah from baptism. They continued to associate with other Church members in Peterborough and eventually gathered with the body of the Saints in Nauvoo.

## The Taggarts in Nauvoo and in the West

Washington, Susannah, and Oliver moved to Nauvoo a short time prior to George and his wife Harriet Bruce Taggart, who arrived there in June 1843, three months before the Taggarts wrote their letter. Fortunately, communication between the divided family members continued after the move. Despite the initial hostility manifested by Samuel and Henry, Albert seems to have remained cordial if not warm. Although he never converted to the Church, Albert did follow his family to Nauvoo in 1845 and continued to receive letters from George as late as 1860.<sup>16</sup>



FIG. 1. George Washington Taggart, ca. 1885. Photograph of crayon enlargement. Artist and photographer unknown.

The Taggarts were of Nauvoo's rank and file. George served as a seventy, worked on the Nauvoo Temple, and joined the Nauvoo Legion band. Life for the family was not easy during their short stay. Washington and Oliver died from "bilious fever" in September 1843. Susannah married Henry Jolley twenty months later, but she died in Nauvoo on October 31, 1845, just six months afterward.<sup>17</sup> George's wife, Harriet, also died that year, expiring in February "after a lingering illness of 6 Months." She left behind a thirteen-month-old daughter. George's commitment to and understanding of his faith, despite reversal and hardship, is evidenced by his resolve soon after his wife's death: "I think

My lot has been one of Sorrow and tribulation since I come to Nauvoo but I do not feel like complaining for sorrow and perplexity is the com[m]on lot of mankind here in this life."<sup>18</sup> With an infant to care for, George married Fanny Parks within five months of Harriet's passing.<sup>19</sup>

Among the first wave of exiles from Nauvoo in February 1846, George left his wife and daughter in Nauvoo and crossed Iowa with the body of the Saints. He later joined the Mormon Battalion. Serving as a musician in Company B, he and his battalion comrades mustered out in July 1847 in Los Angeles. Returning to Winter Quarters via Salt Lake City, George was reunited with his family that December. They settled in Harris Grove in northern Pottawattamie County, Iowa, along with other Peterborough Saints converted through Maginn's influence. George and Fanny had three children together prior to their 1852 journey to Utah with other Saints who had evacuated the Missouri River Valley. After arriving in Utah, George entered plural marriage with Clarissa Marina Rogers, with whom he had twelve children. Settling in Salt Lake City, he became a carpenter and millwright. Later he moved his family to Morgan County, Utah, where George (fig. 1) died on June 3, 1893, at the age of seventy-eight.<sup>20</sup>

When Eli Maginn's preaching soaked through George Taggart's skin, the dye ran deep. Contrary to his younger brother's hope in 1842, Mormonism was not forgotten. George's last known communication to his brother Albert, written in 1860, reads:

I wil[l] suppose in in [sic] the first place that about two and a half years ago you probably expected if you ever heard any thing concerning Me it would be that My Name was blotted from the Earth, with all the rest of the community to which I belong, but this is not the case neither wil[l] it ever happen, for Mormonism so called or the Kingdom of God is in the ascendant and wil[l] continue to be so.<sup>23</sup>

### The September 1843 Letter

The document reproduced on the following four pages is one of nine letters found in the Albert Taggart Correspondence collection in the Church Archives. The letters were preserved by Bob Close, Albert Taggart's great-great-grandson, who contacted Glen L. Taggart, then president of Utah State University and a descendant of George Washington Taggart. The Church obtained the letters through Glen Taggart in 1983. The document is one sheet of lined paper, folded in half to make four pages for writing. Penned in black ink, the letter measures 12<sup>3</sup>/<sub>16</sub>" x 17<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub>" (33 cm x 44.1 cm). Spelling and capitalization in the letter reproduced below are the same as that found in the holographic letter. Common to other writing in antebellum America, the Taggart letter is mostly bereft of punctuation, particularly Susannah's portion. To make the document more readable, I have added punctuation and some paragraph breaks. Angle brackets < > signify textual insertions. Square brackets [ ] include my own editorial clarifications. Erasures are indicated as ~~strikeouts~~.

## Susannah Taggart and George W. Taggart's Letter of September 6th and 10th, 1843

Nauvoo September 6th 1843<sup>22</sup>

dear Children, I now take my pen in hand to write you a line to inform you of my hea[l]th which is pretty good. But the subject upon which I must write makes the task a painful one for I must tell you, my Children, you are fatherless. your Father was taken with the bowel Complaint before we got here and he never was well of it while he lived, although he kept about till about a week Before he died.<sup>23</sup> I dont think he felt able to do any work and if he Could have got along without, it would have been better for his health, but he could not.

Oliver was taken with the fever and ague about the twenty fifth of July and we thought was geting better but the bowel complaint set in which caused his death.<sup>24</sup> Oliver died the first day of September five oclock in the afternoon and your father about the same time the next day.<sup>25</sup> you may judge what my feelings must be situated as I am in a Land of strangers, though the neighbors are very kind and the people as far as I have any acquaintance are good.

George and Hariet come before Oliver died to help me take care of ~~him~~ your father and him and they are here yet.<sup>26</sup> how long they will Stay I don't know.

your father had bought a house Lot and dug a celler and got it mostly stoned and made calculations for building this fall but sickness and death has frustrated ~~their~~ his designs and whether George will come on and put up a house and live with me, I don't know.<sup>27</sup>

but I would say to you all, I want to see you very much and I hope you will in consiquence of this dispensation of providence be led to consider of the uncertainty of life, the certainty of death, and the uncertainty as to the time when and be prepared for the same. and now my children I must conclud[e] by wishing you health and prosperity and by saying my hearts desire and prayer to god is that you may be saved.

Susan Taggart

Albert Taggart<sup>28</sup> Samuel W Taggart<sup>29</sup> Henry C Taggart<sup>30</sup>

[P.S.] give my respects to all inquiring friends and the old neighbours and tell them I like the place very well and I dont know but but [sic] my health is as good as when I left peterborough. write and let us know how you do.

four, I therefore sit down to employ My pen for a few moments thinking that it will be for your satisfaction. and it is with peculiar feelings that I sit down to the task. it is hardly nesecary for Me to Make any remar<ks> uppon what Mother has written for what she has written is even so. Our Father and Our Brother Oliver is dead. Our Mother is as well as common.<sup>32</sup> My Wife and Myself are as well as usual. it has been rather sickly here through the Month of August, not more so however than would be expected conciddering the number of inhabitants and the great emigration which has been going on this season.<sup>33</sup> Our Father bought an acre lot within the precincts of the city and paid twenty dollars. He also had got a cellar dug and stoned and the most of the lumber for a house the walls of which He was agoing to build of brick.<sup>34</sup> the brick he had not bought. He has left, after paying out all expences, something like ten dollars as near as I can guess. He also made his will by which He gave each of us one dollar and the rest to Mother with the request that I should be His executor. how we shall get along I do not know but I am afraid that We shall not be able to go on and build the house. but I shall do what is in My power to get up a house for Mother this fall.<sup>35</sup> but I expect it will be rather a hard case for it is almost imposible for a man here to get a dollar in money for work, for money is scarce and there is but little confidence to be placed in many of the people and those that have money will not put it in circulation.<sup>36</sup> this perhaps you will wonder at seeing. this is called the land of Saints, but let Me tell you that the people are not all Saints that profess to be.<sup>37</sup>

Sunday Sept 10th. I now sit down to finish this letter not having an oportunity since the 6th. I still find Myself in good health and My Wife and Mother the same. I like the place very much but there is Many inconveniences which we will have to undergo in concequence of not having money. but those that have money can live here just as easy as they please. there is a great deal of building a going on here this Summer and the place is groing fast.<sup>38</sup> the most of the people are industrious and honest but poor. but there is manny as might be suposed that aree not honest, and manny that belong to the Church which are not to be depended upon. this I expected before I came here. therefore I am not disappointed.

Now something concerning Old Jo, so called [fig. 2].<sup>39</sup> He is a young looking Man of His age, which is near 38 years and one of the finest looking men there is in the country and He does not pretend to be a man without failings and follies. He is a Man that you could not help liking as a man, setting a side the religious prejudice which the world has raised against him. He is one of the warmest patriots and friends to his country and laws that you ever heard speak on the subject.<sup>40</sup> neither is He puffed up with His greatness as many suppose but on the contrary is familiar with any decent man and is ready to talk upon anny subject that any one

Now something concerning Old Jo so called He is a young looking man of His age, which is near 38 years and one of the finest looking men there is in the country, and He does not pretend to be a man without failings and follies. He is a man that you could not help liking as a man setting a side the religious prejudice which the world has raised against him. He is one of the warmest patriots and friends to his country and laws that you ever heard speak on the subject, neither is He puffed up with His greatness as many suppose but on the contrary is familiar with any decent man and is ready to talk upon any subject that any one wishes, and I assure you it would make you wonder to hear Him talk and see the information which comes out of His mouth and it is not in big words either but that which any one can understand, no more of the People at this time, since the other I have been looking over the

FIG. 2. Excerpt of letter from Susannah Taggart and George Washington Taggart to Albert Taggart, Samuel Taggart, and Henry Taggart, September 6–10, 1843, Church Archives. In this section, George describes the Prophet Joseph Smith,

referring to him by the name “Old Jo,” the epithet that George’s brothers probably used. Used by permission from Barry Taggart.

wishes, and I assure you it would make you wonder to hear Him talk and see the information which comes out of His mouth and it is not in big words either but that which any one can understand.<sup>41</sup> no more of the Prophet at this time.

since the 6th I have been looking over the situation of things as Father has left them and I find that there is not more than from 3 to 6 dollars in money that Father has left besides Clothes and what has been done on the house. one thing more and I must close.

We are now expecting trouble from Misoury and that before long, in consequence of Gov Ford refusing to send out a Military force for the purpose of taking Joseph Smith again which our Gov has refused to do. for particulars concerning Fords answer to the Gov of Misoury in relation to this matter you will find Fords letter in the Nauvoo Neighbour of wednesday Aug 30th 1843,<sup>42</sup> which I think Livingstone & Pevey takes.<sup>43</sup>

Now concerning public reports and stories <that are abroad in the world> concerning Joseph Smith and the Mormons, so called; as a people <they> [that is, the "public reports and stories"] are as <>false> as the Devil or those that make such stories. I say this as a fact knowing it to be so. therefore if you ever beleived Me to be one of truth is am still the same.

I wish to hear from each one of you and would like to see you but the latter I shall not expect this fall but I am in hopes that I shall see all of you here <some> day. I wish you to write, all of you, and when you do fill up a <w>hole sheet and, if you cant, each of you fill a sheet, take a good big one and all write in it, and it will not cost but 25 cts whereas if you send 3 by mail it will cost 75 cts. and I could raise 5 dollars in the east quicker from My work easier than I can raise 75 cts here. Luther Read & his Wife are sick with the chills and fever.<sup>44</sup> Milton How has been atacked with the fever but I have not heard from him for 3 or 4 days and do not know how he now is.<sup>45</sup> the rest of the peterboro folks I think are all well.<sup>46</sup> This from your Friend & Brother G W Taggart

A[ibert] T[aggart]=S[amuel] W. T[aggart]=H[enry] C[urtis] Taggart [—]<sup>47</sup>

[P.S.] Brother Henry, Father told Me since We came here that cousin James Taggart owed him ~~fo~~ one bushel of rye which he came away and forgot. also the [grain] hoks [hooks] were left at Nichols old house.<sup>48</sup> this account you may look to if you choose and the hooks you may get if you can & if you come out here throw them into a chest for they will be very handy here as such things cost 8 times as much here as it would cost to bring or send them here. give My respects to all enquiring. please tell Father Bruces folks that Harriet and Myself are in good health.<sup>49</sup> good bye Henry. My respects to [—]<sup>50</sup>. G[eorge] W[ashington] T[aggart]

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1. An overview of the Taggart family and their early experiences in the Church is found in Forrest Rick McConkie and Evelyn Nichols McConkie, eds., *George Washington Taggart, Member of the Mormon Battalion: His Life and Times and His Wives Harriet Atkins Bruce, Fanny Parks, Clarissa Marina Rogers, and Their Ancestors, 1711–1901* (Fort Duchesne, Utah: Jennie's Family Histories, 1997).

2. *Maginn* is pronounced *Mah-gin'* or *Mah-gine'* and variously spelled *Magin* or *McGinn*.

3. Susannah and George Washington Taggart to Dear Children [Albert Taggart, Samuel Taggart, and Henry Taggart], September 6 and 10, 1843, in Albert Taggart Correspondence, 1842–1848 and 1860, Church Archives, Family and Church History Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter cited as Church Archives).

4. Andrew Jenson, *Encyclopedic History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1941), 574; A. Gary Anderson, "New Hampshire, with Selected Sites in Maine," in *Sacred Places: New England and Eastern Canada*, vol. 1 of *Sacred Places: A Comprehensive Guide to Early LDS Historical Sites*, ed. LaMar C. Berrett, 6 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1999), 59–65.

5. *Maginn*, said to have been born in England, may have immigrated to North America from England and with other family members joined the Church in or near Scarborough, Ontario, known then as Upper Canada, in 1836–37. Apparently a young man of enormous talent and ability, *Maginn*, at about the age of nineteen, was ordained a priest at a December 1837 conference held in Scarborough. He immediately embarked on what became his missionary ministry. His brief but productive career came to a close on April 27, 1844, in Lowell, Massachusetts, where he died at age twenty-six from consumption (tuberculosis). George Abbott Morison and Etta M. Smith, *History of Peterborough, New Hampshire*, 2 vols. (Rindge, N.H.: Richard R. Smith, 1954), 1:187; Richard E. Bennett, "A Study of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Upper Canada, 1830–1850" (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1975), 56–59; Charles Henry [Hales], Hales Family Biographical Sketches, Church Archives; Charles Hales autobiography, in *Windows: A Mormon Family*, comp. Kenneth Glyn Hales (Tucson: Skyline Printing, 1985), 33–34; *Vital Records of Lowell, Massachusetts, to the End of the Year 1849*, 4 vols. (Salem, Mass.: Essex Institute, 1930), 4:202; *Nauvoo Temple Endowment Register: 10 December 1845 to 8 February 1846* (Salt Lake City: Temple Index Bureau, 1974), 89.

Other information about *Maginn's* missionary activity, preaching, and election-eering on behalf of Joseph Smith can be found in Benjamin C. Elsworth to Brothers Robinson and Smith, October 18, 1840, in *Times and Seasons* 2 (November 15, 1840): 219–20; "Mormonism," *Times and Seasons* 4 (May 1, 1843): 180; "General Conference Minutes," *Times and Seasons* 4 (August 15, 1843): 300–302; Wilford Woodruff, *Wilford Woodruff's Journal, 1833–1898*, ed. Scott G. Kenny, 9 vols. (Midvale, Utah: Signature Books, 1983–85), 2:244 (June 18, 1843), 260–61 (July 7–13, 1843), 286–90 (September 9, 1843), 311 (September 22, 1843); Joseph Smith Jr., *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2d ed., rev., 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1971), 5:206, 433, 440, 497, 6:12, 21, 23, 27; Elden J. Watson, ed., *Manuscript History of Brigham Young, 1801–1844* (Salt Lake City: Smith's Secretarial Service, 1968), 37 (April 23,



1839); Andrew Karl Larson, *Erastus Snow: The Life of a Missionary and Pioneer for the Early Mormon Church* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1971), 70; and Margaret C. Robertson, "The Campaign and the Kingdom: The Activities of the Electioneers in Joseph Smith's Presidential Campaign," *BYU Studies* 39, no. 3 (2000): 147–80.

6. "Mormonism," *Times and Seasons* 4 (May 15, 1843): 206. This article, originally published in the *Boston Bee* and signed "A Seeker after Truth" (likely a Church member in the Boston, Massachusetts, area), identified Maginn as being "24 years of age, though his appearance is that of a man farther advanced in years."

7. Morison and Smith, *History of Peterborough*, 1:187.

8. After Maginn's early success and the establishment of a substantial Church presence in the village, Peterborough became a regular stop for missionaries traveling to and from New England. In Peterborough, Brigham Young and Orson Pratt, returning to Nauvoo after short missions in New England, heard conclusively that Joseph and Hyrum Smith had been murdered. It was in Peterborough on July 16, 1844, that Brigham Young stated, "The first thing which I thought of was, whether Joseph had taken the keys of the kingdom with him from the earth; brother Orson Pratt sat on my left; we were both leaning back on our chairs. Bringing my hand down on my knee, I said the keys of the kingdom are right here with the Church." Watson, *Manuscript History of Brigham Young*, 170. A local tradition arose among Peterborough residents that in their town "Brigham Young first received news that he was the head of the Mormon Church." Morison and Smith, *History of Peterborough*, 1:190.

9. E[li] P. Maginn to President [Joseph] Smith, March 22, 1842, in *Times and Seasons* 3 (May 2, 1842): 778–79.

10. "Agents," *Times and Seasons* 3 (June 15, 1842): 830; "Conference Minutes," *Times and Seasons* 3 (July 1, 1842): 844–45; "Conference Minutes," *Times and Seasons* 4 (December 1, 1842): 31–32; "Mormon Conference," *Times and Seasons* 4 (March 1, 1843): 124–25. Peterborough tradition holds that "a total of two hundred and thirty joined the [Latter-day Saint] church at the meetings held in Peterborough" in the 1840s. Morison and Smith, *History of Peterborough*, 1:191.

11. Morison and Smith, *History of Peterborough*, 1:161–63, 166; Elijah Dunbar, *Diary, 1799–1842*, 152–55, microfilm, Family History Library, Family and Church History Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City.

12. As quoted in McConkie and McConkie, *Taggart*, 2.

13. Samuel W. Taggart to Albert Taggart, May 31, 1842, Albert Taggart Correspondence.

14. George's baptism date is confirmed in George Washington Taggart, Notebook, 1837–1857, Church Archives.

15. Henry Taggart to Albert Taggart, July 20, 1842, Albert Taggart Correspondence.

16. Taggart, Notebook; George Washington Taggart to Albert Taggart, March 5, 1845; Samuel Taggart to Albert Taggart, April 11, 1845; George Washington Taggart to Albert Taggart, September 9, 1860, all in Albert Taggart Correspondence.

17. Lyndon W. Cook, comp., *Nauvoo Deaths and Marriages, 1839–1845* (Orem, Utah: Grandin Book, 1994), 75; McConkie and McConkie, *Taggart*, 23.

18. George Washington Taggart to Albert Taggart, March 5, 1845.

19. George Washington Taggart, Register of Family Births and Deaths [ca. 1877], Church Archives; Taggart, Notebook; McConkie and McConkie, *Taggart*, 8, 10, 15, 18, 21–23.

20. *Mountains Conquered: The Story of Morgan [Utah] with Biographies* (Morgan, Utah: Morgan County News, 1959), 299–300; "Harris Grove," in Ronald G. Watt, comp., *Iowa Branch Index, 1839–1859*, Church Archives; Susan Easton Black, comp., *Journal of George Washington Taggart, 1830–1848*, 50 vols. (Provo: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University Studies, 1989), 42:435–36;

Harriet Goodrich Collett, "George Washington Taggart," in Kate B. Carter, comp., *Treasures of Pioneer History*, 6 vols. (Salt Lake City: Daughters of Utah Pioneers, 1955), 4:470-72.

21. George Washington Taggart to Albert Taggart, September 9, 1860.

22. This portion of the document is written by Susannah Law Taggart (1786-1845), wife of Washington Taggart (1786-1843) and mother of six sons, the oldest five of whom lived to maturity. Susannah was born to Reuben Law (1751-1840) and Alice Piper Law (1759-1821) in Sharon, Hillsborough County, New Hampshire. She married Washington Taggart on January 16, 1816. Together they had six sons, the youngest, Reuben, dying within a year of birth. Susannah evidently became a Latter-day Saint in July 1842 at the same time as her husband. She immigrated to Nauvoo with her husband and her son Oliver, probably in the spring of 1843. Writing from Nauvoo, she addressed her sons Albert (1818-1904), Samuel W. (1820-87), and Henry Curtis Taggart (1826-62), all of whom lived in or near Peterborough, New Hampshire, at the time this letter was written. After Washington's death, she married Henry Jolley on May 4, 1845. She died on October 31, 1845, in Nauvoo. McConkie and McConkie, *Taggart*, 105-13; Dunbar, *Diary*, 91, 142.

23. Washington Taggart, son of James (1742-1815) and Elizabeth McNay (or McNee) Taggart (ca. 1750-1814), was born in Peterborough, Hillsborough County, New Hampshire, the youngest of eight children. His father and grandfathers, all veterans of the Revolutionary War, were among the first settlers of Peterborough. Washington became a Latter-day Saint in late July 1842. He immigrated to Nauvoo the following year, and he died within months of his arrival. McConkie and McConkie, *Taggart*, 105-14, 128.

24. Oliver Hazard Perry Taggart (1824-43), the fourth son of Washington and Susannah Taggart, was born in Sharon, Hillsborough County, New Hampshire. Baptized a Latter-day Saint probably in 1842, he immigrated to Nauvoo with his parents in the late spring of 1843 and died on September 1, 1843, having never married. McConkie and McConkie, *Taggart*, 112-13.

25. On September 6, 1843, the *Nauvoo Neighbor* published notice of the deaths of Oliver and Washington Taggart. Both died, it was reported, of "billious fever." Absent the exacting postmortem medical analysis employed today, the terms *billious fever* and *ague* then described malaria with its symptoms of debilitating chills, fever, sweating, and disorientation that often led to death. While Susannah Taggart plainly states that her son died on September 1, 1843, and that her husband died the following day, some Taggart family records indicate that Washington died on August 2 and Oliver on August 11. Other family sources state that Washington died on September 20. The dates Susannah gives are recorded in George Washington Taggart's Register of Family Births and Deaths and circumstantially confirmed in Cook, *Nauvoo Deaths and Marriages*, 75.

26. Harriet Atkins Bruce (1821-45) married George Washington Taggart (1816-93) on May 7, 1843. She was born in Peterborough to Peter (1790-1850) and Eliza French Bruce (1798-1874), the third of their eleven children. Likely the only member of her parents' family to become a Latter-day Saint, Harriet was baptized in Peterborough on February 20, 1842, by Eli P. Maginn. She and her husband moved to Nauvoo the following year. They had one child, Eliza Ann, born January 28, 1844. Harriet died in Nauvoo on February 19, 1845. McConkie and McConkie, *Taggart*, 4, 165-76; 182-83; Taggart, Register of Family Births and Deaths.

27. Washington Taggart purchased block 29, lot 2, in Nauvoo, seven blocks north of the unfinished Nauvoo Temple. McConkie and McConkie, *Taggart*, 14.

28. Albert Taggart (1818–1904), second son of Susannah and Washington Taggart, was born in Sharon, Hillsborough County, New Hampshire. He married Mary E. Gowling in 1849. They had two children. He did not become a Latter-day Saint. McConkie and McConkie, *Taggart*, 112–13; Albert Smith, *History of the Town of Peterborough, Hillsborough County, New Hampshire* (Boston: George H. Ellis, 1876), 307.

29. Samuel W. Taggart (1820–87), third son of Susannah and Washington Taggart, was born in Sharon, Hillsborough County, New Hampshire. He married Catherine Turner in 1845. They had one child. He did not become a Latter-day Saint. McConkie and McConkie, *Taggart*, 112.

30. Henry Curtis Taggart (1826–62), fifth son of Susannah and Washington Taggart, was born in Sharon, Hillsborough County, New Hampshire. Never joining the Church, he married Fidelia Twitchell in 1845 but was later killed during the Civil War at the second battle of Bull Run. His body was not recovered. McConkie and McConkie, *Taggart*, 112–13.

31. This portion of the document was written by George Washington Taggart (1816–93), who was born in Sharon, Hillsborough County, New Hampshire, the son of Washington and Susannah Law Taggart.

32. Susannah Law Taggart died in Nauvoo on October 31, 1845, at the age of 59. Taggart, Register of Family Births and Deaths.

33. While exact population figures for Nauvoo in the 1840s remain somewhat cloudy, the city grew significantly during this time. Susan Easton Black suggests that about four thousand lived in Nauvoo in 1842. Susan Easton Black, "How Large Was the Population of Nauvoo?" *BYU Studies* 35, no. 2 (1995): 92–93. Richard Jensen states that 1,022 British Saints immigrated to Nauvoo in 1843, swelling the city's population by 25 percent through British immigration alone. Richard L. Jensen, "Transplanted to Zion: The Impact of British Latter-day Saint Immigration upon Nauvoo," *BYU Studies* 31, no. 1 (1991): 78. For other calculations of Nauvoo population, see Dean L. May, "A Demographic Portrait of the Mormons, 1830–1980," in *After 150 Years: The Latter-day Saints in Sesquicentennial Perspective*, eds. Thomas G. Alexander and Jessie L. Embry (Provo, Utah: Charles Redd Center for Western Studies, 1983), 43–44; Richard E. Bennett, *Mormons at the Missouri, 1846–1852: "And Should We Die . . ."* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 15; James E. Smith, "Frontier Nauvoo: Building a Picture from Statistics," *Ensign* 9 (September 1979): 16–19; and George W. Givens, *In Old Nauvoo: Everyday Life in the City of Joseph* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1990), 7–9, 14.

Lyndon Cook's compilation of deaths in early Nauvoo suggests that the year 1843 was, as the Taggart letter indicates, a sickly time for many of Nauvoo's residents. There were about 350 deaths in Nauvoo for 1843, the highest number of deaths of any year the Saints occupied the city. The sickliest period was the three months between August and October, when 57 percent of the year's deaths occurred. Cook, *Nauvoo Deaths and Marriages*, 1–87. It should be noted that Cook's figures vary considerably from those in M. Guy Bishop, Vincent Lacey, and Richard Wixon, "Death at Mormon Nauvoo, 1843–1845," *Western Illinois Regional Studies* 9, no. 2 (fall 1986): 73.

34. Homes constructed of brick were a later phase in Nauvoo. The earlier, and majority of, homes in the city were frame or log homes. See Givens, *In Old Nauvoo*, 20–30.

35. It is not known whether Susannah Taggart's home was ever completed.

36. Due to the lack of currency circulating in Nauvoo, residents primarily used a barter economy. For an overview of Nauvoo's economic struggle, see Robert Bruce

37. Earlier in the year on April 13, 1843, in a sermon before newly arrived British converts and "a great Multitude of others assembled at the Temple," Joseph Smith is reported by Willard Richards to have stated:

Where a crowd is flocking from all parts of the world of different minds; religions; &c, there <will be some> who do not live up to the commandments— <there will be> & designing characters who would turn you aside & lead you astray.—speculators who would get away your property. therefore it is necessary we should have an order here, <&> when emigrants arrive to instruct them concerning these things. Joseph Smith, Diaries, April 13, 1843, Joseph Smith Collection, 1827–1844, Church Archives.

This entry has been published with slightly different punctuation in Joseph Smith Jr., *An American Prophet's Record: The Diaries and Journals of Joseph Smith*, ed. Scott H. Faulring (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989), 361 (April 13, 1843); and Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph* (Orem, Utah: Grandin Book Company, 1991), 191 (April 13, 1843).

38. "The one industry which employed more labor and capital probably than all others in Nauvoo combined was the building industry." Flanders, *Nauvoo*, 156.

39. Taggart's reference to "Old Jo, so called," is probably a response to the language used by his unbelieving and antagonistic brothers. Contemporaneous Latter-day Saints generally referred to the Prophet by his complete name, "Joseph."

40. Joseph Smith had for some time expressed contempt over the manner in which the Saints had been treated in Missouri during the 1830s. The repeated attempts of Missouri officials to extradite him for escape from Liberty Jail and for alleged complicity in the attempted murder of ex-governor Lilburn W. Boggs, as well as state and national governmental indifference to Mormon pleas for justice and redress for Missouri losses, provoked the Prophet to speak out in the summer of 1843 on subjects such as liberty, constitutional law, and citizens' rights. It is apparent that Taggart had heard at least one of these discourses after his arrival in Nauvoo. See also Ehat and Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 216–29 (June 30, 1843); 236–37 (August 6, 1843); 242–43 (August 13, 1843).

41. Other immigrant-converts who came to Nauvoo described Joseph Smith in similar language. In early 1843, Jonah R. Ball wrote of meeting the Prophet: "When we all had a social chat I found Joseph familiar in conversation easy & unassuming. I found no syconphancy [*sic*]. there is those that came in or went out not even taking their hats or caps off their heads. . . . he is what the Mormons represent him to be & the stories about him are false." Jonah Randolph Ball to Dear Brother [Harvey Howard] and Sister, January 15, 1843, Letters 1842–1843, Church Archives. See also William Clayton's December 1840 description of Joseph Smith in James B. Allen, "To the Saints in England: Impressions of a Mormon Immigrant," *BYU Studies* 18, no. 3 (1978): 478–79.

42. This event stems from the arrest by Missouri officials of Joseph Smith in Dixon, Illinois, on June 23, 1843. After Joseph Smith's maneuver to free himself from arrest, Missouri governor Thomas Reynolds requested Illinois governor Thomas Ford to employ state militiamen to arrest and then extradite the Prophet to Missouri. Ford declined Reynolds's request. *History of the Church*, 5:533–36. For a summary of the entire incident, see Donna Hill, *Joseph Smith, the First Mormon* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1977), 324–34.

43. This is undoubtedly a reference to Jonas Livingston and Merrill Peavy. Jonas Livingston (1795–1865) was a Vermont native who, with his wife, Angelina Morse, was baptized into the Church. They did not immigrate to Nauvoo with other

Peterborough members. Later one of the most prominent citizens of the community, Livingston served as president of two local railroads as well as being involved in other significant community matters. Livingston may have been a relative of Susannah Law Taggart. Susan Jolley to Samuel Jolley, October 2, 1845, Albert Taggart Correspondence; Morison and Smith, *History of Peterborough*, 1:128, 196, 308–11, 360, 375, 2:684. Merrill Peavy and his wife, Abiel, were both Church members in Peterborough. Morison and Smith, *History of Peterborough*, 1:190, 196.

44. Luther Reed (1797–1871), a New Hampshire native, was baptized in Peterborough by Eli P. Maginn on November 7, 1841. He and his wife Charity Buell (1801–?) gathered to Nauvoo and were endowed in the Nauvoo Temple before their departure west. Luther Reed lived in Utah, married Clarissa Caulkins and Elizabeth Sophia Bailey, and died in Bloomington, Idaho. Black, *Membership*, 36:311–14; Temple Index Bureau, comp., *Nauvoo Temple Endowment Register*, 221.

45. Samuel Milton Howe (1824–?), a former Peterborough resident, was the son of Asahel (1798–1844) and Fannie Spafford Howe (1802–?). Asahel, Fannie, and three of their children, including Milton, converted to the Church. Asahel died in Nauvoo from bilious fever in August 1844. Milton Howe married Jane Sanford (1830–63) in 1845 and was endowed in the Nauvoo Temple before moving west. Milton and Jane had four children. Milton, "a well-educated man" who "had known no hard work," later abandoned his faith and family and returned to the East. Jane remained faithful, remarried, and died in Provo, Utah. Morison and Smith, *History of Peterborough*, 1:195; *Nauvoo Temple Endowment Register*, 257; Cook, *Nauvoo Deaths and Marriages*, 40; Louisa Howe Brown, *Family History*, 1924, 1, Church Archives.

46. Peterborough locals believed that "one hundred and eight [Latter-day Saint] residents of Peterborough went on to the West," many of whom undoubtedly lived for a time in Nauvoo. Morison and Smith, *History of Peterborough*, 1:191.

47. At this point, the text contains an undecipherable figure.

48. This may have reference to non-Mormon Thomas Nichols, whose sister-in-law was Naamah Carter of Peterborough. Naamah later became a plural wife of Brigham Young. Morison and Smith, *History of Peterborough*, 1:191, 513. "Grain hooks" refer to reaping hooks, or sickles, used at the time to harvest wheat.

49. "Father Bruce" refers to Harriet Atkins Bruce Taggart's father, Peter, then living in Peterborough. Harriet Bruce Taggart's family probably did not join the Church. McConkie and McConkie, *Taggart*, 164–83.

50. This symbol encircled by a seal mark appears to be the initials "TH," standing for "Taggart, Henry."

## Santa Anas

*If my people sow filthiness  
they shall reap the east wind,  
which bringeth immediate destruction.*

—Mosiah 7:31

My father's people  
came from the East.  
The natives were us kids,  
Mom, and my aunt.

Pasadena was first  
The Indiana Colony—  
then everybody came,  
mainly in a hurry

to pull up orange groves,  
plant houses, and smear  
freeways across the face  
of postcard towns.

Most every year big  
winds would blow from  
the Mojave—ripping tiles  
off roofs, toppling

trees and tractor-trailers,  
fanning fires across the  
flanks of the San Gabriels—  
it could make you wonder

what you were doing here,  
if your roots would hold.  
(It was like being followed.)  
Almost everything bad or

good came from the East,  
I guess partly because  
there wasn't much  
West left to be from.

—R. A. Christmas

# Vernal Equinox

Brett Walker

Here I sit, practicing a solo version of “You Are My Sunshine” on my harmonica—the same instrument that my grandfather taught me to play. His was a unique style, a combination of single notes offset by a lower beat that traced the music but didn’t define it. A back beat, somewhat like a bass guitar.

I haven’t picked my harmonica up for over a year. Though I’d love to be able to play it better, it’s one of those things that takes more practice than my patience allows. I suck and blow. The tune comes out all right, but it sounds like the standard mixture of solo notes and chords that any harmonica can produce. Mine is a Hohner Marine Band in the key of C that I bought from a 1-800 number for half what you’d pay anywhere else. I run through “You Are My Sunshine” once again. From another room, my wife exclaims that it sounds like it’s coming together. *Whew*. I’ve played in public only once before, and that time I messed up. This time it’s got to come together.

A few months ago, Mom called. “We’ve decided to go through with it.” She said it as though she were selecting bananas at the grocery store.

“Really. What does Grandma think?”

“She’s actually looking forward to the break. She’ll be coming here to stay for a few days.”

“Are you okay with this?”

“I’m fine. We’ve done everything we can for him. They’ll take good care of him there.”

“Mom, I think you’re making the right choice.”

“I hope so.”

Grandpa was going to a rest home. A short time later, after a brisk morning of water skiing, my brothers and I reflected on the news.

“I remember when he’d tickle us. I got a new sleeping bag for Christmas one year. He said, ‘Get on in and try it out.’ I climbed in. He tickled me so long that I finally wet my pants. Good thing the bottom of the bag was plastic.”

“A month ago we thought he was gone. We were driving up to ski at Grand Targhee. I called Mom along the way, and she said that we’d better stop by, that he’d had a bad spell and the doctors at the hospital said he could die there or at home. Mom said that he was taking a nap at home but that we should probably pay our last respects while he was still coherent. When we got there, he had just woken up. It was like he’d got a second wind. There was no sign of death anywhere. The guy was just like he used

to be. He teased the grandkids, scared my little girl away with his bear sounds, and talked like we had all just stopped by for a bowl of ice cream.”

“His condition’s so weird—like a Walkman whose batteries are running out of juice so the music plays in surges. Stop it for a minute, push ‘play’ again, and the sound is perfect for about two seconds until it goes into super slow-mo.”

“The sad thing is remembering how he used to be—back in his prime. When you look in his eyes, you can still see the man that has always been there. But check out his body—he’s all hunched over; his skin looks like it’s covered with wet paper. He’s not the same person.”

“I wonder if that’s what my kids see—an old scary man? I remember the real Grandpa, the one that would give us ice cream until we got sick.”

“It’s too bad everyone can’t still see him that way. Even my wife barely knew him before he got Parkinson’s. She sees him as a little strange.”

“Grandma and Grandpa came to my house not too long ago. I sat there looking at the two of them on my couch, as old and feeble as can be. I asked if I could take a few pictures of them. They snuggled right up together, and Grandpa had that goofy smile that made you feel so loved. I just started to bawl—thinking of all they’ve done for me and feeling this might be the last time I’d see them together.”

“How’d the pictures turn out?”

“Oh, fine. I told them how much I loved them, and they both looked at me like I was dressed in a clown suit. I could see them going, but they seemed to see nothing but life together forever.”

“Funny—now that he’s so out of it, do you think he’s just a soul trapped inside a body prison? I mean, do you think he’s got thoughts like ‘someone get me out of here’ or ‘just let me die—don’t change my diaper or bathe me or feed me. Take that oxygen away.’”

“Come on. You can’t say things like that. I bet he’s happy. He’s eighty-five. I bet he thought he’d never make it past seventy.”

“If I lived to eighty-five I’d be stoked. It’s like spring is over, and we’re moving toward the longest day of the year. You know, like relishing the first day of summer, when the sun comes up long before you wake up and goes down way after you’ve gone to bed. I can’t imagine a nicer day.”

“Well, his name *is* Vernal. Very springlike, stuff growing everywhere. That’s Grandpa.”

Later I asked Grandpa how he felt about life. He sort of drifted around but came back with this: “I spent my life as a farmer. I learned a lot from the earth.” Grandma had been holding his hand, more patiently than I’d ever seen. “When I was young and didn’t have the expensive equipment I had later, I had to irrigate my crops by hand. I had to take my water turns whenever they came. Sometimes they came in the middle of the night.



Since the fields were a mile or so from the house and since the water needed changing every few hours, I figured out a way to sleep through the night and make only one trip to the house.”

“Really?”

“Well, water travels downhill, you know. I would go to the end of a row and sleep there—on the open ground. When the water came to the end of the row, I would obviously wake up.”

“Did you ever get soaked?”

“You know, I usually didn’t sleep well just thinking about the possibility of a soaking. I still have nightmares about getting soaked.”

A few days after we spoke, I picked up the phone.

“Hi, Mom. I’ve been thinking about Grandpa a lot lately. Is he okay?”

“I think so. Harvey, his old neighbor, visited him on Monday and said Grandpa was okay, that he seemed happy.”

“I just started thinking about how lonely he must be. I’ve heard so many stories of people who abandon their old people in rest homes. I just wish there was something I could do from this distance.”

“Maybe you should visit.”

“Mom, do you think we should pray for him to die?”

“No, not yet. I’m not ready to lose him.”

“What’s ‘ready?’ Maybe he’s ready to go but is just waiting for us to be ready for him to leave. It’s like he’s stuck in summer and can’t make it on to winter—like the longest day of the year gone bad.”

The leaves were beginning to turn to reds and oranges when my sister called. “We took Grandpa his harmonica. He’s so bad that he can’t remember how to play it anymore.”

The next time the kids were out of school for a few days, we took a road trip. We drove along the Wasatch Front, past the cities and towns of northern Utah, and into the windswept regions of southeastern Idaho, where everything was the color of wheat ready for the harvest. We drove into Rexburg hoping for a good experience for the sake of the kids. My sister had encouraged me to take my harmonica, just in case.

When we arrived, he was asleep, hooked up to oxygen. We left to find a nurse, who said we could wake him, but when we went back into the room, his eyes were open.

“Hi, Grandpa.”

“Hi, Brett.” I was surprised he called me by name.

“How are you doing?”

“I’m so warm and comfortable, feel like I’ve just been to heaven.”

The kids sang “I’ve Been Working on the Railroad,” a song they had prepared for him. He started to sing along, softly. He was feeble, but his mind was clear. Maybe this was his way of getting it all together for one last good visit.

“Grandpa, do you want to play the harmonica with me?”

“Sure. I’ve got one in my top drawer. I’m not sure how well I’ll be able to play it.”

“Do you have any favorites? How about ‘Home Sweet Home?’”

He started playing with the harmonica flipped over so the high notes were on the wrong end. After a few blows, he recognized his error. He switched it and began softly playing a familiar tune with an equally familiar style—the back beat was fainter but stylistically prominent in his playing.

It was his turn to request a song: “Do you know ‘The Bear Went over the Mountain?’”

I’d never played this one before but found the tune easy enough. It was one of our better duets. As a kid, I’d played duets with him while Mom snapped pictures. The duets seemed to meander wherever he’d take them, leaving me feeling like I was trying to catch a fly that was buzzing around my head. I’d just about catch up when off he’d go again. But this time it all seemed to work out.

As we played, a few nurses gathered in the doorway, and his roommate began to sing along. My wife and children joined in. We played several songs, from “Oh, Susanna” to “Turkey in the Straw,” which he admitted he’d never played before. Everyone clapped.

“Grandpa, you’d better rest a little.” He looked winded and a little pale. He rested his head back on his pillow and held the harmonica up in the air, looking at it like it was a good friend that had just come home after a long time away.

Then he looked at me. “You know, I used to get one of these every year for Christmas. I knew I’d be getting one, but that didn’t take any of the excitement away. Sometimes it would be a long one, sometimes a short one. Sometimes one with holes on both sides in two different keys. I’d play them so much that they’d wear right out. A reed would go, or something else would happen. I’d tear them apart and fix whatever I could. It’s not so fun to play one with a missing note. I used to take one in the fields with me, just throw it in my pocket and go. It was the best friend I could ever have. If ever I had to wait for the irrigation to be finished, I’d just take it out and play. That’s how they are. If you’re ever frustrated or lonely, you just take one out of your pocket and play, and soon enough it’s time for dinner or bed.”

For Grandpa, he was waxing eloquent.

“It’s not like other kinds of instruments, like a trumpet or a clarinet. There’s really not much of an investment. For ten dollars, you can buy one. The key of C is the best, even though there are lots of keys. Lots of people play. Some of them sound bad, but some can do very interesting things on one of these. Even if you’ve never played, you can really only go up.”

“Grandpa, thanks for teaching me how to play.”

“You’re welcome. Maybe I’ve given you something you can use your whole life long.”

“You have, Grandpa. I’m more like you than any man I know. Just suckin’ and blowin’.”

A few days later, my wife and I were watching TV. An image of a young boy flashed on the screen. He was beginning a race. He turned to the boy next to him and said, “I’m going to win this for my grandpa.” The next image was of the finish line, where a very old man stood, obviously the boy’s grandfather. The gun fired, and the race was off. Other racers crowded the young boy, causing him to stumble and fall. We watched him there, kneeling on the ground and crying about the chance he had missed to prove to the world and especially to his grandfather that he could win. Then he looked up and saw his grandfather signaling him on. “Come on,” I thought. “Get up. Go the rest of the way. There’s somebody there that wants you to at least cross the finish line. Come on!” The boy got up. He ran across the finish line and into his grandfather’s arms. Because he was such a small boy, his grandfather picked him up and swung him around, holding him tight, the two of them crying together for the accomplishment.

I cried—no, sobbed like a baby—for about an hour. My wife held my head, stroked my hair, and didn’t say anything. She understood better than I did what I was feeling.

“Honey, it’s time to go.” My wife’s voice brings me back to the present.

I put the harmonica, my friend, in my pocket and straighten my tie. It is a frosty Idaho morning. We drive to the church. Inside, I hug Grandma. She hands me a harmonica and says that I should use this one. It was his.

He taught me about this instrument, but until my last visit with him, he’d never talked about it, just played it. Long summers alone, watching sheep graze among the sagebrush. Days and nights waiting for the irrigation water to reach the end of the row. Always a friend. Always in his pocket. Always an upbeat song at a lonely time.

Now I know what it meant to him. At the family viewing and prayer, moments before the funeral is to start, I slip the harmonica that Grandma gave me into his shirt pocket. He will still need it for those lonely times while he is waiting for the rest of us to come down the row, a posterity that he planted and watered carefully. I pat his pocket and say, “I love you, Grandpa.”

I reach in my pocket and locate my own harmonica. I’d learned to play by watching him—how to hold it, how to wave fingers to create vibrato, how to bend the reeds to achieve nice effects. In private, I’d struggled to copy the inimitable back beat that he employed. His songs run through my head: “Oh, Susanna,” “Home Sweet Home,” “You Are My Sunshine,” “The Bear Went over the Mountain,” “Turkey in the Straw.”

Since none of his sons ever learned to play, I am the only descendant who can carry a tune in his hands. So when they asked me to play at his funeral, I agreed. We decided that two of my cousins would play the guitar and the rest would sing along—nearly forty in all. I would have picked

“How Great Thou Art,” which as a kid I’d come to believe was a dedication to the person in the casket. They picked “You Are My Sunshine.” As I practiced, I grew to appreciate the song for how it mirrors Grandpa’s life like a clear reflection in a high mountain lake.

I stand to play at the mike while my cousins come forward in the old Idaho chapel. I look at my harmonica. Just like each of his, the silver is worn around the middle where lips have frequently moved. I swallow the urge to cry. “He taught me to play this song only a few weeks ago in the nursing home,” I say as I begin to slowly play “The Bear Went over the Mountain.” People in the congregation seem to be singing along.

After one verse, the grandkids are gathered. We play a short intro. Then,

You are my sunshine  
 My only sunshine  
 You make me happy  
 When skies are gray  
 You’ll never know dear  
 How much I love you  
 Please don’t take my sunshine away.

The chapel rings with children’s voices and guitar and harmonica. It is a great moment. I play single notes, careful not to slur them as I move my mouth along the harmonica. In the second verse, I bend a few notes and improvise slightly. As I enter the home stretch, without my thinking about it the back beat—his unmistakable back beat—creeps in. Single notes with a twist, offset by a lower beat that traces the music but doesn’t define it, the beat that has taken me years to find.

You’ll never know dear  
 How much I love you  
 Please don’t take my sunshine away.

I try to stop the back beat in vain, but it continues through the chorus. My tears embrace it by the conclusion. No one in the audience seems aware that I am sharing Grandpa with them—it is the payoff of my ambition to be like him. I look down at the closed box and realize that this song is truly his, that he is playing, not I. It is his breath that draws and blows, his cupped hands and waving fingers, his pursed lips and curled tongue, his back beat. And the sun stays high in the sky while he continues to play in me.

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# The Environmental Ethics of Mormon Belief

George B. Handley

The time has come to find common ground between environmentalism and Mormon belief. The perceived divide between the two has all but shut down the possibility of dialogue. Some Mormons dismiss the political causes of environmentalists as being the fears of faithless hedonists, just as otherwise responsible environmental scholars and activists sometimes perpetuate myths and inaccuracies about what they perceive to be the anti-ecological stance of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. But Mormon belief has more than enough in common with environmentalism to promote genuine and productive change in our environmental behavior. Not only is Mormon doctrine environmentally friendly, but it also provides powerful moral incentives for ecologically sustainable living. Furthermore, Mormon principles contain striking parallels with recent work by ecotheologians and other religiously minded environmentalists.

## Misleading Perceptions

Some critics have gone so far as to accuse The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints of officially encouraging anti-ecological positions. A survey of Christian denominations in the United States indicated that The Church of Jesus Christ was one of only a few churches that had no formal environmental policies and no institutional entities dedicated to fostering more sustainable environmental practices.<sup>1</sup> Although the Church has clearly taken stances on political issues that pertain directly to moral issues, its policy is typically one of political neutrality. On the issue of the environment, Elder Vaughn J. Featherstone of the Seventy recently explained that the Church teaches principles favoring conservation and sustainability and that environmentalism is not incompatible with Mormon belief. Nonetheless, he insisted that Church leaders “don’t dictate” what specific political actions should be taken in order to fulfill the mandate to be good stewards.<sup>2</sup> Failing to understand this policy of political neutrality, Max Oelschlaeger, a professor of environmental philosophy, mistakenly concluded on the basis of the survey’s findings that the “only denomination that has formally stated its opposition to ecology as part of the church’s mission is the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.”<sup>3</sup>

Because of Church leaders' reticence on the politics of environmentalism on one hand and an explicit anti-environmentalism expressed by several prominent Utah politicians on the other, a recent article by religion scholar Richard Foltz depicts Mormonism as an aggressive, profit-minded corporate culture. Mormons, he claims, are people who "have lost their way" spiritually and who "don't know who they are anymore." Foltz comes to the unfortunate and misleading conclusion that it is not clear whether an environmental ethic "is with or against the current of formal LDS teaching" or if caring for creation is merely one of many potentially heretical "private theologies."<sup>4</sup>

The Judeo-Christian tradition in general has been charged with anti-environmentalism. In 1967 historian Lynn White launched his criticism of this tradition for faulty ethics that, in his view, promote an arrogant assumption of our right to rule over nature with impunity. While much debate has ensued regarding the accuracy or fairness of White's claims, many environmentalists nevertheless agree with White's chief point:

What we do about ecology depends on our ideas of the man-nature relationship. More science and more technology are not going to get us out of the present ecological crisis until we find a new religion, or rethink our old one. . . . Since the roots of our trouble are so largely religious, the remedy must also be essentially religious.<sup>5</sup>

Global-warming expert Bill McKibben explains that understanding the justification for White's sharp criticisms of traditional Christianity "requires only a trip to Utah." In an embarrassing oversight of the religious persecution that placed early Mormons in a drama of desperate desert survival, an oversight accepted by many environmentalists, McKibben censoriously notes that in Utah "the state motto is 'Industry' and the Mormons have made a great project of subduing nature, erecting some towns in places so barren and dry and steep that only missionary zeal to conquer the wild could be the motivation."<sup>6</sup>

For some environmentalists, the inherently anthropocentric, or human-centered, views of the Western tradition are so deeply engrained in our ways of thinking that it seems unlikely any form of Western religion can be used to articulate more ethical principles of living within creation. For this reason, some strains of environmentalism have become dominantly and thoroughly anti-Western in their approach.

If Christians attempt merely to condemn this tendency in environmentalism and choose to ignore the ecological crisis itself, they make the same mistake. It would be more powerful to seize the opportunity to decry the "moral and spiritual vacuum" that is the chief reason for our environmental crisis.<sup>7</sup> As former President Ezra Taft Benson warned the members of The Church of Jesus of Christ:

You are among those who must undertake the task of alerting mankind to problems with regard to his physical environment, but do you not see that if you attempt to do this without giving heed to the spiritual law involved, you undertake an impossible task.<sup>8</sup>

In what follows, I will outline the principles of this spiritual law by examining Mormon belief regarding the spirit and the body, the spiritual matter of nature, the human role within God's creations, and social ethics.

### **The Spirit and the Body**

How we conceive of the relationship between our body and our spirit has a direct correlation to how we perceive mortality itself in the context of eternity. This perception, in turn, largely motivates our sense of ethics in relationship to all physical life. As Wendell Berry puts it, "The question of human limits, of the proper definition and place of human beings within the order of Creation, finally rests upon our attitude toward our biological existence, the life of the body in this world."<sup>9</sup> If the body is viewed, as it is in traditional Christianity, as something alien and inherently hostile to the desires of our spirit, then we come to understand ourselves as beings whose real home is not earth and whose real identity is not at all physical. Concern for the well-being of the body or of the rest of creation is viewed as an expression of faithlessness. Hence the logic that concludes, What need is there for urgent action to save the planet when we all know that the earth is going to die? Why bother trying to preserve earthly life when we know it is God's prophesied plan to have it obliterated?

To the extreme, then, completely privileging the spirit over the body can lead to an almost complete shutdown of our capacity to be accountable moral agents. We become content with a Panglossian view that reassures us that all that happens in this life, regardless of the damage done to the earth, is for the best. Environmental degradation becomes a manifestation or sign of God's will. Strange theology, indeed.

Given the dangers of this kind of patent complicity with a wide range of devastating events, many environmentalists have strongly argued for doing away with such thinking altogether in order to more fully embrace the urgent need to care for the body of the earth. This approach, however, potentially also becomes strange theology since such thinking would exempt the spirit from creation and lead us down a dangerous path of physical hedonism wherein we imagine that we are our own creators and that physical well-being is all that matters. The belief in eternal life provides a crucial context within which to grant accountability to all human earthly action. But we are likely to accept our responsibility only if the relationship between our actions and their spiritual consequences is understood to be an intimate one.<sup>10</sup> Otherwise, we are left with two extremes, as Berry

argues, “between those who despise the body for the sake of its resurrection and those, diseased by bodily extravagance and lack of exercise, who nevertheless desire longevity above all things.”<sup>11</sup> What is called for is a theology that is simultaneously earth and body centered, but that is so within the context of a spiritual understanding of the reality of eternal life, a theology that Mormonism uniquely offers.

Latter-day Saint scriptures adamantly oppose the traditional notion that the body and the spirit—and earth and heaven—are dualities that are permanent and irreconcilable. While they may operate as dualities in mortal experience, higher spiritual states are represented as a harmonious reconciliation of those pairs. God and Jesus Christ, though of supreme spiritual power, are believed to be two separate beings, neither of which is limited by the fact that he inhabits an immortal physical body (D&C 130:22). Christ’s Resurrection points to our ultimate destiny as eternal, embodied beings. The highest heavenly reward will be to live again on the earth, not as reincarnated beings, but as resurrected beings with God and Jesus Christ and with the potential to enjoy all of God’s power. The earth itself will have received its “paradisiacal glory” (A of F 10). As Brigham Young explained, “The earth is very good in and of itself, and has abided a celestial law, consequently we should not despise it, nor desire to leave it, but rather desire and strive to obey the same law that the earth abides.” He later added, “We are for the kingdom of God, and are not going to the moon, nor to any other planet pertaining to this solar system. . . . This earth is the home he has prepared for us.”<sup>12</sup>

But what are the environmental advantages of such beliefs about the body and the earth? They teach important principles about the need for body and spirit to work together and the ethical demand that our spiritual aspirations must translate into actions of meaningful earthly consequences. They emphasize the sacred nature of the body and of the earth and the need to keep them clean and beautiful in both a moral and a physical sense. If our bodies are temples of our spirits, so too is the earth the tabernacle of its spirit. To be without profound gratitude or careful, ethical participation in the proper maintenance of either is to take Christ’s suffering and mighty Atonement for granted and to be unworthy of his gift of renewed life.

The realities of the earth and of bodily experience, though potentially deceiving, are not categorically illusory and should therefore not be shunned unthinkingly for the sake of a higher spiritual morality. Joseph Smith taught, “The elements are eternal, and spirit and element [or physical matter], inseparably connected, receive a fullness of joy; And when separated, man cannot receive a fullness of joy” (D&C 93:33–34). This passage implies that our moral capacities can be more fully realized in mortality



and in relationship to the flesh of our own bodies, the bodies of other human beings, and the bodies of all physical creation. Joseph F. Smith stated that “it has always been a cardinal teaching with the Latter-day Saints that a religion which has not the power to save people temporally and make them prosperous and happy here, cannot be depended upon to save them spiritually, to exalt them in the life to come.”<sup>13</sup> That is, earthly and heavenly life are not radically divorced from one another but are part of a continuum; the building of the kingdom of God begins with our efforts in this life and will continue in the next.

The unique and salutary contributions of Mormon belief to an environmental ethic are particularly evident in our understanding of the conditions imposed on Adam and Eve in Genesis but then reiterated with greater clarification in the Pearl of Great Price. Adam and Eve are “cursed” to labor by the sweat of their brow and to bring forth children in suffering (Moses 4:22–23). The Fall, in the Mormon view, is both a consequence of choice and, more significantly, an opportunity to enable us to choose to “have joy” (2 Ne. 2:25). Our biological struggle to feed and reproduce ourselves, again, is not to be mourned but to be embraced within the guiding principles of the plan of salvation. The conditions of human probation, rather than curses, are blessings because they are the ethical testing ground to restore our relationships—to God, to land, and to our bodies—that characterized the experience in the Garden of Eden. Nor, in Mormon belief, has the Fall resulted in a categorical divorce between our biological nature and our spirituality. Such a divorce has brought Christianity the deserved criticism waged by Karl Marx and others who sensed the danger of a system of belief and values derived in seclusion from the fundamental tasks of feeding, reproducing, and sheltering ourselves.

Of course, given the significant advances of technology over the last century or so that have so clearly helped to free us from the realities of physical labor with the land, mortal hardship, and sexual reproduction, one wonders what additional understandings of our doctrine will be necessary to return us to a more complete and less ambivalent acceptance of the conditions imposed on our first parents. In light of such modern problems, for example, we view such teachings as former President Spencer W. Kimball’s emphasis on family gardening as a profound environmental ethic that helps us to remember our relationship to land and to our own bodies. The Word of Wisdom can similarly be seen as containing an important environmental ethic since it teaches us that our spiritual and physical health are interdependent and that health of spirit and body is contingent on an ethical relationship of moderation to other living forms created by God.<sup>14</sup>

## The Spiritual Matter of Nature

One reason why traditional Christianity perceived an inherent divide between the spirit and all physical creation and therefore lost much of its ethical force for meaningful earthly living, as some scholars contend, was because it rejected categorically the pagan notion that nature was animated by spirit. Once all physical creation was conceived of as dead matter, indifferent to God's will or to human choices and alien to the nature of God, the door was opened for wanton exploitation. If nature has spirit, then presumably it has intelligence and some degree of autonomy apart from human agency and in this sense is a spiritual sibling engendered by God's creative activity.<sup>15</sup> Of course, the ever-increasing authority granted by Western society to modern science has also contributed to this view of nature as a kind of morally neutral laboratory for our own experimentation.<sup>16</sup> Technology and scientific knowledge are often viewed in our society as morally neutral categories, and therefore advances in either area are categorically positive, regardless of their environmental costs.

But if we are to turn to some notion of animism in order to justify our ethical relationship to nature, how exactly can we define this spiritual quality of natural things in a way that is consistent with Christian beliefs? Many environmentalists have become attracted to pagan notions of animism because those notions grant significant independence and a sacred identity to the nonhuman realm and to its varied particular parts. Such reformulations of animism will presumably mean we will be more likely to consider the feelings or consciousness of animals, plants, rivers, and mountains. However, as an environmental ethic, pagan animism paradoxically gives us dangerous license to dismiss our obligations to the natural world since nature's identity and felicity are conceived to be *totally* independent of the effects of human action. And if nature is independent of human beings, in a pagan world it also enjoys a greater degree of independence from the notion of a chief divine power to which all creation is accountable.

Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, general secretary of the Reformed Church in America, stipulates that the traditional Christian notion of creation *ex nihilo* essentially presents the same problem as pagan animism since it, too, creates a dualism that separates nature from God. At the same time, he rejects the pantheism offered by the Catholic theologian Matthew Fox and Vanderbilt Divinity School Professor Sallie McFague, who have presented a notion of nature as the very bodily material of God.<sup>17</sup> Although their notion helps to remind us of the sacred quality of nature, it leaves unclear the basis on which we can develop an ethical relationship to the nonhuman world. Does it make ethical sense to argue that we are stewards of the body of God? If nature is the body of God, then it must be perfect and in no need of human effort. We are left to merely worship and submit

to God-in-nature. And this position dangerously mythologizes nature by taking it entirely out of the context of human history, leaving it subject to the temptation to “[worship] and [serve] the creature more than the Creator” (Rom. 1:25). As Granberg-Michaelson explains, the quest is to identify a “theology that safeguards nature’s difference but within a relationship to deity and to human life,” one that sees nature as subject to historical contingency but not in ways identical to human development.<sup>18</sup>

Those who have most successfully identified such a theology are Methodist theologian John Cobb, Episcopalian theologian Michael Northcott, and Reverend Paul Santmire of the Lutheran Church.<sup>19</sup> In 1972, Cobb, building on Alfred Whitehead’s ideas, proposed that all matter “had a purpose, a capability of being fulfilled or being denied that opportunity.”<sup>20</sup> On the basis of his reading of Aquinas and the letters of Paul, Northcott articulates a “natural law ethics,” in which “nature is recast as material stuff . . . [with] intelligible order and moral value.”<sup>21</sup> What is powerful about this conception of physical matter is that it grants agency and intelligence to the nonhuman realm in a way that is codependent with human beings. It implies that nature is within history. As Santmire astutely claims, our modern environmental crisis

has its deepest roots in what may be called *the challenge of historical existence*, which is the challenge to man to be authentically the historical creature he has evolved to be. . . . [H]istory brings with it anxieties and responsibilities which can weigh so heavily on man that he frequently tries to relinquish his historical destiny for something less, a sheerly natural destiny.<sup>22</sup>

This ambivalence about our own historical accountability has a long history in the New World. Recently, scholars such as William Cronon have begun to rethink our ideas of wilderness in order to suggest that mythologizing nature and stripping it of its human history can contribute to a politics of dispossession of perceived “outsiders.” The erasure of human history also then renders our own accountability for such actions invisible within the landscape.<sup>23</sup> The dangerous appeal of pagan animism, for Santmire, is precisely that it offers an “escape from the rigors of historical existence and . . . a refuge . . . in a time of socio-religious fragmentation.”<sup>24</sup> Some environmentalists, charges Santmire, have been seduced by what he calls the “cult of the simple rustic life,” which “brings with it an implicit—sometimes explicit—social irresponsibility.” This leads to mistaken logic that “the social ills of the city can wait, while we seek to heal the world of nature.”<sup>25</sup>

One of the chief reasons for the profound moral relationship between human beings and other creations is that, as Joseph Smith taught, all things are composed of both physical and spiritual matter (D&C 131:7).<sup>26</sup> The Pearl of Great Price describes a spiritual and physical creation: “I, the Lord

God, made the heaven and the earth, And every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew. For I, the Lord God, created all things . . . spiritually, before they were naturally upon the earth” (Moses 3:4–5). This record of the creation goes on to describe the spiritual matter of plant life: “Out of the ground made I, the Lord God, to grow every tree, naturally, that is pleasant to the sight of man. . . . And it became also a living soul. For it was spiritual in the day that I created it” (Moses 3:9). Again in the case of animals: “Out of the ground I, the Lord God, formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; . . . and they were also living souls” (Moses 3:19). We are also told of the following experience, although whether it is symbolic or literal is not revealed:

He [Enoch] heard a voice from the bowels [of the earth], saying: Wo, wo is me, the mother of men; I am pained, I am weary, because of the wickedness of my children. When shall I rest, and be cleansed from the filthiness which is gone forth out of me? When will my Creator sanctify me, that I may rest, and righteousness for a season abide upon my face? (Moses 7:48; see also D&C 88:18–19, 24–25)

And since all living things have spiritual matter and moral intelligence, they are also subject to the conditions of the Fall and of redemption. This is clearly explained in Doctrine and Covenants 29:24–25:

All old things shall pass away, and all things shall become new, even the heaven and the earth, and all the fulness thereof, both men and beasts, the fowls of the air, and the fishes of the sea; And not one hair, neither mote, shall be lost, for it is the workmanship of mine hand.

Although in Mormonism the spiritual matter of nature is not to be worshipped, as it may be in forms of pagan animism, we nonetheless believe we have a kinship with all other living souls. The link that connects us to the physical world is the light of Christ, our mutual creator, who enlightens and enlivens all creation:

The light of truth . . . is the light of Christ. As also [Christ] is in the sun, and the light of the sun, and the power thereof by which it was made. As also he is in the moon, and is the light of the moon, and the power thereof by which it was made; As also the light of the stars, and the power thereof by which they were made; And the earth also, and the power thereof, even the earth upon which you stand. And the light which shineth, which giveth you light, is through him who enlighteneth your eyes, which is the same light that quickeneth your understandings; Which light proceedeth forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space—The light which is in all things, which giveth life to all things, which is the law by which all things are governed, even the power of God who sitteth upon his throne, who is in the bosom of eternity, who is in the midst of all things. (D&C 88:6–13)

All creation, then, although various in form, is united by Christ. Physical creation is not Christ, *per se*, but, similar to what ecology has taught us

about our biological kinship with nature, neither is the nonhuman physical creation *totally* distinct from us spiritually.

If we have the eyes to see, “all things are created and made to bear record of [Christ], both things which are temporal, and things which are spiritual; things which are in the heavens above, and things which are on the earth, and things which are in the earth, and things which are under the earth, both above and beneath” (Moses 6:63; see also Alma 30:44). Part of this spiritual experience is nature’s gift of pleasure. Doctrine and Covenants 59:18 states, “All things which come of the earth, in the season thereof, are made for the benefit and the use of man, both to please the eye and to gladden the heart.” Although the scriptures teach that God expects us to make use of nature, here he prioritizes aesthetic value over utilitarian or even recreational values. This is because nature’s intrinsic aesthetic values bear witness of Christ’s love, and therefore we have an ethical responsibility to demonstrate due appreciation. As Joseph F. Smith has said:

We have eyes and see not, for that which we cannot appreciate or admire we are largely blind to, no matter how beautiful or inspiring it may be. As children of God, it is our duty to appreciate and worship Him in His creations. If we would associate all that is truly good and beautiful in life with thoughts of Him, we would be able to trace His handiwork throughout all nature.<sup>27</sup>

If nature is a witness and a gift of Christ, purely selfish use of nature or misrecognition of its sacred qualities is a sin of considerable measure.

What is particularly powerful about this conception of the spiritual qualities of physical creation is that, in Mormon theology, when we are moved upon by the light of Christ in nature, we are reminded of who we are and where we came from. Nature is a space where we can find renewed strength to assume our human responsibilities because it is informed by God’s light but is also part of our mortal sphere. In the Latter-day Saint view, we cannot arrogantly presume to recover what we believe is nature’s lost innocence, but neither can we pretend that its apparent purity contrasts our own inherent evil.<sup>28</sup> Simply put, nature teaches us to repent.

Because of the Mormon conception of our premortal life and its suggestion that we witnessed and may have participated in the very creation of the world under Christ’s direction, we have a unique opportunity to always remember our intimate relationship with creation. If we forget that intimacy, we are more likely to assume godlike ownership over it, as if we are always entitled to reenact that first moment in which Adam and Eve were given the world to name as they pleased. As renowned microbiologist René Dubos claims, “Man . . . achieved his humanness by the very act of introducing his will into natural events. He became what he is while giving form to nature.”<sup>29</sup> The only difference in Mormon belief is that, even in the beginning, the Garden of Eden was never free of the constraints of human

history. In a sense, there is no original Adam or Eve, no first-time entrance into an unhistoried earthly place, since even Adam and Eve, though understood doctrinally to be the literal first human beings, are children who have forgotten everything, including their previous names and roles in the creation.

Nature is always edenic, not because it is always virginal and outside of human history, but only because, like the original garden, we approach it in a state of forgetfulness. Nature appears to us as raw unnamed material, but our interaction with it should slowly become a process of remembering and removing the veil to discover the divinity within nature and within ourselves. That is, our contact with the divine will forever be tinged with traces of historical, human, earthly contingency and will at the same time be both a renewal and an account of what we had once forgotten.

### **The Human Role within Creation**

A crucial question for any Christian approach to environmental ethics is the definition of the human role within God's creation. Most environmentalist critics of the Judeo-Christian tradition take issue with the idea posited in Genesis that man was given "dominion over . . . the [whole] earth" and the seemingly boundless right to "subdue" animal and land as we see fit (Gen. 1:28). This anthropocentric view has been revised by many strains of environmentalism in order to avoid showing "respect for man at the price of disrespect for the environment."<sup>30</sup> The more extreme environmental movements have displaced human beings altogether from the center of God's creation and have argued instead for a biocentric universe in which all biological life is of inherently equal value. Such is the position of the Deep Ecologists, for example, who insist that the "rights of the individual should be subordinate to the well-being of the whole. If it comes down to human suffering or the environment suffering, man should suffer."<sup>31</sup>

While it is clear that the anthropocentric view as articulated by these critics needs revision, it is puzzling why some would wish to diminish the central importance of human choices, since they are clearly at the center of the environmental crisis. Environmental problems are human problems and need human solutions. Mormon belief makes an important contribution since it clarifies the ethical dimensions of our divinely assigned role as "lords" with "dominion" over the earth. In Latter-day Saint doctrine, we are clearly at the center of all God's creation, since we alone were created in his image and sent to earth to prove ourselves worthy of growing spiritually in the next life until we become like God. However, a Mormon view agrees with ecotheologians who have emphasized that it is precisely because we are at the center of God's creation and because we are given stewardship

over the earth that we are held morally responsible and accountable to God for our interaction with all living things.

Hugh Nibley explains that the responsibility to have dominion over creation that God assigned to Adam and later to Noah and to Abraham is “nothing less than the priesthood, the power to act for God and in his place.”<sup>32</sup> While this may be true, there is no reason to believe that the environmental ethics of Mormon belief do not apply to women and men alike. Within Mormon belief, such responsibilities of stewardship have never implied that God gives us the right to act as gods ourselves. That is, as men and women we are his agents in earthly matters. This implies a theocentric view that is rather distinct from an anthropocentric one since it means we must always defer to the authority of a higher power and can never use that authority to subjugate what the Lord has put in our charge.

Is there any reason to believe that “principles of righteousness” should not be consistently adhered to when acting in our assigned roles as stewards of the earth as well as of each other (D&C 121:36)? Should not men and women also demonstrate “persuasion, . . . long suffering, . . . gentleness and meekness” when interacting with God’s creations (D&C 121:41)? If we do so, the scripture promises, “Thy dominion shall be an everlasting dominion, and without compulsory means, it shall flow unto thee forever and ever” (D&C 121:46).<sup>33</sup>

Subduing the earth, then, involves a fundamental recognition of our stewardship rather than our domination of nature. Of course, the ethical demands of this role are also its greatest dangers, since God places in our hands enormous responsibility and authority, and historically this has often led to an arrogant assumption of right rather than a more humble acceptance of responsibility. As the scripture explains, “We have learned by sad experience that it is the nature and disposition of almost all men, as soon as they get a little authority, as they suppose, they will immediately begin to exercise unrighteous dominion. Hence many are called, but few are chosen” (D&C 121:39–40). Within this role is contained a warning against its own likely abuses, akin to those criticized by biocentric environmentalists. Although the notion of stewardship is ethically rich, it is, as Northcott argues, “a highly problematic notion in ecological terms. The fundamental problem with this metaphor is the implication that humans are effectively in control of nature.”<sup>34</sup>

In Mormon belief, Satan takes particular advantage of this tendency toward godlike arrogance; he opposes principles of righteousness by seducing us with commodification and ownership of land, with the idea that land is a right of ownership, not a gift of stewardship. As Hugh Nibley explains, ancient literature confirms that the anti-Christ “argued from a position of strength and promised ‘all the kingdoms of the world’ (Luke 4:5–8)

with all their power and glory to those who would worship and follow him.”<sup>35</sup> Beginning with Adam down to Jesus Christ, Satan tempted the righteous to take the treasures of the earth, natural materials converted into valuable commodities, and exchange them for “services of important people in key positions; you end up running everything your way.”<sup>36</sup> Granberg-Michaelson concurs; turning land into an exclusive commodity is a “grab for God’s own power. . . . Rather than preserving all life, humanity believes it can take life into its own hands. . . . And rather than regard the life of creation as God’s gift, humanity now tries to act as though it owns the creation.”<sup>37</sup> This opposition to God’s power is what Latter-day Saint scriptures define as priestcraft, the attempt to commodify truths and material things that rightfully and originally belong to God for the sake of individual gain and political and social dominion over others (2 Ne. 26:29). As the law of consecration also implies, ownership of land and natural matter, without due consecration to the Lord, is inherently contrary to the governance of the kingdom of God.

While the scriptures clearly do not share the misanthropic views of those who advocate extreme measures of population control, Latter-day Saint doctrine declares that the earth and all living things were created with divinely appointed purposes, and our stewardship is precisely to ensure that they fulfill them. Joseph F. Smith taught, “Take not away the life you cannot give, for all things have an equal right to live.”<sup>38</sup> This ethic regarding the reproductive rights of all creation, not those of the human population alone, inheres in the command to multiply and replenish the earth, according to Hugh Nibley.<sup>39</sup> That the Lord also commanded fish, for example, to “be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters” demonstrates the egalitarian interdependence of the human and nonhuman realms (Gen. 1:22). Our obedience to God’s will is the key to protecting creation’s right to thrive within the elements God provides. Even fidelity in marriage is mentioned as a key to ensuring that “the earth might answer the end of its creation” (D&C 49:16). Similar to John Cobb’s view of all physical matter, Latter-day Saint scripture declares that “there is an opposition in all things” and that therefore morality permeates all matter (2 Ne. 2:11). Without oppositions and our human capacity to choose between them, all creation would fail to fulfill its purpose:

And if ye shall say there is no law, ye shall also say there is no sin. If ye shall say there is no sin, ye shall also say there is no righteousness. And if there be no righteousness, there be no happiness. . . . And if these things are not there is no God. And if there is no God we are not, neither the earth; for there could have been no creation of things, neither to act nor to be acted upon; wherefore all things must have vanished away. (2 Ne. 2:13)

Essential to the process of creation is the opposition of all things that makes moral choice possible.



The inherent opposition in things, in turn, implies that human redemption cannot be separated from the redemption of all creation. As Brigham Young explained, “Each person belonging to the human family has a portion of labor to perform in removing the curse from the earth and from every living thing upon it. When this work is performed, then will they possess all things.”<sup>40</sup> The Latter-day Saint version of the traditional Judeo-Christian creation story emphasizes that all nonhuman matter obeyed God’s voice, “even as they were ordered” (Abr. 4:7; see also Hel. 12:8). The Fall means that, even though nature continues to obey God, because of our disobedience nature is antagonistic to human endeavor and will remain so until we learn the lessons of the original harmony with nature that Adam and Noah and presumably others enjoyed.

In marching from Kirtland to Missouri, some early Mormons encountered a rattlesnake, which they prepared to kill, but Joseph Smith stopped them. He taught that “men must become harmless before the brute creation, and when men lose their vicious dispositions and cease to destroy the animal race, the lion and the lamb can dwell together, and the sucking child can play the with the serpent in safety.”<sup>41</sup> George Q. Cannon similarly taught that “the time will come when man and animals which are now wild and ferocious will dwell together without hurting each other. The prophets have foretold this with great plainness. But before this day comes men will have to cease their war upon the animals, the reptiles and the insects.”<sup>42</sup> The implication is that any millennial cleanup of human error will require some level of prior repentance for our own antagonism toward nature. As the scriptures additionally make clear, when we accept our stewardship duties toward all creation, even our own physical bodies will begin to be sanctified and renewed (D&C 84:33).

Both the Bible and latter-day scriptures are replete with examples of land bestowed as a gift and blessed by God because of the righteousness of those who occupied it.<sup>43</sup> That is, human obedience to a covenant of creation participates in the redemption of all living things. Christian environmentalists see this as an important element in environmental ethics. As one scholar, William Dryness, contends, “Morality, [man’s] response to God, and fertility of the earth are interrelated.”<sup>44</sup> Northcott adds that “devastation of the land is not only seen as the judgement of a wrathful God. It is also interpreted as the consequence of the human rebellion against the created order and wisdom of nature.”<sup>45</sup> For this reason, he argues that “the recovery of an ecological ethic in the modern world requires the recovery of a doctrine of creation redeemed, and the worship of a creator who is also redeemer of the creation. It will involve . . . [a] God as creator to all that is created . . . and not simply to the life of certain elected souls.” Such a doctrine of mutual redemption “restore[s] relationality between persons and God, and

between persons and created order.”<sup>46</sup> One rather simple formula for an environmental ethic that results from this covenant is that when land becomes unfruitful and fails to fulfill its divinely appointed purposes, this natural degradation is a sign, not of God’s willed destruction of his creation, but of our need to repent of our rebellion against creation.

This interdependence of nature and human beings has been criticized by some for its arrogant assumption that nature is somehow flawed or incomplete without the transformative power of human endeavor.<sup>47</sup> They argue that consequently we have never fully appreciated nature’s superior ability to sustain itself over time. But such criticisms tend to imply that human beings would be more helpful if they did nothing or that nature would be better off if we had never existed. As an ethic, this misanthropic impulse is potentially dangerous. A conception of nature in need of redemption leaves nature ever subject to our agency, bringing it into the realm of ethics by implying that we are “co-workers with God in the redemption of nature.”<sup>48</sup> And the fact is, as global warming trends seem to suggest, we have already affected creation to such a degree that its very life may depend on future corrective action on our part. We simply cannot afford to do nothing. Self-hatred and remorse alone will only hasten the end.

Understanding the need to work with nature “as fellow citizens of the Kingdom of God,” as Paul Santmire suggests, means that we recognize both the intrinsic value and right of nature to enjoy its purposes and our need to act with nature toward our mutual redemption.<sup>49</sup> Our role as participants in the redemption of nature, however, does not exclude the need for the Atonement, since our efforts at self-reform and at redeeming the earth will inevitably both fall short. Northcott points to Colossians 1:20, which says “Having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.”<sup>50</sup> But faith in the Atonement, of course, never justifies inaction, since actions are also needed, as the Book of Mormon explains: “It is by grace that we are saved, *after all we can do*” (2 Ne. 25:23; italics added).

If it is true that human beings are the only ones of God’s creations capable of disobedience to God’s commands, human moral action is integral to the process of ongoing creation, of natural regeneration and redemption. George Tate explains, “If ongoing creation depends upon obedience and if, of all creation, only we human beings have the freedom not to obey, what happens when we choose not to obey? We thwart, deform, and undo God’s creation.”<sup>51</sup> Creation is ongoing and open-ended because it is subject to the continual ethical dimension of human agency and, as Granberg-Michaelson states, because of “the continual, preserving, and creative activity of God within the creation.”<sup>52</sup> Our choice is not to control creation but either to contribute to and enhance it for the sake of

life in all its varieties or to degrade and defile it. Protecting biodiversity is integral to this process. Brigham Young states, “The very object of our existence here is to handle the temporal elements of this world and subdue the earth, multiplying those organisms of plants and animals God has designed shall dwell upon it.”<sup>53</sup>

The interdependence of ongoing creation and human moral action means, as Hugh Nibley contends, that “moral and physical cleanliness and pollution” are inseparable.<sup>54</sup> Brigham Young taught the early pioneers this interdependence:

You are here commencing anew. The soil, the air, the water are all pure and healthy. Do not suffer them to become polluted with wickedness. Strive to preserve the elements from being contaminated by the filthy, wicked conduct and sayings of those who pervert the intelligence God has bestowed upon the human family.<sup>55</sup>

Joseph F. Smith likewise declared that “men cannot worship the Creator and look with careless indifference upon his creatures. . . . Love of nature is akin to the love of God; the two are inseparable.”<sup>56</sup> Nature is, like our fellow human brothers and sisters, a partner and a testing ground in working out our salvation. Mormon belief, therefore, upholds an anthropocentric view of the world but not without important caveats regarding our ethical responsibilities toward nonhuman creation.

### **Social Organization**

The environmental ethics of Mormonism go beyond our responsibilities toward nature; they also include our most basic duties toward our fellow beings. As much as it is concerned with nature, environmentalism is essentially a field that concerns itself with how we manage the use and distribution of the world’s resources in order to feed and sustain over time all sectors of the human community on a planet of limited resources. It is not enough to take pleasure and show respect for nature; Latter-day Saint scripture requires us to use its resources wisely and justly: “And it pleaseth God that he hath given all these things unto man; for unto this end were they made to be used, with judgment, not to excess, neither by extortion” (D&C 59:20). Inherent in creation is an ethic of social justice and egalitarianism in the human realm.

The Latter-day Saint conception of the kingdom of God has always held that the well-being of the earth is dependent upon an egalitarian ideal that consistently measures our successes by how well we look after the poor. The law of consecration represents the highest spiritual law by which this is accomplished; only a few believing communities in scripture have successfully lived it, including the city of Enoch, the early Christians under Peter’s leadership, and the gathering of Nephites and Lamanites that

greeted Christ in the Americas. The law involves disciplined consecration of all that we have been blessed with for the improvement of those around us. A revelation to the early Saints states:

Thou wilt remember the poor, and consecrate of thy properties for their support that which thou hast to impart unto them, . . . every man shall be made accountable unto me, a steward over his own property, or that which he has received by consecration, as much as is sufficient for himself and family. . . . Therefore the residue shall be kept in my storehouse, to administer to the poor and the needy. (D&C 42:30, 32, 34)

What is significant about this principle for present purposes is that obedience to it has direct environmental implications.<sup>57</sup> Human poverty and environmental degradation are symptomatic consequences of our rebellion against God. Granberg-Michaelson explains that “Old Testament pleas for justice are linked to restoring humanity’s broken relationship to the creation. Injustice has its roots in seizing and controlling part of creation for one’s own selfish desires, and thereby depriving others of creation’s fruits, making them poor, dispossessed, and oppressed.”<sup>58</sup> Indeed, the great challenge of human sustainability appears within reach as long as we are willing to recognize that

the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air, and that which cometh of the earth, is ordained for the use of man for food and for raiment, and that he might have abundance. But it is not given that one man should possess that which is above another, wherefore the world lieth in sin. And wo be unto man that sheddeth blood or that wasteth flesh and hath no need. (D&C 49:19–21)

Unequal distribution of earthly resources or excess consumption directly inhibits our spiritual progress: “For if ye are not equal in earthly things ye cannot be equal in obtaining heavenly things” (D&C 78:6). Brigham Young insisted that “it is not our privilege to waste the Lord’s substance.”<sup>59</sup> Excessive consumption at the expense of others or of our environment is therefore never justified since such behavior violates the tenets of Christ’s governance that requires strict adherence to the care for the needy, careful resource management, and a profound disavowal of materialism.

The proper and equitable distribution of wealth means that the earth will be able to provide for us sustainably, as demonstrated in Latter-day Saint scripture:

I, the Lord, stretched out the heavens, and built the earth, my very handiwork; and all things therein are mine. And it is my purpose to provide for my saints, for all things are mine. But it must needs be done in mine own way; and behold this is the way that I, the Lord, have decreed to provide for my saints, that the poor shall be exalted, in that the rich are made low. For the earth is full, and there is enough and to spare; yea, I prepared all things, and have given unto the children of men to be agents unto themselves.

Therefore, if any man shall take of the abundance which I have made, and impart not his portion, according to the law of my gospel, unto the poor and the needy, he shall, with the wicked, lift up his eyes in hell, being in torment.  
(D&C 104:14–18)

While this scripture is often cited in the Church to counter arguments for greater population control, it clearly demonstrates that the promise of sufficient natural resources holds weight only if we learn to consecrate our blessings for others and live with appropriate moderation.<sup>60</sup> If Satan's plan of attack against the kingdom of God is to teach that power comes from owning the earth, selling it, and building up secular power on the basis of extortion of the earth's treasures, Brigham Young countered by reminding us that "not one particle of all that comprises this vast creation of God is our own. Everything we have has been bestowed upon us for our action, to see what we would do with it—whether we would use it for eternal life and exaltation, or for eternal death and degradation."<sup>61</sup> The Book of Mormon also warns against "withholding your substance, which doth not belong to you but to God" (Mosiah 4:22).

While it is true that the wealthiest countries have been in the best position to begin repairing the environmental damage that often sustains economic growth, it is erroneous to conclude that high concentrations of wealth necessarily mean higher environmental ethics. It is equally true that the standard of living in the United States cannot be duplicated worldwide without significant depletion of natural resources and catastrophic environmental degradation.<sup>62</sup> The question, then, is how the most powerful and wealthy communities can energize themselves to safeguard against unnecessarily rapid depletion of goods and resources, so as to reverse the trend where the world's poor typically suffer environmental consequences disproportionate to their rates of consumption. The law of consecration, as Doctrine and Covenants 104 explains, depends upon our use of agency, our voluntary sacrifice of goods and resources. It does not require despotic centralized control over the distribution of resources; its power is in its spiritual focus on the human heart and the need to overcome its selfish impulses in the interest of the larger human and biological community.

Of course, this strength is also its weakness since the Mormon approach to correcting our environmental practices will perhaps always be delayed by the seemingly eternal quest of overcoming the self and establishing Zion communities. Although this does not lend itself to a terribly effective political strategy, it nevertheless reminds us that direct political action may not be enough; the reason we need religion to change our environmental practices, as White once argued, is because it is a matter of preparing our hearts ultimately to sacrifice all that we have. At the same time, with greater awareness of the environmental consequences of our

economic choices, Mormons may sense a greater urgency to devote themselves religiously to the covenant of consecration. The environmental ethics of Mormon belief demonstrate that earthly action on the behalf of a broadly defined community and individual personal devotion to God's will must simultaneously be cultivated.

## Conclusions

In the early years of settlement in the West and again in the early part of the twentieth century, Latter-day Saint leaders and the Wasatch communities tapped into the environmental potential of their doctrines with moderate success.<sup>63</sup> However, the Latter-day Saint contribution to the environmental crisis has, until very recently, remained relatively silent.<sup>64</sup> Such silence has provided fodder to critics of Mormonism in the polemical debates about environmental issues in the West. The critics' misunderstandings, unfortunately, rarely receive a response since it would seem that even Mormons themselves have not always fully appreciated the relevance of their doctrines to environmentalism. As a result, the valuable environmental implications of Latter-day Saint doctrines have languished. They have been replaced in the popular imagination with myths of a great millennial cleanup of environmental waste that justify inertia and inaction regarding the well-being of Christ's (Jehovah's) creations.

The sometimes polarized and angry rhetoric of environmentalism corresponds to an equally angry and polarized view of godless federal forces that invade local communities without consideration. Our languished environmental doctrines have somehow made it possible for some Mormons—whose scriptures declare trees and animals to be living souls—to forget such restored doctrines and scoff at the idea of “tree huggers” and others who are portrayed as pitiless and faithless worriers about the feelings of nature.

Nor have Mormons as a whole been exempt from the consequences of the vast “unsettling of America” that Wendell Berry describes as a steady process by which the majority of our population over the last century or so has become increasingly removed from the day-to-day land ethics of family farming.<sup>65</sup> Berry argues that this has created a culture in America that allows us the illusion that we can make choices independent of their environmental consequences. Within this culture, which has divorced the human community from creation, most theologies have struggled to reassert their relevance to all living things.<sup>66</sup> How else can we explain the strange split in logic that understands a connection between the body as sacred and the need to keep it morally and physically clean—despite inevitable physical death—but does not often accept the same ethics with regard to animals or land?

But Mormonism has additional circumstances that have added to that struggle. It is a religion that has suffered considerable persecution, leaving a scar that manifests itself at times in a defensiveness against outside forces. Unfortunately, Mormon culture is at the point where even simple environmental ethics, as opposed to politics, are rarely mentioned over the ward house pulpit. Because of Mormonism's obscure beginnings and its miraculous transformation into a worldwide church, it is rare within this culture to conceive of growth as anything but a sign of divinely sanctioned progress.<sup>67</sup> It is also a religion that believes in modern-day revelation, and as such, intense political pressures that want to shape the Church in conformity with recent "greening" trends will likely result in increased reticence. Again unfortunately, it is inevitable that a church that believes so strongly in the privilege and authority of prophetic revelation will never be fully understood by contemporary society. But precisely for these reasons, it is time for Mormons themselves to appropriate their own environmental ethics before they become transformed beyond recognition in the political and cultural fray.

Running through the literature of many environmentally concerned Christians is the assumption that the power to change our environmental behavior lies with the local church. There, it is believed, principles of sustainability can be taught and demonstrated by example, hopefully giving those principles ethical meaning. Ironically, recent sociological studies indicate that, at least in the case of our relationship to animals, "the more frequently an individual attended religious services, the higher the probability that his or her attitudes toward animals would tend toward those of dominion or even outright negativity."<sup>68</sup>

More sociological work needs to be done to understand this disappointing tendency, particularly within the Mormon community, since an environmental ethic is prevalent virtually in every corner of Latter-day Saint revelations and scriptures. Certainly we should remember that, as environmental scholar David Kinsley has warned, "it is tempting to assume that ecological spirituality leads to ecologically enlightened practices." "A wide variety of factors," in addition to religious beliefs, influence our behavior. Such disparities should be enough to caution us against "assuming that religious beliefs, themes, practices relating to ecology have a direct and dominant effect on the actual ecological situation of the cultures and societies in which we find them."<sup>69</sup> Otherwise, we risk viewing prevailing political or cultural views in Utah, for example, as *necessarily* having a sound doctrinal basis and official Church sanction.<sup>70</sup> The danger of equating Utah politics with Church sanction is twofold. It blinds us to the ways in which Mormon belief promotes environmental ethics that may not

show up on the politically correct radar screen. And it therefore blinds us to the need to improve environmental behavior in ways other than from the pulpit.

For this reason, we must be cautious about assuming that the power of the environmental ethics of Latter-day Saint belief would necessarily increase solely with more frequent iteration in Church. While more explicit and direct instructions from Church leadership would no doubt help to distinguish doctrine from myth, the truth is that the sermon has already been preached. Religion's power lies not so much in the sermon as it does in the believers' capacity to bring to fruition, through ethical and moral action, the spoken or written word of God. In other words, religion's power is realized when it becomes a system of self-circumspection and self-regulation that then moves us outward to the world around us. Religion is not fruitful when its power is based merely on what it explicitly says or does not say or when religion is used as a measure of what we believe we have already become. Religion should not be a scaffold to maintain the privilege of being right so much as it should be a ladder that prompts us in doing and becoming good.

Ultimately, if the environmental crisis is as broad and pervasive as it appears, clearly it cannot be tackled in ideological or religious camps. Therefore, greater dialogue between different value systems and a more sincere effort to find the necessary common ground for that dialogue are absolutely necessary. Religion needs environmentalism as much as environmentalism needs religion.

Perhaps the greatest power of Mormonism is also its greatest hope for making a lasting contribution to the environmental crisis. That power, I believe, lies in the restored earthly doctrines that I have outlined and that are subsumed in the law of consecration. With greater attendance to the practical measures needed to bring that law's principles into practice, we will of necessity find significant and beneficial environmental ramifications. Such an emphasis, given recently by Elder Joe Christensen, who warned against the dangers of material excess,<sup>71</sup> provides the hope that we can focus on principles of sustainable living and not on the ugly polemics of politics. Grounds do exist for genuine dialogue between environmentalists and Mormons. As God's children, we bear a heavy moral responsibility to act as stewards of all God's physical creations and to treat them with respect and sustaining love.

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2. Glen Warchol, "Environmentalism, LDS Church Need Not Be at Odds, Panel Says," *Salt Lake Tribune*, April 26, 2000, B2.
3. Max Oelschlaeger, *Caring for Creation: An Ecumenical Approach to the Environmental Crisis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 204.
4. Richard C. Foltz, "Mormon Values and the Utah Environment," *Worldviews: Environment, Culture, Religion* 4 (spring 2000): 11, 4, 14.
5. Lynn White, "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis," in *This Sacred Earth: Religion, Nature, Environment*, ed. Roger S. Gottlieb (New York: Routledge, 1996), 191, 193.
6. Bill McKibben, *The End of Nature* (New York: Random House, 1989), 74–75.
7. Michael S. Northcott, *The Environment and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 312.
8. Ezra Taft Benson, *The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988), 643.
9. Wendell Berry, *The Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1996), 97.
10. On the relationship between the body and the spirit as it informs an environmental ethic, see also H. Paul Santmire, "Historical Dimensions of the American Crisis," in *Western Man and Environmental Ethics: Attitudes toward Nature and Technology*, ed. Ian G. Barbour (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1973), 66–92; and Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, *A Worldly Spirituality: The Call to Redeem Life on Earth* (San Francisco: Harper and Rowe, 1984).
11. Berry, *Unsettling of America*, 106.
12. Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (Liverpool: F. D. Richards, 1855–86), 2:302–3, June 3, 1855; 8:293, 294, June 12, 1860.
13. Joseph F. Smith, "The Truth about Mormonism," *Out West* 23 (September 1905): 242.
14. For example, eating less red meat, as the Word of Wisdom counsels in Doctrine and Covenants 89, would go a long way in reducing many significant environmental problems. Cattle are known to be a major source of methane gas, one of the leading causes of ozone depletion, as well as a major cause of deforestation.
15. On this point, see White, "Historical Roots," 189. See also David Kinsley, "Christianity as Ecologically Harmful and Christianity as Ecologically Responsible," in *This Sacred Earth*, 108; and Northcott, *Environment and Christian Ethics*, 324. Wendell Berry writes, "The great disaster of human history is one that happened to or within religion: that is the conceptual division between the holy and the world, the excerpting of the Creator from the Creation." Wendell Berry, "A Secular Pilgrimage," in *Western Man*, 134.
16. White argues this point in a follow-up essay to his 1970 argument against traditional Christianity. Lynn White, "Continuing the Conversation," in *Western Man*, 55–64.
17. See Matthew Fox, *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ: The Healing of Mother Earth and the Birth of a Global Renaissance* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988); and Sallie McFague, *Super, Natural Christians: How We Should Love Nature* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1997).
18. Granberg-Michaelson, *Worldly Spirituality*, 69.

19. See H. Paul Santmire, *Brother Earth: Nature, God, and Ecology in Time of Crisis* (New York: Thomas Nelson, 1970); John B. Cobb Jr., *Is It Too Late? A Theology of Ecology* (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Benziger Bruce and Glencoe, 1972); and Northcott, *Environment and Christian Ethics*.

20. Roderick Nash, "The Greening of Religion," in *This Sacred Earth*, 210.

21. Northcott, *Environment and Christian Ethics*, 254.

22. Santmire, "Historical Dimensions," 85–86.

23. William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," in *Uncommon Ground: Toward Reinventing Nature*, ed. William Cronon (New York: W. W. Norton, 1995), 69–90. See also George B. Handley, "A Post-colonial Sense of Place and the Work of Derek Walcott," *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment* 7 (summer 2000): 1–23.

24. Santmire, "Historical Dimensions," 87.

25. Santmire, *Brother Earth*, 43, 44.

26. On Joseph's denial that spirit is immaterial, see David L. Paulsen, "The Doctrine of Divine Embodiment: Restoration, Judeo-Christian, and Philosophical Perspectives," *BYU Studies* 35, no. 4 (1995–96): 38.

27. Joseph F. Smith, cited in Aaron Kelson, *The Holy Place: Why Caring for the Earth and Being Kind to Animals Matters* (Spotsylvania, Va.: White Pine, 1999), 24.

28. For a trenchant but sometimes overstated critique of the ethical dangers of Christianity's self-assigned role as the redeemer of nature, see Carolyn Merchant's powerful essay "Reinventing Eden: Western Culture as a Recovery Narrative," in *Uncommon Ground*, 132–59. I argue that it is precisely this element of a buried human history already present in nature that serves to keep a check on the dangers of exploitation.

29. René Dubos, "A Theology of the Earth," in *Western Man*, 47.

30. Gabriel Fackre, "Ecology and Theology," in *Western Man*, 117.

31. David Kinsley, *Ecology and Religion: Ecological Spirituality in Cross-Cultural Perspective* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1995), 188. For an overview of Deep Ecology and its environmental ethics, see George Sessions, ed., *Deep Ecology for the Twenty-First Century: Readings on the Philosophy and Practice of the New Environmentalism* (Boston: Shambhala, 1995).

32. Hugh W. Nibley, "Subduing the Earth," in *Nibley on the Timely and the Timeless: Classic Essays of Hugh W. Nibley* (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1978), 88. Nibley's article was first published as "Man's Dominion," *New Era* 2 (October 1972): 24–31; and reprinted in *New Era* 11 (January–February 1981): 46–53. It was also published as "Man's Dominion, or Subduing the Earth," in *Brother Brigham Challenges the Saints*, ed. Don E. Norton and Shirley S. Ricks (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1994), 3–22.

33. Granberg-Michaelson agrees that humanity is called upon to "uphold God's rule over the creation. The unique function of humanity, as contrasted to other creatures, is that humanity, in God's image, has both this power and possibility. But that is conferred upon humanity for the purpose of acting on God's behalf as a guarantor of the preservation and order of life for the whole creation." Granberg-Michaelson, *Worldly Spirituality*, 62.

34. Northcott, *Environment and Christian Ethics*, 129. That this priesthood covenant connects the human community both to God and to the land is made apparent not only in the Old Testament but also in the scriptural discourses about the various promised lands of the Nephites, the Jaredites, and the Mormons. Some critics, like W. J. T. Mitchell, have raised important criticisms of the long-standing intolerance in

monotheistic cultures for polytheistic and animistic peoples, an intolerance that has often led to the dispossession of idolaters for the sake of purifying and possessing the “promised land” for worshippers of the true God. W. J. T. Mitchell, “Holy Landscape: Israel, Palestine, and the American Wilderness,” *Critical Inquiry* 26 (winter 2000): 193–223. In light of these criticisms, it is worth noting that the Book of Mormon offers an important caveat to this tradition because, even though it prophesies the expulsion of the Lamanites from their lands by the arrival of the Europeans, or Gentiles, its message is one of ethnic inclusiveness. Indeed, in 3 Nephi we even have an example in which the righteous Nephites and Lamanites enter into a covenant of land cooperation with former Gadianton robbers on the basis of the Nephite understanding of their own promised land as a gift (3 Ne. 6:3). The Book of Mormon conceives of land as a gift, but a gift from one’s Father who is also Father to one’s enemies, who may have a competing claim on the land. The Book of Mormon is ultimately a story of competing and overlapping, but equally legitimate, claims on the promised lands of the Jews *and* the Gentiles, the Nephites *and* the Lamanites. That is, land as promised gift does not eradicate competing claims and histories in the land but must ultimately be reconciled to the incongruities of New World history. Land as gift, as long as it is understood in a covenantal relationship, does not have to result in the kind of dispossession that Mitchell reminds us often accompany the belief in promised holy lands.

35. Nibley, “Subduing the Earth,” 87.

36. Nibley, “Subduing the Earth,” 93.

37. Granberg-Michaelson, *Worldly Spirituality*, 66. Also, Northcott insists that the Bible portrays creation as a “gift not as right, as promised land held in trust, not owned or possessed by humans” and that “the commodification of land was one of the first steps in the transformation of relations, both material and cultural, between humans and nature which preceded the modern environmental crisis” (Northcott, *Environment and Christian Ethics*, 181, 190–91).

38. Hugh W. Nibley, “Brigham Young on the Environment,” in *To the Glory of God: Mormon Essays on Great Issues—Environment—Commitment—Love—Peace—Youth—Man*, ed. Truman G. Madsen and Charles D. Tate Jr. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1972), 14, as quoted in Joseph Fielding Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 2 vol. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1939) 1:371–72. Nibley’s article was also published in Norton and Ricks, eds., *Brother Brigham Challenges the Saints*, 23–54.

39. See Nibley, “Subduing the Earth,” 87. In Genesis 1:22, the Lord explains that the command to multiply and replenish, or fill, the earth relates to his creations in the sea as well as on earth. This agrees with the view of Northcott who writes of a “cosmic covenant” God established with Noah and other early biblical prophets that pertains to the welfare of all living things. See also Granberg-Michaelson, *Worldly Spirituality*, 78–79; and Paulos Mar Gregorios, “New Testament Foundations for Understanding the Creation,” in *Tending the Garden: Essays on the Gospel and the Earth*, ed. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1987), 85.

40. Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 10:302, June 4, 1864.

41. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 71.

42. George Q. Cannon, “Editorial Thoughts: Revelation—Wanton Killing,” *Juvenile Instructor* 24 (1889): 549.

43. Several theologians have made similar claims. See Walter Brueggemann, *The Land: Place as Gift, Promise, and Challenge in Biblical Faith* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), 47–48; Santmire, *Brother Earth*, 30; Santmire, “Historical Dimensions of the American Crisis”; Northcott, *Environment and Christian Ethics*, 179–80; and Wendell

Berry, "Getting Along with Nature," in *Home Economics: Fourteen Essays* (San Francisco: North Point, 1987), 6–20. A gifted land, as biblical scholar Walter Brueggemann of the United Church of Christ argues, "is also land in history, land not usurped or simply mastered, but a land with its own history. Therefore this people does not own the land but also belongs to the land. In that way, we are warned about presuming upon it, upon controlling it in scientific and rational ways, so that its own claim, indeed its own voice, is not heard or is disregarded." Brueggeman, *The Land*, 192.

44. William Dyrness, "Stewardship of the Earth in the Old Testament," in *Tending the Garden*, 57.

45. Northcott, *Environment and Christian Ethics*, 171.

46. Northcott, *Environment and Christian Ethics*, 222, 223.

47. Merchant, "Reinventing Eden," 132–59.

48. This statement is attributed to Eric Rust, as quoted in Nash, "Greening of Religion," 214.

49. Santmire, *Brother Earth*, 98.

50. Northcott, *Environment and Christian Ethics*, 203. See also Mar Gregorios, "New Testament Foundations," 88–89.

51. George S. Tate, "Obedience, Creation, and Freedom," *Brigham Young University 1994–95 Devotional and Fireside Speeches* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Publications and Graphics, 1995), 244.

52. Granberg-Michaelson, *Worldly Spirituality*, 58.

53. Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 9:168, January 26, 1862.

54. Nibley, "Brigham Young on the Environment," 4.

55. Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 8:79, June 10, 1860.

56. Kelson, *Holy Place*, 107.

57. Northcott, *Environment and Christian Ethics*, 269.

58. Granberg-Michaelson, *Worldly Spirituality*, 86.

59. Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 11:136, August 1–10, 1865.

60. Aaron Kelson concurs on this point:

Those of us who believe that the ecological problems caused by people are at least as much the result of what we are rather than how many of us there are, and Latter-day Saints are certainly among this number, have a tremendous responsibility. We have a solemn obligation to distance ourselves from those practices and trends that lead to the destruction of the Creation and to the related suffering of our fellow beings. We have an obligation to show the world that people can live peaceably with the Creation. (Kelson, *Holy Place*, 159–60)

61. Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 8:67, June 3, 1860.

62. For a powerful Christian perspective on the relationship between overconsumption and environmental degradation, see Michael Schut, ed., *Simpler Living, Compassionate Life: A Christian Perspective* (Denver: Living the Good News, 1999). Also see the Public Broadcasting System documentary *Affluenza*, produced by John de Graaf and Vivia Boe, KCTS Television, 1997.

63. For an excellent historical overview of early Latter-day Saint environmental practice, the historical forces that drove it underground, and its resurgence in the early twentieth century, see Thomas G. Alexander, "Stewardship and Enterprise: The LDS Church and the Wasatch Oasis Environment, 1847–1930," *Western Historical Quarterly* 25 (autumn 1994): 340–64. For other historical essays on Mormon environmental practice, see Richard H. Jackson, "Righteousness and Environmental Change: The Mormons

and the Environment,” in *Essays on the American West, 1973–1974*, 5 (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press): 21–42; Jeanne Kay and Craig J. Brown, “Mormon Beliefs about Land and Natural Resources, 1847–1877,” *Journal of Historical Geography* 11 (July 1985): 253–67; and Terry B. Ball and Jack D. Brotherson, “Environmental Lessons from Our Pioneer Heritage,” *BYU Studies* 38, no. 3 (1999): 63–82.

64. Others who have recently written about the rich environmental beliefs of the Church include Hugh Nibley (Nibley, “Subduing the Earth,” 85–99; and Nibley, “Brigham Young on the Environment,” 3–29) and Aaron Kelson (Kelson, *Holy Place*). An encouraging collection of essays, Terry Tempest Williams, William B. Smart, and Gibbs M. Smith, eds., *New Genesis: A Mormon Reader on Land and Community* (Layton, Utah: Gibbs-Smith Publisher, 1998), also explores the experience of a variety of Latter-day Saint people, including Church leaders concerned with place; this book is discussed in Constance K. Lundburg, brief notices, *BYU Studies* 39, no. 1 (2000): 220–21. See also Michael G. Alder, “Earth: A Gift of Gladness,” *Ensign* 21 (July 1991): 27–28; and Kristen Rogers, “Stewards of the Earth,” *This People* 11 (spring 1990): 10–16.

65. Berry, *Unsettling of America*, 3–14.

66. Berry points to one important antidote to this unsettling: the tradition of rooting oneself in a particular place and taking responsibility for its future well-being. Berry, *Unsettling of America*, 4. While it is not always clear that rootedness translates into environmentally ethical behavior, clearly Brigham Young’s claim “This is the right place” is an important reminder of the value of working with nature’s accidents in a particular place rather than always seeking a more promising bluff around the next corner.

67. The President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Gordon B. Hinckley, addressed the St. George Area Chamber of Commerce in 1998 and said: “It may be foolish to say to any member of a chamber of commerce—and particularly to realtors—that I hope you won’t continue to grow. If you do, then the culture, the spirit, and the ambiance of the community will change as it already has done so in a measure.” Williams, *New Genesis*, xii.

68. Granberg-Michaelson, *Tending the Garden*, 3.

69. Kinsley, *Ecology and Religion*, xx–xxi.

70. Such is the erroneous logic of Richard Foltz, who gives The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints credit for every anti-environmental manifestation in the state of Utah but refuses to see any link between Mormonism and the politics of many prominent Utah environmental activists. Indeed, he seems unaware of many such examples or surprised to find the few he mentions. Foltz, “Mormon Values,” 1–19. A more balanced view is offered by JoAnn Valenti, a non-LDS scholar at BYU whose research shows that “[positive] attitudes toward the environment in the Mormon population are more present than what you find in a cross-section sample of the U.S. public.” She argues against the blindness I refer to: “There’s a tendency to buy into a paranoia that I don’t see as productive or constructive. I think there is an element of mythology, misinformation, paranoia, suspicion and distrust that taints our ability to see the positive and to look forward. We’re more reluctant to assume something good is going to happen.” Quoted in an interview by Alexandra L. Woodruff, “Being a Mormon Environmentalist,” *Canyon Country Zephyr* (August–September 2000): 22–25.

71. Joe J. Christensen, “Greed, Selfishness, and Overindulgence,” *Ensign* 29 (May 1999): 9–11.

## The Garden

I don't know how much dust was on the leaves, in the air  
As darkness filtered out what light remained—  
Tree trunks, boulders steeping into night,  
Plant scent slightly bitter in the coolness—  
But I imagine the birds sifting down onto solidness  
As the Son of God, with no place to lay his head,  
Went on a ways and knelt to pray.

And this one, capable of such flight,  
Was astonished by the heaviness of sin:  
A deepest loneliness, thickest agony.

All our lives in his blood-flecked hands,  
And my life a part of his grief.

—Ellen Gregory

# Irony and Grace

Frederick Mark Gedicks

My wife's and my son, Alex, passed away almost four years ago. He was away at college in North Carolina. One morning, just after accepting a mission call and only a few weeks before he was to return to Utah for Christmas, he woke up with a rare bacterial infection. He died later that same day, less than twelve hours after he went to the health center. I was lecturing in Italy when he died; Nicea was at the airport, trying to get on a flight. He was our oldest child, and our only son.

In the years since Alex died, my thoughts have repeatedly dwelt on a story from the New Testament. The Gospel of Mark describes a man who brought to Jesus his son who was "afflicted with a dumb spirit." It appears from the description that the boy suffered seizures—he probably had a form of epilepsy. After telling Jesus that the boy had suffered this condition from birth, the father begs Jesus to heal him: "If thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us." Jesus says to the father, "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." The scripture tells us that immediately "the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief." Jesus healed the son (Mark 9:17–27).



While I was serving as the bishop of a BYU campus ward some years ago, one of my ward members was killed in a car accident not long after the semester started. Although he had grown up in the East, this student's family had recently moved to Centerville, north of Salt Lake City. The day he died, his father called from Centerville and asked if I could bring up some clothes and other things from his son's dorm room, which of course I was happy to do. When I arrived, the father invited me in, thanked me for bringing the clothes, and asked me to sit down at the dining room table. He pulled out a cardboard box filled with pictures and trophies and certificates and spent about twenty minutes explaining some of the things that his son had done in his short life. It was a wonderful experience, but even so, I remember leaving the house just slightly puzzled that he should have taken the time to explain these things to me, someone he hardly knew.

When Alex died six years later, I remembered this experience. I thought about writing that father a letter, explaining what I know now that I didn't know then. And then, at the viewing on the morning of Alex's funeral,

there he was, with his wife, waiting in line. When he had read Alex's obituary in the newspaper, he had remembered me as his son's bishop, and he and his wife had driven down from Centerville to mourn with us for our son, whom they had never met. When I embraced this father, the world seemed to recede for a long moment, leaving him and me by ourselves, holding onto each other.



The common definition of irony is “a state of affairs or events that is the reverse of what was . . . expected.”<sup>1</sup> Most popular literature lacks irony. It is a common experience to be sitting in a movie or to have worked one's way into a best-seller and realize exactly how the story is going to end. Irony is one of the devices that separates literature from cliché.

There is another, darker definition of irony. An irony may be a result that is not simply unexpected but “opposite to and . . . in mockery of the appropriate result.”<sup>2</sup> Elder Maxwell calls this kind of irony a “disturbing incongruity” that “violates” our expectations.<sup>3</sup> This, I think, is closer to what I have felt since my son died. A friend suggested that the death of a child upsets the order of the world; children are to bury their parents, not vice versa. By mocking our ideals, irony upsets the order of our worlds, so much so that we may question our deepest beliefs. Richard Rorty says that ironists are never sure of themselves.<sup>4</sup> C. S. Lewis agrees. “You never know how much you really believe anything,” Lewis wrote, “until its truth and falsehood becomes a matter of life and death to you.”<sup>5</sup>

After he died, people often commented that Alex must have been an exceptionally valiant young man to have been called on an “early mission” to the spirit world. I know they meant well, and I do not begrudge the strength that some people draw from this idea. To be able to call upon one's faith in the face of devastating loss is a gift of belief.<sup>6</sup> For me, however, this idea brought no comfort—to the contrary, it made me angry. What kind of a God is it that rewards a good life by snatching a child from his family without warning? Perhaps, I have thought, the same kind of God who would command Abraham to tie Isaac to an altar and slit his throat. Lewis, struggling with the death of his wife, wrote that what he dreaded was not, “There's no God after all,” but rather, “This is what God's really like.”<sup>7</sup> There is no good way to lose your child, but to have him taken so suddenly, with so many things to do and left undone—this seems unspeakably cruel.

I have tried to avoid blaming God by giving up Alex's death to the impersonal randomness of a fallen world. Bad things happen to everyone in this world, and this was just a bad thing that happened to Alex and to us. But this strategy doesn't lead to any place very comforting either. I can



hardly sit through a testimony about the power of the priesthood. My son had a priesthood blessing barely thirty minutes before his heart stopped beating; if he was not appointed by God unto death, then why did God not intervene to save his life? I may have lacked faith, but I know that his mother and sisters didn't. One of my daughters has written an account of the day Alex died, of how she pled with God, desperately, for her brother's life. When I read her words for the first time, I felt my soul twisting, wrung out like a wet rag. How unfeeling must God be not to have answered that prayer?

I know the ways in which we typically try to make sense of this contradiction. I know exactly the answers called for when this contradiction is raised in church—I've even given talks on them. I envy those for whom these answers are adequate, because for me they are not. That suffering may be necessary does not make it into something else, like joy or laughter. That Jesus suffered infinitely worse than I did just adds guilt to the pain. That this all makes sense from some other perspective is not very helpful when that perspective is barely imaginable.

Rorty points out that "the opposite of irony is common sense,"<sup>8</sup> and this, I think, is the beginning of wisdom. Sense cannot be made of this situation—not now, perhaps not ever. Reason and rationality are human attributes, not divine ones. Unlike Roman Catholics, Latter-day Saints do not believe that reason is a reflection of the divine law written in our hearts; to the contrary, our scriptures suggest that God condescends to human reason because we can't seem to understand him in any other language (D&C 50:12).

Nevertheless, Latter-day Saints do not believe that reason or sense of any sort is a necessary prerequisite to truth, as the story of Abraham and Isaac exemplifies. I must confess that I find this story barbaric. Of all the craziness in the Old Testament, this is surely the worst. God gives Abraham and Sarah the gift of a son in their old age—Isaac, through whom will be fulfilled God's promise that Abraham will bless all the nations of the earth. And then, not only does God tell Abraham that Isaac must die, but he commands that Isaac die by Abraham's own hand. One could forgive Abraham if it passed through his mind that this God was, in the end, not very different from all the others.

The conventional reading of this story is that God tested Abraham's faith, but if that is so, it was surely a pointless test. If Abraham had failed, what would it have proved? That his faith was not perfect? That he lacked "perspective?" That he was not God? And isn't it just a little troubling that Abraham was prepared to kill his own son?<sup>9</sup> Kierkegaard could not understand Abraham,<sup>10</sup> but it is Abraham's God whom I cannot understand. If this really was a test, its irrationality renders it senseless.

But not meaningless. For even in the ethical wreckage of this story, there is a truth that forces its way up through a corner of the rubble. God saves Isaac—and Abraham—at the last moment, and then says to Abraham (in wonder?), “Thou hast not withheld thy son, thine *only* son, from me” (Gen. 22:12; italics added). Thus is Abraham linked to God as father to father, like no other person in the world, not even Jesus himself.



In the dominant Western tradition, we think of truth as a relationship between an idea and a thing. We grasp truth, so it seems, when we succeed in accurately conceptualizing some idea that corresponds to some thing that exists outside of ourselves.<sup>11</sup> Some of the scriptures even read like this: “Truth is knowledge of things as they are,” states Doctrine and Covenants 93:24. No modernist could say it better. This idea of truth, while useful in its place, can nevertheless lead us down a wrong path: Truth is not just a static relationship between an idea and a thing; it is a developing relationship between one person and another—as they were, as they are, and as they will be. Looking for the former relationship often obscures the latter one.

I am reminded of this error every four years when the Gospel Doctrine class studies Genesis. Someone inevitably makes a comment about evolution or carbon dating, and in microseconds the class is off on an indignant, science-trashing search for the “truth” of the creation, “how God really did it,” as if this were somehow an important thing to know. This focus tragically misses the point. The significance of the creation is not *how* God did it, but *that* he did it, for it is the creation that puts us into our present relationship with him, that makes God our father and we his children. Insisting on the “facts” of the creation blinds us to its truth.<sup>12</sup>

If truth is a relationship between people, then it is not static. Perhaps this is one reason why, when the scriptures contrast the worship of the God of Israel with idol worship, they often call God the “living” God—even the “true and living” God (Alma 7:6). So also modern revelation refers to the “true and living church” (D&C 1:30). Our relationships with people change as we come to know them. In the Bible, the verb “to know” is often used to signify intimacy. This usage is preserved in all of the romance languages: to know someone is to be intimate with him or her, to live with that person. This is why eternal life is to know God (John 17:3), to be intimate with him—not sexually intimate, of course—but intimate nonetheless: to live with him, to be at home with him, to be eternally bound together with him.

One image haunted me on the long flight back from Italy to North Carolina: that of my son, surrounded by strangers in a hospital emergency room, knowing that he is dying, by himself. What comforted me was being

told that his friends went to the hospital with him; finding out that he was conscious for that blessing before he died; reading in his journal that he loved his parents and knew that we loved him; feeling, as I do now, that someone surely came to help him through the veil between this life and the next; knowing that he is not, and was not ever, alone.

Toward the end of the Book of Mormon, Moroni steps out of the text and speaks directly to the reader. He worries that he is “weak in writing,” that people will make fun of what he has set down in the plates because, as he puts it, God has made “our words powerful and great, even that we cannot write them; wherefore, when we write we behold our weakness and stumble because of the placing of our words; and I fear lest the Gentiles shall mock at our words” (Ether 12:25). And he was right to fear. Mark Twain joked that the Book of Mormon is “chloroform in print,” that if the phrase “and it came to pass” were edited out of the Book of Mormon, it would not be a book but a pamphlet, that it is, finally, a “stupid and tiresome” story.<sup>13</sup> These are only the gentler criticisms leveled at the Book of Mormon over the years.

In contrast to Moroni’s worrying over his inability to capture in writing things that he knew and felt, the Lord himself is remarkably unconcerned. “My grace is sufficient for the meek,” he says,

that they shall take no advantage of your weakness. And if men come unto me I will show unto them their weakness. I give unto men weakness that they may be humble; and my grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them. (Ether 12:26–27)



I have a good friend who teaches at a law school in the East. We met over ten years ago, almost by accident, when someone suggested that I invite him to speak on a law and religion program I was putting together. We have a great deal in common but not religion; he’s not a Christian, and I’m not even sure he’s very religious, because we’ve barely talked about it. He does, however, love golf, as do I, and if you play golf, you know that it, by itself, is more than enough for friendship.

About a year after Alex died, my friend was out in Park City during one of those dry Decembers when you could actually play golf in the valley, so we did. It was the kind of day that makes me glad I live in Utah. There was snow on the mountains, and the sky was a deep, cloudless blue. By the fourth hole, we were playing in shirtsleeves.

While driving back to my house after the round, we got to talking, and he asked where Alex was buried. I told him it was less than two miles from our house, which was good, because I go there a lot. “What do you do when

you go there,” he asked. “Do you pray?” I paused for a moment and then told him, a little embarrassed, that I “sort of talk to Alex.” He reacted with enthusiasm, saying he does the same thing when he visits his father’s grave, although it’s so far away that he doesn’t get there often.

The cemetery was on our way, so we stopped and walked out to Alex’s grave. There was this late-afternoon light that cast long shadows and tinted everything in a muted half-orange. My friend walked right up to the grave, squatted down, and began to talk to Alex in the most unaffected way, as if he were sitting right across from Alex at my dinner table and was just talking to him about his college major. “Well, Alex,” he began, “I’ve never met you, but I’ve heard your dad talk a lot about you . . .” He just kept talking. I don’t remember anything he said after that, but as he talked to my son, my heart warmed until it seemed that all the afternoon light was inside of me, shining back out towards the sun.



We know truth when we experience it in relations with other people. Truth is an event; truth happens, shining forth in the darkness, just like the scriptures say it does (John 1:5; D&C 88:7). To live in truth is to live in these relationships. And sometimes, when we live in them well, God will tell us.

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1. *Webster’s Third International Dictionary of the English Language* (Springfield, Mass.: Merriam-Webster, 1993).
2. *Third International Dictionary*.
3. Neal A. Maxwell, “Irony: The Crust on the Bread of Adversity,” *Ensign* 19 (May 1989): 62.
4. Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, Solidarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 73–74.
5. C. S. Lewis, *A Grief Observed* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1961), 34.
6. For a beautiful expression of this kind of faith, see Nicea S. Gedicks, “These Are the Things We Know,” in *Mourning with Those That Mourn* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1999), 15.
7. Lewis, *A Grief Observed*, 19.
8. Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, Solidarity*, 74.

9. Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Enda H. Hong (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1983), 30.

10. Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, 10.

11. See, for example, Martin Heidegger, *Basic Questions of Philosophy: Selected "Problems" of "Logic,"* trans. Richard Rojcewicz and André Schuwer (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1994), 9–16; Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Explained* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), 10.

12. See Lyotard, *The Postmodern Explained*, 18: The modern subject's "mastery over the objects generated by contemporary science and technology does not bring greater freedom, more public education, or greater wealth more evenly distributed. It brings an increased reliance on facts."

13. Mark Twain, *Roughing It*, ed. Harriet Elinor Smith and Edgar Marquess Branch (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 132, 133, 142.

## In the Loge

*(from a painting by Mary Cassatt)*

It's all about seeing  
and about being seen without knowing  
and about who sees whom.

The woman in black is the closest  
and first one we see.  
Her face and dress

lack the color and lace  
that would bring our eyes back  
again and again.

Limply tied at her neck  
is a matching black hat.  
What catches our eyes

are the glasses held to her eyes  
with one hand; the other,  
clutching a closed gold fan,

lays in her lap. We see  
through transparent gloves,  
her ivory flesh.

Her glasses are trained,  
not on the lit white stage,  
where the baritone bows

and an ardent soprano curves at his feet,  
but on someone outside of the frame  
whom we cannot see.

Farther back and unseen  
by the woman in black  
is the blur of a man in an opposite box.

He, too, is suited in black,  
and he leans his white head toward us  
and toward the woman. Like her,

his right hand holds glasses to his eyes;  
his point precisely at her.  
Both the woman in black

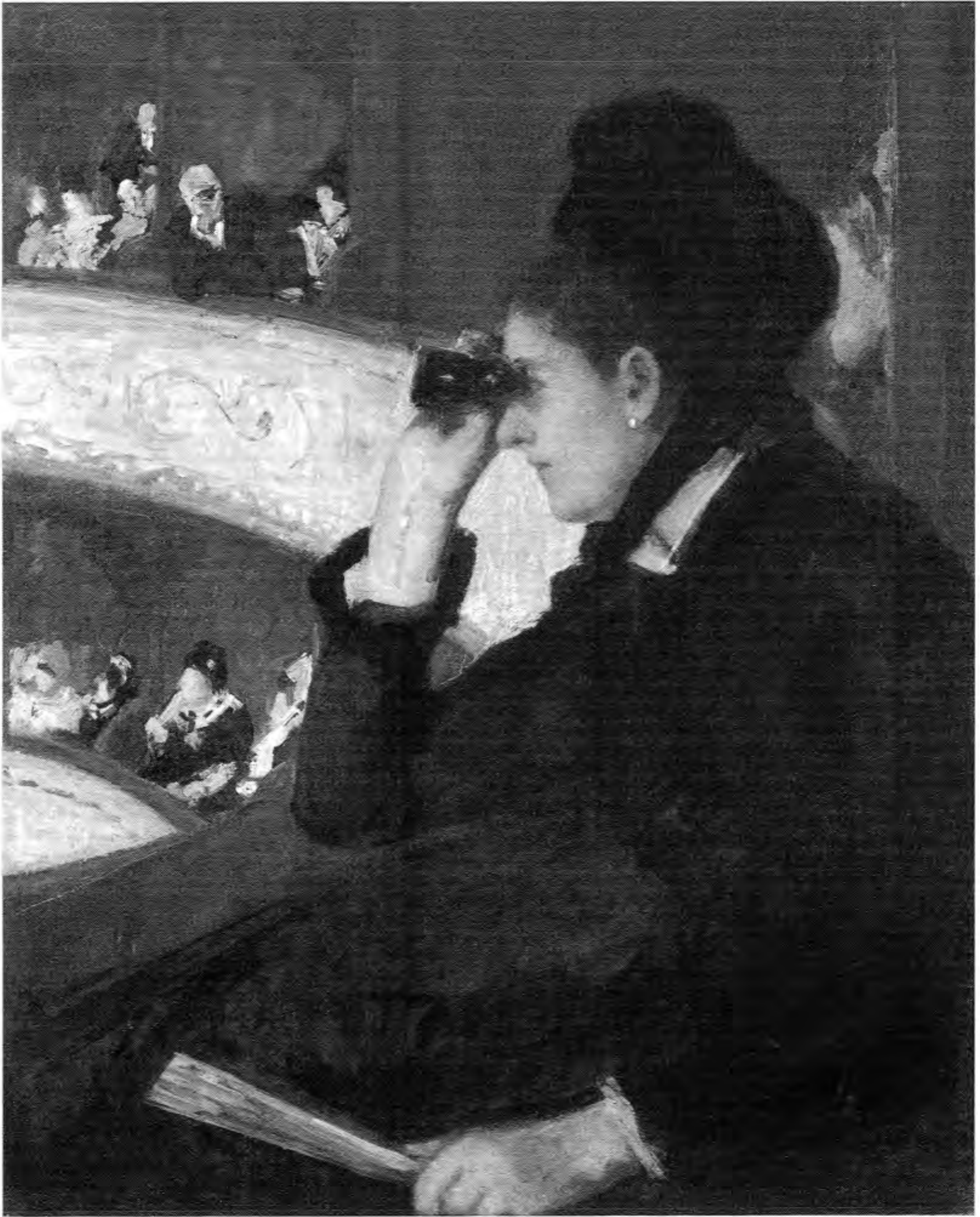
and the man in black watching her  
rest their arms on the rim of the rail,  
linking the two, unaware,

in a velvet-toned curve.  
Though through the eyes of the painter,  
we see the woman and man

in the black, gold and red composition,  
neither we, nor that man, see who is seen  
by the woman in black,

the same seen by the painter  
who kept her or him forever  
out of our sight.

—Marilyn Bushman-Carlton



Mary Cassatt, *In the Loge*, 1879. The Hayden Collection, Charles Henry Hayden Fund. © 2000. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. All rights reserved.

## Late Gardens

(for Georganne)

These days morning with a deep honey light and air  
 is a lure that makes you hesitate—  
 as though abundance under the brimming sky  
 will require the utmost you can give,  
 then more,  
 as though the enclosure of late summer—  
 blossoms heavy with sweetness,  
 and leaves relinquishing green to truer colors,  
 a coming syrup that will drip down—  
 will hold you accountable  
 for such weight, until you are convinced  
 this might once last forever, and are fearful.

These mornings, just rising is like looking up  
*life* in the encyclopedia, for explanations  
 that fill all need to know.  
 The paisley growth around you  
 refuses to take you in.  
 In the end, there's nothing to be done  
 but make your vague way among the gardened flowers,  
 snip a faded bloom, pinch back a token of overgrowth,  
 and to refrain from crushing,  
 as though reverence for the delicate  
 amid such denseness  
 is salvation.

—Dixie Partridge



## Book Reviews

ALLEN J. CHRISTENSON, translator and editor. *Popol Vuh: The Mythic Sections—Tales of First Beginnings from the Ancient K'iche'-Maya*. Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2000. xv; 278 pp. Illustrations, notes, appendix, bibliography. Softbound, \$19.95.

Reviewed by John S. Robertson

This book is the second of the FARMS series *Ancient Texts and Mormon Studies*. The complete title, *Popol Vuh: The Mythic Sections—Tales of First Beginnings from the Ancient K'iche'-Maya*, reveals that Allen Christenson chose to publish the part of the Popol Vuh (an ancient Mayan story) that explains the Mayan view of the creation of humankind. The unpublished part deals with the protohistory of K'iche' nobility.

Christenson prepared himself well to undertake the onerous task of translating a text whose language is very remote from English and whose content is far removed from what is culturally conceivable to English speakers. Christenson spoke K'iche' as a missionary in Guatemala and, under the direction of the renowned Mayanist Linda Schele, earned his Ph.D. at the University of Texas at Austin.

Christenson's book has three main segments: an introduction, a "free translation," and a "literal translation" with the K'iche' text running alongside. The introduction outlines the origins of the people and the manuscript and also gives a description of K'iche' poetic style. As Christenson explains, our current historical understanding holds that a migratory, conquering people came to the Guatemalan highlands from the Mayan lowlands (the southern coast of the Gulf of Mexico), bringing with them new languages and culture. The conquerors were likely bilingual in both Nahuatl (Uto-Aztecan) and Chontal (Mayan), but like the Manchus of China, they ultimately assimilated to their new environment, adopting the language of the people they conquered (K'iche'-Maya).

The introduction also gives some historical background: According to the author, the Popol Vuh was written in the ancient Mayan script long before the time of Columbus. The Popol Vuh was first written in Roman script in the mid-sixteenth century. The authors of the Roman manuscript are anonymous but were likely grandsons of the two Mayan kings burned at the time of Spanish contact.

The author carefully inventories the rhetorical tropes of the Popol Vuh, which is high poetry in the best literary tradition. Roman Jakobson regards poetry as a focus on "phonological, grammatical and semantic

structures in their multiform interplay,” with the stipulation that parallelism “does not remain confined to the limits of parallel lines but expands throughout their distribution within the entire context.”<sup>1</sup> Such distribution is certainly true of Mayan poetry. Undoubtedly, Christenson’s most significant contribution to the broader understanding of Mayan poetry is his careful attention to chiasmus, which is significantly present in the Popol Vuh.

The final portion of the introduction is entitled “The Popol Vuh and Revealed Scripture.” Christenson initially points out that “there has never been an official statement by the Church” concerning the geographic setting of the Book of Mormon (24). It follows that the historicity of the Book of Mormon hardly hangs on the degree to which the Popol Vuh reflects Mormon theology. With that caveat, he lists some suggestive themes, including organizational—not ex nihilo—creation; gods—not just God—in creation; planning (spiritual creation) before creation; emergence of land from water; and creation by the spoken word.

The free translation and the literal translation constitute the core of the book. In one sense, Christenson picked an impossible task for himself, since it could be argued that absolute translation is impossible—especially translation of poetry. Of course, linguistic content gets translated all the time, but the fact remains that translation of artistic creation, which depends so heavily on those elements unique to the respective languages, is like trying to shop with pennies: there is no functional medium of exchange. Difficulties of exchange are heightened when the respective languages’ literary devices—including phonology, grammar, and cultural references—are fundamentally different.

That said, Christenson’s method comes as close as any method could to bridging the gap between the two languages and cultures. The free translation aids those readers who want an approximate sense of the content and story line of the Popol Vuh. The copious footnotes are rich in ethnographic and linguistic detail. For example: “*Kik*’ is the vital fluid of any living thing (blood for animals, sap for trees, etc.). Rubber, as well as a ball made from rubber, is also called *kik*’ since it is made from the sap of the rubber tree (*Castilla elastica*)” (75). It turns out that the rubber ball (or lack thereof) on the Mayan ball court is a symbol of life (or death).

The literal translation is also helpful, not only because it is virtually a word-by-word rendition in English for K’iche’, but also because it contains the K’iche’ text itself. This inclusion is particularly valuable to scholars. As a student of Mayan languages for some thirty years, I have found this volume very helpful as a reference work. In addition, the author generously provided me with a digitized version that facilitated my research.

Finally, the illustrations (typically pictures of the Guatemalan countryside or illustrative ceramics) are nicely chosen. Of special interest are the scenes from ancient ceramics, usually with a caption that includes text from the Popol Vuh. It is remarkable that these ceramic depictions correspond directly with certain descriptions of scenes found in the Popol Vuh. It would roughly be like a non-Christian a thousand years from now reading about Christ's nativity from the New Testament and then finding some of the thousands of paintings with the Christ Child, Mary, Joseph, the wise men, the shepherds, and the animals in the stall.

My only complaint about the book would be the orthography in the K'iche' transliteration. In K'iche' (some dialects, at least), long vowels are distinguished from short vowels. Apparently, Christenson uses diereses (the symbol "̈") on some vowels to make that distinction, but his markings do not always correspond to the spoken language. It probably would have been better to have left out the diereses because the distinction is so dialectically complex that it is an overwhelming task to try to reconstruct the complicated vocalic distinctions of four hundred years ago. Furthermore, some words are lost from the modern language, so it would be impossible to know the pronunciation anyway. But this is a small matter compared to the overall strength of the book. His reconstruction of consonantal distinctions not found in the original text is accurate.

Anyone interested in Mayan myth, culture, and prehistory will find this work full of information that bridges the gap that otherwise makes the ancient Mayan language and worldview so remote from our own. Christenson is to be congratulated for a massive effort that resulted in a book whose value can only increase with time.

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1. Roman Jakobson, "Grammatical Parallelism and Its Russian Facet," *Language* 42 (April–June 1966): 423.

MARGARET K. BRADY. *Mormon Healer and Folk Poet: Mary Susannah Fowler's Life of "Unselfish Usefulness."* Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 2000. xi; 222 pp. Photos, sketches, maps, notes, bibliography, index. \$44.95.

Reviewed by Kristi A. Bell

During the course of her life, Mary Susannah Fowler filled many roles: a much loved mother who underwent twelve pregnancies, a midwife and nurse, a leader in Church and civic organizations, a poet, and a wife. Margaret K. Brady's *Mormon Healer and Folk Poet* looks at the different aspects of these roles and their significance both to Mary and to those around her. Born October 23, 1862, in Woods Cross, Utah, Mary Susannah Fackrell was the seventh child of David Bancroft Fackrell and Susannah Sumner Fackrell. David had come west during the gold rush of 1849, had found relatives in Utah, and had joined The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Susannah, orphaned at the age of twelve, had crossed the plains with the Mormon pioneers and, upon arriving in Utah, had been given a home by the Fackrells in Bountiful. When David discovered his Fackrell relatives, he met Susannah. David and Susannah fell in love and were married.

In 1862, David took a second wife, Hannah Proctor, and six years later, when David was called to settle the Muddy, he took Hannah, her children, and Susannah's oldest son with him. Two years later, he returned for Susannah and the rest of their children. By the time David, Susannah, and their younger children arrived in southern Utah, the mission to the Muddy had been disbanded. Over the next few years, the Fackrells lived in St. George, Mt. Carmel, and Long Valley before settling in Orderville.

After living in the united order during her adolescence in Orderville, Mary taught school for two years. On September 29, 1880, she married a man from Orderville, Henry Ammon Fowler, in the St. George Temple. The couple remained in Orderville following their marriage and started a family. Sometime between 1886 and 1888, Henry took a second wife, Eliza Norwood, who had been employed as a nurse for Mary when her daughter Laura was born. In 1888 the family moved to Huntington, Utah, in search of better economic opportunities. Except for four years spent in Provo while two of her sons attended Brigham Young Academy, Mary lived in Huntington. She died on October 27, 1920, in Salt Lake City following an operation to remove a growth in her colon.

A serendipitous event brought Mary Fowler to Margaret Brady's attention. While preparing for a presentation on folk medicine at the 1996 Fife Folklore Conference at Utah State University, Brady happened across a typescript copy of Mary's diary in the Marriott Library at the University of

Utah. The diary sparked Brady's interest and marked the beginning of extensive research and fieldwork on Mary Susannah Fowler. Brady, a professor of folklore at the University of Utah, specializes in American Indian studies, folk narrative, women's folklore, and folklore method and theory. Since Brady is not a member of the Church, she brings a unique perspective to this study of a very Mormon woman. This is not the first time that Brady's scholarship has focused on a Mormon woman. In 1987 the *Journal of American Folklore* published her well-received article "Transformations of Power: Mormon Women's Visionary Narratives."<sup>1</sup> In her book on Mary Fowler, Brady successfully weaves her expertise into a very readable and engrossing study.

In the introduction to the book, Brady provides a synopsis of each chapter. For those unfamiliar with folklore theory, it helps to follow Brady's suggestion to "read the first chapter for some essential background and then flip quickly to the last where you will find . . . a theoretical perspective" (6). Brady espouses the theories of reflexivity and reciprocity in her fieldwork and analysis. According to Brady, reflexive theory is a "postmodern methodology . . . [that] emphasizes the involvement of the researcher with the materials that he or she examines" (4). Reciprocal ethnography takes reflexivity one step further. Brady describes this process, developed by folklorist Elaine Lawless, a leader in reciprocal practices, as one "in which both the folklorist and those she interviews work collaboratively by 'foregrounding dialogue as a process in understanding and knowledge retrieval'" (4).

As part of her research, Brady interviewed some of Fowler's descendants and used the type of reciprocity that Lawless describes. Although she cites trends in literary and historical theories that encourage active "participat[ion] in the ongoing conversation of the texts themselves," Brady does not limit her reflexive and reciprocal interpretations to her living informants (4). While her application of reflexivity and reciprocity allows us to trace the development of Brady's understanding and appreciation of Mary Fowler, it also allows Brady to come to conclusions that may be based more on her own philosophies than those that guided Fowler's life. Two examples that support this view are Brady's conclusions about how Fowler felt when a literary club she belonged to was discouraged by Church leaders and how Mary felt about her husband Henry's second wife, Eliza.

In February 1900, Mary became part of a group of women who founded a women's club. As one of the leaders, Mary helped determine the direction of the group. Mary's journal entry for April 18, 1900, reads: "Attended a special meeting and had the privilege of shaking hands with Apostle Teasdale. He doesn't heartily approve of the ladies club. But says we may go on if our actions are approved of by the Bishop, which they have

been all the time. But unless we get a warmer consent than that I am not in favor of continuing" (67).

Four days later, Mary recorded that she had learned that a letter from Apostle Teasdale about joining clubs or societies had been read in a church meeting. He counseled Church members to confine their membership in clubs or societies to those sponsored by the Church. Mary admitted frustration at what seemed to be Teasdale's earlier advice and concluded that she was "glad for once that [she] was not at meeting" (67).

In an interview with Brady, Rae Spellman, Mary's granddaughter, described the controversy over what she termed a "book club." Regarding her grandmother's feelings, Spellman recounted, "Well, she was very unhappy about it, but there was no confusion about it for her. Now today there might be more discussion, but then every one of the sisters felt that they should obey the priesthood. So they just stopped having the club" (69).

Mary had already expressed hesitancy about continuing with the club before Teasdale's letter was ever read in church, and the club existed, in fact, for less than three months. It is difficult to believe that the disbanding of the women's club was a pivotal point in Mary's life. Brady's final chapter discusses "the matrix of voices," and it is important to consider whose voice is strongest in this incident. Choosing to value modern-day sensibilities over realities of Mormon life in the early twentieth century may have led Brady to misunderstand Mary's community of discourse.

Brady also appears to have difficulty in completely understanding Mary's position as the first wife in a polygamous marriage. When discussing polygamy stories circulated in the late twentieth century, folklorist William A. Wilson would remind his students that the tales represent current attitudes towards polygamy rather than the feelings of those who were actually involved in polygamous relationships. Brady, too, seems to interpret Mary's feelings about her situation more by Brady's own attitudes than by the realities of Mary's life. While scholarship like Jessie Embry's *Mormon Polygamous Families: Life in the Principle* indicates that polygamy was not a bed of roses for many,<sup>2</sup> Brady bases her conclusion that Mary was likely dissatisfied with polygamy upon two brief mentions of Eliza in poems Mary wrote her husband. Throughout the rest of the book, Brady remarks on Mary's circumspection about her polygamous state. After all, Mary had grown up in a polygamous family and lived in a polygamous marriage; polygamy was simply a part of her life. Brady does concede that any qualms Mary might have had about polygamy were made manageable by "the strength of [Mary's] own spiritual beliefs" (157).

The strength of Brady's book lies in her theme of interconnectedness among the different roles in Mary's life and the lives of her descendants, as well as in Brady's life and her relationship with her own daughter. Chapters

two through five deal with different discourse groups and roles in Mary's life. At least two of the chapters were presented as papers at annual meetings of the American Folklore Society. So while these four chapters could each stand alone, they are best understood and the depth of Brady's work is best revealed when all four are taken together. The final chapter of the book, "Your Words Like a Balm': A Matrix of Discourses," is an excellent summary of how many voices actually go into the construction of Mary Fowler. Mary's story will mean different things to different people, but it should not be only what others would have it be. When all things are considered, Brady allows the many facets of Mary's life to shine through.

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1. Margaret K. Brady, "Transformations of Power: Mormon Women's Visionary Narratives," *Journal of American Folklore* 100 (1987): 461–68.
2. Jessie L. Embry, *Mormon Polygamous Families: Life in the Principle* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1987).

## Brief Notice

*The Dissent of the Governed on Law, Religion, and Loyalty*, by Stephen L. Carter (Harvard University Press, 1998)

*The Americanization of Religious Minorities: Confronting the Constitutional Order*, by Eric Michael Mazur (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999)

*The Lustre of Our Country: The American Experience of Religious Freedom*, by John T. Noonan Jr. (University of California Press, 1998)

*God versus Caesar: Belief, Worship and Proselytizing under the First Amendment*, by Martin S. Sheffer (State University of New York Press, 1999)

Four recently published books written by non-Latter-day Saint legal scholars and political scientists look at Mormon history as a means of examining the scope of constitutionally protected religious freedoms in the United States. The federal campaign against plural marriage in the late nineteenth century emerges as the main period of interest for each scholar. While none is a proponent of plural marriage, each sees the Raid as a landmark low point in the history of American religious freedom. For example, circuit court judge John T. Noonan identifies the property confiscations, imprisonments, test oaths, suffrage revocations, and constriction of religious practice that Latter-day Saints endured in the 1880s as the result of a “mass of intolerant legislation” (32).

Martin S. Sheffer, emeritus professor of political science at Tuskegee University, begins his book by suggesting that *Reynolds v. United States*—in which the Supreme Court in 1887 upheld the conviction of a Latter-day Saint polygamist—set an unfortunate pivotal precedent in interpreting the religious freedom clause

of the First Amendment. This ruling made a distinction between belief and practice. It forbade laws against beliefs that stay inside a person’s head but gave legislators virtually free reign to draft laws criminalizing any religious activity deemed offensive to community morals (1–4). He gives many examples of what he considers the negative effects of *Reynolds* but focuses on cases having to do with alternative education and conscientious objection.

Legal scholar Eric Michael Mazur argues that, throughout American history, constitutional protection has tended to cover those religions least in need of it—namely mainstream and evangelical Protestant religions whose conception of the proper sphere of religion tends to be narrowly defined as personal rather than the more social definition common in newer, smaller groups. He also suggests that the more a religion diverges from the mainstream, the less likely it is that the Constitution will be interpreted to protect its practices. Mazur raises difficult questions about the ostensible religious neutrality of America’s constitutional order and claims that unless constitutional interpretations embrace America’s growing religious plurality, Americans are in for a future of further religious conflict and state-sanctioned violence against religious minorities (122–43).

In *The Dissent of the Governed*, the prolific legal scholar Stephen L. Carter, author of *Civility* and *The Culture of Disbelief: How American Laws and Politics Trivialize Religious Devotion*, examines those difficult situations in history where people are reluctant to obey laws they consider unjust and immoral. He argues forcefully that civil societies must allow for a great deal of individual and community autonomy for religious and other groups. To him, Latter-day Saint polygamists were victims of an overzealous drive



for moral homogeneity—an example of our nation's difficulty in tolerating dissenting visions of righteousness. Even more forcefully than Mazur, Carter takes *Reynolds* to task as emblematic of governmental intolerance and questions the privileging of “high-church Protestant values” in legal interpretations of religious freedom (57–58).

These authors' views echo those expressed in Elder Dallin H. Oaks' testimony before the Senate Judiciary Committee considering the proposed 1993 Religious Freedom Restoration Act. (When passed, RFRA helped close the *Reynolds* loophole for religious discrimination until the act was overturned by the Supreme Court.) Elder Oaks reminded the legislators of the Raid and underscored the aptness of using the Mormon experience to highlight the necessity of religious freedom for even the most unpopular of religious groups—even those who would violate Latter-day Saint beliefs by sacrificing animals or using narcotics in religious ceremonies. According to Elder Oaks, “The Bill of Rights protects principles, not constituencies. The worshippers who need its protections are the oppressed minorities, not the influential constituent elements of the majority.”<sup>1</sup> The four authors and Elder Oaks seem to agree that the essence of a principled defense of constitutional religious liberty goes beyond seeking to preserve the right to practice one's own religion. Rather, it is to advocate freedom even for those whose practices we find heretical or repugnant.

These four books from leading university presses are not representative of all contemporary legal views on religious freedom, nor are they the first to expound these views. However, they are significant additions to the ongoing debate and will be of interest to those keeping their finger on the pulse of contemporary constitutional thinking in general and the rights of American religious minorities in particular.<sup>2</sup> Interestingly, each of these scholars seems to have arrived independently

at similar interpretations. What these books may forebode for future legal rulings on thorny issues, including contemporary polygamy prohibited by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, is yet to be seen.

—Eric A. Eliason

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1. Senate Committee on the Judiciary, *The Religious Freedom Restoration Act: Hearing before the Committee on the Judiciary*, 102d Cong., 2d sess., September 18, 1992, 31–32, 38.

2. Prevailing scholarly legal opinion of late seems to hold that the Supreme Court rulings that led legislators to find RFRA necessary and then later overturned the Act have, in essence, made the free-exercise clause of the First Amendment powerless to protect religious practices. See, for example, Michael W. McConnell, *Institutions and Interpretation: A Critique of City of Boerne v. Flores*, *Harvard Law Review* 111 (1997): 153–95; and R. Collin Mangrum, *The Falling Star of Free Exercise: Free Exercise and Substantive Due Process Entitlement Claims in City of Boerne v. Flores*, *Creighton Law Review* 31 (1998): 693–740.

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