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Joseph B. Keeler, Print Culture, and the Modernization of Mormonism, 1885–1918

David J. Whittaker

The years flanking the start of the twentieth century represented a time of transition for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Seventy years old in 1900, the Church and the larger Mormon society in which it resided still displayed much of their traditional character. Although some members congregated in urban densities that edged out along the Wasatch Front from Salt Lake City (Utah's capital and the Church's headquarters), most still lived in small, relatively self-contained agricultural communities in the Great Basin's interior. Wherever they lived, however, they expected charismatic leaders to continue organizing the Church, directing devotional life, and keeping the federal government at arms length. That formula had held sway during the Saints' half-century-long occupation of the Intermountain West, allowing a unique intermixing of civil and ecclesiastical institutions to develop. Change was in the wind, however, and indeed had been for decades.

Increasing contacts with the gentile (non-Mormon) world had resulted in Utah's increasing implication in national economic and political networks. Brigham Young, who directed the migration to Utah in 1846–47 and led the Church until his death thirty years later, had steered the economy in the direction of Mormons' self-sufficiency, preferring short-haul exchange to national trade; stressing local, cooperative manufacturing over mining (which in California and Nevada had quickly attracted outside interests); and accepting commercial banking only grudgingly. Completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869 had, however, begun Utah's integration into American capitalism,

David J. Whittaker

In 1996, the L. Tom Perry Special Collections in the Harold B. Lee Library at Brigham Young University acquired the Joseph B. Keeler (1855–1935) papers [MSS 2016]. Keeler was an important leader in the early years of BYU, and he also contributed to his community and his church. As the curator of Mormon manuscripts at BYU at the time, and as a student of Mormon print culture, I was familiar with his contributions to the Church and to the



school, but I was particularly interested in better understanding his publications and their influence on Church history. Once the collection was organized and related items were added to it, I was invited to present a paper at the conference “Religion and the Culture of Print in Modern America” at the University of Wisconsin–Madison in September 2004. In 2008, a volume containing many of the papers given at the conference were published in *Religion and the Culture of Print in Modern America*, edited by Charles L. Cohen and Paul S. Boyer (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2008). My essay appeared on pages 105–27 and is here reprinted with permission.

Keeler’s work grew out of his involvement in leadership positions at BYU. He was one the first twenty-five students to enroll in the newly organized Brigham Young Academy in Provo in 1875, and he received his diploma two years later. Following his LDS mission, he was hired to teach at BYA and served on its faculty for thirty-six years. He served as head of the Commercial and the Theological Departments while also serving as a counselor to Karl G. Maeser and as an administrative vice president under Benjamin Cluff and George Brimhall. He helped keep the struggling school financially solvent during these years and served as the chairman of the building committee for the Maeser Building.

While I was interested in BYU history, my main interest was in Keeler's important contributions to Mormon print culture and specifically his work with the Aaronic Priesthood. Keeler had served as the bishop of the Provo Fourth Ward (and later as president of the Utah Stake) at a time when there were a larger number of young men who he felt needed better mentoring in the Church. These concerns led him to prepare the first manuals for this age group, as well as textbooks for the religion classes he was teaching at BYU. Because the Aaronic Priesthood was not generally given to boys in the nineteenth century, Keeler's innovations in his own ward were to help in the preparation of young men for missionary service and later leadership in the Church. His work was followed closely by President Joseph F. Smith, who encouraged this more formalizing of Aaronic Priesthood ordinations and mentoring throughout the Church. I argue that Keeler was instrumental in the "managerial revolution" in the Church and thus helped lay the foundations for the Church's growth in the twentieth century.

My essay presents an overview of Joseph Keeler's contributions to the Church through his published works. He prepared a guide for the bishops' courts, works on Church government, and, as a stake president, his was one of the first stakes in the Church to hold regular family home evenings, several years before they were encouraged churchwide. His wife, Martha, prepared the first Relief Society lesson manuals in the Church as well. As a second-level Church leader, Keeler deserves more attention than he has received. I hope reprinting this essay in *BYU Studies Quarterly* will allow others to see Keeler's contributions.

a process well along by the 1880s.¹ The long struggle to obtain Utah's statehood had culminated successfully in 1896, but only after LDS leaders agreed to abandon their unique marriage system and extricate the Church from its long-standing embrace of the civil state. Latter-day Saints were once again full-fledged citizens of the United States, but any lingering sense that old gentile enmities had died and that they could continue to live without overmuch federal surveillance were dashed by the uproar over seating Reed Smoot, a Mormon Apostle, to the United States Senate. As Kathleen Flake has suggested, the public hearings that exercised the Upper House between 1903 and 1907 gave the American people a fuller understanding of Mormonism and left no doubt among the faithful that the federal government would regulate and, if necessary, defang any religious group it deemed un-American.² All of these changes worked their influence on Temple Square. As Utah's gentile population increased, free markets took hold, and the government in Washington struck down Mormon legal and matrimonial arrangements, the Church moved to bring its internal workings in line with the new circumstances, developing a more rationalized bureaucracy, systematizing its internal workings (including its theology), and altering its relationship to the civil state. Joseph Keeler played an important role in these changes. Although virtually unknown to non-Mormon scholars, Keeler, whose life spanned the transitional era, helped transform the Church from a body bent on building the Kingdom of Zion in relative isolation to a dynamic, corporate religious institution that, by the end of the twentieth century, had established itself internationally. His writings, emblematic of a shift in Mormon print culture noteworthy in itself, helped facilitate the rationalization of the LDS Church.

1. See Leonard J. Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom: An Economic History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830–1900* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958). A useful, one-volume chronological history of the Mormons is James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints*, rev. and enl. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992). A good topical history is Leonard J. Arrington and Davis Bitton, *The Mormon Experience: A History of the Latter-day Saints* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979).

2. Thomas G. Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition: A History of the Latter-day Saints, 1890–1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986). For the coming of Utah statehood, see Edward Leo Lyman, *Political Deliverance: The Mormon Quest for Utah Statehood* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986). Kathleen Flake's study is *The Politics of American Religious Identity: The Seating of Senator Reed Smoot, Mormon Apostle* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

Joseph B. Keeler (1855–1935): An Overview of His Life

Keeler's roots thrust deep into the soil of Mormon historical experience. His father, Daniel, a first-generation convert born in New Jersey, apprenticed as a stonemason in Philadelphia and worked in various places along the East Coast, including New York City, where he joined the Church in March 1840. That summer, he journeyed to western Illinois, joining those Saints who were building the city of Nauvoo. Daniel laid stone for a number of Mormon buildings, including the Nauvoo Temple, prior to the Mormon Exodus. Keeler's mother, Ann, joined the Church in New Jersey following her migration from Lancashire, England. Both of Keeler's parents had married, raised children, and been widowed before finding each other.³ Joseph, their first child, was born in Salt Lake City on September 8, 1855. His given names, Joseph Brigham, paid tribute to the Church's past and present prophets, Joseph Smith and Brigham Young. During the Utah War of 1857–58, when U. S. troops threatened Salt Lake City, the Keelers, along with virtually the entire population of the city, abandoned the capital and relocated forty-five miles south to Provo. When the emergency was over, most of the refugees returned to their homes in Salt Lake City, but the Keelers elected to remain in Utah Valley. There, Joseph Keeler and his wife, Martha Alice Fairbanks (June 29, 1860–October 2, 1938), whom he married in 1883 and with whom he raised ten children, spent most of their lives.

Keeler learned about hard physical labor at home, assisting his father in the construction business. During the 1860s, he helped build Provo's first tabernacle, and from October 1874 to March 1875, he served a building mission in southern Utah, helping to lay the stone foundation of the St. George Temple, the first such structure that the Latter-day Saints completed in the Great Basin. But his family also encouraged reading, and, like so many nineteenth-century Americans, his introduction to

3. The main sources for Keeler's life are in the Joseph Brigham Keeler Collection [MSS 2016], L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah (hereafter BYU Library), with additional material in the University Archives. Especially valuable biographical works in the Keeler Collection include Beulah McAllister, "A Treasured Heritage," an unpublished biography of Keeler by his daughter (266 pages, 1958); and Daniel M. Keeler, with Ellen Keeler Thompson and Daniel A. Keeler, *Build Thee More Stately . . . : A History of Joseph Brigham Keeler and Martha Fairbanks Keeler and Their Children* (Murray, Utah: Roylance Publishing, 1989). See also Clinton David Christensen, "Joseph Brigham Keeler: The Master's Builder" (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1997).

print culture began with scripture. His mother regularly read to her children from the family Bible that she had brought from England; young Keeler first learned his capital letters from its pages. In an early journal he recorded, “I was impressed with the thought that I was sent to earth to perform a mission—I began, therefore, to improve my mind by reading and studying good books.”⁴ These volumes were both secular and religious. In addition to Keeler’s own efforts, Karl G. Maeser, the first principal of the Brigham Young Academy (BYA), which was established as a kind of high school in Provo in 1875, exercised a great influence over him.⁵ Keeler enrolled in 1876 as one of BYA’s initial students and the next year began as a reporter for the Provo *Territorial Enquirer*, gaining a good introduction to the printing business. After graduating in 1877, he served as the first president of the BYA Polysophical Society, a student group devoted to discussing books and ideas.⁶

Keeler’s calling as a writer had manifested itself by the time he reached adulthood. He first gained a measure of literary notice and public visibility when the *Territorial Enquirer* published letters that he penned from Georgia during his service as a full-time proselytizer in the LDS Church’s Southern States Mission between April 1880 and March 1882.⁷ He also kept a personal journal of his mission and published his first pamphlet, *How to Get Salvation: The Faith and Teachings of the Latter-day Saints* (1880), a brief overview of Christian history from a Mormon perspective.⁸ Following the organizational lead of forerunners like Orson Pratt and Orson Spencer, Keeler took his readers from the Church’s beginnings through what Mormons considered the apostasy that spewed out the “great and abominable church” (1 Ne. 13:6), whose continued sway necessitated the Restoration of lost authority and gospel

4. Joseph B. Keeler, Journal, 8, Keeler Collection.

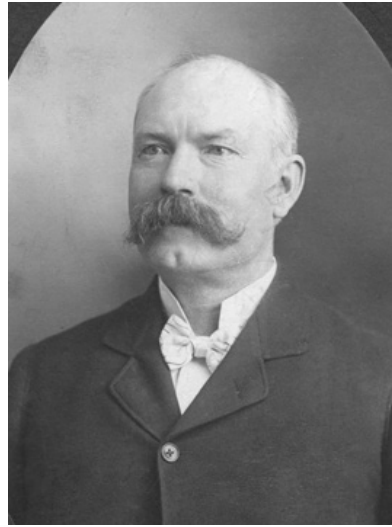
5. On Karl Maeser, see A. LeGrand Richards, *Called to Teach: The Legacy of Karl G. Maeser* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2014); Reinhard Maeser, *Karl G. Maeser: A Biography by His Son* (1928); Alma P. Burton, *Karl G. Maeser: Mormon Educator* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1953); and Douglas F. Tobler, “Karl G. Maeser’s German Background, 1828–1856: The Making of Zion’s Teacher,” *BYU Studies* 17, no. 2 (1977): 155–75.

6. The minutes of the first meetings of the Society are in Keeler’s papers in the BYU Library.

7. Photocopies of the published letters, as well as typescripts are in the Keeler papers: box 1, folder 14. The collection also contains his mission journal.

8. Published [dated December 20, 1880, at end] in White County, Georgia. The only known copy of the twenty-page work is in the BYU Library.

truth that Joseph Smith, guided by heavenly visitations, made possible by revealing lost scripture.⁹ Keeler published his ambitious pamphlet at a time when it was becoming less usual for missionaries to develop such aids for evangelization, since treatises written by Church leaders that explained Mormon history and doctrine were becoming more available and were widely considered throughout the community of Latter-day Saints to be more appropriate guides for spreading the faith than those penned by missionaries themselves.¹⁰



Joseph B. Keeler. Courtesy L. Tom Perry Special Collections.

Keeler well exemplified the pattern, common among nineteenth-century Mormons, of combining civic and educational work with Church callings. Following his mission, he began his long career as a faculty member and administrator at Brigham Young Academy (later, University). He joined BYA in 1884, the same year in which he was called as the first counselor to the

9. Keeler cited Orson Pratt's earlier series, *The Kingdom of God* (1848–49), available to him in a volume entitled *Orson Pratt's Works*, first published in 1851 and reprinted several times thereafter. His mission journal suggests that he took with him copies of Orson Pratt's *Works*, Orson Spencer's *Letters* (published in various editions beginning in 1848), Parley P. Pratt's *Key to the Science of Theology* (first published in 1855), and John Taylor's *The Government of God* (1852). See also the discussion of Keeler's missionary pamphlet in Christensen, "Joseph Brigham Keeler," 47, 62–65.

10. See David J. Whittaker, "Early Mormon Pamphleteering" (PhD diss., Brigham Young University, 1982), especially chapter 2, which traces the gradual centralization of official Mormon publishing into the hands of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and First Presidency. Such control was based on revelation and direction from Joseph Smith by 1842, and it was tightened after Smith's death in 1844 as Brigham Young and the Apostles consolidated their positions as leaders of the Mormon community. But pioneering in the American West, financial issues, growing conflicts with the federal government, and a lack of strong bureaucratic control meant that freelance publishing would continue sporadically until the twentieth century.

president of the Utah Stake Young Men's Mutual Improvement Association (YMMIA), an organization for improving the religious knowledge, values, and morals of young Mormon men.¹¹ His ecclesiastical, educational, and civic prominence increased in concert. He was called as president of the Utah Stake YMMIA in 1893 and bishop of the Provo Fourth Ward two years later. He became in 1898 the first Church official to authorize single women to undertake full-time missions for the Church.¹² In 1892, having the previous year taken a Master of Accounts degree from Eastman Business College in Poughkeepsie, New York, he became a counselor (that is, a vice president) to President Benjamin Cluff at BYA. He served as Provo city treasurer, and, in 1897, gained election to the Provo city council. Meanwhile, he continued to write for the *Territorial Enquirer* and publish on both secular and religious topics. In 1891, he gathered his previously published essays on science and religion into a small book, *Foundation Stones of the Earth, and Other Essays*, a typical rejection of Charles Darwin's theory of evolution on grounds that it transgressed a literal reading of Genesis. Keeler could not accept any account of life's origin that excluded either divine design or the Deity's active participation.¹³ His rejection of evolution had an impact later at BYU. The next year he shared the technical knowledge gained at Eastman in his first textbook, *A Student's Guide for Book Keeping*.¹⁴

11. The Young Men's Mutual Improvement Association was organized in 1875 as an auxiliary organization to assist in the educational and cultural improvement of young men. For its early history, see Leon M. Young, "A History of the YMMIA, 1875-1938" (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1939).

12. While wives occasionally accompanied their missionary husbands before 1898, Keeler was the first to issue formal calls to women missionaries. He called two more single women on missions in 1901. All these calls were approved by Church leaders in Salt Lake City. For background, see Calvin S. Kunz, "A History of Female Missionary Activity in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1830-1898" (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1976).

13. Joseph B. Keeler, *Foundation Stones of the Earth, and Other Essays* (Provo, Utah: Enquirer Steam Print, 1891). This work gathered essays in the following order that he had published earlier in *The Contributor*: "Foundation Stones of the Earth," 11 (February 1890): 121-29; "Near [Nigh] the Throne of God," 10 (February 1889): 156-59; and "The Fallacy of Evolutionism," 9 (July 1888): 340-43.

14. *A Student's Guide to Book Keeping, double and single entry, for use in . . .* (n.p. [Provo]: n.p., 1892). Keeler's extensive and important roles in the early financial history of BYA and BYU or his community business involvement are ignored in this paper.

As part of a larger movement to decentralize local Church government, Church leaders in January 1901 met in Provo to divide the large Utah Stake into three smaller stakes: Utah, Nebo, and Alpine. David John, the new president of the Utah Stake, called Keeler as his first counselor. It was in this capacity and then as stake president in his own right (he was called in 1908) that Keeler made his most important contributions to Mormon print culture. Understanding his impact requires a brief sketch of how that culture had developed.

Early Mormon Print Culture

Nineteenth-century Saints were people of not just one book, but of books in general, and periodicals too. The Church emerged at the same time that the young republic experienced a proliferation of printing presses, technology that Church leaders seized upon to announce and spread the latter-day truth. The paramount Mormon publication was, of course, the Book of Mormon (1830), whose appearance antedated the Church itself, but although most people then (and now) associated Mormons most strongly with that single text, Saints in fact immersed themselves in a wide variety of printed matter from the outset. Almost immediately following the Church's organization, leaders began newspapers to communicate with dispersed believers and inform the public. A compilation of Joseph Smith's revelations appeared first in 1833 and in revised format two years later; periodic editions inserted additional revelations regarding doctrine and practice that Smith, who insisted that prophecy did not end with the biblical age and that God still reveals his will in the present, continued to disclose. Pamphlets and books defending and explaining Church doctrine appeared as well.¹⁵ From the pens of its most articulate converts, many of them Church leaders, came missionary pamphlets and books. Two brothers, Parley P. and Orson Pratt, proved especially productive and influential during the first generation. Parley's death in 1857 helped bring the initial era of Mormon pamphleteering to an end, though other factors played a role too. Mormon publishers overestimated their markets, leaving large quantities of books unsold, and Brigham Young wanted to husband the Church's precious resources, sorely depleted by the

15. An excellent guide to the first century of Mormon publications is Chad J. Flake and Larry W. Draper, comps., *A Mormon Bibliography, 1830–1930: Books, Pamphlets, Periodicals and Broadsides Relating to the First Century of Mormonism*, 2d ed., rev. and enl., 2 vols. (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2004).

move into a virtually uninhabited desert, for such projects as aiding even the poorest Latter-day Saints to gather in Zion and building the temple. He also thought that too much analysis of Mormon doctrine would kill the spirit of its central belief in continuing revelation and an open canon.¹⁶

The second phase of Mormon print culture, in which Keeler would so prominently figure, opened about a decade later in response to wholesale demographic, social, and economic changes that challenged Mormons' painfully constructed group cohesion and moral sensibilities. The trans-continental railroad made the Intermountain West more accessible to gentile influence, ending Mormons' self-imposed isolation and threatening their self-sufficiency. Non-Mormons crowded into the territory, bringing with them such examples of gentile culture as the popular dime novel, whose consumption Church leaders considered a waste of time and money, not to mention inimical to Mormon industry and morals. To combat such influences, the Church, led by Brigham Young, took some institutional steps to improve religious education, creating mutual improvement associations for both adolescent women (the Young Women's Mutual Improvement Association, or YWMIA [1869])¹⁷ and young men (YMMIA [1875]). Sunday schools, imported by English converts from Methodism, first appeared in the Salt Lake Valley as early in 1849, but not until 1872 did the Deseret Sunday School Union organize fully.¹⁸ The Church's campaign to protect the next generation included creating periodicals such as the *Juvenile Instructor* (January 1866), *The Contributor* (October 1879), and *Improvement Era* (November 1897), all efforts to reach younger readers by providing them literature supporting LDS values and perspectives.

16. See David J. Whittaker, "Early Mormon Pamphleteering," *Journal of Mormon History* 4 (1977): 35–49.

17. According to Elaine Cannon, "The Young Women organization began as the Cooperative Retrenchment Association in November 1869." Elaine Anderson Cannon, "Young Women," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow, 4 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 4:1616. The organization underwent several name changes, eventually becoming the Young Women's Mutual Improvement Association in 1934. The name was shortened to Young Women in 1974. Janet Peterson, "Young Women of Zion: An Organizational History," in *A Firm Foundation: Church Organization and Administration*, ed. David J. Whittaker and Arnold K. Garr (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2011), 277, available at <http://rsc.byu.edu/archived/firm-foundation/12-young-women-zion-organizational-history>.

18. See Deseret Sunday School Union, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Jubilee History of the LDS Sunday Schools, 1849–1899* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Sunday Schools, 1900).

Although directing most of these efforts toward young adults, the Church also made sure to provide more systematic instruction for children. The Primary Association, an analog to the YMMIA and YWMIA, was founded in 1878 to instruct children aged three to twelve.¹⁹ Some of Smith's early revelations had called for creating books to instruct juveniles, but the pressures of building Zion in an arid wilderness with minimal resources necessarily delayed these directives' implementation. Indeed, the first major breakthrough issued from a press overseas. In 1854, the Church released John Jaques's *Catechism for Children, Exhibiting the Prominent Doctrines of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* in Liverpool, following its serialization in the *LDS Millennial Star*, an English Mormon newspaper, the previous year. Jaques's *Catechism* proved very popular among the Latter-day Saints, appearing in ever-larger English-language printings up to its Salt Lake City edition of 1888, which brought the total to 35,000, not counting the printings in other languages. The need for Mormons to have such a basic instructional work is reflected in the fact that, notwithstanding its title, parents read it for themselves as avidly as to their offspring.²⁰

The Church's primary printing operation outside the Liverpool mission publishing concern was the Church-owned press that began issuing the *Deseret News* in Salt Lake City in 1850 and also published books, booklets, handbills, and other printed material under the name Deseret News Press. George Q. Cannon, Brigham Young's counselor, provided another outlet for Mormon publications when he established his own business in the 1860s; it was soon printing periodicals, books, and other items.²¹ He also operated a bookstore. The Church acquired Cannon's

19. See Carol Cornwall Madsen and Susan Staker Oman, *Sisters and Little Saints: One Hundred Years of Primary* (Salt Lake City: Desert Book, 1979).

20. For the larger story, see Davis Bitton, "Mormon Catechisms," in *Revelation, Reason, and Faith: Essays in Honor of Truman G. Madsen*, ed. Donald W. Parry, Daniel C. Peterson, and Stephen D. Ricks (Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, Brigham Young University, 2002), 407–32.

21. There is no full study of the history of George Q. Cannon as a writer and publisher. The best overall study is Davis Bitton, *George Q. Cannon: A Biography* (Salt Lake City: Desert Book, 1999). A limited but important study is Lawrence R. Flake, "The Development of the *Juvenile Instructor* under George Q. Cannon and Its Functions in Latter-day Saint Religious Education" (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1969). A celebratory history of Deseret Book, with some information on the earlier Cannon publishing business, is Eleanor Knowles, *Deseret Book Company: 125 Years of Inspiration, Information, and Ideas* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1991).

business enterprises before his death in 1901, combined them with other publishing and bookselling ventures, and in 1920 renamed the operation Deseret Book Company, the flagship of LDS publishing and distribution to the present day. Deseret News Press constituted the Church's main publishing operation throughout the period under discussion, and it printed nearly all of Keeler's works.

Most of the Church's fundamental doctrines and practices had appeared in print by the 1870s, if not earlier, but regularly printed and systematically prepared guides for administration, handbooks for Church government, and lesson manuals for Latter-day Saints of all ages were still lacking. Keeler's greatest accomplishments in using print to help the Church accommodate to Utah's increasing integration into American life came in these areas. Three particular projects warrant attention here: his rationalization of the bishop's court, his calls to standardize the Church bureaucracy, and his innovative program for organizing the Aaronic Priesthood.

The Bishop's Court: Its History and Proceedings

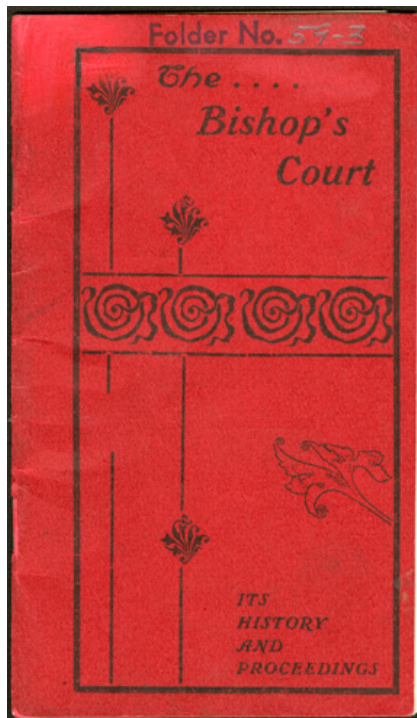
In February 1901, Keeler delivered a lecture about the institution of the bishop's court to the Utah Stake high council, a group of twelve men called to assist the stake presidency in administrating the unit's affairs.²² Prior to the talk, Keeler sent Anthon H. Lund, a member of the Church's First Presidency, an outline. Reviewing what he himself knew about LDS history, Lund complimented Keeler on his thorough study of the courts, noting that the variations in their judicial proceedings from ward to ward called for a more standardized approach to their operation.²³ If Lund read the lecture published the next year, as he undoubtedly did, he must have been quite pleased.

Keeler's twenty-two-page pamphlet addressed an important and complex issue, for, during the course of the nineteenth century, Mormon bishops had accumulated civil powers far exceeding those of

22. Bishops in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are male lay-persons who serve voluntarily for a number of years while also gainfully employed in their chosen occupation. Stake presidents, who usually serve a few years longer than bishops, are also male lay-leaders. Unlike today, in the nineteenth century both bishops and stake presidents received financial allowances for their services.

23. McAllister, "Treasured Heritage," 176–78, reprints Lund's letter, dated February 15, 1901.

ecclesiastical officials in any other American religious body. Their authority had to be delimited both to clarify their role within the LDS hierarchy and to dispel any objections that their courts transgressed popular American notions about separating church and state.²⁴ From the office's inception, Mormon bishops had exercised control over temporal as well as religious affairs. During the Nauvoo, Illinois, period (1839–46), the Church assigned them responsibility for geographical areas called wards, so-called because of their concurrent use as voting districts. Once ensconced in the Great Basin, the Church formalized the ward system, assigning bishops and ordering the construction of chapels in every one.²⁵ Considered by the LDS hierarchy as “judges in Israel” (D&C 58:17), bishops held authority to settle family arguments, adjudicate disputes among neighbors over property and water rights, receive tithes and freewill offerings on behalf of the Church, and care for widows and orphans. They also dealt with members' conduct and standing in the Church. As spelled out in Joseph Smith's early revelations, a bishop was technically the highest office in the Aaronic Priesthood—the lower of the two Mormon priestly orders that holds authority



Cover of *The Bishop's Court: Its History and Proceedings*. Courtesy L. Tom Perry Special Collections.

24. For a brief overview, see Dale Beecher, “The Office of Bishop,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 15 (Winter 1982): 103–15; see also D. Gene Pace, “Community Leadership on the Mormon Frontier: Mormon Bishops and the Political, Economic and Social Development of Utah before Statehood” (PhD diss., Ohio State University, 1983).

25. A Mormon ward is essentially a parish; a stake is similar to a diocese. A stake is usually composed of about ten wards, although in the nineteenth century both wards and stakes were much larger units than is the case today.

to, for instance, baptize individuals—but as ward structures evolved, two officers came to lead local congregations: the bishop, responsible for temporal affairs, and the presiding high priest, responsible for spiritual ones. During the 1850s, Brigham Young merged these two positions into a single post that, despite retaining the title “bishop,” dealt with more than just mundane matters. The task of counseling the ward bishops and overseeing their work fell to the Church’s Presiding Bishop, who reported to the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, the Church’s highest governing authorities.

The judicial system of the early LDS Church took shape in the interaction between scripture, Smith’s revelations, and the Saints’ experience. One of Smith’s earliest revelations held that transgressors were to be “dealt with as the scriptures direct” (D&C 20:80), which left a great deal of latitude about how to proceed. Absent clear instructions and precedents, Church courts initially employed at least three practices for treating ecclesiastical malfesances: (1) a mild form of exclusion that limited the wrongdoer’s participation in the religious community for a short period; (2) a more formal ban, which deprived the person of all religious privileges for a longer or indefinite period; and (3) a complete excommunication from the religious community. Soon a more formal judicial system superseded these decentralized practices. By 1835, the Church had constituted three main courts: the bishop’s court (D&C 42; 107:68, 72), the stake high council court (D&C 102), and the council of the First Presidency (D&C 102:78–81), although use of these courts was inconsistent until much later. Essentially, bishops’ courts served as units of judicial origin, with the other two acting as courts of appeal or, in more serious cases, courts of origination. Until the 1840s, bishops had regional as well as local responsibility, but by 1842 the Church had identified the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles with the quorum of twelve high priests identified in Doctrine and Covenants 107:78–84, thereafter granting it the highest judicial authority.

The priesthood’s judicial functions increased as the Church moved West.²⁶ In 1852, after two of the three judges federally appointed to the Utah Territorial Court “ran away” from their posts (for a variety of

26. For a brief summary, see David J. Whittaker, “The LDS Church Judicial System: A Selected Bibliography,” *Mormon History Association Newsletter* 59 (October 1985): 8–10.

reasons),²⁷ the Utah legislature transferred original jurisdiction for criminal matters from federal to local probate courts. Mormon bishops presided over most probate courts, which consequently took on far-ranging civil functions as well as ecclesiastical ones. Until 1874, when Congress passed the Poland Act, stripping the courts of their criminal jurisdiction, Mormon bishops heard both civil and criminal matters that, outside Utah, belonged to exclusively “secular” jurisdictions. The probate courts’ extended authority was one of many problems facing Mormon leaders as they attempted to achieve Utah’s statehood.²⁸ Bishops’ extraordinary competence suggested to non-Mormons that little if any separation existed in Utah between church and state, a parlous constitutional situation. Aware of these public perceptions, Keeler in 1902 drew upon his own episcopal experience and his research into LDS history to author

27. For the story of the “runaway” territorial officials, see Norman F. Furniss, *The Mormon Conflict, 1850–1859* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960), 21–29; Thomas G. Alexander, *Utah, the Right Place: The Official Centennial History* (Layton, Utah: Gibbs Smith, 1995), 117–18; Ronald W. Walker, “The Affairs of the ‘Runaways’: Utah’s First Encounter with Federal Officers, Part 1,” *Journal of Mormon History* 39, no. 4 (2013): 1–43; and Ronald W. Walker and Matthew J. Grow, “The People Are ‘Hogaffed or Humbugged’: The 1851–52 National Reaction to Utah’s ‘Runaway’ Officers, Part 2,” *Journal of Mormon History* 40, no. 1 (2014): 1–52.

28. On the history and function of early Mormon courts, with particular emphasis on the role of bishops, see Stephen J. Sorenson, “Civil and Criminal Jurisdiction of LDS Bishop’s and High Council Courts, 1847–1852,” *Task Papers in LDS History*, no. 17 (Salt Lake City: Historical Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1977); James B. Allen, “The Unusual Jurisdiction of County Probate Courts in the Territory of Utah,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 36 (Spring 1968): 132–42; Jay E. Powell, “Fairness in the Salt Lake County Probate Court,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 38 (Summer 1970): 256–62; Elizabeth D. Gee, “Justice for All or for the ‘Elect’: The Utah County Probate Court, 1855–1872,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 48 (Spring 1980): 129–47; Raymond T. Swenson, “Resolution of Civil Disputes by Mormon Ecclesiastical Courts,” *Utah Law Review* 3 (1978): 573–95; C. Paul Dredge, “Dispute Settlement in the Mormon Community: The Operation of Ecclesiastical Courts in Utah,” *Access to Justice, Volume IV: The Anthropological Perspective* (Milan, Italy, 1979), 191–215; R. Collin Mangrum, “Furthering the Cause of Zion: An Overview of the Mormon Ecclesiastical Court System in Early Utah,” *Journal of Mormon History* 10 (1983): 79–90; and Edwin Brown Firmage and Richard Collin Mangrum, *Zion in the Courts: A Legal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1830–1900* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988).

The Bishop's Court: Its History and Proceedings,²⁹ which established more clearly than had any previous work the institution's proper organization and function under both LDS and federal law.

Following a short introduction, the pamphlet discussed the court's history and development. Keeler underlined the absence of systematic recordkeeping in the courts, the lack of procedural uniformity, and the need to establish a single method for governing wards.³⁰ The essay's remainder provided just such standard procedures, including the forms to be used for complaints and summonses. He also described the proper process for a trial and drew up sample forms for taking down testimony, reporting the court's decision, issuing a notice of appeal, and excommunicating the worst offenders. The two last pages summarized and reviewed the steps to be observed in such disciplinary matters.

This brief work, a first in Mormon print culture, provided the basis for regularizing the courts.³¹ As late as 1939, a handbook of Church government compiled by a leading member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles recommended using several of Keeler's forms.³² *The Bishop's Court* settled the jurisdiction of the courts, removing gentile doubts about their possibly usurping civil functions, and systematized the judicial process of Mormon ecclesiastical courts, a reform that helped preserve their popular legitimacy even as the locus of much LDS disciplinary activity moved away from rural villages, whose courts were

29. Digital scan can be viewed at <http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=njp.32101074889740;view=1up;seq=3>.

30. The 1877 circular had also suggested that such records be kept. See "Circular of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to the Presidency of the Various Stakes of Zion, to the Bishops of the Different Wards and to All the Officers and Members of the Church," in *Messages of the First Presidency*, comp. James R. Clark, 6 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965–75), 2:287.

31. There are letters and discussions of Keeler's suggestions in the Letterbooks of the First Presidency, indicating how influential his works were. Manuscripts in Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City. See also the talk of President Joseph F. Smith, September 13, 1917, to the Parowan Stake as published as "Principles of Government in the Church," *Improvement Era* 21 (November 1917): 3–11; and the discussion on Church courts in James E. Talmage, "Judiciary System of the Church," *Improvement Era* 23 (April 1919): 498–500.

32. See John A. Widtsoe, comp., *Priesthood and Church Government* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1939), 214–18.

adequately served by informal procedures, into urban areas, where the volume of business, if nothing else, necessitated formal ones.

Theology Department Courses

Keeler's careful and systematic approach toward legal and organizational matters also manifested itself in his work as a teacher and director of the Theological Department at the Brigham Young Academy. In 1902–3, he prepared materials for four theology courses. Their subject matter addressed several of his ongoing interests in standardizing the Church's operations, such as systematizing the teaching of LDS administrative history to young Mormons and encouraging the Church bureaucracy's standardization.

The first two courses covered the Lesser (Aaronic) Priesthood in thirteen lessons; the second expatiated on Church government in nineteen.³³ In October 1903, BYA became Brigham Young University, and the next August, Deseret News Press published the course materials as *The Lesser Priesthood and Notes on Church Government*.³⁴ It quickly sold out, requiring a second edition in 1906. Issued with the strong approval of the First Presidency, the work won lauds from the *Deseret News*, which published both a detailed article surveying the volume's content and a short editorial praising it.³⁵ Proud of its favorable reception, Keeler had a small broadside printed that quoted the coverage, publicizing the newspaper's recommendation that every Latter-day Saint library ought

33. Copies of these printed course materials are in the BYU Library.

34. Joseph B. Keeler, *The Lesser Priesthood and Notes on Church Government* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1903). The print run was five thousand copies, suggesting an audience far larger than just students at BYU. Preface to the second edition of 1906, p. iv.

35. "New Book for Church Workers," *Deseret Evening News*, July 16, 1904, 10; and editorial "A Valuable New Work," *Deseret Evening News*, 4. Keeler's *The Lesser Priesthood* was recommended for use as a textbook for Church classes in *Annual Instructions*, no. 6, December 1, 1904 (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1904), 19. The Church's First Presidency recommended in 1905, 1906, and 1908 in their *Annual Instructions* that Keeler's work "be used in all the Quorums of the Aaronic Priesthood throughout the Stakes of Zion." See, for instance, *Annual Instructions to Presidents of Stakes and Counselors, Bishops and Counselors, Stakes Clerks and General Authorities in Zion, 1 December 1906*, no. 8 (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1906), 19.

to have a copy.³⁶ He also called attention to part 4, “A Brief Concordance of the Doctrine and Covenants,” highlighted in another issue of the *Deseret News*.³⁷

Such publicity clearly boosted sales, and Keeler’s own leaflets spread the word further. A letter from J. W. Paxman, president of the Juab, Utah, Stake, suggests the enthusiasm with which this volume was greeted:

I have read your leaflets—every one of them—and enjoyed them very much. I placed the Leaflets, at my personal expense, in the Lesser Priesthood Quorums in this stake. . . .

I have recommended the work lately in the wards, as far as I have visited them and will speak of it in all the wards in the stake during the winter.

[I] would like to see a copy of it in every home among the saints. It fills a long-felt need, and the Saints will have a much better understanding of the excellency of our church and its government by reading its pages.³⁸

Joseph F. Smith, President of the Church, was hardly less complimentary: “You deserve great credit for your book and I commend your work. If there is an error in fact or doctrine in it I have not discovered it. It will be an excellent help to students of Church Organizations and Systems of Government and Discipline.”³⁹

In 1929, a third edition appeared, and it, too, was advertised by the publisher in specially printed bookmarks as a work that had “inestimable value for every member of the Church.” *The Lesser Priesthood’s* influence extended well beyond Keeler’s death. The work that succeeded it, John A. Widtsoe’s *Priesthood and Church Government* (1939), owed much of its structure and contents to Keeler’s work, as evidenced by Widtsoe’s incorporating sixty-one excerpts into his own book.

36. A copy of the broadside *Lesser Priesthood, Church Government, and Concordance of the Doctrine and Covenants* is in Perry Special Collections.

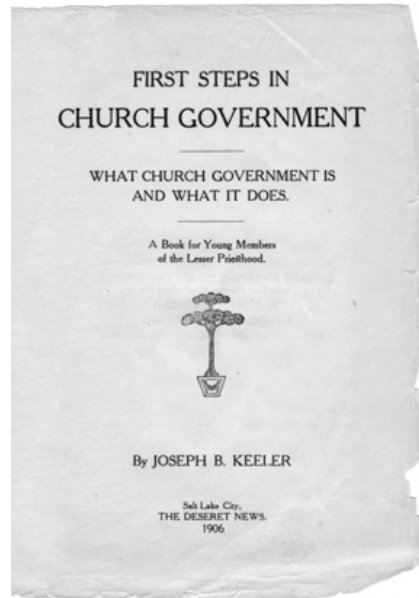
37. “Every diligent reader of the Doctrine and Covenants . . .” *Deseret Evening News*, September 17, 1904, 4. See also *Lesser Priesthood, Church Government, and Concordance*, September 17, 1904, 6.

38. J. W. Paxman to Joseph B. Keeler, October 27, 1904, as cited in Keeler, “*Build Thee More Stately . . .*” 387.

39. Letter of January 7, 1907, as cited in Keeler, “*Build Thee More Stately . . .*” 387.

First Steps in Church Government

During the winter of 1906, Keeler published *First Steps in Church Government: What Church Government Is and What It Does*.⁴⁰ Recommended and then adopted as the lesson manual for the Lesser, or Aaronic, Priesthood, it was reprinted in 1912 and 1924. To fully appreciate what Keeler was doing with these works, a brief overview of the nineteenth-century Mormon concept of priesthood, especially the Aaronic Priesthood, is necessary. Today, young Mormon males enter the Aaronic Priesthood at age twelve and advance through three offices: deacon (ages 12–13), teacher (14–15), and priest (16–18). The ward bishop takes a major role in guiding these young men, reflected in the fact that his office is technically the highest in the Lesser Priesthood. At age eighteen, all faithful, worthy young men are given the Higher, or Melchizedek, Priesthood and are then ordained to the office of an elder. The Aaronic Priesthood offices provide a series of mentoring experiences for young boys as they mature. These callings school them in the basic duties and responsibilities of Church service and leadership. In addition to helping keep them active in the Church,



Title page of *First Steps in Church Government*. Courtesy L. Tom Perry Special Collections.

40. Joseph B. Keeler, *First Steps in Church Government: What Church Government Is and What It Does* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1906). The Church's *Annual Instructions, 1909, Circular No. 9, 31*, recommended that both *Lesser Priesthood* and *First Steps* be used as textbooks for the Aaronic Priesthood classes throughout the Church. By 1909, there were 60 stakes in the Church, up from 22 in 1879. By 1930, the years of the Church's centennial, stakes numbered 104. Today (2015), there are 29,621 wards and branches organized into 3,114 stakes.

this training better prepares them to undertake full-time missions and to serve both the Church and society at large.

Until the end of the nineteenth century, however, men, not boys, generally held the Aaronic Priesthood.⁴¹ Those called to serve in its offices were usually designated “acting deacons” or “acting teachers.” Few boys were considered mature enough to enter the priesthood, and those deemed acceptable were given the Melchizedek Priesthood. Keeler himself never received the Aaronic Priesthood in his youth, but while working in the YMMIA, teaching at BYA, and serving as bishop, he came to see the great value such callings could have for young men.

As a newly called bishop, Keeler found himself presiding over 150 young boys living in his ward. Church leaders since Brigham Young had struggled with how to rein in such fellows, who did not always adhere to Mormon values and teachings.⁴² The YMMIA was established to be one of the solutions, and some of the larger wards formed literary societies⁴³ for reading and debate, but these efforts attracted mostly those who were already self-motivated, and even the most active ones failed to provide their members with regular instruction. Passing the faith of the pioneering parents to the next generation proved harder than anyone had supposed, especially since by the late nineteenth century young men were moving out of the hamlets and villages that had constituted the bedrock of Mormon Utah society. They still met weekly with other ward members and took on various obligations to their neighborhood or ward, but these tasks involved mainly manual labor like cutting wood or cleaning the chapel and did little to improve their spirituality or dedication to Mormon values. When adolescent

41. See William G. Hartley, “Ordained and Acting Teachers in the Lesser Priesthood, 1851–1883,” *BYU Studies* 16, no. 3 (1976): 375–98. Brigham Young, just before his death, had moved to reorganize the priesthood quorums church-wide, and, in the important July 11, 1877, “Circular of the First Presidency,” suggested that “it would be excellent training for the young men if they had the opportunity of acting in the offices of the lesser priesthood. They would thereby obtain very valuable experience, and when they obtain the Melchisedec priesthood they would be likely to place a higher value upon it.” See “Circular of the First Presidency,” in Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, 2:287.

42. See Davis Bitton, “Zion’s Rowdies: Growing Up on the Mormon Frontier,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 50 (Spring 1982): 182–95.

43. Ronald W. Walker, “Growing Up in Early Utah: The Wasatch Literary Association, 1874–1878,” *Sunstone* 6 (November/December 1981): 44–51.

males did meet to study, they might read adventure novels as readily as they did scriptures.⁴⁴

Keeler's experience in both academic and ecclesiastical settings prepared him, as a new bishop, to organize and structure lessons for the young men in the Aaronic Priesthood.⁴⁵ Eventually, he expanded his handwritten notes and printed them, first as his theology lectures at the BYA, then as *The Lesser Priesthood and Church Government* in 1904. In 1906, his *First Steps in Church Government* systematized these lessons for the Aaronic Priesthood quorums.

The founding generation of Utah's Mormon leaders worried that young boys were not yet spiritually mature enough to handle official responsibilities. There is no evidence, for instance, that even Brigham Young's sons had been given the Aaronic Priesthood. Keeler, on the other hand, trusted them and established workable training regiments for them,⁴⁶ beginning with his own son, whom he ordained a deacon at age twelve. Soon, he was instructing other boys in his ward in their callings as well. His published works played so important a role in spiritually developing the Church's young men that they drew further notice to him. In 1908, Keeler was called to serve on the Church's General Priesthood Committee on Outlines, the same year he was called to the presidency of the Utah Stake.

Other contributions followed. He was invited to write articles for *The Improvement Era*, the main English-language Church periodical. In July 1913, he published "Organization and Government of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," then, in June 1914, he surveyed the contents of "A Typical Ward Service."⁴⁷ He addressed general conferences of the Church in 1902, 1911, and 1918, testimony to his stature as a stake president. His publication *A Concordance of the Doctrine and*

44. See the comments of William G. Hartley, "The Priesthood Reform Movement, 1908–1922," *BYU Studies* 13, no. 2 (1973): 138.

45. Keeler's handwritten lessons for the Provo Utah Fourth Ward were really the first manuals for the Aaronic Priesthood in the Church.

46. For the larger picture, see William G. Hartley, "From Men to Boys: LDS Aaronic Priesthood Offices, 1829–1996," *Journal of Mormon History* 22, no. 1 (1996): 80–136. As Hartley notes, other Church leaders at the same time were suggesting specific age rankings for the Aaronic Priesthood offices.

47. Joseph B. Keeler, "Organization and Government of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," *Improvement Era* 16 (July 1913): 918–27; Joseph B. Keeler, "A Typical Ward Service," *Improvement Era* 17 (June 1914): 738–50.

Covenants was officially sanctioned by its inclusion in the 1918 edition of those revelations issued by the Church.⁴⁸

Summary and Conclusion

Joseph B. Keeler witnessed the passing of Mormonism's founding generation. With it went plural marriage, millennial expectations, and an emphasis on the immediate establishment of a political and economic Kingdom of God. Keeler's own generation experienced the shift from a rural, village community to an urban world in which the Church needed to help foster piety in the ward and nuclear family. His work proved central in several ways to standardizing and bureaucratizing the Church hierarchy, processes that themselves were part of a larger modernizing trend shaping not only the LDS Church but much of American life in the early twentieth century.⁴⁹

Nineteenth-century Mormonism generally sought to maintain a stable society, often forced through circumstance into self-contained and isolated communities. Communication among members remained primarily oral but was supplemented by their printed newspapers. Face-to-face communication, centered in extended family and kin networks, was the norm. Such a traditional society was also reflected in its social structure and political organization, controlled as it was by an elite leadership class that seldom distinguished between the secular and the sacred. Plural marriage

48. *A Concordance of the Doctrine and Covenants*, which had been printed earlier in his work on the Lesser Priesthood. A committee had to choose between Keeler's and another prepared by John A. Widtsoe. Widtsoe's had been prepared earlier, and he gave a manuscript copy of it to the Church in April 1898. Widtsoe's work would be incorporated into the 1921 edition, but the committee chose Keeler's for the 1918 edition, perhaps because it was already in type from its earlier printings. See the discussion in the Letterbooks of the First Presidency, under the dates of June 19 and July 11, 1917. Here I benefit from notes from these volumes (which are now closed to research in the LDS Church Archives) in the Scott Kenney Papers, BYU Library. Keeler's *Concordance* appeared in *The Doctrine and Covenants . . .* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1918), 504–49.

49. I am using the word *modernizing* in the sense suggested by Richard D. Brown, although I have applied it to the Latter-day Saints a few years after those on which Brown's arguments focused. See Brown, *Modernization: The Transformation of American Life, 1600–1865* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1976), especially chapter 1, pp. 3–22. See also Douglas D. Alder's discussion of the changing nature of Mormon wards from the nineteenth to the twentieth century: "The Mormon Ward: Congregation or Community?" *Journal of Mormon History* 5, no. 1 (1978): 61–78.

extended and reinforced this reality. The failure to separate church and state only added to the growing conflict with the larger society.

But by the end of the nineteenth century, modernization was making inroads and forcing a more dynamic challenge to Mormon group cohesion. Market forces and job patterns, the gradual movement from rural to urban settings, and the increasing melding of Utah politics with national power structures and national financial networks provided strong centrifugal forces on the Mormon Church and its members. These same forces, strongly at work in American society as reflected in the rise of the modern manufacturing system, the growth of transportation and communication networks, specialization in the job market, and a growing international outlook that was reflected in the Spanish-American War, were all part of the larger context of Joseph Keeler's life. While Mormons like Keeler did not produce novels that raised serious questions about what all these changes meant for Americans, their response certainly provides another window into the way churches and religious people adjusted to the challenges that Theodore Dreiser, William Dean Howells, and Mark Twain raised in their novels. Mormons were not as innocent or as ignorant as the main character in *Sister Carrie*, but they could relate to Silas Lapham's need to keep the old values while confronting the amoral modern urban world. And Mormons could only partially identify with Twain's Connecticut Yankee Hank Morgan, who admired ingenuity and inventiveness but failed to see the costs of industrialization and its challenges to the core values of a traditional society. Mormonism came to feel at home in the modern world but has never lost the central core of the family-oriented values that had its roots in an earlier traditional society. Institutional shifts and adjustments encouraged by individuals like Keeler helped the Church step into a new century while keeping a solid foot in the old one.

For one thing, Keeler played a significant role in what might, following Alfred Chandler, be denominated Mormonism's "managerial revolution," the rationalization of its ecclesiastical structure into corporate-like forms staffed by "professional executives" (Church authorities) thoroughly prepped for their tasks. In the American economy, the managerial revolution realigned business organizations, enabling them to compete against national (and international) rivals, and created a steady supply of trained labor.⁵⁰ Out of deeply held religious conviction, Keeler

50. Alfred D. Chandler Jr., *The Visible Hand: The Managerial Revolution in American Business* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977). More recently,

saw that inducting the Church's young men into the Aaronic Priesthood earlier than had been conventional and educating them in their wards and schools developed a similar pool of leaders necessary to run a corporate religious headquarters or compete with missionaries from other faiths throughout the United States and abroad. This standardization of training would prove instrumental to the tremendous growth of the Mormon Church in the twentieth century. Keeler's printed works suggest that Mormon writing was moving away from its more polemical and freelance origins in the nineteenth century to a more standardized discourse that was carefully crafted and focused on institutional consumption. As the LDS Church entered the new century as a recognized church in the newly created state of Utah, its partisans' rhetoric became less defensive and more geared toward working out the Church's place in a larger world.

Keeler encouraged the Church's fiscal modernization as well. In 1897, he published a pamphlet on tithing.⁵¹ At a time when the Church, intent on shoring up finances depleted by fending off the antipolygamy crusade, was coming to rely solely on cash contributions to fund its operations rather than accepting commodity donations-in-kind more typical of a frontier-exchange economy, securing a regular flow of an instantly negotiable medium was crucial for maintaining the stability of an increasingly large-scale bureaucracy. That LDS leaders recognized this situation can be seen in the *Instructions to Presidents of Stakes*, which the Church began to issue in 1898 and which contained significant pronouncements on fiduciary as well as spiritual matters.⁵² Keeler also worked hard to place BYU on a stronger financial footing.

Keeler's life reveals other dimensions of Mormon modernity. Church leaders had encouraged Mormons to abstain from tea, coffee, tobacco, and alcohol ever since Joseph Smith had revealed the Word of Wisdom (D&C 89) in 1833, but nineteenth-century Saints, including Smith himself, sometimes honored it more in the breach than in the observance. Active in the national temperance movement that would lead to Prohibition, Keeler encouraged Mormons to obey Smith's injunctions to

see Jo Anne Yates, *Control through Communication: The Rise of System in American Management* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989).

51. *The Law of Tithing: As Set Forth in the Old Scriptures and in the Modern Revelation . . . Compiled by Bishop Jos. B. Keeler* (Provo, Utah: n.p., [1897]).

52. Copies of these *Annual Instructions* issued by the Church are in the BYU Library.

the letter. Church leaders, influenced by their own experiences, came to a similar conclusion, making abstinence not just a voluntary act but prescribing it as a requirement for full Church worthiness. Keeler's work with boys in the Aaronic Priesthood was a natural outgrowth of his concern for those most vulnerable to the temptations of demon rum and stimulants of all kinds.⁵³

Finally, Keeler early caught the vision of promoting Mormon family life and family history, the latter a most characteristically Mormon engagement with print culture that inscribes not just a Saint's love for and interest in immediate, living kin, but that also situates the individual among people who, Mormons believe, will remain one's family for eternity. Pressured to end plural marriage and the sealing of nonbloodline relatives, the Church replaced these practices, which non-Mormons found particularly repellent, by facilitating individuals' research into their lineages and then doing temple work to seal direct family lines. In 1894, the year President Wilford Woodruff ended nonbloodline sealings, the Church organized the Utah Genealogical Society, forerunner of its Family History Library, the largest archives of genealogical records in the world.⁵⁴ Keeler wrote a manuscript genealogy of his family in 1891 and a larger, printed one in 1924.⁵⁵ Emphasis on such family ties

53. On Keeler's fight for Prohibition (local option), see Christensen, "Joseph Brigham Keeler," 174–76. On the larger story, see Brent G. Thompson, "Utah's Struggle for Prohibition, 1908–1917" (master's thesis, University of Utah, 1979). For the larger context, see Paul H. Peterson, "An Historical Analysis of the Word of Wisdom" (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1972).

54. The best introduction to the early practices is Gordon Irving, "The Law of Adoption: One Phase of the Development of the Mormon Concept of Salvation, 1830–1900," *BYU Studies* 14, no. 3 (1974): 291–314. See also Rex E. Cooper, *Promises Made to the Fathers: Mormon Covenant Organization* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1990). For a summary of the changes made under the direction of Wilford Woodruff, see Thomas G. Alexander, *Things in Heaven and Earth: The Life and Times of Wilford Woodruff, a Mormon Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1991), 321–22. For more on the Genealogical Society, see James B. Allen, Jessie L. Embry and Kahlile Mehr, *Hearts Turned to the Fathers: A History of the Genealogical Society of Utah, 1894–1994* (Provo, Utah: BYU Studies, 1994).

55. See *Genealogical Record of the Keeler Family* [14 pp.] (Provo, Utah: Enquirer Steam Print, 1891); and *Genealogical Record of the Keeler Family, 1726–1924*. By Joseph B. Keeler, *Life Member of the Historical and Genealogical Society of Utah* [79 pp.] (Provo, Utah: Printed for the Author by the Post Publishing Company, 1924).

evolved into the Church's regular family home evening, which encouraged members to set aside one evening per week for developing family relationships and teaching the gospel. Following the implementation of the program by President Frank Y. Taylor in the Granite Stake in 1909,⁵⁶ Keeler introduced the practice into the Utah Stake in January 1910. The Church as a whole adopted the program in 1915. The family home evening remains a central Mormon domestic devotion, although the day itself has changed from Wednesday to Monday.

The manuals and handbooks that Keeler and his generation produced had a lasting impact on the Church. His printed works made foundational contributions to the institutional coherence of the LDS Church and the growth of a major American religion, even though most Latter-day Saints, let alone Gentiles, have forgotten them.

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56. Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition*, 108. See also "Editor's Table," *Improvement Era* 13 (January 1910): 276.