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Joseph Smith—History: From Dictation to Canon

Russ K. Bennett

A thesis submitted to the faculty of  
Brigham Young University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

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## ABSTRACT

Joseph Smith—History: From Dictation to Canon

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This thesis seeks to answer the question of how *Joseph Smith—History* found in *The Pearl of Great Price* developed into a part of the canon of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. When the prophet Joseph Smith first dictated the text to his scribes it seems he had not intended for the work to become scripture, but simply to follow the Lord’s divine mandate to keep a record. Additionally he provided the purpose in his document to “disabuse the public mind, and put all inquirers after truth in possession of the facts, as they transpired.” The format he proposed for the *Manuscript History* illustrates how it was originally not purposed for scripture. The compiling of that history took the efforts of many men and women and spanned the length of almost twenty years to complete.

Joseph Smith had begun the dictation to his scribe George Robinson in 1838, but it was unfinished. Joseph later began the dictation anew to his scribe James Mulholland, first having the man rewrite what he had told to Robinson and then picking up the dictation from there. While the prophet had started and stopped histories before, this particular dictation began the enduring effort. The *Manuscript History* was developed from the original 59 pages that were scribed by Mulholland. By the efforts of other scribes, but mostly Willard Richards, the history was completed. The official statement of Brigham Young and Orson Pratt upon its completion said nothing of extracting portions for canon.

But Mulholland’s work seemed destined for a different purpose than the rest of the *Manuscript History*. It was printed serially in the *Times and Seasons*, and a few apostles seemed to catch a vision of what the manuscript could do for potential converts and members of the Church. Orson Pratt was especially a proponent of communicating certain key events as illustrated in his missionary tract “Remarkable Visions.” A later apostle, Franklin D. Richards, would see the benefit of using the official history to distribute the history of the restoration of the Church to others. He extracted portions from Mulholland’s text that covered certain main events in Joseph’s life and printed them in his missionary tract *The Pearl of Great Price*. This pamphlet would eventually be canonized by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in 1880.

*Joseph Smith—History*’s inclusion in the reclamation of revelation that occurred in 1880 was deserved. This is evidenced by examining the process of canonization and the guiding principles of canonization employed by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It was canonized at the same time as many other revelations and at a General Conference saturated with

many important events. Consequently it is difficult to gauge the reaction to its inclusion in canon, except in how it has been used since its canonization. After its inclusion into scripture the text has become a foundational piece of literature for the Church. The impact the text has had can be seen in the culture, missionary work, and doctrine of the Church. The focus of this thesis is to map the text's journey from birth to canonization.

Keywords: Joseph Smith, James Mulholland, Orson Pratt, Willard Richards, Franklin D. Richards, Brigham Young, John Taylor, *Joseph Smith—History*, *The History of the Church*, *The Manuscript History of the Church*, *The Pearl of Great Price*, England, British Missionaries, Missionary Tracts, The Missouri Persecutions, *Times and Seasons*, keys, authority, canonization.

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## Chapter 1

### The Genesis of *Joseph Smith—History* as Found in *The Pearl of Great Price*

#### Introduction

Put first into the official history, then to newspaper, pamphlets, LDS culture, and culminating eventually with its inclusion into canon, the document now titled *Joseph Smith—History* has become a phenomenon of religious texts. The history went from being relatively unknown to central to the missionary work, culture, and theology of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. But how did it rise to such heights? While much work has been done by scholars debating the origin of Joseph's story, this work will concentrate almost entirely on the canonized text currently found in the Church's book of scripture *The Pearl of Great Price*. By focusing on the story of the text clearer insights can be attained concerning the growth, theology, and practices of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In particular the following can be ascertained: a greater understanding of LDS canon and the Church's process of canonization, greater insights into LDS record keeping and its place in the culture of the Church, and the challenges the Church has faced during its years of growth. In short, the purpose of this particular thesis is to explore the life of the text *Joseph Smith—History* from birth to adolescence to its rite of passage into canon. An exploration of the life span of the text produces a sense of the magnitude of this particular extract from the Church's official history. To accomplish this feat the following course will be pursued.

Firstly, the genesis of *Joseph Smith—History* will be examined. This thesis will define the genesis as occurring during the years of 1830 to 1839. Questions to be explored include:



Why was this particular account of the history written? How was it written? Who wrote the text? What possible influences existed on the text? The birth process of the text contributes greatly to the overall direction of the thesis.

Secondly, the adolescence of the text will be studied. The adolescent period will be defined as the period directly following its genesis, 1840, to the year 1851 when *Joseph Smith—History* was separated as its own entity from the rest of the *Manuscript History*. The thesis will ask the following questions: How did the text become separated from the rest of the history which it was included with originally? For what purposes was the text intended? For what purposes was it used? Who were the key characters involved in promoting its popularity and influence? These questions will help to provide insight into missionary efforts and the culture of the Church.

Finally, the rite of passage, the actual canonization of *Joseph Smith—History* will be examined. Who was involved in the standardization of the text? What was the actual event and further winnowing process like? While the process of canonization in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is rather simple, the journey of a text to the loftier status of scripture is not always so simple. Such was the case with *Joseph Smith—History* and *The Pearl of Great Price*.

While this work is not intended to be comprehensive, it is intended to be a positive contribution to understanding the theology, culture, and history of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It also provides a solid beginning to understanding a foundational text to the LDS church, and sheds light to arguably one of the most influential religious texts written in the last three hundred years.

Joseph Smith is a controversial figure in history, and his written history is oft debated. The following rather well known commentaries from a few historians will help to set the tone for the broad range of reactions to the history.

“Fanatics and imposters are living and dying every day, and their memory is buried with them; but the wonderful influence which this founder of a religion [Joseph Smith] exerted and still exerts throws him into relief before us, not as a rogue to be criminated, but as a phenomenon to be explained. The most vital questions Americans are asking each other today have to do with this man and what he has left us.”<sup>1</sup>

“The road that led Joseph Smith into the career of “prophet, seer, and revelator” is overgrown with a tangle of legend and contradiction.”<sup>2</sup>

“Joseph’s self-deprecating style masks his true role in the Restoration. The sweep of prophetic world history reveals the description “an obscure boy... of no consequence” as a gross understatement.”<sup>3</sup>

“Joseph Smith, the Prophet and Seer of the Lord, has done more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived in it” (Doctrine and Covenants 135:3).<sup>4</sup>

The commentaries are not new, and many scholars are already familiar with these particular excerpts. What is more, to many they are the tired and oft repeated rehashes of Joseph and his history. While there were many more that could be included from scholar, faithful

<sup>1</sup> Josiah Quincy, *Figures of the Past: From the Leaves of Old Journals* (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1883): 317.

<sup>2</sup> Fawn M. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1976): 16.

<sup>3</sup> Scott C. Esplin, “Millions Shall Know Brother Joseph Again: Joseph Smith’s Place among the Prophets,” in *Joseph Smith and the Doctrinal Restoration: The 34<sup>th</sup> Annual Sydney B. Sperry Symposium*, (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2005): 173.

<sup>4</sup> First published as a eulogy, and then later included as scripture in Doctrine and Covenants 135:3.

believer, or unabashed hater of Joseph Smith, only a small sampling is included as a means of emphasizing the impact of this one written history. It has served as the catalyst for many historians' writing attempts. In truth a scholar cannot avoid *Joseph Smith—History* when attempting to study Joseph Smith or the Church that he founded because it is one of the few complete and relatively contemporary narratives on the topic. So how did this formal history come about?

### **Divine Mandate**

The answer should be focused on the divine mandate currently found in Doctrine and Covenants 21:1. “Behold, there shall be a record kept among you; and in it thou shalt be called a seer, a translator, a prophet, an apostle of Jesus Christ....” While there are other reasons that can be argued, such as desires for legitimacy, a desire to represent yourself and not be represented by others, apologetics, and many others, the main reason seems to simply be because Latter-day Saints felt that writing a history was, and is, a commandment from God, even a sacred duty. Consequently, the Church's endeavors to represent Joseph Smith's history will likely never cease. From their perspective, it cannot. Not if they are to be obedient.

The perception of this being a divine commandment is still evident in the culture and theology of the Church, so much so that when a person enters the archival library of the organization located near the headquarters in Salt Lake, they will find the words “and there shall be a record kept...” emblazoned largely and boldly along one wall. This desire to be obedient to the commandment was felt in the earliest days of the Church and is evidenced by how the Church zealously strove to have an official historian, or group of historians, since the recording of that particular commandment. That mandate came early in Church history, even at the

inception of the organization on April 6, 1830. The influence this divine mandate had in the early Church can be seen in the anxiety the prophet Joseph felt about completing the Lord's commandment, and how he included many members of the Church to share in this concern for completing the commandment.

In light of this mandate and the sense of duty felt by the church members, the critiques offered by some of the official church history have merit. Some critics are quick to point out the heavy bias present in the history, and rightly so. There is a bias, and most scholars are able to read the text recognizing the bias for what it is. Another common critique concerns the misleading first person voice. Some of the accounts of the history were actually taken from the journals of other men, or a compilation of different accounts on the topic, that were then rewritten to be included in the history from Joseph's perspective. The first person voice seems to be intended to introduce the reader to the roles of Joseph Smith in a more believable fashion, as seemed to be the trend of that time's literature. You can still see echoes of that "believability" literature today—especially in emails, media, and infomercials. A generic example, "I tried this shampoo, and now my hair is thicker and stronger!" Today this literary device is looked at as more gimmick than personal witness, where as in the early and mid 1800s it seemed to be a more legitimate means of convincing. But even more important, for that time period it seemed to be the premiere means of relating a history or a person's story. Joseph had reviewed the material to be used for the history and said they were reliable to the actual events of his life, even if he had not written or even recalled them himself.

Perhaps in the mind of a faithful member, these critiques are not necessarily a bad thing. If anything, these critiques would only confirm that the history had indeed met the requirements of the Lord's mandate to herald Joseph's divine calling. But later attempts show that the Church

has been aware of the critics and have sought to satisfy the demands of scholarship. Again this seems to be in response to the divine mandate given on the first day the Church was organized. Some examples include the efforts by B. H. Roberts in which he sought to bring the history to more members of the Church and to produce the history in a way that would better match what were then the current secular norms, more recently the massive project of the *Joseph Smith Papers* published by The Church Historian's Press which is providing historians and scholars access to primary documents for their research.

In conclusion, members of the Church see Doctrine and Covenants 21:1 as a divine command from God. They inherited this belief from Joseph Smith and the first leaders of the Church. Keeping a record has become a major part of their theology and culture and the writing of *Joseph Smith—History* is a primary document that confirmed and perpetuated this belief. By taking a closer look at the writing of this text, the beginning development of the theology and culture or record keeping can be seen.

### **The Writing of the History**

Writing a history was not an easy task for Joseph Smith. Renowned scholar Dean C. Jessee explained the circumstances well in the following statement: “Joseph Smith did little of the actual writing of his history. According to his journal, he seldom used the pen himself, dictating all of his communications to a scribe.”<sup>5</sup> Due to his lack of much of a formal education, writing was a difficult task for Joseph, and he was well aware of his inability to spell and string sentences together in a formal manner. Thus he used clerks and scribes to aid him in what he considered a sacred charge.

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<sup>5</sup> Dean C. Jessee, “The Writing of Joseph Smith’s History,” *BYU Studies* 11. No. 4 (1971): 440.

The Church was organized on April 6, 1830, and the Lord’s directive to “keep a record” was given to Joseph during that original meeting. Before 1846 Joseph used or employed fifty-two people as his scribe or clerk, or called them to work on the history.<sup>6</sup> Twenty-two of those wrote or assisted in gathering the majority of early Church history from 1829-1856. This number illustrates just how concerned the prophet and his successors were with completing the record. The number he employed at one time increased during the last three years of his life as his anxiety about completing the history grew. “For the last three years I have a record of all my acts and proceedings, for I have kept several good, faithful, and efficient clerks in constant employ: they have accompanied me everywhere, and carefully kept my history...”<sup>7</sup>

They were not just engaged in gathering his current affairs at that time, but were busy with the beginnings of the *Manuscript History of the Church*, a work that weighed heavily on Joseph’s mind and which he had designated as the means to answering the divine mandate. An example highlights the anxious concern Joseph had for this work. W.W. Phelps, a clerk employed for that work, at one time told Joseph that a nearby school class was making it hard to concentrate on the work of the history. Joseph then went and saw Mr. Cole, the caretaker of the school, and told him that the classes needed to relocate because of the importance of continuing the history. Later he would tell Phelps, “There are but few subjects that I have felt a greater anxiety about than my history which has been a very difficult task.”<sup>8</sup>

Another factor that proves Joseph’s desire to complete the Lord’s mandate concerning a history is found not only in the number of clerks he employed in the task, but in the many

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 440–461. Jessee does a terrific job of listing out the different scribes and clerks. Footnote 72 of his document lists thirty additional clerks or scribes. The twenty-two listed in the article did the bulk of the work on keeping the history.

<sup>7</sup> Joseph Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B.H. Roberts (Salt Lake City, 1948), vol. 6: 409. (Jessee’s above work pointed me toward this source also).

<sup>8</sup> Ibid; 6, 66. (Jessee’s work also used this great example to illustrate Joseph’s stirrings and concern for the history).

attempts he made at a history. Before 1839 seven attempts were made to write a history.<sup>9</sup> Each attempt seemed to meet with failure, or was unsatisfactory to Joseph and what he said the Lord expected. One example of Joseph's frustration with these previous attempts can be found in a letter Joseph wrote to W.W. Phelps on July 31<sup>st</sup>, 1832. "...I exhort Bro John also to remember the commandment to him to keep a history of the church & the gathering and be sure to shew him self approved [SIC] whereunto he hath been called."<sup>10</sup> In another example he sadly comments on the early failures at a history: "Since I have been engaged in laying the foundation of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, I have been prevented in various ways from continuing my journal and history in a manner satisfactory to myself or in justice to the cause. Long imprisonments, vexations and long-continued law-suits, the treachery of some of my clerks, the death of others, and the poverty of myself and brethren from continued plunder and driving, have prevented my handing down to posterity a connected memorandum of events desirable to all lovers of truth..."<sup>11</sup> In other words, it was a task that seemed to be barred every step of the way. Of the men who wrote during Joseph's tenure as prophet, nine left the Church, two died leaving the history in a lurch because of the timing of the deaths, and one "held onto," without permission, Church records that had been entrusted to him.<sup>12</sup>

But because those early Saints felt God had commanded them to make this record, they persevered. In 1839<sup>13</sup> the enduring document of his history would begin, but that document

<sup>9</sup> For this full list see: Jessee, "The Writing of Joseph Smith's History," 461–462.

<sup>10</sup> *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, comp. by Dean C. Jessee (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 2002): 276.

<sup>11</sup> Joseph Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 7 vols., introduction and notes by B. H. Roberts (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1932-1951), 4: 470.

<sup>12</sup> Jessee, "The Writing of Joseph Smith's History," 461. See footnote 75.

<sup>13</sup> Though records show that the attempt actually began in 1838 with George Robison, the actual document of the *Manuscript History* was written began by James Mulholland's hand in 1839. So this thesis refers to the beginning of the record that is used as the basis for the reproduction of the history, and it is unclear how much Robison actually accomplished, and how much Mulholland rewrote from Robison.

would not be concluded until 1856, many years after Joseph Smith's death and the Church's migration to Utah. Because Joseph had involved so many in his history attempts, the culture and theology of record keeping were cast and set. This is illustrated by the simple fact that the effort continued even after his death.

There were other histories approved by Joseph written after the beginnings of the *Manuscript History*. Two prime examples of later history attempts are Orson Pratt's "A interesting account of several remarkable visions, and of the late discovery of ancient American records" and the "Wentworth letter" that Joseph seemed to pattern in a similar fashion to Pratt's history. These approved histories, one used for missionary purposes and the other for a sketch of the fledging church for a newspaper article, were written after 1839—Pratt's tract in September 1840 and the Wentworth letter published in *The Times and Seasons* March 1, 1842. These later history attempts were written in a summative manner because of their different purposes from the 1839-1856 document. The *Manuscript History* had a specific purpose and specific instructions, as George A. Smith explained. He claimed the format and style of the history was determined by Joseph Smith himself. That format is more exhaustive than the later church approved histories written about Joseph. According to George A. Smith, the clerks knew that the specific document that began in Mulholland's pen, would become the official history of the Church.

The plan of compiling the history of Joseph Smith from the Journals kept by his clerks, Willard Richards, William Clayton, Wilford Woodruff, and Thomas Bullock, was commenced by himself, extracting items of necessary information in regard to general and particular movements from the Times and Seasons, Millennial Star, Wasp, Neighbor, and other publications, extracts from City Councils, Municipal Courts, and Mayors Dockets, and Legion Records, which were all kept under his direction; also the movements of the Church as found in Conference minutes, High Council records, and the records of the several quorums, together with letters and copies preserved on file; also



noted remarkable occurrences throughout the world, and compiled them under date of transaction, according to the above plan....<sup>14</sup>

This quote shows how thorough Joseph intended this particular history to be. The prophet's plan took a considerable amount of time and work to carry out.

The work was first started by George Robinson in 1838. But it was not continued by him, and the real document began with James Mulholland's writings in 1839.<sup>15</sup> His penmanship spans the first 59 pages of the *Manuscript History*. His unexpected death put a halt to the work. Several others followed, but the work slowed dramatically, until Willard Richards. He was appointed secretary to Joseph Smith in December 1842. With Richards at the helm the work progressed at a significant rate. In his first six months he almost doubled the previous three years worth of work—only 157 pages written in the first three years compared to 114 pages in less than six months.<sup>16</sup> But just as important, if not more important, as the writing of the history was the archiving or compiling of the source material that the history would depend upon. By 1844 Richards had gathered more than the majority of the sources from which the remainder of the history would be based.

This history has had a heavy influence on the Church and on how Joseph Smith is viewed by historians. Upon its completion the First Presidency of the Church met in the Historian's Office where they put their stamp of approval on it by "finishing up the history..."<sup>17</sup> When it was eventually published George A. Smith and Wilford Woodruff added the following endorsement:

The history of Joseph Smith is now before the world, and we are satisfied that a history more correct in its details than this was never published. To have it strictly

<sup>14</sup> George A. Smith, letter to Wilford Woodruff, April 21, 1856. LDS Church Archives, Church History Library (Salt Lake City, UT).

<sup>15</sup> *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*: 226.

<sup>16</sup> See Jessee, "The Writing of Joseph Smith's History," 466.

<sup>17</sup> Wilford Woodruff diary, 13 August, 1856. LDS Church Archives, Church History Library (Salt Lake City, UT).

correct, the greatest possible pains have been taken by the historians and clerks engaged in the work. They were eye and ear witnesses of nearly all the transactions recorded in the history, most of which were reported as they transpired, and, where they were not personally present, they have had access to those who were.

Moreover, since the death of the Prophet Joseph, the history has been carefully revised under the strict inspection of President Brigham Young, and approved by him.

We, therefore, hereby bear our testimony to all the world, unto whom these words shall come, that the History of Joseph Smith is true, and it is one of the most authentic histories ever written.<sup>18</sup>

With that endorsement it is no small wonder that so many Church members fully embrace the history. But more importantly it was this history that set the precedent for the culture and theology of the Church concerning record keeping. Though at first the history was hard to navigate through if looking for the primary sources it drew upon, it did meet the standards of the time. As time has passed the culture and theology of record keeping began by the *Manuscript History* and the efforts of the early church leaders proved to have made its mark. The Church is concerned with making its history fit the secular norms. This is in large part because of the dedicated work that church historians and scholars have devoted to that very endeavor. Many of those church historians and scholars operated, and still operate, under the belief that it was God’s will that the history and record be kept, and done well. The idea has become so engrained in the culture and theology of the Church that record keeping and journal writing has become a duty of every member. One later prophet expressed the idea bluntly when he said, “Every person should keep a journal and every person *can* keep a journal. It should be an enlightening one and should bring great blessings and happiness to families. If there is anyone here who isn’t doing so, will you repent today and change—change your life?”<sup>19</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Jessee, “The Writing of Joseph Smith’s History,” 473. He concludes with this statement, and this article was a tremendous resource, especially the footnotes. He got this quote from *Deseret News*, vol. 7 (20 January, 1858): 363.

<sup>19</sup> Spencer W. Kimball, *Ensign*, May 1979: 84.

With this heavy of an emphasis on history keeping and record keeping it should come as no surprise that a portion of Joseph's history eventually became a part of Church canon. The endorsement to the *Manuscript History* was written in 1858, and twenty-two years later the portion now titled *Joseph Smith—History* was canonized. The question then becomes which part of that history became scripture and what is the story of just the canonized portion? The story of the canonized portion should begin with one of Joseph's scribes, James Mulholland.

### **James Mulholland: Scribe of the Canonized Portion of the *Manuscript History***

James Mulholland probably had no idea at the time that he wrote that the words that fell from his pen would one day be considered sacred scripture. Today his text is quoted by high school students of the faith, missionaries who proselytize for that organization and even young children who attend their Primary and Sunday school programs. James Mulholland scribed the initial 59 pages of the *Manuscript History*,<sup>20</sup> and from those 59 pages portions were assembled together to create *Joseph Smith—History* as found in *The Pearl of Great Price*.

Mulholland had no special pedigree as a writer or as a historian; though it appears he liked to write. He was a simple man in many ways, and was just beginning his associations with the prophet and the Church when he died at the early age of thirty-five. Due to his short time in the Church there is not a lot of information available about him, but there are a few resources that help us to better understand who he was. One of those scant writings comes from R. B. Thompson, the next clerk that takes up the history after Mulholland dies. Oddly enough, he too had a very short appointment as clerk as he too suffered an unexpected and early death. But a few months before Thompson's death, and after Mulholland's death, he published a free verse

<sup>20</sup> Jessee, "The Writing of Joseph Smith's History," 473. He concludes with this statement, and this article was a tremendous resource, especially the footnotes. He got this quote from *Deseret News*, vol. 7 (20 January, 1858): 363. See table on p. 441. It does a good job of breaking down the principal writers of the pages.

poem written by James Mulholland. There is a lot that can be gleaned concerning Mulholland from his literary prose, like his love for freedom and the United States, his devotion to God, and his wearied frustration at the mobs that would not let him practice his religion in peace. His attempts at prose are a rich source for learning more about the man, but perhaps not as rich as Thompson's short preface he included before the poem. It gives some valuable summarizing information. The following is the entirety of the preface:

James Mulholland, the author of the following poem, was a native of Ireland, and was descended from a respectable family; but for his attachments to free institutions, he left the land of his forefathers and emigrated to the United States.

He was educated in the Roman Catholic religion to which he had a very strong attachment, until he heard the Elders of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints preach, when he was fully convinced of the errors of the "Mother Church," and became obedient to the gospel. Soon after which, he removed to Missouri, and shared in all the trials and persecutions which the church had to suffer while in that State.

Some time after his removal to Illinois, he composed the following poem; but before he could publish it, death put a period to his mortal career.

As a tribute of respect to departed worth, and thinking there were many sentiments in it worthy of notice; and as it told a tale of suffering and woe in a manner somewhat new and interesting, I have been induced to give it publicity.<sup>21</sup>

Mulholland was born in 1804. That would have made him and Joseph very close in age. When Joseph left for Washington, D. C. Mulholland died shortly after in November of 1839, perhaps from the deadly malaria that had been spreading in the area of Commerce. Being laid low by the sickness Mulholland made his way to Emma Smith's house, where many of the sick were cared for. There he died merely two weeks after his last entry in Joseph's Minutes book. Concerning his clerk the prophet Joseph said the following: "My clerk, James Mulholland, died

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<sup>21</sup>James Mulholland, *An Address to Americans: A Poem in Blank Verse*, (Nauvoo, IL: E. Robison, 1841): preface. L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University (Provo, UT).

on Nov. 3<sup>rd</sup>. 1839 while I was absent.... He was a man of fine education, and a faithful scribe and Elder in the Church.”<sup>22</sup>

B. H. Roberts adds more insight into how well loved Mulholland must have been by Joseph when he added this footnote to the *History of the Church* where it records Joseph’s feelings about the death. “Mulholland street in Nauvoo was named in honor of this worthy man. It ran east and west on the south side of the Temple block, and became the principal business street of the city....”<sup>23</sup>

Mulholland began writing for the prophet on Monday, September 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1838.<sup>24</sup> He was newly married to Sarah Scott, their wedding day occurring on February 8<sup>th</sup>, 1838 in Far West, Missouri. The last two years of his life must have felt like a whirlwind. He was newly converted, newly married, suffered through the expulsion from Missouri, ordained a seventy,<sup>25</sup> newly acquainted and befriended by the prophet Joseph Smith, hired and appointed as his clerk, and scribed from the most mundane of things<sup>26</sup> for the Church to what many of the Church would one day consider the most fantastic, even revelations and the history of the Church. A great deal happened to him in a relatively short amount of time.

Mulholland began writing during a critical time in Missouri. His task to keep Joseph’s daily doings was extremely difficult, and what added more to the challenge is that he and George Robinson were sharing the duty. The lines of who held responsibility for what seemed to have been blurred. This seems especially evident with the history itself. George Robinson began the work, but Mulholland rewrote what Robinson had written and continued from there. Mix in the

<sup>22</sup> Joseph Smith, *Journal History*, CR 100 102, vol. 10, (21 February, 1840–3 April, 1840): 159.

<sup>23</sup> *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 4: 89.

<sup>24</sup> Joseph Smith journal, September–October, 1838.

<sup>25</sup> He was ordained on 28 Dec. 1838.

<sup>26</sup> He would scribe deeds, official appointments, etc. for the prophet.

tense political stirrings of that time and Joseph's overloaded schedule, and it makes Mulholland's first writings understandable. The journal he kept was bare-boned, and it does not reflect properly what was occurring. For example, in early October the De Witt Mormons were under siege by a group of anti-Mormons. Joseph organized two small companies of men that left from Far West to go and aid those troubled Saints.<sup>27</sup> Mulholland records that on October 5<sup>th</sup> he "did not see him (speaking of Joseph Smith) all the afternoon, understood that he went from home."<sup>28</sup> Then he wrote underneath the entry a dateline for the next day. According to the pattern in the rest of the journal it seems that he expected to see Joseph the next day. But a round trip to De Witt and back would have taken over one day. This example illustrates that Mulholland did not know all that was brewing and likely had enough going on in his immediate vicinity to occupy his attention.<sup>29</sup> It also shows that Joseph did not confer with him often on the happenings of the Church, at least not at this time. His writings were almost strictly observational, as evidenced by the journal entries. The journal ceases shortly after because of the imprisonment of Joseph Smith and Mulholland's expulsion from Missouri.

Joseph's trust of Mulholland evidently grew after his Liberty Jail experience. The prophet's stay in Liberty Jail had changed him, and he seemed more determined to accomplish the Lord's work than ever before. Mulholland, though not acting as scribe for Joseph had been a support for Emma, Joseph's wife, during those difficult months he had spent in jail. Emma and Mulholland had together charged a thief that had stolen one of Joseph's rings, and combined

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<sup>27</sup>See Leland H. Gentry and Todd M. Compton, *Fire and Sword: A History of the Latter-day Saints in Northern Missouri, 1836-39*, (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2011): 196-201.

<sup>28</sup> Joseph Smith journal, September–October, 1838.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. It should be noted that the "Historical Introduction" located online with the journal makes this same observation that Joseph was not apprising his clerk of his happenings at that time.  
<http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/journal-september-october-1838>

again to save the translation that Joseph had done of the Bible. Probably more than anything else Mulholland's watch care over Joseph's family during his absence had won his trust.

Mulholland, along with many of the Saints, had been driven out of Missouri and had found refuge in Quincy, Illinois. It was there that he was reunited with Joseph, and it was there that Joseph rehired him as scribe. Though Joseph never implicitly stated that he had grown to trust and rely on Mulholland, it is manifest through the prophet's actions. As the weeks progressed Joseph loaded Mulholland with many important tasks, like the letter book, and the 1839 minute book. But then came what could be termed as Mulholland's crowning moment. On June 11<sup>th</sup>, 1839, Joseph records: "I commenced dictating my history for my Clerk—James Mulholland, to write."<sup>30</sup> Mulholland also wrote in his own journal, one he kept in the back of the 1838 attempt of a journal for Joseph, a corresponding explanation of June 11<sup>th</sup>. He wrote: "writing &c for Church history."<sup>31</sup>

This may be the greatest illustration of how the trust of Joseph Smith for Mulholland had grown. Joseph switched which scribe would write the history. His dictation of the history had started a year before with George Robinson acting as scribe. In *The Scriptorial Book of Joseph Smith Jr.*<sup>32</sup> Robinson records: "Friday April the 27<sup>th</sup> 1838. This day was chiefly spent in writing a history of this Church from the earliest perion (SIC) (period) of its existance up to this date, By Presidents, Joseph Smith Jr & Sidney Rigdon, myself also engaged in keeping this record."<sup>33</sup> He

<sup>30</sup> Joseph Smith, *Manuscript History of the Church*, C-1: 954. See also Joseph Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1948), 7 vols., 3:375.

<sup>31</sup> James Mulholland diary.

<sup>32</sup> See Joseph Smith journal, March–September 1838: 15. This was another name given for the journal.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 34. (SIC) Parentheses used to clarify what the word seemed to be intended to be, or perhaps even was but it was difficult to determine.

also indicates that they worked on the history on April 30, May 1-4.<sup>34</sup> But then more tumultuous times interrupted the progress and it was not begun again until Mulholland started writing it in June 1839.

Robinson was still employed as a clerk at this point, and was not released from those duties until October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1840 so that he could move to Iowa. Later he apostatized.<sup>35</sup> Though the reasons are not clear as to why Joseph felt the need to not use Robinson any longer, Mulholland had won his trust enough to take over the all important task of writing the Church's history.

Mulholland began the work in earnest. This is gathered by the amount of days he spent on the project and the amount of pages completed. During his short tenure he wrote 59 pages of the history while maintaining his other numerous responsibilities—copying out letters for the letter book<sup>36</sup>, keeping the minutes book, writing up deeds and other more formal documents, and working around Joseph's busy schedule.<sup>37</sup>

The work began by copying the history already done by Robinson into a new notebook. This helps to explain the dating given in the history. On page one of the *Manuscript History* it claims that this was being written on the “eighth year since the organization of said Church.”<sup>38</sup> On page eight a second date is given, “this day, being the Second day of May, One thousand Eight hundred and thirty eight.”<sup>39</sup> The manuscript written by Robinson has never been found, and consequently it is unclear how many pages Joseph actually dictated to him. At least the first eight pages were done by May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1838. In other words it took to the fourth day to write out the

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid, 37–38.

<sup>35</sup> Jessee, “The Writing of Joseph Smith's History,” 450.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, 464, footnote 83. He wrote 73 pages in the Letter Book.

<sup>37</sup> This time he would even travel with the prophet at times to keep up his duties as clerk.

<sup>38</sup> Joseph Smith, *Manuscript History of the Church*, A-1: 1.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 8.



first eight pages. Probably not a significant amount more was written in the last two days he lists out as having worked on the history given the time constraints and the busy schedule of the prophet. After Mulholland finished copying those pages done by Robinson, the process of Joseph dictating his history while Mulholland wrote it all down began. It continued at a comparatively good pace until the untimely death of James Mulholland.

But Mulholland had accomplished what no other scribe or clerk before had been able to do. The amount written in the history was a tremendous step forward and far exceeded any previous attempts. Even more remarkable was the amount of time he took to accomplish the task. In five short months he accomplished more than the combined clerks before him had accomplished in nine years with the History of the Church.

Mulholland's contribution to the history was important, and so too were the environment and circumstances of 1838-1839.

### **Possible Influences of 1838-1839 on *Joseph Smith—History***

“ ‘...Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake; rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so persecuted they the Prophets which were before you.’ Now, dear brethren, if any men ever had reason to claim this promise, we are the men!”<sup>40</sup> Joseph wrote these words while imprisoned in Liberty Jail in a general letter to the members in Caldwell County. The years of 1838 and 1839 were some of the most painful the Church had endured. The people of Missouri were in a state of paranoia, member and non-member. The Latter-day Saints were driven out of Missouri and their cries to the government for redress fell on deaf ears. The

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<sup>40</sup> Joseph Smith, letter to the church in Caldwell County, Missouri, 16 Dec. 1838, 3. Joseph Smith Collection, LDS Church Archives, Church History Library (Salt Lake City, UT).

leadership of the Church was fractured; the organization was in serious debt; and their prophet's standing was being questioned. The Prophet Joseph Smith's life was grooved deeply by these trying years. But what about the history? Was there any impact from those tumultuous times on Mulholland's text?

This thesis would argue that the transpiring events of 1838 and 1839 helped to mold and shape the text, and evidence of this influence can be seen throughout it.

### **The Paranoia of Missouri in 1838-1839**

The Mormon Missouri conflict was in part a product of paranoia on both sides. While there were many contributing factors to this smear on history, it was a classic case of action out of fear. Rumors swirled through those difficult years, and were treated as verities. Actions on both sides were viewed with suspicion. One scholar wrote, "The rapid influx of Mormons alarmed the older settlers, especially those who had purchased land or town lots in areas they hoped to develop into prosperous communities. John Corrill reported that the Mormon settlement at Diahman 'stirred up the people of Davies in some degree, [because] they saw that if this town was built up rapidly it would injure Gallatin, their county seat....' In addition, once the Saints moved into a neighborhood, property values would decline because non-Mormons refused to settle there."<sup>41</sup> This quotation addresses one of the major sources of fear perpetuated in 1838, and one that held some truth. The political climate was changing rapidly and becoming quite tense. Both sides propagated rumors concerning the situation.

"Anderson Wilson, a Clay County resident, claimed that after the Mormons got a foothold in a neighborhood by buying out one settler, 'they would harang (SIC) the rest away &

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<sup>41</sup> See Stephen C. LeSueur, *The 1838 Mormon War in Missouri*, (Columbia: University of Missouri Press): 34. Though I do not agree with all of LeSueur's conclusions, I do feel he did an excellent job with his research.

get theirs at their own price.”<sup>42</sup> This is an example of the exaggerations of the time. There were other such exaggerations that were stretched by the Missourians until it sometimes became difficult to see where it actually began. But the perception was very real, and in the minds of a people perception is truth. County meetings, concerned citizens, and even legislature met to discuss the problem the Mormons presented as the paranoia rose to unprecedented heights. The paranoia of non-member Missourians culminated in the “Extermination Order” issued from Governor Boggs and the resultant expulsion of the Mormons from the state.

Alternatively, the Mormons’ paranoia was just as evident. One example is the assembly of the Danites and the teachings of Dr. Avard. One scholar, Leland H. Gentry, captures the membership’s fear nicely when he wrote, “The Saints believed that, if they were faithful, the Lord would protect them in time of war. Avard took advantage of this principle and taught his followers that, if they would obey the Lord in all things, they would be invincible in battle.... Avard eloquently pictured to his followers ‘a great glory that was then hovering over the Church, and would soon burst upon the Saints as a cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night.’ ... In addition to skillfully using LDS concepts to serve his own ends, Avard also implied that the First Presidency gave unqualified support to his activities. Owing to the group’s secrecy and the severe penalties for breaking silence, dubious members of the order did not, apparently, investigate the validity of Avard’s claims.”<sup>43</sup> Avard taught that they were going to be forced to defend the Church by bloodshed. Upon learning the true activities of the Danites and Avard, Joseph Smith denounced them while in prison in December of 1838.<sup>44</sup> But the damage had already been done. Avard was successful on preying upon the fears of the Saints and enhancing

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Gentry and Compton: 233.

<sup>44</sup> Joseph Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 3: 231. See also Jessee, *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*: 380.

the general paranoia felt by them. This is only one small example. The Saints were also guilty of fanning the flames of the paranoia in sermons, rumors, politics, and economic practices.

While the Mormon War of 1838<sup>45</sup> was terrible, many of the events that occurred during that time were sensationalized. One death would become 20, six burned down properties would become a whole city, and the verbal sparring reached ridiculous claims. Each claim was usually founded in truth, but the paranoia of the times accelerated the conflict to tragic consequences.

The affect of that very paranoia can be seen in the text of *Joseph Smith—History*. The first sentence Joseph dictates makes the following claim concerning the reason the history is being written at that time. “Owing to the *many reports* which have been put in circulation... I have been induced to write this history, to disabuse the public mind.”<sup>46</sup>

In none of the previous attempts at a history was this listed as a reason for writing the history, at least not in those currently in possession. The historical attempts that we actually have simply began with an explanation that this was a history of Joseph Smith. For example, his first attempt at a history began in the following way; “A History of the life of Joseph Smith Jr. an account of his marvilous (SIC) experience and of all the mighty acts which he doeth in the name of Jesus Ch[r]ist the son of the living God of whom he beareth record and also an account of the rise of the church of Christ in the eve of time according as the Lord brough<t> forth and

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<sup>45</sup> What was presented in this thesis is merely a skimming of the events to help represent the paranoia of 1838 and the Mormon Missouri War. For some great works on the topic please see Gentry and Compton, *Fire and Sword: A History of the Latter-day Saints in Northern Missouri, 1836-1839*; Alex Baugh, *A Call to Arms: The 1838 Mormon Defense of Northern Missouri*; Stephen C. LeSueur, *The 1838 Mormon War in Missouri*; and a nice collection of essays entitled *The Missouri Mormon Experience*, ed. by Thomas M. Spencer (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 2010).

<sup>46</sup> Joseph Smith, *Manuscript History of the Church*, A-1: 1. Also see *Joseph Smith—History* 1:1. Italics added for emphasis.

established by his hand...”<sup>47</sup> This was a new reason for the history, one in addition to the fact that God had mandated it.

One may suppose that the “many reports” spoken of in the Mulholland text was a natural result to the rumor mongering of the times.

Later on in the text he seems to more clearly recall the reports being made about himself, identifying them for the reader. When Joseph dictated the account of first sharing his encounter with deity with a certain priest of another faith, he reports; “...he treated my communication not only lightly, but with great contempt, saying it was all of the devil, that there was no such thing as visions and revelations in these days; that all such things had ceased with the apostles, and that there would never be any more of them. I soon found, however, that my telling the story had excited a great deal of prejudice against me among the professors of religion, and was the cause of great persecution, which continued to increase; and though I was only an obscure boy... yet men of high standing would take notice sufficient to excite the public mind against me...”<sup>48</sup> In another section he dictated that many were, “speaking all manner of evil against me falsely...”<sup>49</sup> He even identifies some of the false reports. An example, “Hence arose the very prevalent story of my having been a money-digger.”<sup>50</sup> But perhaps his strongest claim comes towards the end of his canonized history; “...and rumor with her thousand tongues was all the time employed in circulating falsehoods about my father’s family, and about myself. If I were to relate a

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<sup>47</sup> Jessee, *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 9–10.

<sup>48</sup> *Joseph Smith—History* 1:21–22.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.* v. 28.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.* v. 56.

thousandth part of them, it would fill up volumes.”<sup>51</sup> In total there are nine instances within the canonized text that address the issue of the “many reports.”

While these may just have naturally come by giving a more detailed account of a history than previous, it seems likely that his circumstances at the time of the dictation made the more ancient “false reports” fresher in his mind. After all, he was writing to “disabuse the public mind” of the many lies that were spreading.

Paranoia created a devastating rumor mill in Missouri for the Saints and whether Joseph recognized it or not, it seems to have affected his dictation of his history to James Mulholland. The history was no longer just about keeping a record, it was also about creating what he considered an accurate account in contrast to the false accounts.

### **Expulsion from Missouri and the Failed Attempts for Redress in 1838-1839**

During the mob activities of 1838-1839 the Saints sought aid from the government. Their claims were just, and yet no aid seemed to be forthcoming. Their actual expulsion from Missouri was hard felt by every member of the Church. Instead of redress the governor of the land issued the death knell for the members’ properties and livelihoods in Missouri. In a letter Governor Boggs wrote to General Clark, he summarized the terms of his extermination order; “The case is now a very plain one, the Mormons must be subdued and peace restored to the community. You will therefore proceed without delay to execute the former orders; full confidence is reposed in your ability to do so. Your force will be amply sufficient to accomplish the object. Should you need the aid of artillery, I would suggest that an application be made to the Commanding Officer of Ft. Leavenworth for such as you may need. You are authorized to request the use of it in the

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid. v. 61.

name of the State of Missouri.... The ringleaders of this rebellion should be made an example of, and if it should become necessary for the public peace, the Mormons should be exterminated or expelled from the State.”<sup>52</sup> Shortly thereafter the Mormons were driven from the State.

In this difficult time Joseph was thrown into the dungeon of Liberty Jail. He heard of the terrible plight of the members, and wanted to offer comfort to them in some way. He wrote a letter and assured the Church body that they were still in God’s favor. He used the Savior’s eighth beatitude found in Matthew 5:10-12 to comfort the suffering Saints.<sup>53</sup> “Blessed are they who are persecuted for righteousness sake.” Then he went on to teach in that same letter that their persecutions were indicators that what they were doing was good, and of God’s will. That they were not being persecuted for wickedness sake, but because they were Christ’s Church!

Logically, the prophet would not count persecution alone as proof of righteousness, and especially not of correctness. But in the face of the difficulties the Mormons were experiencing this thought helped to ease the pains of 1838-1839, both for himself and for the Saints. It also served as a means of answering the doubts that some had at that time. In particular, some members began to wonder why so much persecution happened to them if they were doing God’s will. Perhaps he hoped that his use of the scriptures tied with his words of condemnation for the persecutors would spark faith and hope in those dark times.

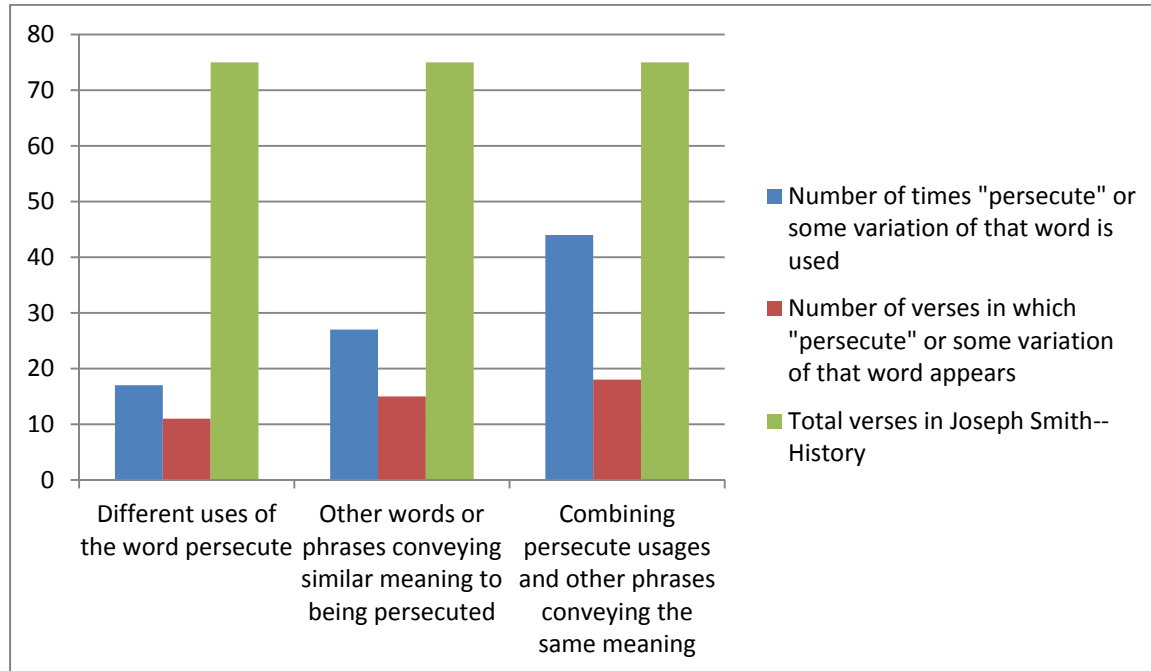
This mindset of the beatitudes seems to be reflected in the text of *Joseph Smith--History*. It is astounding to see how often the word ‘persecute,’ or some form of that word, is used in the text. Even more astounding when similar phrases that convey a similar meaning are added to the

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<sup>52</sup> Governor Lilburn Boggs, “Letter to John B. Clark, 1 November, 1830,” in *History of the Church*, 3: 192.

<sup>53</sup> Joseph Smith, letter to the church in Caldwell County, Missouri, 16 Dec. 1838: 3.

total. The following table is an effort to illustrate, numerically, the prevalence of this theme in the history he wrote.



Different variations of the word ‘persecute’ are used 17 times throughout the 75 verses comprising JSH. This is significant because this is the same word used in the gospel of Matthew. Other words or phrases that convey a similar connotation of the word ‘persecute’ are found 27 times throughout the text. Bringing the total times the idea of persecution is found in the text to 44. That is a lot considering the text is only a dozen pages in length.

Of the 75 verses, 11 of them directly use a form of the word ‘persecute.’ That means 15% of *Joseph Smith—History* relays the idea of adversity for truth’s sake. Combine the other similar words or phrases with those 11, and the number of verses rises slightly to 18. That is 24% of the verses, almost a full fourth of the text.



In consequence of this evidence it would seem that the persecutions of 1838-1839 were weighing heavily on the mind of Joseph at the time the canonized portion of the official history was penned. The environment of the time touched the dictation of the history. It is important to note that the previous attempts at a history have nowhere near the same percentages of using the theme of persecution, and some are completely devoid of it.

### **1838-1839: Fractured leadership, Heavy Debt, and the Claims that Joseph was a Fallen Prophet**

Perhaps the most difficult source of persecution for Joseph was from members of the Church, and more crushingly, from those he considered friends. At first persecution had been mostly from non-member influences. But starting in 1837, things started to go awry. Several factors contributed to the fractious period of 1838, but the catalyst was debt. Land speculation, debt from the construction of the Kirtland temple and surrounding area, debt from the publications of the Church, and wealthy saints not sufficiently contributing to the Church were the main reasons for the Church's financial woes. But what compounded them all was the failure of the Kirtland Safety Society, basically an attempt at a Mormon bank. This bank failure ravaged the Church. The result was a full blown money crisis.<sup>54</sup> Many laid the blame squarely on Joseph Smith's shoulders, and the leadership of the Church started to crack under the pressure of financial ruin.

On January 9<sup>th</sup>, 1837, the bank had been started<sup>55</sup> as a means to settle the debt that the Church had incurred in building the temple and other ventures. The prophet promised success based on the faithfulness of the Saints. The Panic of February 1837 complicated matters, the

<sup>54</sup> See Mark Lyman Staker, *Hearken, O Ye People: The Historical Setting of Joseph Smith's Ohio Revelations* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2009). Especially see Chapters 30–35.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid*, xxix for quick reference, or 479-480 for a more detailed accounting of its opening.

greed of some members involved made it a doomed project, and the organized runs on the bank by anti-Mormons sped the banks downfall. Throughout the experience Joseph continually warned against the lack of faith he felt was being demonstrated. By November of 1837 the Kirtland Safety Society had utterly failed.

Rumors began to swirl from within the leadership that Joseph Smith was a fallen prophet. And the first apostates surfaced. John Farnham Boynton, one of the original members of the Quorum of the Twelve, was dismissed in 1837. He never returned to the Church. One author wrote, "...as financial speculation engulfed much of Kirtland, John became embroiled in an enticing scheme of trafficking merchandise for quick wealth.... Failure of the Kirtland Safety Society bank became the scapegoat for John's neglect to repay his debts. Clinging to his personal gains, he feigned losses in the speculative venture. According to Aroet Hale, 'The Prophet Joseph Smith called on him for money. He had the money but refused. This was a turning point in his life.'"<sup>56</sup> Boynton's betrayal was one of the first of this tumultuous time period. He was among the first to claim that Joseph was a fallen prophet, and he began to mingle with a group of some 20 to 30 disaffected men who were starting a reformed version of the Church.<sup>57</sup> In September of 1837 he was removed from the apostleship, then reinstated, and removed once again in December of 1837. He was officially excommunicated on April 12<sup>th</sup>, 1838.<sup>58</sup> He seemed to be a large part of the reason Joseph received the hurried revelation on January 12<sup>th</sup> 1838<sup>59</sup> that directed Joseph to flee from that area. Boynton had displayed some violent tendencies, and even tried to take the temple and Joseph by force with pistols and bowie knives.<sup>60</sup> The Lord revealed

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<sup>56</sup> Susan Easton Black, *Who's Who in the Doctrine and Covenants* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1997): 33.

<sup>57</sup> Staker: 550–551.

<sup>58</sup> Black: 34.

<sup>59</sup> Staker: xxxi.

<sup>60</sup> Black: 33–34.

the following to Joseph and Sidney Rigdon. They were to “take their families as soon as it is practicable, and a door is open for them, and moove (SIC) to the west, as fast as the way is made plain before their faces.”<sup>61</sup> That very night Joseph and Rigdon left town without the general knowledge of Kirtland to head for Missouri. Joseph hoped for reprieve from the troubles that had begun among the members in Kirtland. But the New Year would prove to be the beginning of two betrayal-ridden years. Boynton was merely a precursor of what awaited him in the near future.

Eight of the remaining eleven apostles would either apostatize or waiver concerning Joseph in the beginning manuscript stage of the history, the first half of 1838. The three loyal apostles were Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, and Orson Pratt. They had not wavered during those two years of 1838 and 1839.<sup>62</sup> Three other members of the Twelve wavered temporarily against Joseph. Their betrayals were painful, but they returned to loyalty shortly thereafter. The three who wavered temporarily were David W. Patten,<sup>63</sup> Orson Hyde, and Parley P. Pratt. Three others were excommunicated but would later in life, after these two tumultuous years, return to activity to the Church. These were Thomas B. Marsh, Luke S. Johnson, and William Smith.<sup>64</sup> Two others would, like Boynton, become bitter enemies against the Church—William McLellan and Lyman E. Johnson.

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<sup>61</sup> Jessee, *The Papers of Joseph Smith*, 2:255.

<sup>62</sup> Orson Pratt did have a time of wavering, but it was not during these difficult years. He was excommunicated on August 20, 1842, and readmitted January 20, 1843. He would never leave the Church again, and was loyal to Joseph and the Church from that point on.

<sup>63</sup> David W. Patten would become the first martyr for the Church in 1838 during the Battle at Crooked River during the Missouri Mormon War.

<sup>64</sup> While William was brought back into full membership he continued to have a very rocky relationship with the Church. He would later get excommunicated again after Joseph’s death in 1845 and would never return again.

But this was not the full extent of the fallout. The members of the Stake Presidency in Missouri, trusted friends of Joseph, were excommunicated in February 1838.<sup>65</sup> It was during this time period that Joseph's trusted companions that had helped him with translating the Book of Mormon also fell away. Of the eight witnesses that bore testimony that they had actually seen and held the golden plates only six were alive at that time. Of those six half apostatized from the Church before 1838 had ended.<sup>66</sup> All three special witnesses to the Book of Mormon fell away during this time also.<sup>67</sup> They had written a statement that they had not only seen the plates, but that an angel had shown the artifact to them, and testified to them that the record Joseph was translating was true. While none of these eleven witnesses ever denied their testimonies of the Book of Mormon, they all felt that Joseph was a fallen prophet. Oliver Cowdery, Martin Harris,<sup>68</sup> and David Whitmer were some of Joseph's closest friends. It could be that these were the most painful of the betrayals.

These years of apostasy led to an estimated 10-15% of the membership being lost.<sup>69</sup> But the toll to the leadership of the Church was a much higher percentage. And the betrayals were not just emotionally damaging to Joseph. The membership and Joseph suffered greatly from their hands in very tangible ways. Leland H. Gentry, a respected scholar who has done extensive research on that time period, makes the following observation: "One of the most devastating blows to the Mormon cause was that supplied by an affidavit from Thomas B. Marsh, an apostle

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<sup>65</sup> David Whitmer, W.W. Phelps, and John Whitmer.

<sup>66</sup> Jacob Whitmer, John Whitmer of the Stake Presidency in Missouri, and Hiram Page.

<sup>67</sup> Richard L. Anderson, *Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1981).

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.* Martin actually fell away in September of 1837, and excommunicated the last week of December 1837. He claimed later in life that he never left the Church but the Church left him. But Joseph felt the effects of his lost friend when Martin did not join the Kirtland camp that came to Missouri in July of 1838. To make matters worse, he had joined with Parrish's church in Kirtland and in its 1838 articles was named one of that church's three trustees. This was a difficult blow to Joseph.

<sup>69</sup> Milton V. Bachman, "A Warning from Kirtland," *Ensign* (April 1989). He says 13% and gives the figures of 150 out of 475 families.

who secretly left Far West on the night of October 20 with Apostle Orson Hyde shortly after Marsh's return from Adam-ondi-Ahman. Marsh had been at odds with the Church for some time. Orson Hyde, as it later developed, was "sick with a violent fever of some sort," which might serve to excuse his actions somewhat. The importance of their testimony, particularly its effect on Boggs's final decision, cannot be overstated. Written by Marsh, a high Mormon official<sup>70</sup>, it fastened in the public mind concepts already placed there by lies and exaggerations."<sup>71</sup> This quote helps in showing just how the betrayals caused not only Joseph, but the whole Church, to suffer great persecution. Marsh was not the only one to undermine the Church in this way. Other leaders also signed affidavits, like W.W. Phelps, while still others printed negatively against the prophet in newspaper, like Oliver Cowdery.<sup>72</sup> These efforts combined to stir up the mobs against the Church, and to give those mobs government backing. These betrayals propelled the expulsion of the Saints and forged the chains for Joseph's worst prison experience in Liberty Jail.

In an almost uncharacteristic moment, Joseph unleashes his anger at the fractured leadership and the dissenters' claims that he had become a fallen prophet. While imprisoned he endured harsh and inhumane treatment. He wrote the following in a letter to the general membership on December 16<sup>th</sup>, 1838: "... and in fine, we have waded through an ocean of tribulation and mean abuse, practiced upon us by the ill bred and the ignorant, such as Hinkle, Corrill, Phelps, Avard, Reed Peck, Cleminson, and various others,... Such characters as McLellin, John Whitmer, Oliver Cowdery, and Martin Harris, are too mean to mention; and we had liked to have forgotten them. Marsh and 'another,' whose hearts are full of corruption... who after having escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of their Lord and Savior

<sup>70</sup> He was President of the Quorum of the Twelve.

<sup>71</sup> Gentry and Compton: 290.

<sup>72</sup> Leland Homer Gentry, *A History of the Latter-day Saints in Northern Missouri from 1836 to 1839* (PhD diss., Brigham Young University, 1965).

Jesus Christ, became again entangled and overcome.... But it has happened unto them according to the word of the Scripture: ‘The dog has returned to his vomit, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.’”<sup>73</sup> This letter is hard evidence of just how deeply the fractured friendships were cutting Joseph.

Obviously these writings were emotionally charged. The difficulties he was experiencing in jail, and that his loved ones were experiencing as they were driven out of their homes in the cold winter months, had taken a toll on him. His wife and children were driven out of home in the middle of a snowstorm while he was stuck in prison. It was only a few short months after this painful and emotional experience that he dictated anew to Mulholland. And it was shortly after many of the painful betrayals that he began dictating to Robinson. In such extreme situations the environment can lay a heavy hand on any written document.

The effects of these betrayals seem to exist in the *Manuscript History*—though their touch on the text seems to be much more understated than the previous two examples. Perhaps this is simply because Joseph lumps these betrayals in with the general persecutions he was receiving. His beginning explanation on why he was writing the statement, “Owing to the many reports which have been put in circulation by evil-disposed and designing persons....”<sup>74</sup> can be just as easily placed in the context of those that had been members of the Church and betrayed him, as it is in the context of the Missourians that sought to prove his fraudulence. In essence, both groups could be classified as “evil-disposed and designing.” But it is important to point out that the betrayals seem heavier in the prophet’s mind than the persecutions of the non-member.

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<sup>73</sup> Joseph Smith, letter to the church in Caldwell County, Missouri, 16 Dec. 1838: 6.

<sup>74</sup> Joseph Smith, *Manuscript History of the Church*, A-1: 1. Also see *Joseph Smith—History* 1:1.

Joseph's before quoted December 16<sup>th</sup> letter places them in the same category, but his anger and disappointment is steeper in regards to those that had apostatized from the Church.

In the beginning paragraph of the letter he hails the Saints as those “who are persecuted, and made desolate, and are afflicted in divers manners for Christ's sake and the Gospel's, by the hands of a cruel mob and the tyrannical disposition of the authorities of this state; and whose perils are greatly augmented by the wickedness and corruption of false brethren.”<sup>75</sup> The rest of the letter seems to corroborate those feelings. The persecution received by the mobs and the state of Missouri were taxing, but those persecutions were “greatly augmented” by the betrayals. Therefore, it would make sense to think on some of those mentions of persecution in the manuscript as general trials at the hands of unbelievers that were exasperated by former practicing members.

In the text itself there seems to be only one section that reflects his frustration with former friends. It is found, as an interjection, and seems to have a correlation with what would have been his current circumstances in 1838-1839. “During the space of time which intervened between the time I had the vision and the year Eighteen hundred and twenty three, (having been forbidden to join any of the religious sects of the day, and being of very tender years, and persecuted by those who ought to have been my friends, and to have treated me kindly and if they supposed me to be deluded to have endeavoured (SIC) in a proper and affectionate manner to have reclaimed me) I was left...”<sup>76</sup> The parentheses portion of the manuscript could give a sliver of insight into Joseph's feelings at the time, especially in light of his recent experiences with his former friends.

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<sup>75</sup> Joseph Smith, letter to the church in Caldwell County, Missouri, 16 Dec. 1838: 1.

<sup>76</sup> Joseph Smith, *Manuscript History of the Church*, A-1: 4–5. Also see *Joseph Smith—History* 1:28.

The bitter break between Joseph and Oliver Cowdery provides an excellent example. His once friend now viewed Joseph as an enemy. This can be seen in the following example: “It is expected that Smith and Rigdon will come here to live, and it will be my endeavor to seek a location for myself and friends somewhere else.”<sup>77</sup> Cowdery wrote this in 1838 shortly before Joseph’s arrival to Caldwell County. Instead of reaching out to Joseph to help “reclaim” him, he turned to spreading falsehoods about him. He mentioned in public needing to speak with Joseph in private about matters, but in private letters like this one, made it clear that he had no such intention. Further, when the opportunity to meet with Joseph came, he did not take it.<sup>78</sup>

But the *Manuscript History* was not written as a narration of his then current circumstances. Consequently the text cannot be used to directly give insight on 1838, but that does not rule out that the difficulties of 1838 colored his dictation of his previous history. While the text does not discuss the internal struggles of leadership, it undoubtedly stirred his greater recognition of persecution throughout his history.

The 1838 fractured leadership also served to produce a more clarified claim on his call as prophet. The original mandate in 1830 gave this as one of the chief purposes of the History, but this particular attempt better achieves this than any of the other history attempts by emphasizing his call and including revelation experiences all throughout. These recorded experiences came in two main types: descriptions of revelations and written words dictated to the prophet by divine means.

In light of the number of members lost because of the claims that Joseph was a “fallen prophet,” it makes sense that this particular dictation would be more focused on establishing Joseph as called of God. Notice the number of evidences that are bundled together to witness that

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<sup>77</sup> Gentry: 48.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid. The entire section he wrote on the Church trial of Oliver Cowdery is excellent.



Joseph was a prophet; a charismatic experience with God the Father and Jesus Christ, multiple angelic ministrations, a specific call to a specific work, the receiving of sacred and holy artifacts, the power to translate an ancient record verified through secular means, the authority to add additional scripture, the reception of God’s authority to act in His name also known as the priesthood. This is not intended to be an exhaustive list of evidences found in the canonized version of *Joseph Smith—History*. But these are significant evidences, and the evidences multiply when the full 59 pages written by James Mulholland are examined. All of this was written in 1838-1839. This list is included in this thesis to show how much more exhaustive in evidences this particular text is than any of the previous history attempts. Perhaps the conditions of 1838-1839 made the following content of the 1830 mandate much more relevant and crucial to its purpose: “and in it thou shalt be called a seer, a translator, a prophet, an apostle of Jesus Christ, and elder of the church...”<sup>79</sup> And whether it is intentional, or unintentional, Joseph lends a few “I am qualified for this in ways that no one else is” statements to the text he dictated.

Concerning his yearly angelic ministrations from the angel Moroni Joseph dictated the following, “Accordingly as I had been commanded I went at the end of each year, and at each time I found the same messenger there and received instruction and intelligence from him at each of our interviews respecting what the Lord was going to do, and how and in what manner his kingdom was to be conducted in the last days.”<sup>80</sup> In another place the text is careful to point out the difference between Oliver Cowdery and Joseph Smith. The setting is the portion that describes the restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood and their subsequent baptisms. “Immediately upon our coming up out of the water after we had been baptized we experienced great and glorious blessings from our Heavenly Father. No sooner had I baptized Oliver Cowdery than the

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<sup>79</sup> D&C 21:1.

<sup>80</sup> Joseph Smith, *Manuscript History of the Church*, A-1: 7. Also see *Joseph Smith—History* 1:54.

Holy Ghost fell upon him and he stood and prophecied (SIC) many things which should shortly come to pass: And again so soon as I had been baptized by him, I also had the Spirit of Prophecy, when standing up I prophecied *concerning the rise of this Church, and many other things connected with the Church* and this generation of the children of men. We were filled with the Holy Ghost, and rejoiced in the God of our Salvation.”<sup>81</sup> The distinction the text makes is in italics. Oliver did receive the spirit of prophecy on that momentous occasion, but not concerning the Church.<sup>82</sup> It was Joseph’s role to speak that particular bit of revelation.

The rocky rumblings of 1838-1839 seemed to etch out some niches in the text that were an essential part of its eventual canonization in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid, 18. Also see *Joseph Smith—History* 1:73. Italics added for emphasis.

<sup>82</sup> As a side note of interest. Two of the betrayers are introduced in *the Manuscript History*, Martin Harris and Oliver Cowdery. Both severings seemed to be vicious, and took place before the dictation to Robinson or Mulholland had transpired. But Joseph did not slander the two or paint them in unfavorable ways in the text. But he does make sure to illustrate their secondary roles in the divine work in comparison to his primary role. As an example, the fifth and final section of the canonized text introduces Oliver Cowdery. He helps in the translation process, and the two receive a divine visit from John the Baptist who lays hands on them and gives them authority to baptize and act in God’s name. Keeping the dissensions in mind, this section establishes Joseph as the head of Oliver Cowdery. Joseph is the instrument of God, and Oliver plays a role subservient to Joseph in the translating process of the Book of Mormon.

But more intriguing than the power hierarchy presented in the history is the way Joseph treats the two dissenters in the history. In these two sections he writes of both Oliver Cowdery and Martin Harris *favorably*. Given the recent betrayals, it seems that this would have been the perfect opportunity for Joseph to portray them in a negative light, or at least foreshadow their character flaws that would lead to their dissensions. Instead, he paints them rather fairly and nobly. Even with what Joseph perceived to be terrible things these men had done and said about him in those recent months, he does not use this history to mar their characters.

This is not to say that Joseph Smith is infallible when it comes to speaking kindly about the dissenters. In fact, there are contemporary accounts to the *Joseph Smith--History* text where he does speak or write in hard words concerning these rebels. (The previously mentioned December 16<sup>th</sup> letter is a great example of this.) That is what makes his treatment of the dissenters so intriguing. Given his strong feelings on the subject why does he not cast a more negative shadow onto those dissenters? He even has two opportunities to do so with the two dictations. Surely he had time to place a revisionist perspective of history on these two characters. But he does not. Could it be that Joseph wrote about the dissenters in a positive light because he hoped for their eventual return, like a W.W. Phelps? There is some evidence for this mindset. But perhaps what loomed even larger in his mind was the Lord’s mandate to have an *accurate* record. Interesting questions with an interesting moral situation.

### Concluding Thoughts on the Genesis of *Joseph Smith—History*

The arguments presented here are not meant to lead a reader to the conclusion that *Joseph Smith—History* was exclusively or mostly a product of the environment and circumstances of the time. There is not enough evidence for that. But rather it is an observation similar to those made concerning Victor Hugo's novel *Les Misérables*, Charles Dickens's writings, and other literary works by various authors. The environment and circumstances they endured helped them to produce some unique texts, and without those environments and circumstances they would have been hard pressed to produce similar literary works. *Joseph Smith—History* is not necessarily a literary work in the same vein as those examples, but it is a text or narrative influenced by the time period and people it sprang from. Consequently, it would be absurd to not look for the touch that time period had on the text.

In summation, the birth of *Joseph Smith—History* began with a divine mandate from God to his prophet on the day the Church was organized. It struggled through a troubled labor for nine years, until it finally crowned with the aid of James Mulholland. Then the circumstances of 1838-1839 helped to push out the canonized portion of the *Manuscript History* until it had come fully into the world. The genesis of *Joseph Smith—History*.

## Chapter 2

### **The Childhood and Adolescence of *Joseph Smith—History***

Thanks to the efforts of Joseph Smith, George Robinson, and James Mulholland the history of Joseph Smith and the Church had a solid foundation in one of Joseph's ledgers. As described in the first chapter the history did not really progress until well after Mulholland's death when Willard Richards took his place, although the portion of the history that would eventually be canonized had been accomplished by Mulholland. The details of Joseph's history grew slowly through the years in between its birth in 1838 and 1839 and its canonization in 1880. It was a gradual process, but following its genesis the text would mature into a heavy contributor to the Church. Several events and circumstances which occurred during this transitory period led to the rise of its popularity and impact. This rise ensured its place in canon. The first thirteen years since the creation of the text could well be called its childhood and adolescent years. At first the role of the text was more tentative and unknown, but still essential because these first years were formative for its later role as canon. This chapter will examine this adolescent period of the text and mark its slow progress into the culture and theology of the Church. This will hopefully give the reader a deeper understanding of how the text becomes such a critical part of the belief system of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Two questions will be answered: First, what were the initial uses of the history? Second, who were the first friends, or advocates, of the new text?

## Learning to Walk: The First Publication

Due to the difficulties created by the expulsion of the Saints from Missouri and the building of a new establishment in Illinois, not much was accomplished with the *Manuscript History* right after it had been penned. For nearly the next three years the history was put on hiatus while the members sought redress of some sort. After Mulholland's death not much was done with Joseph's dictation until Willard Richards was appointed clerk.

Willard Richards was reportedly a portly and good man who had joined the Church on December 31, 1836. He was in England for approximately the first four years of his membership, during which he edited the *Millennial Star*, a Mormon publication. When he made his way to Illinois in December 1841, he became a clerk and a compiler of history for the Church. A year later, Joseph appointed him as his private secretary and historian.<sup>83</sup> Significant to the *Joseph Smith—History* manuscript was the appointment that occurred in November 1841 when Richards became editor of the Church newspaper the *Times and Seasons*.<sup>84</sup> This editorial assignment, combined with his appointment as clerk, opened the way for the manuscript's first steps. He would be the means of exposing the Saints more fully to the history that would one day become scripture.

In March of 1842 the Mulholland manuscript was put into type and printed serially for the first time.<sup>85</sup> It appears that the printing was Joseph's idea, and if it was not, it was at least done with his permission. The newspaper prefaced the history with these words, "In the last number I gave a brief history of the rise and progress of the Church. I now enter more

<sup>83</sup> Jessee, "The Writing of Joseph Smith's History," 454.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> See H. Donl Peterson, *The Pearl of Great Price: A History and Commentary* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1987): 18. This table documents well the history's printings in the *Times and Seasons*.

particularly into that history, and extract from my journal.”<sup>86</sup> The statement was stamped with Joseph Smith’s name, and then followed the first 2 and 1/3 pages of the dictation given to Mulholland.

The next few issues printed a large portion of Mulholland’s text, including the entirety of what would eventually become scripture. It seems providential that Willard Richards was Church clerk and editor of the *Times and Seasons* because being so made it easy for him to be instrumental in the first printing of the text. This first printing was akin the initial steps a toddler takes. The text took a few unknowing steps towards its eventual placement as integral piece in the theology and culture of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Like a toddler’s first steps between mother and father, the text was gaining its mobility—a mobility that would lend to its impact and importance.

### **Orson Pratt: The First to See the Potential Value of the History**

Orson Pratt is arguably the first to really grasp the potential value of Joseph’s history. He produced a missionary tract in September of 1840, a year before the history is ever actually published, entitled *A Interesting Account of Several Remarkable Visions, and of the Late Discovery of Ancient American Records*.<sup>87</sup> He had been traveling with the prophet Joseph in early 1840 before parting ways with him to serve a mission in Edinburgh, Scotland. His journal records his experience there after nine months: “raised up a Church of over 200 Saints... published a pamphlet now entitled REMARKABLE VISIONS.”<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Joseph Smith, *Times and Seasons* 3, 15 March 1842: 726.

<sup>87</sup> This tract is often called “Remarkable Visions.” I assume this is for brevity sake.

<sup>88</sup> See Milton V. Backman, Jr., “Confirming Witnesses of the First Vision” in *Ensign* (January 1986).

When Pratt wrote the tract it appears that Mulholland's manuscript was not before him. There are no direct quotations from the text, the literary style is very different, and he expounds on some of the events beyond the Mulholland text's descriptions.<sup>89</sup> But his pamphlet does correlate well with the 1838 account, especially concerning the order of events like the first vision, the angelic ministration of Moroni, and others. Despite the flavored descriptions he provided, the sequence of events remains the same. He explained that he had heard the history many times before this occasion from the mouth of Joseph Smith.<sup>90</sup>

Church historian, Milton V. Backman, argues that, "Orson Pratt undoubtedly based his history on what he had learned from the teachings rather than the writings of Joseph."<sup>91</sup> While that statement is true. It is probable that Orson Pratt had seen the Mulholland manuscript, or at the least, had heard that Joseph had dictated the history to Mulholland so an accurate written record of the events could be had among the Saints.<sup>92</sup> Important to this argument is the fact that Pratt was most likely aware of the Mulholland manuscript. Orson Pratt was an early convert to the Church. Backman gives the following summary of Pratt's dedicated learning from Joseph, and points to Pratt being very aware of the prophet's doings.

Throughout the decade of the 1830s and during the winter of 1839-1840, Orson Pratt was one of the Prophet's most attentive students. Shortly after his baptism in September 1830, the nineteen-year-old convert traveled over two hundred miles to meet the Prophet, who, in December of that year, ordained him an elder. When Joseph moved to Kirtland, Ohio, Orson Pratt followed. While there, he lived for nearly two months in the Prophet's home and worked with him. He was one of the early members of the School of the Prophets and spent many hours in 1833 listening as the Prophet unfolded to

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Regardless of whether Pratt did see the Mulholland manuscript it remains obvious that he wrote his pamphlet based on Joseph's teachings rather than writings because he is able to provide additional details that do not appear in the 1838 manuscript and because of the way the two texts correlate despite not having a hard copy of the history to reference. Backman's point is to prove that Pratt is a credible confirming witness of the first vision. whether he had read the 1838 account or not, Pratt remains a valid confirming witness.

the school the history and doctrines of the restored faith. In the early 1830s he traveled with Joseph to western Missouri and in 1835 was called to be an Apostle of the Lord.

Orson Pratt's contact with Joseph Smith continued in 1839 and early 1840. During the late spring and early summer of 1839, Orson lived adjacent to the Mississippi River not far from the residence of Joseph Smith. Later that year he served a brief mission with the Prophet in Philadelphia before traveling on to Edinburgh...<sup>93</sup>

Given the close proximity and the shared experiences of the two, probability would suggest that he was indeed aware of Joseph's work on the official history. A fact that strengthens this probability is the fact that he and Joseph were together around the time the letter arrived informing Joseph of James Mulholland's death. It would seem natural for the two to discuss the life and accomplishments of James Mulholland and mourn his death together before Orson left with others in the spring of 1840 for a mission to Europe.

Maybe it was because of these circumstances that Orson Pratt was inspired to create a pamphlet telling the early history of the Church. Though he was unable to use the Mulholland text, he knew the history well enough. But even more importantly, because of Joseph's desire to "disabuse the public mind" concerning his history, Pratt felt licensed to publish such a tract. Without the 1838 account, or the added intentions of the 1838 account, perhaps he would not have dared to write the tract. Pratt was aware that Joseph had a great desire to set the records straight concerning his and the Church's history.

Pratt's "Remarkable Visions" pamphlet had a lot of success, and helped to further the work tremendously. This can be seen in the way it was republished—four times in the next two years after its first printing, and starting in 1848 republished time and time again in Europe in English, Dutch, Danish, and Swedish languages.<sup>94</sup> It was a great tool used often in missionary

<sup>93</sup> Milton V. Backman, Jr., "Confirming Witnesses of the First Vision" in *Ensign* (January 1986).

<sup>94</sup> I have read conflicting reports concerning the dates of when these different language editions were published, and decided to go with the most recent. See Peter Crawley and Chad J. Flake, *A Mormon Fifty: An Exhibition in the*



efforts and in strengthening the new converts. In later American editions Pratt added the event of the restoration of the priesthood to his pamphlet, which more closely reflects the edited Mulholland text that would eventually be canonized. The Mulholland text was at least influential in that particular way.

Pratt is one of the first to realize how the history of Joseph Smith could be used. The pamphlet supported missionary work, established the truth of the Church and its doctrines, and pointed towards the divine authority Joseph Smith possessed. He remained a heavy advocate and user of the history throughout his long service in the Church. This friendship that began between Pratt and Joseph's history paved the way for the eventual important role the *Manuscript History* would take in the Church's theology, and would create a path for its eventual canonization. This one pamphlet served in helping many members become familiar with Joseph's story. While there were others who, like Pratt, befriended the history of Joseph, no one helped raise the prominence of Joseph's first events like Pratt.

While Pratt was arguably the history's most important advocate, Franklin D. Richards was arguably the text's most important friend. He was the first to use the text, and not just the history, for Church purposes. He extracted portions of the actual Mulholland text to use in his published Church tract. The text was now beyond its first steps and had entered into a time of adolescence. Richards helped portions of the Mulholland text to claim their independence from the rest of the *Manuscript History*. These portions that Richards separated out from Joseph's dictated history would eventually receive the title of *Joseph Smith—History*.

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*Harold B. Lee Library in conjunction with the annual conference of the Mormon History Association.* (Provo, UT, Friends of the Brigham Young University Library, 1984). Item 18: 16; and Peter Crawley, *A Descriptive Bibliography of the Mormon Church. Volume One, 1830-1847.* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University, Religious Studies Center, 1997). Item 82: 127–129.

## Claiming Independence: The Separation of the Canonized Portion from the *Manuscript History*

Richards, using the serially printed version of the *Manuscript History* found in the *Times and Seasons*, separated *Joseph Smith—History* from the *Manuscript History* in several ways. He took out the revelations from the Lord that used Joseph Smith as a medium for those words. He also skipped through certain portions of the narrative in order to emphasize certain events. Like many adolescents, the text claimed an independence from the home from which it originated.

The following table aids in discerning the differences between Richards extracts and the actual *Manuscript History* by giving the scriptural reference compared to the first printing of Mulholland's text in *Times and Seasons*. The scriptural reference is the modern canonized version of *Joseph Smith—History*. Thus it is broken up into verses even though Richards' original tract did not break the text into verses. Verses came much later, roughly twenty years after the text was actually canonized. But the verses are helpful in accurately showing which portions Richards separated from the *Manuscript History*. The *Times and Seasons* is in the chart because it was what Richards used to draft his tract rather than the actual *Manuscript History*, which is not a problem since there is very little difference between the two. This chart also identifies the portions of Mulholland's 59 pages that were actually separated out to stay true to the original manuscript.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> See H. Donl Peterson: 18. This table is aided tremendously by the table Peterson provides in his work. But this table relays much more information concerning *Joseph Smith—History* while his table was more interested in providing information on the entirety of *The Pearl of Great Price*.

Modern scriptural reference points	First printing in the <i>Times and Seasons</i>	Pages in the <i>Manuscript History of the Church</i>
Joseph Smith—History 1:1-14	<i>Times and Seasons</i> , 3 [15 Mar. 1842]: 726-728	Pages 1-2 and ¼ of page 3
Joseph Smith—History 1:15-29	<i>Times and Seasons</i> , 3 [1 Apr. 1842]: 748-749*	Last ¾ of page 3 and 5/6 of page 4*
Joseph Smith—History 1:30-49	<i>Times and Seasons</i> , 3 [15 Apr. 1842]: 753-754	Last 1/6 of 4, pages 5-6, 1/3 of page 7
Joseph Smith—History 1:50-65	<i>Times and Seasons</i> , 3 [2 May 1842]: 771-773**	Last 2/3 of page 7, page 8, and 2/3 of page 9**
Joseph Smith—History 1:66-67	<i>Times and Seasons</i> , 3 [1 July 1842]: 832	A bottom 1/5 of page 13 towards the bottom
Joseph Smith—History 1:68-75	<i>Times and Seasons</i> , 3 [1 Aug. 1842]: 865-866	The bottom 1/5 of page 17 and 9/10 of page 18

\*almost a full paragraph concerning a conversation he has with his mother is added here that is not in Mulholland's text. But there is a note from Willard Richards on where to find this added paragraph.

\*\*A description is added to this portion concerning where the hill lies. It is a loose paper in the *Manuscript History* found between pages 6-7. The description came from Joseph Smith as an afterthought suggested by Willard Richards.

Two things became clear from the first printing of Mulholland's text in 1842 and Pratt's use of Joseph's history as a missionary tool. First, Mulholland's text was too large for missionary tract purposes, and the history, in its complete form, was not meant for that kind of work. Second, Joseph's story was and still is a great tool for the work of the Church, especially in describing certain key events. Franklin D. Richards, an Apostle of the Church, must have

recognized the value of the text. He played a key role in the independence of *Joseph Smith—History*.

### **Franklin D. Richards**

In 1838 Franklin D. Richards, at the age of seventeen, was baptized a member of the Church, two years after he first heard the restored gospel from his relatives, Elders Brigham and Joseph Young.<sup>96</sup> As discussed previously, it was in the tumultuous years of 1838-1839 that the history was first created through the pen strokes of James Mulholland, a remarkable coincidence. The very year that the text was written is the very year that a convert would come into the Church that would propel the text to its eventual canonization. To add more to this remarkable coincidence is noticing how the life and faith of Franklin D. Richards as member of the Church was formed and shaped by those tumultuous years, just like the text was. In October of 1838 his younger brother George Spencer was killed at what is now known as the Hahn's Mill Massacre.<sup>97</sup> He suffered through the other difficulties the Saints experienced during those years, including the rumors, apostasies, persecutions, and eventual expulsion. Those experiences had an influence on him. Persecution touched his personal faith story like it had touched the genesis of the text.

However, the years of 1838-1839 were not the only years of persecution he would endure. His faith was perpetually tried throughout the entirety of his membership. For example, another of his other younger brothers died while serving as a member of the Mormon Battalion along the Arkansas River.<sup>98</sup> Event after event required faithful pursuance of what he considered

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<sup>96</sup> Richard W. Sadler, "Franklin D. Richards and the British Mission" in *Journal of Mormon History* (Provo, UT: MHA), vol. 14: 82.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

the truth. And so his life continued, and these trials forged a solid foundation of faith for his future service.

After his marriage, Richards was asked to serve a mission in 1844. He left with other missionaries from Nauvoo who had been called to serve in the eastern United States. He was called to serve in England. Before going to Britain he first stopped in the eastern States and promoted Joseph Smith's bid for President of the United States. He never made it to England. The murders of Joseph Smith and Hyrum Smith cut that service short, and he returned early to mourn and stabilize the affairs of the Church.

Roughly two years later Richards was given the opportunity to fulfill his service in England. But it was a good thing his mission had been delayed because it was during those years that he received formative mentoring from his uncle, Willard Richards. Franklin helped in the Church Recorder's office.<sup>99</sup> He wrote and transcribed "scribblings," as he called them, as directed by his Uncle Willard, the Church historian. Franklin's work included the *Manuscript History*, the same document that held Joseph's dictation of his early years and the Church's early years. It was during this time that he became familiar with that particular history, and the history must have had a rather profound effect on him.

On April 27<sup>th</sup>, 1846, Richards was informed by Orson Hyde that he was to go immediately to England, but he would not leave until nearly three months later.<sup>100</sup> The delay was due to his concern for his family's welfare, consisting of his first wife, Jane, his second wife, Elizabeth, and his daughter, Wealthy. He knew that they would be leaving Nauvoo soon, and he

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid, 83.

wanted them to have the provisions and care they would need. When his worries were somewhat alleviated he departed for his missionary service.

These two years of service in England were tender for Franklin. The missionary journal that chronicled these two years is much more detailed with personal thoughts than his later missionary journals would be. It contained his personal feelings, his prayers to God, and the challenges and problems he faced.<sup>101</sup> During his absence his family suffered greatly. Jane was pregnant when he had left, but the baby boy died the same day he was delivered. His daughter, whom he loved dearly and who often was the focus of his personal writings, became blind and then died from the hardships of the journey across Iowa. Elizabeth, who with Jane's approval, he had just barely married, suffered from scurvy and tuberculosis before also dying.<sup>102</sup> Jane, the sole surviving member of his little family wrote, "I only lived because I could not die."<sup>103</sup> Communication was slow between Franklin and Jane, and though he wrote faithfully she did not receive many of the letters he had penned for her. When he did finally hear word of the terrible hardships that his family had endured, the delay in time had only managed to delay his pain, not lessen it. As an example, it was not until September that Elder Parley P. Pratt informed Franklin that his son had been born and then died. While the news reached him much later than the event, it was nonetheless a difficult trial. In fact, the delay only magnified the pain of the trial because he knew his wife had already suffered through the worst of it without him.

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<sup>101</sup> A practice he did keep throughout the majority of his journal writings. In my opinion, those are some of the most informative sections of his journals. They illustrate his inner desires, and seem to be based in deep emotion. Franklin D. Richards diary, LDS Church Archives, Church History Library, (Salt Lake City, UT). Especially see the years of this particular mission.

<sup>102</sup> Sadler: 84. Sadler did a terrific job in writing this article, and it was incredibly helpful to my work. I stand on his shoulders, especially concerning Franklin D. Richards.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid, The source he gives is: Jane Snyder Richards interview, as quoted in Wallace Stegner, *The Gathering of Zion* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964): 89.

But still Richards held tenaciously to his faith and purpose, and seemed to be buoyed by experiences there in the mission field. One such example occurred when he was asked to go to Scotland. The weather had been awful, he had water up to his knees in his cabin, and he was dreadfully sea sick. After enduring in these awful circumstances he one day, partly out of desperation, commanded the wind and the waves to be silent. He tenderly and gratefully recorded that the rest of the journey was peaceful.<sup>104</sup>

Seminal to the missionary tract that he would one day write was his brief experience in the office at Liverpool. Orson Hyde had been informed that Orson Spencer, the newly assigned president of the mission in Liverpool, had died. Consequently, he felt impressed to call Franklin D. Richards to the assignment. Elder Hyde wrote the following, "...But before you can act in that capacity (as president), you must come here and enter in at the door by our blessing and confirmation. This letter from under our hands does not authorize you to act in this high and responsible calling until you have received a confirmation of this appointment under the hands of the authorities of the church here. Therefore we beseech you to come and leave your brother Samuel in charge of Scotland..."<sup>105</sup> So it was that he went to Liverpool, and was there introduced to some of his duties. In particular, he learned about his responsibilities with the *Millennial Star*, the Mormon newspaper printed regularly for the benefit and information of the members. For two weeks Elder Hyde directed his efforts as he presided over the mission. He became familiar with the books and tracts of that time, and sent out bundles to those who were in need of the materials. It was an important education for Richards, one that would serve him and the eventual canonized text in the future.

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<sup>104</sup> Franklin D. Richards diary, 22–23 October, 1846. LDS Church Archives, Church History Library (Salt Lake City, UT).

<sup>105</sup> Sadler: 87. Parentheses added for clarification purposes.

One scholar, Richard Sadler, detailed the humorous event that led to Franklin's sooner than anticipated release. "On January 14, Orson Hyde was startled to receive a letter from William Appleby stating that Orson Spencer and Andrew Cahoon had sailed from New York City on December 14 and would shortly arrive in England. Contrary to earlier reports, Spencer was not dead! Nine days later, on January 23, Spencer and Cahoon arrived in Liverpool. Spencer was pleased to be in England and even seemed to enjoy reading his own obituary, which filled two pages, bordered in black, in the initial issue of the *Star*, dated January 1847. Franklin's term was short, but he remained in Liverpool to serve as Spencer's only counselor for the next year."<sup>106</sup> His time directing the mission came to an unexpected and amusing close.

At the end of his mission Franklin D. Richards returned home. There he learned the full extent of the tragedies that had befallen his family—a difficult challenge for him. He also faced down more hardships, but at the same time he felt he was being extraordinarily blessed. One of his sweetest experiences came by vision. He was told that he would become an apostle. In his own writing he recorded his dream.

This morning I awoke from a dream in which I seemed to have been with President Brigham Young in the Temple at Nauvoo. We sat opposite each other, with our feet in a clear, lively pool of water, and we conversed together. He asked, 'Brother Franklin, would you accept it if I should appoint you one of the Quorum?' I replied, 'Brother Brigham, I always have accepted, and as far as I could, have obeyed every appointment that has been given to me, and I always intend to.' He then showed me several books containing peculiar drawings and diagrams, many of which were lightly colored and in the Prophet Joseph's own hand writing. While I was examining the books I awoke, and felt as happy as if I had really been in the company of President Young, and the holy influence seemed to rest upon my whole person.<sup>107</sup>

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Franklin L. West, *Life of Franklin D. Richards: President of the Council of the Twelve Apostles Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1924): 81-82. See also Franklin D. Richards diary, 1847, British Mission. LDS Church Archives, Church History Library (Salt Lake City, UT).



Two years later, on February 12<sup>th</sup>, 1849, his dream was partly fulfilled.<sup>108</sup> Not in the same manner of his dream, but he was called and ordained a member of the Quorum of the Twelve. The dream played an important role in the development of his missionary tract, *The Pearl of Great Price*, written while he was an apostle.

### **Richards as President of the British Mission**

In October 1849 during the General Conference of the Church Richards was again called to missionary service in Britain. Considering the great hardships endured by his family on his first mission this must have been a difficult calling emotionally especially since he and his wife had not been reunited for much time. As a token of their commitment to the faith as a couple, it is important to note that there seems to be little to no murmurings, and they both responded promptly to the call.

His call came simultaneously with three other members of the Quorum of the Twelve appointed to open different countries. John Taylor was to initiate work in France, Lorenzo Snow in Italy, and Erastus Snow in Scandinavia. Richards was to succeed Orson Pratt as President of the British Mission. This time his tenure would be longer than two weeks.

He arrived in Liverpool on March 29<sup>th</sup>, 1850.<sup>109</sup> Despite the deaths of Joseph and Hyrum the Church had survived the confusion of succession and had continued to grow. But its composition was unique, and the responsibility given to Richards was heavy. The Saints had begun their westward migration. By 1850 more than six thousand lived in the Salt Lake valley, and an additional five thousand lived in territories throughout the surrounding regions. But this was a small percentage of the Church's actual membership. In 1850 more than fifty-seven

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid, 100.

<sup>109</sup> Franklin D. Richards diary, 29 March, 1850. LDS Church Archives, Church History Library (Salt Lake City, UT).

thousand Saints pertained to the Church. Only eleven thousand lived in the Utah territory, fifteen thousand remained in the East or were making their way west across the plains, and the remaining portion lived in Great Britain—nearly thirty-one thousand!<sup>110</sup> H. Donl Peterson, a Church historian, posits the situation well when he wrote, “With more than half the entire membership of the Church living in Great Britain, communication and administrative problems were accentuated. Conditions in Utah contributed to the difficulties. For example, when the Saints were able to turn their attention to such matters, they found they lacked sufficient trees to produce paper in quantity. What little paper could be produced was used for the urgent printing needs of the Church in Utah and of the territorial government, newly established in 1850. It was not feasible for the scriptures and other Church literature to be printed in the Utah Territory.”<sup>111</sup> Consequently, during his tenure as mission president, Franklin D. Richards became concerned with the printed materials available to the potential converts, new converts, and existing members. A staggering percentage of the Church was without *the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants*, or any of the Church literature at all, and this was especially true of the membership in Great Britain. Since the martyrdoms in 1844, the Church had not published the scriptures, and the tracts that were printed were not even close to enough in number to meet the rapid growth of the British converts.

What compounded matters was the economic crisis that Great Britain was experiencing. The crisis was a continued floundering that was still being carried from when the initial missionary efforts occurred by the apostles in that region. Brigham Young and Willard Richards wrote a letter to Joseph Smith concerning his missionary experiences and the terrible economic situation of the people in September of 1840. Their feelings accurately portray the economic

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<sup>110</sup> H. Donl Peterson: 9.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*

challenges that faced Franklin D. Richards in 1850 during his tenure as mission president. The two missionaries reported the following:

...great changes... have taken place in the nation, within a few years, with regard to money matters, which has caused a mighty revolution, in the affairs of the common people.

A few years since, and almost every family had their garden, their cow on the common and their pig in the sty, which added greatly to the comforts of the household; but now we seldom find either garden, cow, or pig.

...the people have enough to do, to keep from dying with hunger without taking much thought for the improvement of the mind.

...the masters... have reduced the workmens wages to almost the lowest extremity, & if their hands should turn out for more wages, they have nothing before them but destruction for there are thousands & tens of thousands who cannot get one days work in a month, or six months, so they continue to labor 12 hours in a day for almost nothing rather than starve at once.<sup>112</sup>

These combined situations, the scarcity of printed materials and the lack of ability for the Saints of the British Mission to afford the published materials, made it so that hardly any of the British members possessed written works of the Church.

While this scarcity of literature did not seem to slow the missionary work, it did hinder the spiritual progress of the new converts. It was for this reason that Franklin D. Richards began compiling his missionary tract. He felt that the work would be prospered greatly by supplying the Saints with inspirational text. He was not alone in that feeling. Elder Orson Pratt (who had been mission president the two years previous to Richards's tenure) and Elder John Taylor also seemed concerned with the issue.

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<sup>112</sup> See Ronald W. Walker, "The Willard Richards and Brigham Young 5 September 1840 Letter from England to Nauvoo," *BYU Studies* (Spring 1978): 469–472.

These three Apostles, along with others, sent many letters in 1850-1851 to Church headquarters regarding the concern of publishing and distributing Church literature.<sup>113</sup> A central depot for the sale and lending of Church materials was proposed and estimates suggested that some literature could be printed and used even at the vast numbers of twenty five thousand copies. Richards oversaw this development, and pushed the work forward.

Some of his first acts as president consisted of encouraging the members “to read Elder Pratt’s pamphlets, and lend them to others, so that people might know that Mormonism included all that is good.”<sup>114</sup> He also researched and found ways to do some printing there in Liverpool where he was stationed. He went about printing more of Orson Pratt’s pamphlets so that members could more readily have those resources available to them, and with the aid of others tried to establish a “lending” system, or library-like system.

Elder Pratt’s pamphlets had been successful in the past with the work, and continued to bring success to the mission. His printings in 1848 were practically all the members in Britain had. It was shortly after these reprintings that Franklin D. Richards decided to take a crack at compiling his own missionary tract. He wanted a document that he felt would best meet the needs of the mission and, more importantly, the members located in Great Britain.

President Richards deeply wanted to strengthen those tender new converts of the Church. In a letter he wrote to his uncle he divulges this tract’s particular purpose. “You will perhaps recollect my naming to you that I thought of issueing (SIC) a collection of revelations,

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<sup>113</sup> H. Donl Peterson does a pretty good job of mentioning some of the letters and giving a good feel for the dialogue going back and forth in his work on pp. 10–11. Another reference that gives a more in depth look at the issue is: David J. Whittaker, *Early Mormon Pamphleteering* (Ph.D. diss., Brigham Young University, 1982): 67-70.

<sup>114</sup> Franklin D. Richards, *British Mission Manuscript History*, 2 June 1850, LDS Church Archives, Church History Library (Salt Lake City, UT). See also H. Donl Peterson, *The Pearl of Great Price: A History and Commentary* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1987): 10. It was this source that pointed me to the British Mission Manuscript History, a valuable aid in my research.

prophecies &c., in a tract form of character not designed to pioneer our doctrines to the world, so much as for the use of the Elders and Saints to arm and better qualify them for their service in our great war.”<sup>115</sup> He wrote the letter the day Elder Pratt was heading to America on board the *Ellen Maria*. In the letter he detailed which works he was thinking of including and their proposed order.

From Richards’s mind *The Pearl of Great Price* was compiled. It was, as he had stated earlier, a work not necessarily for winning converts, but to fortify the Saints and help them in their spiritual progress. These were weightier and meatier doctrines for those who were already spiritually converted. It appears that the earliest documentation that we have actually naming the title of the tract is found in the diary of Levi Richards dated the 8 May 1851. “With Franklin at 15 Wilton, Liverpool, reading proof sheets of Pearl of Great Price.”<sup>116</sup> The title was meant to encapsulate the contents of the tract, something that would be of great worth to members of the Church.

Shortly before the tract was published the following appeared in the *Latter-day Saints’ Millennial Star*. Richards explained the soon to be published tract in the following manner:

PEARL OF GREAT PRICE, is the title of a new work which will soon be ready for sale, containing 64 pages on beautiful paper of superior quality, and on new type of a larger size than any heretofore issued from this office. It contains

Extracts from the prophecy of Enoch, including a revelation of the Gospel to our first parents after their expulsion from the Garden of Eden.

The Words of God, which he spake (SIC) unto Moses at the time when Moses was caught up into an exceeding high mountain, and saw God face to face, and talked with him, and the Glory of God was upon Moses, so that he could endure the presence of the Lord. Including also the history of the creation of this heaven and this earth, together

<sup>115</sup> Franklin D. Richards, letter to Levi Richards, 1 February 1851. LDS Church Archives, Church History Library (Salt Lake City, UT).

<sup>116</sup> Levi Richards journal, LDS Church Archives, Church History Library (Salt Lake City, UT).

with the inhabitants thereof, and many historical items until the time of the flood, being items from the new translation of the scriptures by the Prophet Joseph.

The Book of Abraham—a translation of some ancient records that fell into the hands of the Church a few years since from the catacombs of Egypt, purporting to be the writings of Abraham while he was in Egypt, called the Book of Abraham, written by his own hand upon Papyrus; translated from the Papyrus by Joseph Smith. Connected with this translation are three fac-similes from the Papyrus.

An extract from a translation of the Bible—being the Twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew, commencing with the last verse of the Twenty-third chapter, by the Prophet, Seer, and Revelator, Joseph Smith.

A Key to the Revelations of St. John, in a series of questions and answers. By the same.

A Revelation given December, 1832, which has never before appeared in print.

Extracts from the History of Joseph Smith, containing an account of the First Visions and Revelations which he received, also of his discovery and obtaining the Plates of Gold which contain the Record of Mormon; its translation, his baptism, and ordination by an Angel; items of doctrine from the revelations and commandments to the Church, &c.

This little work though not particularly adapted nor designed as a pioneer of our faith to unbelievers of present revelation, will be a source of much instruction and edification to many thousands of the Saints, who will by an acquaintance with its precious contents, be more abundantly qualified to set forth and defend the principles of our Holy Faith before all men. The PEARL OF GREAT PRICE will recommend itself to all who appreciate the revelations of truth as hidden treasures of Everlasting Life. Prices printed on the covers.<sup>117</sup>

This is the first mention of *Joseph Smith—History* as a separate entity from the *Manuscript History*. The brief synopsis detailed in this editorial gives some insight into his reasoning behind why certain parts were extracted. Apparently his extraction was centered on and concerned with chronicling certain first events. Undoubtedly Richards felt these to be the crucial events of the history, and everything else was omitted.

Richards had sought his uncle's opinion on the contents of the tract as shown by the letter he wrote soliciting his opinions and the proofing he did with him in Liverpool. It is probable that

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<sup>117</sup> Franklin D. Richards, "Editorial," in *Millennial Star*, 13 (15 July 1851): 216–217.

he sought the opinions of others also, especially Orson Pratt and John Taylor because of his high esteem of the two men and their previous success with writing. By correlating the letter he wrote to his uncle with Franklin's journal accounts it is discovered that he was compiling the tract during the same times Orson Pratt and John Taylor were visiting. He does not mention the writing of the pamphlet in his journal since it seemed to be purposed for his general feelings and concerns, but it does focus on his time with Elders Taylor and Pratt. These men were highly influential to him. Therefore it is probable that he sought for and received input from these men on the pamphlet. Orson Pratt in particular seems likely since the extracts from Joseph's history reflect the same emphasis of events that Pratt's pamphlet, *Remarkable Visions*, covers. If he did not directly receive council from Elder Pratt then at least Pratt's pamphlet influenced his decisions on which parts should remain. Little can be garnered concerning the details of who was consulted and how the process of putting the tract together transpired. But what can be surmised is that through Richards *Joseph Smith—History* gained its independence from the *Manuscript History*. Combined with other works it was purposed for strengthening the converts of England.

### **The Fulfillment of Richards's Apostolic Dream**

*The Pearl of Great Price* was introduced as a tract of the Prophet Joseph's words and works. Of particular interest are the summarized sections of the tract in the brief editorial of the *Millennial Star*. The wording of the editorial is careful to include the name of Joseph Smith in every summative paragraph of each section of the tract. In other words, Richards wanted to emphasize that the major contents of *The Pearl of Great Price* were the words of Joseph Smith. It contained the drawings and diagrams, otherwise known as the facsimiles that Joseph included with his translation of Abraham, along with many other important writings, translations, and revelations—all from Joseph. All of the major works compiled into the pamphlet, including

those not included in the current *Pearl of Great Price*, were works of Joseph, save for one poem. It could easily be interpreted that this missionary tract was “several books containing... the Prophet Joseph’s own hand writing.”<sup>118</sup> Richards’s apostolic dream of completing a compilation with the writings of Joseph, complete with diagrams, was fulfilled. The pamphlet was published on July 11<sup>th</sup>, 1851. President Richards included the following preface to the first edition. His preface emphasizes this as a book of Joseph’s writings.

The following compilation has been induced by the repeated solicitations of several friends of the publisher, who are desirous to be put in possession of the very important articles contained therein. Most of the Revelations composing this work were published at early periods of the Church, when the circulation of its journals was so very limited as to render them comparatively unknown at the present, except to a few who have treasured up the productions of the Church with great care from the beginning. A Smaller portion of this work has never before appeared in print; and altogether it is presumed, that true believers in the Divine mission of the Prophet JOSEPH SMITH, will appreciate this little collection of precious truths as a *Pearl of Great Price* that will increase their ability to maintain and to defend the holy faith by becoming possessors of it.

Although not adapted, not designed, as a pioneer of the faith among unbelievers, still it will commend itself to all careful students of the scriptures, as detailing many important facts which are therein only alluded to, or entirely unmentioned, but consonant with the whole tenor of the revealed will of God; and, to the beginner in the Gospel, will add confirmatory evidence of the rectitude of his faith, by showing him that the doctrines and ordinances thereof are the same as were revealed to Adam for his salvation after his expulsion from the garden, and the same that he handed down and caused to be taught to his generations after him, as the only means appointed of God by which the generations of men may regain His presence.

Nor do we conceive it possible for any unprejudiced person to arise from a careful perusal of this work, without being deeply impressed with a sense of the Divine calling, and holy ordination, of the man by whom these revelations, translations, and narrations have been communicated to us. As impervious as the minds of men may be at present to these convictions, the day is not far distant when sinners, as well as Saints, will know that JOSEPH SMITH was one of the greatest men that ever lived upon the earth, and that under God he was the Prophet and founder of the dispensation of the fullness of times, in

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<sup>118</sup> Please note that while Joseph did not actually pen the documents found in *The Pearl of Great Price*, he did dictate the words, including “Joseph Smith—History.”



which will be gathered together into one all things which are in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth.<sup>119</sup>

Ultimately, Richards seemed concerned with publishing a work of Joseph's writings for the benefit of the believers, and as further evidence of Joseph's divine calling. These evidences suggest that Richards was cognitively fulfilling his apostolic dream.

## Conclusion

Richards was emphatic about this work not being meant to be a "pioneer" to those not of the faith. In general, this has proved to be true of *The Pearl of Great Price* since its beginnings to current day usage. But *Joseph Smith—History* was quick to be the exception. Pratt's pamphlet exhibited the usefulness of Joseph's history as a missionary tool. Modernly it has become a foundational text in missionary teachings, and it was during the mid to late nineteenth century that this particular practice took flight. Before then it was a very rare method of propagating the Church, but afterwards it grew as a popular form of evidence designed to promote the development of a testimony in potential converts for the Book of Mormon and for the prophet Joseph Smith.

While Orson Pratt's rendering of the history enjoyed several reprintings, the extracted form of Mulholland's text would eventually become the preferred account. Most likely this is simply because it was a part of the official history of the Church, and was set to the words and expressions of Joseph Smith himself.

This further set the text apart from the rest of *The Pearl of Great Price*. It had a different purpose, and arguably a greater versatility because of its usefulness in "pioneering" the way to

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<sup>119</sup> Franklin D. Richards, *The Pearl of Great Price* (Liverpool, England: F. D. Richards, 1851), LDS Church Archives, Church History Library (Salt Lake City, UT).

unbelievers. While *The Book of Mormon* undoubtedly remains the major literary tool of conversion for missionary work, *Joseph Smith—History* is the second place holder. It is a work that has thoroughly benefitted missionary efforts worldwide.

After the genesis of *Joseph Smith—History* in 1838-1839, the toddler manuscript took its first steps with its 1842 serial newspaper printing. Orson Pratt recognized the history's value and unique abilities, and became its first friend and advocate. Then the text in its adolescence claimed its independence from the *Manuscript History* with the development of the missionary tract compiled by Franklin D. Richards in 1851. The text was rapidly growing towards maturity, but would not pass its rite of passage until it was officially canonized in 1880.

## Chapter 3

### **Canonization as the Rite of Passage for *Joseph Smith—History***

A rite of passage among many cultures includes some rite that would help that individual be formally recognized as an adult or as a valid contributor to that community. Scripture, while not a person, has its own rite of passage—a process wherein a text is recognized as being a valid and binding contributor to the Gospel and Church of Jesus Christ. The classification for any such book that has survived the rite of passage is “canon.” The debates among Christianity that raged, and still rage, over what should legitimately be considered canonical demonstrates the rigorous nature of that process.<sup>120</sup> But the rite of passage for canonization employed by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has been different from mainstream Christianity. The Mormon process, philosophy, and ideas concerning canon vary from the traditional Christian concepts of canon. Consequently, this chapter will deal with this particular Church’s canonization methods and spend little time looking at some of the traditional canonization arguments, like authorship or authenticity. Traditional views will only be referenced if it helps to illustrate how foreign the two concepts are and to act simply as a foil.

In order to better understand the rite of passage for *Joseph Smith—History*, or its canonization, this chapter will first seek to briefly summarize the church’s process and guiding

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<sup>120</sup> Christianity is not alone in the rigor it applies to canonical literature. Many other religions, cultures, philosophies, and sciences apply a rigorous “rite of passage” for canonical texts. For more information concerning religions and their process of canonization see the following works: A. Van Der Kooij and K. Van Der Toorn ed., *Canonization and Decanonization: Papers Presented to the International Conference of the Leiden Institute for the Study of Religions (Listor), Held at Leiden 9-10 January 1997* (Leiden; Boston; Koln; Brill, Studies in the History of Religions, 1998), vol. 82 and Lee Martin McDonald, *Forgotten Scriptures: The Selection and Rejection of Early Religious Writings* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009).

principles of canonization. Next it will cover the actual canonization event. Finally it will briefly look at the effect canonization of the text has had on the Church.

### **Process of Canonization Employed by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints**

A fundamental difference between The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and mainstream Christianity is that the Church has an open canon. A now deceased Apostle, James E. Talmage, endeavored to explain this concept in a book he authored, *Articles of Faith*. The following is an excerpt of this book: “The term canon, now generally current, suggests not books that are merely credible, authentic or even inspired, but such books as are recognized as authoritative guides in profession and practice. The term is instructive in its derivation. Its Greek original, *kanon*, signified a straight measuring rod, and hence it came to mean a standard of comparison, a rule, a test, as applied to moral subjects as well as to material objects.”<sup>121</sup> This quote helps to establish the Church’s mindset concerning the difference between canonical texts and other religious texts. Later in the book he discussed the theology of the Church regarding canon when he wrote, “The canon of scripture is still open; many lines, many precepts, are yet to be added; revelation, surpassing in importance and glorious fullness any that has been recorded, is yet to be given to the Church and declared to the world.... In every department of human knowledge and activity, in everything for which man arrogates glory to himself, he prides himself in the possibilities of enlargement and growth; yet in the divine science of theology he holds that progress is impossible and advancement forbidden. Against such heresy and blasphemous denial of divine prerogatives and power, God has proclaimed His edict in words of piercing import: “Wo be unto him that shall say: We have received the word of God, and we

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<sup>121</sup> James E. Talmage, *Articles of Faith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1977): 239.

need no more of the word of God, for we have enough!”<sup>122</sup> Talmage managed to paint the passion Church members have regarding the idea of an open canon. While Latter-day Saints have strong feelings towards their belief that canon is open, very few seem to grasp how canon becomes canon beyond the simple explanation that God wills it. In other words, Saints are good at admiring the finished products of their canon and are even anxious to accept all that God proffers to them, but know little of how the canon came about. To use a metaphor, they like to admire the paintings but do not know how they came to be considered a great work of art superior to the common variety.

In truth the process appears simple, and in terms of steps, it is quite simple. There are two major steps for formal standardization or canonization into what the Church would term modern scripture. The first step is to have the prophet or member of the First Presidency propose that a document should be added to the canon of the scripture. The second step is for the members of the Church to sustain the proposal through the law of common consent. This is accomplished as members raise their arm in agreement to sustain the proposal, the majority being the common consent. That is the whole of the process in public.

The Church’s process of canonization revolves around its doctrines of authority and stewardship. Not any person could propose for a text to be added to the canon. Canonical scripture is viewed as a type of revelation from the Lord for the whole of the world, or at the least for the Church. Therefore there is only one authorized of God to dictate what is and what is not scripture. The practice then is that only the President of the Church can authorize such changes, since according to Mormon beliefs, he is the one with stewardship, or responsibility, to

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<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 311.

receive God's words for not just the membership of the Church but for the whole world.<sup>123</sup> This is part of the reason the President of the Church is called a prophet; he is considered to be a revealer of God's word, of revelation.

The prophet is given the power and ability to change canon as he deems the Lord has told him to do. This differs greatly from the way much of protestant Christianity understands the concept of closed canon. To sum up the differences in one statement; the Church has a canon rather than the canon has churches.<sup>124</sup> This viewpoint hinges on Christ's church being able to dictate what texts will determine the standards by which the membership of the Church will be measured rather than the Church trying to match the standard and person revealed from a particular standard text established anciently. There are many churches which profess faith in Jesus Christ. They seek to match their tenets of faith and practice to the text of their canon that was established in the early history of Christianity. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is different. They do not rely on the traditional canon proposed but rather on the modern authority's proposal for canon. In theory, canon is much more fluid and changeable under the philosophy of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, but in practice the adding to and subtracting from canon has only been on rare occasions, and always through the process of the one with authority proposing a change to canon.<sup>125</sup>

Through the Church's history the canon has changed. New books have been added, texts have changed, and written works have been added and subtracted. It is a fascinating study to see

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<sup>123</sup> The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Handbook 2: Administering the Church 2010*: 8.

<sup>124</sup> Paul Flanagan, "The Canon of Catholics," [www.catholicapologetics.org](http://www.catholicapologetics.org). This is where I first came upon the viewpoint that describes a Catholic perspective on canon recommended to me by a catholic friend. I realized that this same mindset applies to the LDS perspective on canon. Their argument hinged on all other churches being churches of the Bible rather than the Bible being the Book of the Church. There is a similar vein here because of both churches' emphasis on authority.

<sup>125</sup> Note there is one exception to this pattern that will be discussed later in this paper.

the changes. But even with the flux of texts, the canon has been consistently comprised of four standard works through the majority of the Church's history; these being the *Bible*, the *Book of Mormon*, the *Doctrine and Covenants*, and *The Pearl of Great Price*.

The last of these standard works was *The Pearl of Great Price* officially added to canon in 1880. While the formal acceptance of canon is rather straightforward, consisting only of the two steps, the process can be more complicated leading up to the actual event of canonization. Canon is a type of revelation, and the scriptures are clear in teaching that revelation comes “line upon line, here a little and there a little.” There are times when the journey of a text into canon is step by step. For example, Section 110 was received in early Mormon history. It was important enough to the prophet to be added in the *Manuscript History*, and had a large impact on his teachings and on the practices of the Church. Yet it was not until 1880 that it was added to the canon, over 34 years later. There was a process to its canonization that scholars are just beginning to touch on.<sup>126</sup> Each example of a text, line, or even whole book being added or subtracted to the canon could be approached individually because of their different journeys into canon. Not all texts that have been added or subtracted from canon experienced a lengthy determining period. There are examples of the process occurring rather simply; someone with authority declaring it so and the membership of the Church affirming it.

The canonization of the *Book of Mormon* is a good example of this. It was declared to be God's will when the Church was first organized. But even before then, since the initial stirrings of the book, before a single page of the work had been translated, it was purposed to be canon in addition to the *Bible*. The actual process of canonization was more formality than an actual

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<sup>126</sup> See Richard E. Bennett, “Line upon Line, Precept upon Precept: Reflections on the 1877 Commencement of the Performance of Endowments and Sealings of the Dead,” *BYU Studies*, vol. 44: 3; Trevor R. Anderson, “Doctrine and Covenants Section 110: From Vision to Canonization” (Master's Thesis, Brigham Young University, 2010).

paradigm shift concerning how those early members regarded the text. Other texts though had a longer, debated, thought-out period by those with authority. While many texts experienced this type of prolonged addition, of particular interest to this thesis has been the journey of *Joseph Smith—History*. It was only a small part of the additional canon added in 1880, but of paramount interest because of its contribution to the Church. When first dictated the text did not seem to be intended for scripture, but rather a chronicle of history. This is different than most of the other texts added in 1880 which seemed purposed, even in the way and manner of their literary style, to be added to canonical works of the Church. The *Manuscript History of the Church*, particularly the portions covering Joseph’s life, seemed more explanatory than canonical in purpose.<sup>127</sup>

In summary, in order for scripture to be canonized in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints the President of the Church should propose it and the majority sustain it. The addition of “modern” books of scripture, meaning that scripture which has been added in addition to the traditional books of the Bible, follow the formal pattern of canonization.

But there has also been one instance of an informal means of canonization. The Bible went through a different process of canonization in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints than all the other canonical works. The original members of the Church already accepted it as scripture. Consequently it never underwent a proposal and sustaining. But Joseph Smith received a revelation early in the Church’s history that called for the Bible to undergo its own

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<sup>127</sup> There could be an argument against this. Especially since Joseph Smith titled one of his journals a “Scriptory” book of himself. The writing style of that particular journal seems to be trying to copy the writing style of other canonical works like 1<sup>st</sup> Nephi and the book of Moses and Abraham. This journal was kept at the same time he first dictated his history to Brother Robinson. The beginning of the history could be comparative to style with other canonical works, but soon, within a few pages, departs from that style completely. Joseph Smith’s later explanation in Nauvoo concerning how he envisioned the format and writing style of the *Manuscript History* was quite different than a canonical text in purpose and style.



sort of canonization process, or perhaps in this case better said as a standardization process. One scholarly work comments on this process in the following way:

Shortly after the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was organized, the Prophet Joseph Smith was instructed by the Lord to undertake a careful reading of the Bible to revise and make corrections in accordance with the inspirations that he would receive. The result was a work of profound significance for the Church that included the revelation of many important truths and the restoration of many of the “precious things” that the Book of Mormon prophet Nephi had foretold would be taken from the Bible (1 Ne. 13:23-29). In June 1830 the first revealed addition to the Bible was set to writing. Over the next three years, the Prophet made changes, additions, and corrections as were given him by divine inspiration while he filled his calling to provide a more correct translation for the Church. Collectively, these are called the Joseph Smith Translation (JST), a name first applied in the 1970’s, or the New Translation, as Joseph Smith and others of his day referred to it.<sup>128</sup>

Joseph worked on rendering a better translation of the Bible longer than he had in translating the Book of Mormon. His work to bring the Bible into fullness was an important part of his ministry as prophet.

This thesis in particular is interested in providing a summative understanding of the Bible’s informal canonization process because it is essential for understanding the journey that *Joseph Smith—History* took to becoming a part of canon. It helps to better establish the philosophy the Church uses when determining what should or should not be canonized beyond the simple explanation of someone with authority declaring it so. The Bible’s informal process enlightens the process that sometimes takes place *leading up to* formal canonization. The strokes that were added to the Bible’s canonical canvas were the same strokes used to paint *Joseph Smith—History*.

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<sup>128</sup> Scott H. Faulring, Kent P. Jackson, and Robert J. Matthews, eds., *Joseph Smith’s New Translation of the Bible: Original Manuscripts* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2004): 3.

The Bible was never formally canonized.<sup>129</sup> Neither was there a proposal to accept the Joseph Smith Translation as the canon of the Church, and the members never sustained it as such. Instead it has mostly been a resource to help the members understand the text of the Bible, parts of which are even included in the footnotes and appendix of the King James Version that the Church currently prints. While there were some sections of the translation that were canonized in *The Doctrine and Covenants* and in *The Pearl of Great Price*, the whole of the translation was never formally accepted as scripture. Nonetheless, in practice, the translation done by Joseph Smith is binding, even considered to be the way the Bible should read by members of the Church.<sup>130</sup>

One apostle explained the binding nature of the Joseph Smith Translation in a speech he gave to Latter-day Saint teachers and scholars. He said: “May I be pardoned if I say that negative attitudes and feelings about the Joseph Smith Translation are simply part of the devil’s program to keep the word of truth from the children of men. Of course the revealed changes made by Joseph Smith are true—as much so as anything in the Book of Mormon or the Doctrine and Covenants. Of course we have adequate and authentic original sources showing the changes—as much so as are the sources for the Book of Mormon or the revelations. Of course we should use

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<sup>129</sup> However the Saints believed that the Lord through revelation to Joseph Smith did sustain the Bible as His word. An example of this can be found in *Doctrine and Covenants* 42:12. But the teachings of the Bible were balanced with the Book of Mormon. Through Joseph the Lord told the priesthood to “teach the principles of my gospel, which are in the Bible and the Book of Mormon, in the which is the fullness of the gospel.” But to secure the point of the thesis, this scripture should be balanced with Nephi’s teachings in the Book of Mormon that suggest that plain and precious parts were removed. And also with the Article of Faith that explains the Bible is true as far as it is translated correctly. It seems clear that the Lord respected the Lord as canon, but there were some warnings about it. This places the Bible in a unique place in the Church’s canon.

<sup>130</sup> Please note that this development of paradigm for Church members was slow progressing, and that the 1979 edition of the King James Version of the Bible especially hastened this mindset forward. For more information on this change of paradigm see: Bruce R. McConkie, “The Doctrinal Restoration,” *The Joseph Smith Translation: The Restoration of Plain and Precious Things*, Monte S. Nyman and Robert L. Millett eds., (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1985): 1-22; and Robert J. Matthews “The New Publications of the Standard Works—1979, 1981,” *BYU Studies*, vol. 22: 387-424; and Robert J. Matthews *Joseph Smith’s Translation of the Bible: A History and Commentary* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1975).

the Joseph Smith Translation in our study and teaching. Since when do any of us have the right to place bounds on the Almighty and say we will believe these revelations but not those?”<sup>131</sup> He went on to advocate the translation’s addition to the footnotes and appendix of the Bible. This quote illustrates how the translation of the Bible is considered binding in the minds of Church leadership, and consequently should be the same for members.

One of the articles of Faith, a canonized list<sup>132</sup> that represents some of the core beliefs of the Church, illustrates this rather unusual process that the Bible underwent in order to receive canonization. Perhaps more importantly, it highlights the attitude of members of the Church concerning the text of the Holy Bible. These articles were penned by Joseph Smith after he had completed his translation of the Bible, and were canonized at the same time as *Joseph Smith—History*, as they were both included in the missionary pamphlet *The Pearl of Great Price*. Look carefully for the paradigm intimated by article number eight. “We believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly; we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God.”<sup>133</sup> The translation of Joseph Smith is considered to be this correct translation spoken of in these articles of faith.<sup>134</sup> While not formally canonized, the Bible did undergo a

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<sup>131</sup> Bruce R. McConkie, “The Doctrinal Restoration,” *The Joseph Smith Translation: The Restoration of Plain and Precious Things*, Monte S. Nyman and Robert L. Millett eds., (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1985): 14.

<sup>132</sup> In fact they were canonized twice. Once in 1880 as part of *The Pearl of Great Price* and a second time in 1890 separately and all by itself. See James R. Clark, “Our Pearl of Great Price: From Mission Pamphlet to Standard Work,” Official Web site of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; and Robert J. Matthews, *Joseph Smith’s Translation of the Bible: A History and Commentary* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1975), especially chapter 11.

<sup>133</sup> Joseph Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*: 535–541. Please note again the dual message that could be construed by examining *Doctrine and Covenants* 42:12 which calls on the priesthood to use the Bible and Book of Mormon in teaching. No wonder there has been some hesitancy concerning what is the purpose of *Joseph Smith Translation*. No wonder it was not fully included in footnotes until much later than its actual translation.

<sup>134</sup> It could be argued that the King James Version of the Bible is this correct translation. In answer to that I would simply respond with noting that the King James Version is the version of the Bible that the Lord had Joseph “translate.”

different type of canonization process—a process approved through the canonized Articles of Faith.

Please note that the question of authority seems to be the most important determining principle in the principles of canon employed by the Church—akin to a master painter only being able to produce a work of art. But it is not the only guiding principle of canonization—a master painter can use many different variations of strokes and brushes to fabricate art. By examining the translation process of the Bible, one can gain insight into the guiding principles of canonization. These principles help to explain why *Joseph Smith—History* was canonized and why it has had such a large impact after its canonization. The next step into understanding the history’s progress into canon then is to separate out what are the guiding principles of canonization established by Joseph’s translation of the Bible.

### **The Guiding Principles of Canonization**

A group of scholars summarized Joseph’s translation of the Bible in the following way: “The prophet called his Bible revision a “translation,” though it did not involve creating a new rendering from Hebrew or Greek manuscripts. So far as the translation of the Bible is concerned, he never claimed to have consulted any text other than his English Bible, but he translated it in the sense of conveying it in a new form.”<sup>135</sup> The types of changes rendered for this “new form” of the Bible are enlightening. These scholars made an effort to classify the different types of changes made. These categorizations are helpful because of the insight they provide in the philosophical precedent it sets for canonization by those who are in authority to do so. The types of changes for the translation are separated into the following five categories; First, a restoration

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<sup>135</sup> Faulring, Jackson, and Matthews: 8.

of original text. Second, a restoration of what was once said or done but which was never in the Bible. Third, editing done to make the Bible more understandable for modern readers. Fourth, editing done to bring biblical wording into harmony with truth found in other revelations or elsewhere in the Bible. Lastly, fifth, changes made to provide modern readers teachings that were not written by original authors.<sup>136</sup> With these categories in place it is easier to extrapolate out the philosophy of the Church regarding when to add canon. The following four guiding principles characterize the types of changes Joseph Smith made to the Bible. Central to all of these guiding principles is the concept that only those who have authority to do so can determine the canon of the Church.

First, additional canon can be included for what the church would deem as “restorative” reasons. “Restorative” in this context means to return something to resemble its previous state. While Joseph had meant to do this with the Biblical text, it was sometimes a broader effort than just merely returning text to its original state. In fact it could also mean adding things that were never written by the original authors in order to bring the modern followers into better compliance with the teachings, practices, and doctrines of Christ’s original Church, or the interpretation of what the Church of Christ was by the current prophet. Joseph Smith made the following comment about some of the corrections he had made, “[There are] many things in the Bible which do not, as they now stand, accord with the revelation of the Holy Ghost to me.”<sup>137</sup> In many cases Joseph would “restore” truths that to the rest of traditional Christianity looked new and strange, like proxy work for the dead. This first guiding principle, “to restore,” has the

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 8–11.

<sup>137</sup> Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, Eds., *The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University Press, 1980): 211. This source is also quoted in “Joseph Smith’s New Translation of the Bible,” 9. Spelling and capitalization modernized.

purpose of bringing the modern members into better alignment with the Church established by Christ.

Second, additional canon can be added if it helps to better synchronize the doctrines and practices of the Church. Much of the translation work by Joseph Smith resolved what he and other contemporaries deemed as contradictory, or unclear. A study done on Joseph Smith's New Translation says: "Three examples may illustrate this kind of change: (a) The Gospel of John records the statement, "No man hath seen God at any time" (John 1:18), which contradicts the experience of Joseph Smith (JS—H 1:17-20) as well as biblical examples of prophets seeing God (e.g., Ex. 24:9-11; 33:11; Num. 12:6-8; Isa. 6:1; Amos 9:1). The JST change at John 1:18 clarifies the text. (b) The Gospel of Matthew contains what appears to be a misunderstanding of the donkey used in Jesus' triumphal entry (Matt. 21:2-3, 7). The JST revises the text to agree with the clearer accounts in Mark, Luke, and John. (c) Matthew 27:3-5 and Acts 1:16-19 contain conflicting information about Judas' death. The JST revises Matthew to harmonize the two accounts."<sup>138</sup> As illustrated by these examples, one of the purposes of the translation was to bring scripture into better harmony with itself. But this philosophy goes broader than just the text of the Bible. This group of scholars went on to make the following bold declaration in conjunction with their example: "It is possible that in examples *b* and *c* the Bible preserves accurately what the original authors wrote, based on misunderstanding, incomplete recollection, or the imperfection of writing. Joseph Smith was called to provide a more accurate translation, and responding to divine inspiration, he made the necessary changes even if they corrected the words of ancient writers."<sup>139</sup> In other words, to the believing followers of the prophet, it did not matter as much what the original text said. If the one with authority deemed a change necessary,

<sup>138</sup> Faulring, Jackson, and Matthews: 9–10.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

then it was necessary. The effort of bringing the doctrines and practices of the Church into harmony held great importance. The main purpose of the second guiding principle, “to synchronize,” is to bring greater unity of doctrine, members, and the Church in general.

Thirdly, additional canon can be added when it helps to clarify comprehension of modern readers. One such example can be helpful for understanding this principle. In Genesis 24:2, the character Abraham asks his servant to swear to him by placing his hand under his thigh. An interlinear scripture analyzer shows that the word “thigh” was translated from the Hebrew word “irki.” *Strong’s Concordance* also agrees with this translation. The word appears to have been thigh. Joseph Smith however changed “thigh” to “hand.” Some scholars have proffered that perhaps the change was made not so much for correction or even accuracy, but to help modern readers understand that this would be like shaking hands to seal a deal. Others suggest that perhaps it meant to place one hand atop the other person’s which rested on his thigh like a person swearing on a Bible in court. There are a myriad of such examples from the Bible, and they all seem to be focused on helping the modern member better understand the gospel. A really clear example of this canonical principle can be seen in a text separate from the New Translation.<sup>140</sup> Joseph Smith received this revelation while working on his biblical translation. It is now found in *Doctrine and Covenants* section 77.<sup>141</sup> Section 77 is a text which is meant to clarify certain verses and phrases found within the book of *Revelation* as found in the King James Version of the Bible. The third principle of canonization in the Church, “to clarify,” is all about helping the modern follower better understand the word of the Lord.

<sup>140</sup> The previous two guidelines also have examples outside of the Biblical translation, as will the last guiding principle. If they are guiding principles, then all of canonical texts should fit at least one of the guiding principles, and usually several of them.

<sup>141</sup> Section 77 was added to the canon in 1880 at the same time as *Joseph Smith—History*.

Lastly, additional canon can be included to regulate the practices and paradigms of church members. While this sounds very similar to the second guiding principle, the difference is that this principle does not seek to harmonize already existing scripture, but to simply regulate modern paradigms and practices. Noah needed to build an ark anciently, while today an ark is not needed, but some other practice instead. In other words, prophets could receive new revelation for their days' specific needs. The exclusion of *Songs of Solomon* in the Old Testament is an accurate example of this. Joseph's translation of this book was to write that it was not inspired of God. Consequently it is not considered to be part of the canon of scripture, though it still gets printed in the modern editions of the LDS Bible.<sup>142</sup> But in the footnotes the Joseph Smith Translation renders the book as "not inspired." It is the only such correction of an entire book in the whole of the Bible. This translation changes the paradigm concerning that particular text or book resulting in members who would not scour its pages looking for doctrinal insights or behavioral modifications to be made based from the text. Notice that this translation was made with "restorative" purposes, but it also served the dual purpose of regulating the practice of studying the Bible, and has a large effect on members' paradigm concerning the Bible and *Songs of Solomon*. The fourth principle, "to regulate," has the purpose of shaping the practices and mindset of the modern members.

These guiding principles are not only reflected in the types of changes made in the New Translation, but can also be confirmed in certain key passages from the *Book of Mormon* that discuss the issue of additional canonical scripture. The written context of the following passages

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<sup>142</sup> It is unclear why "Songs of Solomon" has continued to be printed in the Bible produced by the Church. For that matter, it is unclear why the Joseph Smith Translation has not been added to the text rather than existing only in the footnotes. I speculate that this is to maintain a common ground with the rest of Christianity where most of Mormon converts come from. But that is only speculation. Perhaps there is more to it, but if there is, I do not know it.



involves an ancient prophet named Nephi who is explaining the possible reaction of some in modern times to the addition of more scripture. The object in displaying these specific passages of scripture is to re-identify the philosophical tenets that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has concerning canon and scripture. Look for the guiding principles from these verses:

But behold, there shall be many—at that day when I shall proceed to do a marvelous work among them, that I may remember my covenants which I have made unto the children of men, that I may set my hand again the second time to recover my people, which are of the house of Israel;

And also, that I may remember the promises which I have made unto thee, Nephi, and also unto thy father, that I would remember your seed; and that the words of your seed should proceed forth out of my mouth unto your seed; and my words shall hiss forth unto the ends of the earth, for a standard unto my people, which are of the house of Israel;

And because my words shall hiss forth—many of the Gentiles shall say: A Bible! A Bible! We have got a Bible, and there cannot be any more Bible....

Know ye not that there are more nations than one? Know ye not that I, the Lord your God, have created all men, and that I remember those upon the isles of the sea; and that I rule in the heavens above and in the earth beneath; and I bring forth my word unto the children of men, yea, even upon all nations of the earth?

Wherefore murmur ye, because that ye shall receive more of my word? Know ye not that the testimony of two nations is a witness unto you that I am God, that I remember one nation like unto another? Wherefore, I speak the same words unto one nation like unto another. And when the two nations shall run together the testimony of the two nations shall run together also.

And I do this that I may prove unto many that I am the same yesterday, today, and forever; and that I speak forth my words according to mine own pleasure. And because that I have spoken one word ye need not suppose that I can speak another; for my work is not yet finished; neither shall it be until the end of man, neither from that time henceforth and forever.

Wherefore, because that ye have a Bible ye need not suppose that it contains all my words; neither need ye suppose that I have not caused more to be written.

For I command all men, both in the east and in the west, and in the north, and in the south, and in the islands of the sea, that they shall write the words which I shall speak unto them; for out of the books which shall be written I will judge the world, every man according to their works, according to that which is written.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> Nephi 29:1–3, 7–11

In the second above paragraph it explains that the words will “proceed forth out of my mouth.” In other words, the church’s standpoint is that scripture has the divine claim of being God given. But there is the almost strange caveat to that phrase, “the words of your seed shall proceed forth out of my mouth.” To put the qualification more simply, the Church believes that scripture is divinely inspired through certain men. God will inspire and speak through certain oracles and they will in turn write it down, or propose other people’s words. In some of the preceding chapters this prophet Nephi used the words of others in his scripture. He used the words of Isaiah and the words of his brother Jacob. Members of the Church would be careful to point out that Nephi did not have the same concept of canon as understood modernly, but it seems clear from context that Nephi understood that these words would be added to the Bible as additional scripture. It is a confirmation of the most essential principle of canonization. The one upon which all other guiding principles hinge. Only one with authority can add to the canon, a prophet like figure similar to Nephi, chosen by God to do so.

Another guiding principle can be seen in that same paragraph. It reads: “words shall hiss forth unto the ends of the earth, for a standard unto my people...” Additional canon, according to the Book of Mormon, should “regulate” a standard unto the people. Nephi is explaining to modern readers that the Book of Mormon should be accepted, and not rejected, to the canon because of its ability to help create the Lord’s standard for the House of Israel, also known as the Church. The idea of more than one witness that is repeated throughout the verses supports the guiding principle that additional canon should “clarify” understanding of modern readers. Similarly verses eight and nine re-confirm that additional canon should “synchronize” all tenets of faith into one whole with the words: “Wherefore, I speak the same words unto one nation like unto another.” When more scripture is to be added it often serves the purpose of “clarifying” and

“synchronizing [or unifying]” doctrines, practices, and beliefs of the Church. According to Nephi scripture should also prove that God is “the same yesterday, today, and forever.” This idea of God working the same way as he always has with all people is implied throughout this text, and supports the other guiding principle; “to restore.”

Both the example of Joseph Smith’s translation of the Bible and the text from *The Book of Mormon* establish the guiding principles for canonization in the Church. They concur that additional canon can be added by the one with authority for “restoration,” “synchronizing,” “clarifying,” and “regulating” purposes.

With this very brief and summative understanding of the process and guiding principles of canonization employed by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints completed, a return can be made to the story of *Joseph Smith—History*. The first chapter explored the genesis or birth of the text. The second chapter explored the childhood and adolescence of the text—covering its first appearances to public, and its adolescent independence from the rest of the *Manuscript History*. All that remained was the formal rite of passage. Once it passed from insightful and useful history to essential canon, it would be able to fortify the Church greatly.

### **The Canonization of *Joseph Smith—History*: The Reclamation of Revelation**

Between the years of *Joseph Smith—History*’s first printing in *The Pearl of Great Price* and its canonization a growing concern for the youth of the Church had been developing. While concern for the youth of the Church has almost always been a concern for leadership, Brigham Young and the other ecclesiastical leaders held some specific concerns in regards to their ignorance of the Church’s history outside of Utah. The rising generation’s reaction to some proposed practices greatly troubled the President and Quorum of the Twelve.

Brigham Young in particular felt a great need for reformation because of this ignorance, and for other reasons too. His frustrations with the manner and way the members worshipped haunted him throughout his presidency. While the greatest emphasis of the reformation took place during the 1850s, it began as soon as they had entered into the Salt Lake valley. Brigham Young saw being separate from the rest of the world as an opportunity to finally establish Zion. His discourses reflected his concern that the members would embrace the ways of the world and turn away from the Lord. They could not have the unity necessary for the Zion he envisioned in such a situation. One scholar noted that by 1854 “reform became a recurrent theme. The continued influx of Gentile merchants, the difficulty of assimilating increasing numbers of immigrants to Zion, and the surfacing of apostates were among the factors contributing to the increase in reform sentiment.”<sup>144</sup> His concern is manifested in its implementation. Leaders traveled from settlement to settlement preaching the need for conformity to certain reformation practices. In its most aggressive stage home missionaries would visit members in their homes and ask a series of questions that had to deal with how well they were individually living the gospel. These questions directly reflected the reformation practices that the leadership was most concerned with.

On September 21, 1856, the prophet’s sentiments were rather bluntly portrayed in the following statement: “We need a reformation in the midst of this people; we need a thorough reform, for I know that very many are in a dozy condition with regard to their religion; I know this as well as I should if you were now to doze and go to sleep before my eyes. You are losing the spirit of the Gospel, is there any cause for it? No, only that which there is in the world. You have the weakness of human nature to contend with, and you suffer that weakness to decoy you

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<sup>144</sup> Paul Peterson, “The Mormon Reformation” (PhD diss., Brigham Young University, 1981).

away from the truth, to the side of the adversary; but now it is time to awake before the time of burning.”<sup>145</sup> This desire for reformation burned brightly in the hearts of the Prophet and leadership, and they felt it their duty to see it come about. The reformation was officially recognized in 1856, and in many ways it was quite successful. Church attendance blossomed in a dramatic fashion, and there was also an increase, though not as dramatic, in tithing payments and free will offerings.<sup>146</sup> Another interesting and correlating benefit from the reformation was the renewed focus the Saints placed on the temple ordinances. Though the temple was not finished, the endowment house was used at such a pace that the President of the Church spent a lot of his time in that period administering endowments and marrying couples.<sup>147</sup>

While the reformation was successful in many regards, Brigham Young was still unhappy with the end result. His concept of Zion had not been reached, and his concept relied on what the Saints had learned concerning Enoch and his city from the revelations given to Joseph. The revelation is found in *The Pearl of Great Price*. It reads, “And the Lord called his people Zion, because they were of one heart, and one mind, and they dwelled in righteousness, and there was no poor among them.”<sup>148</sup> Apparently Young’s vision of Zion was incomplete without the people having “no poor among them.”

The prophet’s frustration with not meeting this standard of Zion seemed to climax in the 1870s because there were so many of the youth who knew nothing of the practices of Church members in the first twenty years of the Church’s history. Not only did they not know them, but they seemed dubious that some of the claimed practices had ever existed. Young’s frustrations

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<sup>145</sup> *Journal of Discourses*, 4:52.

<sup>146</sup> Paul Peterson: 45.

<sup>147</sup> Anderson: 93–94.

<sup>148</sup> Moses 7:18.

were undoubtedly a precursor to the “Order of Enoch” he proposed in the last years of his life. In 1874 the Church leaders called all to live according to the law of consecration, popularly known then as the “Order of Enoch.” On October 8, 1872, almost two years before the practice was officially announced as a policy for all members, George Q. Cannon said the following: “The time must come when we must obey that which has been revealed to us as the Order of Enoch, when there shall be no rich and no poor among the Latter-day Saints; when wealth will not be a temptation; when every man will love his neighbor as he does himself; when every man and woman will labor for the good of all as much as for self.”<sup>149</sup> This statement gives a general description of what the law should look like. Practically it involved members pooling resources through priesthood supervision. Much to leadership’s frustration, many of the rising generation questioned the practice and its origins.

The rising generations’ dubious whispers had reached the ears of Church leadership. This skepticism was especially apparent when the leadership instituted the order into practice in 1874. Many of the youth claimed it to be a new machination. The Apostles responded by addressing it in discourse. Elder Orson Pratt stood at the pulpit of the tabernacle on June 14, 1874, and proclaimed the following:

There seems to be at the present time a great deal of interest manifested among the Latter-day Saints, and even among those who are connected with our Church, in regard to some instructions that have been imparted to the Latter-day Saints in relation to their temporal affairs. The instruction which have been imparted, and which the people are, in some measure, receiving, are comparatively new in their estimation, that is, it is supposed they are new, and something which we, in times past, have not practiced. But if we appeal to the revelations of God, we shall find that no new thing has been required of us. It is generally termed, however, by Latter-day Saints, the New Order. You hear of it in all parts of the Territory. What is meant by the New Order? Is it really new in the revelations of God, or is it something new for us to practice it? We have been required in the past year 1874, to come back again to an old order, as taught in ancient Mormonism.

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<sup>149</sup> *Journal of Discourses*, 15:207.

What I mean by ancient Mormonism is Mormonism as it was taught some forty-three or forty-four years ago.<sup>150</sup>

The Church was encountering a heretofore unknown problem because the Church was relatively so young. The youth were unaware of the older practices of the Church.

In addition to this conflict, the lack of printed materials the membership was facing hastened the need for a “reclamation of revelation” to occur sooner rather than later. So it was that in 1878, Orson Pratt went to England to print a new edition of the *Book of Mormon* on electrotype plates. During this time he proposed that the Church also print a new edition of the *Doctrine and Covenants* from electrotype plates as well. John Taylor, Acting President of the Church, agreed to the proposal on condition that he included cross references and explanatory notes.<sup>151</sup> This, in the estimation of the leadership, must have been an excellent opportunity to expand the canon to include the revelations they wished the membership possessed. Cross references and explanatory notes would not be sufficient.

One thesis manages to capture the reclamation that took place with the *Doctrine and Covenants*. Notice the correlation these additions have with the *Manuscript History*—an important indication of just how authoritative the manuscript had become. The thesis reads:

Knowing that the leaders were trying to establish the “ancient order of Mormonism,” this sheds some light upon the revelations chosen to be included in the [new edition of the] *Doctrine and Covenants*. For example, Section 13 is about John the Baptist restoring the Aaronic Priesthood to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, and Section 115 states that Joseph Smith held the keys of the kingdom which established priesthood authority. Section 85 is living the law of consecration in Zion and Sections 111, 117, and 120 deal with the temporal affairs of the Church and individuals, proving the United Order was not a new concept...

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<sup>150</sup> *Journal of Discourses*, 17:104.

<sup>151</sup> Robert J. Woodford, “The Historical Development of the *Doctrine and Covenants*” (PhD diss., Brigham Young University, 1974): 15.

Section 109 is the dedicatory prayer of the Kirtland Temple, and Section 115 is about the naming of the Church and building a temple in Far West which helped establish the doctrine of building temples. . . . Section 110, of course, is about the visitation of Jesus Christ, Moses, Elias, and Elijah in the Kirtland Temple to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery. Sections 121, 122, and 123 were taken from a letter written by Joseph Smith while he was in Liberty Jail, in Liberty Missouri, which was penned as a “prison temple,” because of the spiritual significance and the revelations Joseph Smith received while imprisoned there. In Section 126 the Lord commends Brigham Young for his faithful service. Section 131 is about celestial marriage, and Section 132 is about how exaltation is gained through the new and everlasting covenants and that Joseph Smith had the sealing power to bind and seal on earth and in heaven.<sup>152</sup>

The *Manuscript History* played an integral role in the additions to the canon, and it is fitting that Orson Pratt was the one to oversee the electrotype pages of this new edition of the revelations because of his role with the *Manuscript History of the Church*. All but one of the new sections added were taken from the pages of that very history.

During this same visit to England by Pratt, John Taylor also decided that members should have an American edition of that British missionary tract written by Richards. The *Pearl of Great Price* had become popular among the Saints. Perhaps it even became more popular than Richards’ had envisioned. Enoch’s city of Zion had especially caught the interest and imagination of the members, and other parts were becoming more frequently referenced, like *Joseph Smith--History*. So far the American Saints only had access to it through returning missionaries and immigrating British members, which made up almost 2/3 of the membership of the Church at that time. Both Orson Pratt and John Taylor had been in Europe when Richards had put the tract together, and both had likely had some input into its compilation. It is not clear if this new printing was intended for canonization, but it seems that it likely was not. It was not broken into sections like the other canonized scripture of the time, and did not receive the same request to include cross references and explanatory notes—though it did have some minor

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<sup>152</sup> Anderson: 120–121. Parentheses added for clarification purposes.



changes, namely it contained additions of sections of *the Doctrine and Covenants* that were later removed in subsequent printings of *The Pearl of Great Price* after it was canonized.

H. Donl Peterson summarizes the other changes made to the 1878 edition in comparison with the original tract. He said: “

The preface was deleted because it was no longer pertinent, and it was not replaced by a new one. The first two entries in the table of contents were combined and placed in chronological order, and several passages not included in the 1851 edition were added. The source of most of these additions was the Inspired Version of the Bible (the Joseph Smith Translation), which had been published by the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in 1867. Several of the brethren, including Orson Pratt, had assisted Joseph Smith in preparing the Inspired Version, and they were persuaded that the Reorganized Church had been honest in preserving the original text. Another addition was the revelation on eternal marriage (now D&C 132). This revelation was also added to the new Doctrine and Covenants that was being prepared for publication.<sup>153</sup>

From these listed changes it seems apparent that the tract was not intended to be added to the canon. So what was it that changed the minds of leadership by the time the October 1880 general conference approached?

The records seem to be unfortunately mute on the point. But knowing the emphasis the leadership had on reformation and reclamation, it does not come as too much of a surprise. A perusal of the contents of that pamphlet reveals that it was heavily influential on some of the very points of doctrine leaders had been seeking to reclaim.

### **The Reclaiming Properties of *The Pearl of Great Price***

*The Pearl of Great Price* contained sections from the Doctrine and Covenants that met the needs of the time, thus reinforcing the content of these particular revelations. For example, speaking of the addition of the plural marriage revelation to the pamphlet, one historian makes

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<sup>153</sup> H. Donl Peterson: 21–22.

the following observation: “It seems that the brethren wanted it to be widely circulated because the Church at the time was under heavy attack from federal officials who opposed the practice of polygamy.”<sup>154</sup> The sections of *The Doctrines and Covenants* that were in the pamphlet included many of the doctrines that they wished to reinforce and reclaim.

Similarly, what is now known as the “Book of Moses” was printed in the pamphlet. This particular text is a new rendering for the first six chapters of Genesis. It included the revelations of Enoch, and his city of Zion, and the way and manner the Lord calls prophets in our day. Joseph Smith had written it as part of his new translation of the Bible, and it had become the popular explanation of the law of consecration, called the Order of Enoch in 1880. Many ideals that the leadership sought to reclaim were found within the *Book of Moses*.

*Joseph Smith—Matthew* was also a result of the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible. It gives a different translation to the entirety of Matthew 24. It reclaimed certain prophecies concerning the Savior’s second coming. The images of the second coming were often used to lend urgency to the work that the Saints were called upon to do. This helped to reinforce some of the practices that the leaders urged.

The Articles of Faith were also a part of that pamphlet. These articles were a collection of statements of belief held by the Church and its members. Some of those, like number ten<sup>155</sup>, responded directly to the conflicts of the time, and were a good reminder of the basic doctrinal tenets of the Church.

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<sup>154</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>155</sup> Joseph Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*: 535–541.

A poem entitled “Truth” by John Jaques was also included. It expressed a great desire to search for and claim truth over any other earthly treasure. Its earnest words worked as a magnifier for those principles expressed in the other sections of the pamphlet.<sup>156</sup>

The book of Abraham, along with its facsimiles, reclaimed the unique doctrines of pre-mortal life held by the Church, along with reestablishing the unique aspects of the creation story maintained by the Church and its leadership. This different creation story influenced their worship practices.

And of course, *The Pearl of Great Price*, also included extracts from the *Manuscript History of the Church*. This history had become an important part of the culture and theology of the Church. The prophet of the restoration, though dead for many years now, had become even more important to the members. It seemed only fitting for parts of his history to be included in the 1880 reclamation of revelation.<sup>157</sup>

Because of the reclaiming properties possessed by “The Pearl of Great Price” pamphlet it is not surprising that leadership ultimately decided to include it in the expansion of canon. Even if it had not originally been intended as such when they reprinted it in 1878, they saw the benefit of adding it as part of the reclamation of revelation they sought to make.

### **Sunday, 10 October 1880, the Canonization of *The Pearl of Great Price***

The 50<sup>th</sup> Semiannual General Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was taking place on the second weekend of October in 1880. It was Sunday the 10th, and

<sup>156</sup> The poem was put to music and can now be found in the Church’s hymn book under the title “Oh Say What Is Truth?”

<sup>157</sup> Also Pratt’s vision of using *Joseph Smith—History* in missionary efforts had also grown and by 1880 it had become a much bigger part of missionary efforts.

the membership was convening for the second session of the day at 2:00 pm for the final session of that conference. Elder Orson Pratt presented the authorities for the sustaining vote of the conference. Since Brigham Young's death in 1877 there had been no organized First Presidency, and the Quorum of the Twelve had presided over the Church. John Taylor, as senior apostle, was presented as the prophet, seer, and revelator of the Church, and two counselors were also presented for sustaining, George Q. Cannon and Joseph F. Smith. President Taylor had only been acting president since the death of Brigham Young, but now the First Presidency was again reformed. While the additions to canon could have been presented without a First Presidency, it is interesting to note that they were not until after the new President had been sustained with two counselors.<sup>158</sup>

Following the reorganization of the First Presidency the *Doctrine and Covenants* was then sustained because of the many additional texts added to it, as was *The Pearl of Great Price*. The once pamphlet would become the fourth standard work, or canonized book of scripture. The following quotation is taken from the records of that conference:

President George Q. Cannon said: I hold in my hand the Book of Doctrine and Covenants and also the book *The Pearl of Great Price*, which books contain revelations of God. In Kirtland, the *Doctrine and Covenants* in its original form, as first printed, was submitted to the officers of the Church and the members of the church to vote upon. As there have been additions made to it by the publishing of revelations which were not contained in the original edition, it has been deemed wise to submit these books and their contents as from God, and binding upon us as a people and as a Church.

President Joseph F. Smith said: I move that we receive and accept the revelations contained in these books as revelations from God to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and to all the world.

The motion was seconded and sustained by unanimous vote of the whole conference.<sup>159</sup>

<sup>158</sup> It is also interesting to note that John Taylor was the author of Section 135.

<sup>159</sup> *Journal History of the Church*, October 10, 1880: 4.

*Joseph Smith—History*, along with many other additions, was added to the canon of the Church. The rite of passage had been passed, and this passing forever changed the status of the text in the Church.

### **Reactions to the Canonization of *Joseph Smith—History***

It is difficult to gauge the immediate reaction of members concerning *Joseph Smith—History*'s canonization because of the great many changes that occurred in that particular session of General Conference. Not only was John Taylor's tenure as prophet official but he had chosen two new counselors. The additional canon was a rather large load of many different revelations consistent with the desire to reclaim "ancient Mormonism." The reclamation was a massive effort. The many happenings of this day help to explain why the records are mute concerning reactions to what was actually added to the canon. It was a day saturated with important events.

Consequently there are mostly just general statements made concerning that particular day and the conference, like the one recorded by then Elder Wilford Woodruff: "This is a great day to Israel."<sup>160</sup> But as time marches on, reactions of the leadership can be identified in their actions, if not in their words. It seems that while the formal canonization of *The Pearl of Great Price* had taken place, the canonization process was still incomplete. The text would be refined and worked over for several years.

In October 1890 the Articles of Faith were read to the congregation and confirmed as scripture by the vote of the conference.<sup>161</sup> This is a strange occurrence since it had already been canonized as a part of the other books contained in the fourth standard work. There must have

<sup>160</sup> *Wilford Woodruff* journal. LDS Church Archives, Church History Library (Salt Lake City, UT).

<sup>161</sup> H. Donl Peterson: 23. Notice this may be the closest the Church has ever come to actually sustaining the Bible as canon because of Articles of Faith no. 8 which claims: "We believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly."

been some debate over their inclusion; whether it was among the members or leadership, it is unclear, but it was the only part of the book that received a second and individual sustaining. However it was not the only part of the book under debate.

Ten years later in the year 1900, the First Presidency had authorized Dr. James E. Talmage of the University of Utah to make some changes to the *Pearl of Great Price*. He made three major changes. He edited out the repetitious sections or extracts from the *Doctrine and Covenants*. He cut the poem “Truth” from the work.<sup>162</sup> He divided the work into chapters and verses and added numerous cross references. A Church reading committee, consisting of General Authorities, approved Talmage’s proposed changes. The new edition was accepted, proposed, and sustained at the 1902 October general conference. The overseeing committee consisted of Apostles Frances M. Lyman, Anthon H. Lund, and Elder George Reynolds, secretary to the First Presidency. This is the first edition of *The Pearl of Great Price* that was done under the direct supervision and authority of the First Presidency of the Church. Other than the above mentioned changes to *The Pearl of Great Price* there were not any major changes made to its contents<sup>163</sup> until 1976—though it did undergo many format changes like columns, cross references, indexes, footnotes, and other such additions for reference and convenience sake. In 1976 two revelations were added consisting of Joseph Smith’s vision of the celestial kingdom and Joseph F. Smith’s vision of the redemption of the dead. But by 1979 these two scriptures were removed and placed in *The Doctrine and Covenants* as sections 137 and 138.

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<sup>162</sup> However, it continued to be used in the hymn books of the Church.

<sup>163</sup> Please note that there have been some editorial changes in *The Pearl of Great Price*, and there would even be some who might claim that major changes occurred. After reviewing the content it is the opinion of this author that *The Pearl of Great Price* was mostly in place content wise by 1902. The books were in place with only a few changes that were later moved to *Doctrine and Covenants*. The 1902 version closely resembles the current edition, though there are some minor changes.

While the contents of the book had fluctuated with time, *Joseph Smith—History* remained a vital component of the canonical book. It had passed through the additional winnowing process that the *Pearl of Great Price* had endured. The actions of those in authority indicated the approval of the leadership of this particular book. It was there to stay. Perhaps this relatively silent but real prophetic approval becomes more compelling when coupled with how well the text meets the guiding principles of canonization used by the Church. The argument in this case is that not only does the text meet the formal process of being proposed by one with authority and sustained by membership, but it also satisfies all of the guiding principles of canonization. Some canon that has been added only gratifies one or two of the guiding principles—which is fine since meeting the requirement of merely one of the principles is sufficient for canonization. But *Joseph Smith—History* meets and appeases *all* of the guiding principles. Observing this could help to explain the vital role this once relatively unknown text has come to take in the theology and culture of the Church.

### ***Joseph Smith—History Satisfies All the Guiding Principles of Canonization***

Though not meant to be a comprehensive list, this thesis has provided four guiding principles of canonization in addition to the main principle of canonization; only those with authority can add scripture to the canon. These four are the major guidelines that govern expanding and contracting canon.

First, additional canon should *restore* doctrines and practices of Christ’s Church. It seems that the major purpose of the history that Joseph dictated was to document restoration events. The first vision is considered by membership to be the catalyst behind God restoring His church to the earth. The relation of the obtaining of the plates and the translation of *The Book of*

*Mormon* is the story of how an ancient text was restored. In this principle of canonization, the text is exploding in fulfillment. It has become the vehicle, the preferred teaching tool, of introducing to members and potential converts the need for a restoration of the Church of Christ. It restores the doctrine and practice of having a prophet like Moses of old. While there were other canonized texts that could cover some of these restoration events, none seemed to do it as well as *Joseph Smith—History*. This is illustrated in modern curriculum used by the Church. For example, in *Preach My Gospel*, the missionary training manual employed by the Church, the following exhortation is included concerning Lesson 1 to be taught to potential converts: “Memorize Joseph Smith’s description of seeing the Father and the Son (Joseph Smith—History 1:16-17), and always be ready to describe the First Vision using his own words.”<sup>164</sup> Similarly the study section throughout Lesson 1 is filled with excerpts and summaries from the scriptural text of *Joseph Smith—History*.<sup>165</sup> It is similarly used in teaching manuals for youth, adults, and children of the Church.

*Joseph Smith—History* reaffirms the practices of baptism and priesthood ordination, and restores the doctrines of the Godhead, angelic ministrations, prayer, and many, many others. The text has become the foundational piece for describing the history of the “restoration” of the Church. This was not always the case in the Church’s proselytizing history, but since canonization it has become central to explaining the need of a restoration, restoring certain key practices and doctrines, and restoring the House of Israel to its long forgotten covenants.

Second, canon should synchronize and unify the doctrines of the Church. The text that Mulholland scribed has helped to synchronize many key doctrines of the Church. One example

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<sup>164</sup> The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2004): 38.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, 31–46.



can be seen when examining the doctrines that involve priesthood keys. *Joseph Smith—History* attempts to blend the New Testament passage of Matthew 16:15-19, and that concept of keys being delivered to Peter, with the modern world using the explanatory means of ministering angels as an explanation. In *Joseph Smith—History* 1: 68-69 the text records the event of John the Baptist conferring “the Priesthood of Aaron, which holds the keys of the ministering of angels, and of the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins.” While section 27 mentioned John’s giving of keys to Joseph and Oliver, *Joseph Smith—History* had the exact wording of the angel during the priesthood ordination.<sup>166</sup> This text is one of the vital players that put authority firmly on the shoulders of Joseph Smith. Even more so, *Joseph Smith—History* blends the story of the restoration of the Aaronic priesthood into one place rather than having to piece the restoration’s story together through several sections of the *Doctrine and Covenants*. *The Doctrine and Covenants* then passes the authority on from Joseph to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

But this is not the only doctrine that it helps to synchronize among the standard works. Doctrines concerning the relationship of God and Christ, the role of the Book of Mormon, and many others are placed in better comparison with one another because of this text. In a different way, the ministration of the angel Moroni provided a synchronized list of scriptures that before this time had never been placed in context with one another, thus synchronizing scripture in a completely original way. Examples of this principle being fulfilled swim freely throughout the entirety of *Joseph Smith—History*. It matches and exceeds the expectation that it should synchronize and unify doctrines and practices of the Church.

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<sup>166</sup> Notice Section 13 was not added until 1880 at the same time *Joseph Smith—History* was added.

Third, canon should clarify comprehension of modern readers. The text does not overflow the expectation of this particular guideline, but it does still fully meet the requirement. It provides critical renderings for a few particular passages of scriptures. James 1:5 is clarified for modern readers in the following manner, “At length I came to the conclusion that I must either remain in darkness and confusion, or else I must do as James directs, that is, ask of God.”<sup>167</sup> By providing a modern day application of the scripture the text renders a plainer understanding of the passage.

Joseph’s history does the same thing, provides an application or fulfillment of a Biblical passage, in verses 64 and 65—this time from a passage found in Isaiah 29:11-12. But Moroni’s visit to the seventeen year old Joseph Smith is perhaps the richest in rendering different, arguably plainer, versions of Biblical passages. The first, fifth, and sixth verse of the last chapter of Malachi was rendered differently than it appears in the Bible. In this case the “curse” alluded to in the Bible is now identified as the “whole earth” being “utterly wasted at his coming.” The angel Moroni also offers explanatory comments on certain other Biblical passages that are meant to clarify comprehension.<sup>168</sup> While the intent of the *Joseph Smith--History* text does not seem to be to clarify comprehension, at least not like *Doctrine and Covenants 77* is intended to, it does provide many important clarifications. Some of those clarifications provided in the history were even considered important enough to hold their own individual places in footnotes or in sections of the *Doctrine and Covenants*, like section 2 for example.

Last, canon should regulate the practices and paradigms of Church members. Recalling that this particular guideline often occurred dually with one of the other three guidelines, this

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<sup>167</sup> *Joseph Smith—History* 1:13.

<sup>168</sup> See *Joseph Smith—History* 1:36–41.

historical text satisfies this particular guideline too. It does this in several ways, but perhaps no example does it as clearly as Joseph's claim that he saw *both* the Father and the Son in a grove of trees. This is considered to be one of the more controversial claims of Joseph Smith because of the traditional paradigms it disrupts. Orthodox ideas and practices concerning the trinity are challenged, along with challenging the concept that the time of prophets, men seeing God and conversing with him, has passed. Practices and paradigms are molded anew throughout the text. From angelic ministrations to open canon versus closed canon, the document establishes an order of things, and regulates many of the practices and paradigms of the Church.

*Joseph Smith—History* passes the canon “test” with flying colors. The way in which it passes provides insight into why it has ascended from relatively unknown history to foundational to the doctrines, culture, and practices of the Church. No longer is it unknown to the general populous of the Church, but is quoted and committed to memory by even the small children of the faith.

## **Conclusion**

In the theology of the Church, not only was *Joseph Smith—History* proposed as scripture by someone who had authority and sustained by the members of the Church, but it also more than meets the guiding principles of canonization employed by the Church.

By exploring the genesis, or birth of the text, a labored beginning can be identified. The Lord had mandated a history to be written, and though circumstances made the task difficult, the perpetual efforts were able to produce a remarkable document—if not in its literary style, at least in its eventual impact. It also helped to create the culture of record keeping and history keeping of the Church. It is important to note that the turbulent history of 1838 and 1839 undoubtedly had

some touch on the document. It is difficult to determine how much of the text was affected by environment and how much of it was simply the oratory style of Joseph. But either way, textual evidence reveals that the environment and time period held some sway over the text. This prolonged delivery resulted in a text that had staying power, at least in the culture and environment of the Church, unlike the previous attempts at a history, and even the later attempts at a history of sorts. After much labor and travail, the infant form of the text was born.

The manuscript's first steps were taken when it was published for the first time serially in 1842. Its childhood consisted of a friendship with Orson Pratt and missionary work. That friendship would one day greatly benefit the text when it would finally claim maturity. Franklin D. Richards was another important friend that helped the text to claim its independence and begin its adolescent stage. The text that would one day be canonized was separated and designated as an individual, distinct from the rest of the *Manuscript History of the Church*. This individuality was essential for its full maturation.

All that remained was to pass through the rite of passage for canonization, a final change that would embed the history into a permanent place in the culture and theology of the Church. In 1880 the formal rite took place as *The Pearl of Great Price* was sustained as the fourth standard book of scripture in the Church's canon. The unspoken approval of the First Presidency was stamped on the text as it remained a part of scripture during the winnowing years of *The Pearl of Great Price*. The text since then has moved into a prominent position of status in comparison with the rest of the canon of the Church because of its ability to encapsulate in one place the story of the restoration. Currently, it is a foundational text of scripture, a central cog in the identity of the modern Saint.

This thesis is a portrayal of the story of *Joseph Smith—History* and the text’s journey from history to scripture—its birth, childhood, adolescence, and finally adulthood as a full-fledged member of canon.

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