Journal of Mormon History Vol. 10, 1983

Table of Contents

• --Two Integrities: An Address to the Crisis in Mormon Historiography
  
  Martin E. Marty, 3

• --Indulging in Temperance: Prohibition and Political Activism in the RLDS Church
  
  Paul Shupe, 21

• --“Standing between Two Fires” : Mormons and Prohibition, 1908-1917
  
  Brent G. Thompson, 35

• --History and the Mormon Scriptures
  
  William D. Russell, 53

• --The Limits of Learning in Pioneer Utah
  
  Charles S. Peterson, 65

• --Furthering the Cause of Zion: An Overview of the Ecclesiastical Court System in Early Utah R.
  
  Collin Mangrum, 79

NOTES, VIEWS, AND REVIEWS

• --Reflections on the Founding and Purpose of the Mormon History Association
  
  Leonard J. Arrington, 91

• --Joseph Smith and Mysticism Max Nolan 105 TEN-YEAR INDEX
  
  Melvin L. Bashore, 117

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Contents

Two Integrities: An Address to the Crisis in Mormon Historiography
Martin E. Marty 3

Indulging in Temperance: Prohibition and Political Activism in the RLDS Church
Paul Shupe 21

"Standing between Two Fires": Mormons and Prohibition, 1908-1917
Brent G. Thompson 35

History and the Mormon Scriptures
William D. Russell 53

The Limits of Learning in Pioneer Utah
Charles S. Peterson 65

Furthering the Cause of Zion: An Overview of the Ecclesiastical Court System in Early Utah
R. Collin Mangrum 79

NOTES, VIEWS, AND REVIEWS

Reflections on the Founding and Purpose of the Mormon History Association
Leonard J. Arrington 91

Joseph Smith and Mysticism
Max Nolan 105

TEN-YEAR INDEX
Melvin L. Bashore 117


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MORMON HISTORY ASSOCIATION
AWARDS FOR 1983

Book:
JUANITA L. BROOKS, Quicksand and Cactus (Salt Lake City: Howe Brothers, 1983).

T. Edgar Lyon Award for Best Article:

Special Citations:
To Larry C. Porter, for eight years of selfless service as secretary of the Mormon History Association.
To the Chesterfield Foundation for its preservation efforts and historical publications, especially Chesterfield: Mormon Outpost in Idaho (1982).

* * *

OTHER AWARDS
The Grace Arrington Award for Historical Excellence, $500, to Ronald W. Walker, for contributions to the field of Mormon history, and especially for eight scholarly articles published in 1982. This award was established in 1982 in honor of the late Grace Fort Arrington. Walker is the second recipient.

The Reese History Award, $500, to E. Leo Lyman for his dissertation, "The Mormon Quest for Utah Statehood" (University of California, Riverside, 1981), to be published in 1984 by the University of Illinois Press. Lyman is the first recipient of this award, established in honor of William Grover Reese and Winifred Foster Reese and to be given annually for the best dissertation or thesis or first article or book in the field of Mormon history.
Two Intelligences:
An Address to the Crisis
in Mormon Historiography

By Martin E. Marty

Mormon thought is experiencing a crisis comparable to but more profound than that which Roman Catholicism recognized around the time of the Second Vatican Council (1962–65). Whatever other changes were occurring in the Catholic Church, there was a dramatic, sometimes traumatic shift in ways of regarding the tradition. One of the conventional ways of speaking of this shift comes from the observation of philosopher Bernard Lonergan. He and others in his train argued that Catholicism was moving from a “classic” view of dogma to a thoroughly “historical” view of faith.

In the classic view, Catholic teaching had come intact, as it were, protected from contingency, from a revealing God. Deposited in Scripture, church tradition, and especially dogma, it was protected from anything but ordinary or trivial historical accidents. In the new vision, this classic understanding gave place to an approach which saw Catholic events, thought, and experience as being at all points and in every way colored by the contingencies and accidents of history. God was revealed in the midst of this history.

Mormonism never was constituted around anything so formal and, it was believed by Catholics, uncontingent as dogma. From the beginning this faith was always characterized by its thoroughly historical mode and mold. Yet...
almost inevitably this understanding after a century took on what we might call an “historically classical” form. Today, in what some might regard as a dramatic and traumatic shift among Mormon intellectuals, there is a move so expansive and sudden that it hardly needs chronicling. While tautology might sound cute, one could say this shift is from an “historically classic” to an “historically historical” understanding. A focus on this issue can serve for reexamination of the historian’s vocation — whether this be of the believing “insider” or the non- or other-believing and “outsider” version. At the same time, the inquiry can point to some of the limits of historical contributions to issues of faith and certitude.

**History and the Historian**

Whatever else historians do, there are at least two components in their work. They deal with the past and they tell stories. As G. J. Renier¹ reminds us, their subject is the human social past (in contrast to, say, “natural history.”) And while today various structuralisms and “cliometric” statistical approaches may obscure the story character, yet over all the historical mode is one of narrative, of story. Stories have subjects. Here things begin to get interesting.

We may not know exactly why anyone else follows the vocation of the historian. When one is an historian, it is also hard to account for the choice of subject. Some people who are Mormon will choose to write on other than Mormon history: roofing technology in Virginia, dairy farming in Wisconsin, or the middle years of Michael the Drunkard may be compelling subjects to some. Others will inquire about the past of their own people. Meanwhile some people who are not Mormon will abandon other subjects and find themselves drawn to the history of the Saints. Historians cannot all avoid the story of the social past of a movement of up to five million people. It would be inconceivable that they escape the notice of non-Mormons, Gentiles. At once, two sets of people set out on similar topics. This often has produced clashes.

The ethics of the profession calls historians to do careful research, not to hide evidence, to be suspicious when handling sources, and then to be fair. People used to say they should be “objective,” but objectivity seems to be a dream denied. This means that historians have to be reasonably aware of their assumptions, the viewpoints they bring, the thought worlds of the people they are representing at second hand. What results, all thoughtful historians agree,

¹ I have retained as much as possible of the lecture format and have kept footnoting to a minimum. It seems unnecessary, perhaps futile, and certainly imperial for me to take up more journal space than I already am doing by citing the scores if not hundreds of articles in the Journal of Mormon History, Dialogue, Sunstone, and elsewhere, devoted to the historical debate. In the present readership I can assume some familiarity with its main features or can by mentioning these journals direct new readers to the scene. Some of the debate is of a polemical character directed at people like Klaus Hansen, Marvin Hill, Jan Shipps, Larry Foster, and other historians from whom I have gained so much of my understanding of Mormon history. I myself have been the subject of some criticism. To cite it would be a temptation to turn or give the appearance of turning this lecture into a response to criticism or, worse, an ad hominem counterattack. Were that to happen, the whole effort would be misread.

For the dependencies upon Renier, see G. J. Renier, History: Its Purpose and Method (Boston: Beacon Press, 1950), chapters I:1 (for the social or collective character of history); I:11 (for its story character); II:1 (for “events and traces”). See p. 14 on “stopping to think.”
Marty: Crisis in Mormon Historiography

is not a reproduction of reality, which cannot even be grasped by people on the scene during events, but "a social construction of reality." The historian invents.

Historic construction or invention is more delicate when the subject is the experience of the sacred in the life of people, of a people. The sacred, Rudolf Otto's *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*, appears in the midst of the mundane and ordinary world with an Otherness which sometimes threatens, often eludes, forever beguiles the historian who comes in range of it. Because people who respond to the sacred stake their arrangement of life and their eternal hopes on this experience, they bring to it a passion which often leads them to want to be protected from historians and other social scientists. "Our" sacred, "our" Otherness, we think, is different - pure, uncontingent, protected from accident, beyond the scope of inquiring historians, be they insiders or outsiders.

Most of the time both those internal to the history of a people and a faith as well as those external to it can go about their business without creating suspicion or arousing a defensive spirit. So long as the life of the people proceeds routinely, they may not pay much attention to what historians discover and publish. It is when people are in a period of crisis that they notice the historians. Renier has a charming passage on how historians, used to obscurity, become suddenly relevant when people "stop to think." They are especially on the spot when what they discover and publish causes the people to "stop to think." They have successfully done so, from within and without, in the case of Mormons in recent times.

**STOPPING TO THINK ABOUT HISTORICITY AND RELIGION**

The Mormon ferment of today, like the Catholic analogue during and after Vatican II, is a species of a genus we might call "the crisis of historical consciousness." This crisis cut to the marrow in the Protestant body of thoughtful scholars in Western Europe in the nineteenth century and continues, though it has been lived with in various ways and thus seems more domesticated, in the late twentieth. Before the Enlightenment and the rise of a critical history focused on Christianity, professional historians were ordinarily cast as storytellers who were defenders of the faith. A few learned to direct their suspicions against forgeries and frauds like the Donation of Constantine. Most were called, if they were Catholic, to summon events from the past to certify the truth of Catholicism over against Protestantism. Needless to say, *vice versa*.

This meant that the ordinary historian was much like other believers in respect to the people's past. It is useful here to introduce Paul Ricoeur's concept of "primitive naivete," by which he means nothing pejorative or con-

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2 On "primitive" and "second" naivete, see Paul Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, Inc., 1967), pp. 351-53. His exact words on the second naivete (p. 352): "For the second immediacy that we seek and the second naivete that we await are no longer accessible to us anywhere else than in a hermeneutics; we can believe only by interpreting. It is the "modern" mode of belief in symbols, an expression of the distress of modernity and a remedy for that distress... This second naivete aims to be the postcritical equivalent of the precritical hierophany." Again (p. 351): "If we can no longer live the great symbolisms of the sacred in accordance with the original belief in them, we can, we modern men, aim at a second naivete in and through criticism. In short, it is by interpreting that we can hear again."
descending, merely something which designates. Children have such a naivete: they receive and accept more or less without question a world, a world view, and views, from parents and nurses and teachers. Tribal people can sustain a similar naivete: they know other tribes with other ways only from a distance, at best. Or they find no threat in these because they see no lure: other ways belong to the enemy. Isolated people, whether in a valley or an urban ghetto in a pluralist society, even in the age of mass media, can sustain the naivete. So can people in massive isolations of the sort which bind together every fifth human, religions like Islam. Most places where it is strong it has a monopoly, and the Muslim never knows and need never consider alternative ways of being or believing.

The primitive naivete of Catholic Europe, protected by space from the Muslim and contrived space in the form of ghetto walls from the Jews, was challenged with the introduction of variety by the Protestant Reformation on Western soil. Yet it waited for the Enlightenment to introduce the full-fledged assault on this naivete. The Enlightenment brought other religions close to home: one thinks of Lessing’s Nathan der Weise as a typical attempt to see rough parity between Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. The Enlightenment went further: while beginning to relativize Christian distinctives in the face of other ways, it also used critical tools on Christian texts and traces from the past.

In the nineteenth century, the age of modern critical history, the crisis of historical consciousness became intense and drastic. Now no events, experiences, traces, or texts were exempt from scrutiny by historians who believed they could be value-free, dispassionate. Today, of course, no one sees them as being successful in their search. They were tainted by radical Hegelian dialectics, neo-Kantian rigorisms, or the biases of a positivism that thought it could be unbiased. We may see these critical historians as naive in this respect. Otherwise they were highly successful at destroying the primitive naivete among those who read them seriously. The responses could vary among these readers. Some lost faith while others shored it up with defensive fundamentalisms which focused on papal infallibility or biblical inerrancy. Most adapted their way of looking at faith and lived with it in transformed ways. Whatever else happened, however, the believer who made the passage beyond primitive naivete was very busy picking and choosing responsive attitudes.

THE CHRISTIAN CRISIS OF HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

Protestantism, like Catholicism, had a “classical” aspect through its own dogmatic structure. All Christians then, like the Saints now, had much at stake because their faith was so thoroughly historical in character. It lived by reference to events like the creation, the call of Israel through its exodus and exile, the happening of Jesus Christ and especially his death and resurrection within calendrical history, and the calling into being of an historical people, the Church. To see these events as shaped by historical forces, their traces and texts unexempt from critical examination, altered responses of faith and practice.

The clash between classic and historical views was stated classically by Lessing (1729-1781), the Lutheran minister’s son who became an Enlighten-
merit philosopher. He argued what has since become a commonplace: an historical truth was not capable of logical demonstration. Reported miracles, from creation through the signs and wonders which accompany biblical accounts of Israel and Jesus and through the visions which led to the vocations of prophets and apostles down to the resurrection of Christ could never thus demonstrate the truth of Christianity. "Accidental truths of history can never become the necessary truths of reason." Lessing called the gulf between the truths of history and the truths of reason "the ugly broad ditch which I cannot get across, however often and however earnestly I have tried to make the leap." 3

Henceforth whoever believed in God and the integrity of God's people while aware of what Lessing and his successors posed, clearly had to believe in a different way — Ricoeur would say through a "second naivete." After criticism, people believe not in spite of but through interpretation. Much of educated catholic (Catholic and Protestant) Christianity is made up of people who thus believe. They would not call themselves "literalists" about history and would even question whether self-styled literalists are really literal or whether these do not select which events to protect from scrutiny under the leaky canopy of historical contingency.

The transit to the second mode of being and believing was not easy; a little garland of testimonies should suffice to recall it. John Viscount Lord Morley 4 spoke of the subsequently developed "triumph of the principle of relativity in historic judgment," the "substitution of becoming for being, the relative for the absolute, dynamic movement for dogmatic immobility."

The result was what historian Friedrich Meinecke called "one of the greatest spiritual revolutions which western thought has experienced." Ernst Troeltsch, a great Christian scholar, personalized it in a way that speaks to and for many. He had come with a solid belief in the events and the demonstrability of events which made up the Christian story, protected from and within the rest of history. Like others, he personally had felt the "demand of the religious consciousness for certainty, for unity, and for peace." But:

I soon discovered that the historical studies which had so largely formed me, and the theology and philosophy in which I was now immersed, stood in sharp opposition, indeed even in conflict, with one another. I was confronted, upon the one hand, with the perpetual flux of the historian's data, and the distrustful attitude of the historical critic towards conventional traditions....

So Christianity was henceforth "a purely historical, individual, relative phenomenon." Further, the inference from all this was "that a religion, in the several forms assumed by it, always depends upon the intellectual, social, and national conditions among which it exists." Gone for him was "the absolute validity of Christianity."

Not all scholars took Troeltsch's course. Critical historians who are Christian believers abound in most Catholic and Protestant communions. Yet the

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testimony of a profound and empathic figure like Troeltsch has led them not
to be disdainful of people who take “literalistic” or “fundamentalistic” ways of
responding to the crisis — just as they have to hope for sympathy and under-
standing from those who resist and, in resisting, show the depth of “the crisis
of historical consciousness.”

Where “primitive naivete” is simply no longer possible but the desire for
faith is matched by the presence of faith and participation in the life of a
people, it is clear that people who live with and pass through the crisis of his-
torical consciousness may have the same “object” of faith, but believe in
different ways. We must at least entertain the possibility that there can be
integrity in the response of believers who believe after criticism, through
interpretation.

THE SAINTS’ CRISIS OF HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

From the earliest years there have been Mormons who left the faith because
their view of the historical events which gave shape to it no longer permitted
them to sustain it. Others remained with the Mormon people but were uneasy
and made their own adjustment. We may safely assume that all thoughtful
people must have some struggles with elements of a complex history. Faith
attached to or mediated through historical events has always had some dimen-
sions of an “offense” or “scandal” to the insider just as it has been only that to
the outsider who despises. Awareness of pettinesses and peccadillos among
leaders or injustices in the record of a people — one thinks of the Christian
Crusades and Inquisition or papal corruption in many ages — has to be some
sort of threat to the clarity of faith’s vision, though it clearly has not meant
the loss of faith or abandonment of peoplehood on the part of so many who
are aware. Those more familiar than I with Mormon history can point and
have pointed to questioners within the historical profession through the years.

As far as the profession as a whole and the intellectual community at large
are concerned, however, the crisis has been noticeable only in the past two
decades, and urgent only in very recent years. The hostility of the Gentile
world, geographical remoteness from alien forces, and the necessarily defensive
agenda of the Mormon churches and people long protected the Saints. Serene
in their grasp of Mormon faith, the historians could busy themselves marshalling
evidences to defend the integrity of the people. More often they simply
chronicled the story of the amazing formation, trek, colonization, and expan-
sion of a people — subjects that have to stir the hearts of either insiders or out-
siders who have a musical ear for human drama.

Someday the crisis had to come. Few others of the 20,870 separate denomi-
nations listed in the most recent encyclopedia of Christianity have as much at
stake so far as “historicness” is concerned as do Mormons. The character of
their shaping events takes on a different nature in that these occurred so re-
cently, on familiar soil, in check-outable times and places, after historical “sci-
ence” had become developed. The shaping events of classic Christianity, whose
story Mormons share, are accessible almost entirely through insider Christian
sources alone. The Romans ignored them. Mormon events, meanwhile, occur
inside a history chronicled by smalltown newspaper editors, diarists, hostile
letter writers, contemporary historians. The beginnings are not so shrouded in obscurity as are Christian beginnings which were recorded especially in the New Testament. People now alive in their nineties who talked as little children to people then in their eighties have “memories” which link them to the years of Mormon beginnings. There is no place to hide. What can be sequestered in Mormon archives and put beyond the range of historians can often be approached by sources outside them. While Mormon iconography developed impressively early in its history, the images of Mormon beginnings are not yet haloed or sanctioned the way Christian beginnings are by their reflection in stained glass, their inspiration in centuries of classical music. There is little protection for Mormon sacredness.

Whoever knows how Christian faith survives and can survive knowledge of all the evidences of fallibility and scandal that occurred through history will understand why the outsider historian finds trivial the question of whether the faith is threatened by the revelation of human shortcomings in the later administration of the Mormon churches. Of course, for public relations reasons, one likes to portray one’s heroes and Saints as saints. Lives of quality and character and policies of justice and fairness enhance one’s identification with them and the people at large. Yet intellectually these are not of much interest. One can cut through all the peripheral issues and see that most of the writing on Mormon history which poses the issue of the crisis of historical consciousness focuses finally on Joseph Smith’s First Vision, often capitalized to set it apart, and then, many agree, more importantly on the later vision which led to a second capitalization, the Book of Mormon.

Let me clear the air with a stark, almost crude, but still light-hearted and well-intended analogy.

When Cardinal de Polignac told Madame du Deffand that the martyr St. Denis, the first Bishop of Paris, had walked a hundred miles carrying his head in his hand, Madame du Deffand correctly observed, “In such a promenade it is the first step that is difficult.”

By analogy, if the beginning of the promenade of Mormon history, the First Vision and the Book of Mormon, can survive the crisis, then the rest of the promenade follows and nothing that happens in it can really detract from the miracle of the whole. If the first steps do not survive, there can be only antiquarian, not fateful or faith-full interest in the rest of the story.

When the historical crisis comes it can, of course, be addressed by fiat. Authority can invoke authority and silence the questioning, suppress curiosity, rule inquiry out of bounds, close off the sources, purge the questioners. Now and then rumors and reports of policies somewhere in this range of “heteronomy,” to use Paul Tillich’s term, reach the ears of Gentiles. If these occur, ecclesiastically, they are “none of our business.” Intellectually, professionally, and personally, of course, one cares and feels sympathy for Mormon historians, who are believers and belongers through “secondary naivete” or “after criticism” or “through interpretation.” At the very least, one will also hear the

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whisper of those driven away or silenced: *eppur si muove.* Galileo kept integrity by murmuring such a truth after authority forced him to recant, to say that against all evidence the world did not move. "And yet it moves!"

Suppressed historians may busy themselves trying to comprehend the integrity of those who guard the tradition, eager as these are to protect the faith of Mormons who live in "primitive naïvete." Yet historians can be understandably frustrated if they feel that their gift, which would help people pass to another, secondary, mode of being and believing, is *a priori* denied. Still, this is a matter of internal ecclesiastical concern, and it would come with bad grace for a guest to intervene or pursue the matter much beyond the point of observation.

It *does* belong to the historian's vocation, however, to say that alongside the unreflective faith of Christian believers who have not come to the crisis of historical consciousness there are reflective, historically-conscious people who do believe. There may be something of worth in their history, a history of great complexity, which might serve Mormons through analogy and precedent. There can be more than one kind of integrity in faith and peoplehood.

**FOCUSING THE MORMON CRISIS ISSUES**

Having dismissed as secondary, late stages in the promenade, both what we might call "political embarrassments" and "borderline religious issues" (like the role of Masonry, the development and demise of polygamy) we can concentrate on what I will call the *generative* issues. They come down to what historians of religion call "theophany," the appearance of gods or godlike figures, and "revelation," the disclosure from one order of being and reality to another. The First Vision belongs to the category of theophany, the Book of Mormon to revelation.

The four accounts of the First Vision do not quite match, a fact no less and no more interesting than that details in the four Christian Gospels do not always match. What matters is the event, which is accessible only through these traces. It is hard to read Mormon history as I have for twenty years without coming to agree with Neal E. Lambert and Richard H. Cracroft, that this First Vision is "that pivotal event which is so central to the message of Mormonism that belief therein has become a touchstone of faith for the orthodox Mormon and Mormon convert." James B. Allen says that it is "second only to belief in the divinity of Jesus of Nazareth," and "next to the resurrection of Christ, nothing holds a more central place in modern Mormon thought than that sacred event of 1820." Reflective Mormons have to cross Lessing's "ugly ditch" as they face up to such events.

Second, more urgently, the vision of 1823, the story of golden plates and seer stones and the text translated and published as the Book of Mormon is both theophany and revelation. While the book may go unread by many Mormons — it always surprises Gentiles to see how little awareness of much of its...
content there is among their Mormon neighbors—it is the event itself, the whole generative shape of the discovery, translation, and publication, which has made up a single base for Mormon history. When historians call into question both the process and the product, they come to or stand on holy ground. Not all Mormon historians devote their energies to these generative events, just as I as an historian of twentieth century Christianity do not have to do research on the resurrection of Jesus: “it’s not my period.” Yet the basis for faith and concerns for events which follow are at stake when professional colleagues converge on these focal issues.

**Understanding the Mormon Issues**

After 150 years, when historians inside or outside the Mormon community focus on the generative events, it has become conventional to see them as concentrating on a direct, simple question. It is all supposed to come down to “Was Joseph Smith a prophet or a fraud?” To say “prophet” made one a Saint, for how could one then stay away from the history and people which issue from these events? To say “fraud” is precisely what made one leave Mormonism or never convert in the first place. That was that.

Then, two things happened. Many non-Mormon historians bracketed [put in brackets, suspended] that question. Seeing four million and more people shaped by Smith’s theophanic and revelational vision, people who, in many cases, were as intelligent and “modern” as they, the historians asked a new range of questions. If they would get hung up on the prophet/fraud dialectic, however much it may have nagged or tantalized them, they could not get to another range of questions: what sort of people are these people, what sort of faith is this faith, what sort of prophet with what sort of theophany and revelation was Joseph Smith? His consciousness, his “myth” and his effect could be pursued if one refused to be tyrannized by the literal stark prophet/fraud polarity in the question.

Meanwhile, Saints historians asked more radical questions than before. They had to move through history and interpretation toward a “second naivete” which made possible transformed belief and persistent identification with the people. They brought new instruments to their inquiry into Mormon origins; shortly I shall detail what strike me as the three main approaches used by outsiders and insiders alike.

For now, a very obvious and important point needs to be made. According to the norms and approaches of the historical profession, the “ground rules” accepted by historians, it would be impossible to prove that Smith was a prophet. As Renier reminds us, past events are, as events, wholly lost to us. We have only traces, testimonies, texts. As historians, we cannot get behind those testimonies to the New York hills where the visions occurred, and we cannot regress in time. There is no way in which empirical evidence can produce for our verification the “two personages” or the later angel of the visions. If by some now-inconceivable time machine device we could be there, we might be duly impressed that something was happening beyond the ordinary. But in 1820 and 1823 as in 1983 we would be suspicious of visions—and Smith called them that—because they can be contrived, can elude ordinary analysis.
without themselves being extraordinary. We can see some things more remark-
able on television or on stage any day of a week, yet these do not inspire the
response of faith.

Conversely, of course, historians may find it possible to prove to their own
satisfaction that Smith was a fraud. This is hard to do with the First Vision,
if we grant that somewhat different accountings of detail on four occasions are
no more challenges to its integrity than are the four Gospel accounts to the
Gospel event. It could be easier to do, and many have done so to their own
and others' satisfaction, in respect to the Book of Mormon, both so far as its
external circumstances and internal character are concerned. Yet this proving
of fraudulence has not been compelling, not "proof," to millions of Saints, who
do not really lie abed in suspense lest the next discovery or assault achieve what
the first eight score years of attack could not achieve. For our purposes it is
more important to note that the issue of fraud, hoax, or charlatanry simply
need not, does not, preoccupy the historical profession most of the time.

It is not necessary here to detail fully two of the three approaches to ques-
tions beyond the prophet/fraud issue addressed to generative Mormon events.
I need only cite them and point to major statements of the issue. The first
family has been familiarly summarized in Klaus Hansen's Mormonism and the
American Experience. We might call the studies summarized and enlarged
upon there "consciousness" studies, contributions to the question of the con-
sciousness of a modern prophet. After reference to social and environmental
contexts and explanations, Hansen moves to the consciousness sphere.

Quoting Jan Shipps, he develops first "the analogy of musical genius," and
then, more speculatively, Julian Jaynes's hypotheses about consciousness as it
relates to hemispheres of the brain. Other "possible explanatory frameworks
for getting a handle on Smith's revelations" include non-Mormon T. L. Brink's
summaries of four alternatives derived from "depth psychology." On their
basis Brink can assume that Joseph Smith "was a man of sound mind and sin-
cere religious convictions." Sigmund Freud, more plausibly C. G. Jung, and
then Alfred Adler and Erik Erikson are called as witnesses to make plausible
the prophethood and throw light on prophetic character.

Emphatically, in my understanding of the historical approach, none of
these produce proof that Smith was a prophet or fraud. Instead they make
possible a different level of urgent inquiry, make plausible the concepts of
Smith's "soundness" and "sincerity." I should add that Larry Foster has
developed his own approaches to prophetic consciousness, approaches which
have made it possible for him sometimes to speak up more emphatically for
Smith than many Mormons can or do. These scholars show that one can use
psychological instruments to illumine without falling into a reductionism which
would insist that Smith was "nothing but" an exemplar of this or that stage
of adolescent psychology, or whatever.

7 Klaus J. Hansen, Mormonism and the American Experience (Chicago: The University
8 Lawrence Foster, Religion and Sexuality: Three American Communal Experiments of
the Nineteenth Century (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), pp. 128-30 and else-
where in Foster's writings.
The second address to the crisis of Mormon historical consciousness comes from a cluster of scholars whose work is focused in and summarized by another non-Mormon, Jan Shipps. Aware as is Hansen from within that the issue of prophet/fraud is in many ways a question of faith which can be illumined by but not proven by historical inquiry, Shipps employs still another discipline for her work, Religionsgeschichte, which in America is usually translated as History of Religion. (History here is not the same as ordinary “history of religions,” but implies a somewhat different set of methods, and has far less interest in narrative. It may be more taken with synchrony than diachrony, with structure than with happening.)

For Shipps’ purposes, to begin with the First Vision casts the questions in an inappropriate light; the Book of Mormon here (as in Foster’s work) is determinative. With the Book of Mormon the public career of the prophet began, and here it becomes accessible to the historian. Shipps is interested explicitly in shifting the focus from the prophet/fraud questions to the notion that Smith’s story is “best understood in the context of his sequential assumption of positions/roles that allowed the Saints to recover a usable past.” That was his religious function and achievement. She can go on to say that when one sees how this endeavor legitimated the prophetic task, “the question of whether Smith was prophet or fraud is not particularly important.”

The fourth chapter of Shipps’ forthcoming book, “In and Out of Time,” will suggest the promise of the History of Religion approaches for ordinary historians.” The sacred and non-sacred, wrote Mircea Eliade, are “different modes of being in the world.” Historians using their ordinary canons have to be aware of this difference. They must be aware that the original Mormons saw their prophet and themselves stepping outside ordinary time and space, beyond the reach of conventional critical criteria. Temporally, they wanted to live “once again at the beginning, in illo tempore,” the kind of time which lies beyond empirical evidence.

Gulford Dudley has written that “the mystic time of beginnings is sacred by definition.” The experience on the hill in New York or, for Shipps more important, the Mormon entry into the Promised Land was “entry into sacred space” and sacred time. This did not mean that the Mormons ever were anything but practical people; they were not insubstantial or otherworldly. Yet their special kind of millennialism removed many of their claims beyond the realm of the mundane and practical and has served to provide extraordinary interpretations for the life of the people. Mundane Mormons even today “possess the means of reentering sacred time and space” in their temples and special times. These help endow their peoplehood with value and guarantee that the mythic dimensions of their history, which remain beyond the range of historians’ destruction, also become a part of their historical constructions. Shipps shows how creative it is to ask other than the prophet/fraud question of Smith and the Book.

A third approach, not yet fully developed but rich in promise, is the hermeneutical. This version of “interpretation theory” helps Mormon intel-

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lectuals make the passage from primitive to secondary naivete, or from belief before criticism to belief through criticism and interpretation. It also helps both Mormons and non-Mormons in the historical profession understand each other and do some justice to the generative events without being mired in the prophet/fraud polarity or posing. I will close with some references to it.

THE INTERPRETIVE ENTERPRISE AND ITS PROMISE

I propose a hermeneutical approach to the problem of Mormon texts. By texts I mean both those which impart Joseph Smith’s visions and the Book of Mormon itself. Contemporary hermeneutics, the focus of so much philosophical passion today, can be treated extremely technically, in ways which would seem alien to most historians. Yet the subject has on occasion been rather simply introduced, and I shall depend upon a summary by a noted literary critic, E. D. Hirsch, to outline it.10

Hermeneutics, he points out, is associated with Hermes, the divine messenger between gods and men. (The parallel name is Interpres, from which we get “interpretation.”) God’s hidden message needs such a conveyor to ordinary people. In 1927 Martin Heidegger, in Sein und Zeit, borrowed a term from hermeneutics, Vorverständnis, or “preunderstanding,” to launch the modern debate. He showed that unprejudiced, objective knowledge was not possible. All knowledge is bound in part by “pre-knowing” which is determined by our historical, social, and personal backgrounds. Such pre-knowing, for example, determines in large measure what attitudes we have toward and what we derive from Islamic, Marxist, Christian, or Mormon texts.

“Pre-understanding,” to step back further, derives from Wilhelm Dilthey (1833–1911) who showed how understanding of a text is a circular process. As a non-Mormon I can discuss the Book of Mormon in such terms.

First, we encounter words and clauses which have no distinct meaning until we know how they function in the text as a whole. But since we can only know the whole meaning through the various parts of the text, and since we cannot know before what the parts mean or how they work together before we know the whole text, we find ourselves in a logical puzzle, a circularity. This is the famous “hermeneutical circle.” It can be broken only by resolving the question of which came first, the chicken or the egg, the whole or the part. By general agreement, from which there has been virtually no dissent, the question of priority is decided in favor of the whole. The whole must be known in some fashion before we know the part. For how can I know that I am seeing a nose unless I first know that I am seeing a face? And from the doctrine of the priority of the whole came the doctrine of pre-understanding. Since we must know the whole before the part, we must assume some kind of pre-understanding in all interpretation.

Muslim children come to Muslim texts and Mormon children come to Mormon texts with pre-understandings which allow them to grasp the whole before they take apart the parts. These pre-understandings, no doubt often creatively, bias their understandings of the whole and the parts. Those who stand outside the circle have great difficulty sharing the understandings which

come from the preunderstandings, though, of course, there can be and are conversions which bring illuminations of texts "from within," as it were.

Fortunately, for our purposes, philosophers Jean Nabert and Paul Ricoeur have developed the theme of a "hermeneutics . . . of testimony." The philosophy of testimony evokes an enormous paradox. Nabert in *L'Essai sur le mal* asks, in the spirit of Lessing, "Does one have the right to invest with an absolute character a moment of history?" This must be addressed. Now, testimony begins with a "quasi-empirical meaning"; it "designates the action of testifying, that is, of relating what one has seen or heard." Then comes the sort of transfer on which all Mormon faith depends: "there is the one who testifies and the one who hears the testimony. The witness has seen, but the one who receives his testimony has not seen but hears," and it is in this hearing that faith or unfaith is decided. The statement and the story constitute "information on the basis of which one forms an opinion about a sequence of events, the connection of an action, the motives for the act, the character of the person, in short on the meaning of what has happened."

When, asks Ricoeur, do we give testimony and listen to it? In a form of discourse called "the trial," which, whether they have noticed it or not, defenders and attackers of Joseph Smith so regularly establish. "Hence the question: what is a true witness, a faithful witness?" Ricoeur connects witness with the Greek word *martus*; the witness is linked with the martyr. "A man becomes a martyr because he is first a witness . . . It is necessary, then, that the just die." And "the witness is the man who is identified with the just cause which the crowd and the great hate and who, for this just cause, risks his life." Thus "testimony is the action . . . as it attests outside of himself, to the interior man, to his conviction, to his faith."

This is the point at which the religious meaning of testimony is most clear. Historical faith connects what one "testifies for" a meaning with the notion that he is testifying *that* something has happened which signifies this meaning. There is tension between confession of faith and narration of things seen, but it is this tension that means that faith is dependent upon testimony, not sight, not "proof."

Mormons are people who, though aware of many historical ambiguities in the record and fallibilities in the prophet Joseph Smith, also see in his character, vocation, career, and witnessing — finally, martyrdom — a credentialling which leads them to connect confession of faith with "something that has happened."

We have connected Jean Nabert and Paul Ricoeur with the hermeneutics of being the testifier, the witness. When one deals with the text of the Book of Mormon, the issue now becomes the hermeneutics of testimony. Ricoeur asks, "Do we have the right to invest a moment of history with an absolute character? One needs a hermeneutics, a philosophy of interpretation." Here Nabert remarks that "consciousness makes itself judge of the divine and consequently chooses its God or its gods." Testimony gives something to interpretation, but it also demands to be interpreted. There is the story of an event and a demand

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for decision, a choice that the testimony functions to awaken faith in the truth. "The judge in a court makes up his mind about things seen only by hearing said."

It is interesting to this Gentile to notice the Book of Mormon is not widely read in the Church. People come to faith because living witnesses base their speaking and way of life on what they have read, "heard," there — and a new generation of children or converts comes to faith by "hearing." None of them see golden plates to authenticate this faith. There is "no manifestation of the absolute without the crisis of false testimony, with the decision which distinguished between sign and idol." The Mormon believer and the non-Mormon rejecter are on the same terms, so far as material traces of actual past events are concerned.

Nabert speaks of this norm for judging the divine "the expression of the greatest effort that consciousness can make in order to take away the conditions which prevent it from attaining complete satisfaction." Faith is not absolute knowledge of an event that is forever lost except through testimony. Here is the break between "reason and faith, . . . philosophy and religion." And "this is what signifies the 'trial,' the 'crisis' of testimony." We must "choose between philosophy of absolute knowledge and the hermeneutics of testimony." The enforcer of orthodoxy who limits the inquiry of the historian wants history to do what a "philosophy of absolute knowledge" would do. The historian, to whom past events are lost and for whom only traces in testimony remain, lives with "the hermeneutics of testimony" which is, in the end, at the basis of all faith.

I must add a word on how a text like the Book of Mormon ministers in the tension and authenticates itself as testimony. To summarize almost to the point of cliche a very complicated set of developments in "interpretation theory," let us say that one moves through and beyond both historical and literary criticism to the interpretive level. That is, one wants to understand "the world behind the text," the world of Joseph Smith and the events described in the Book of Mormon. Yet having learned all that can be learned is not what either brings about or destroys faith. Second, one can use literary tools to understand the world "of the text." What is its genre or form? Yet here, too, is not the birth or death of faith. Instead one deals with "the world in front of the text," for here testimony forces its challenge.

Not was Joseph Smith a prophet or a fraud, but does the Book of Mormon connect confession and event in such a way that it discloses possible modes of being or thinking or behaving that the reader or, better, the listener (to a contemporary witness based on it) must entertain the risk of acceptance or rejection of the testimony? There is where faith or unfaith is born. David Tracy, employing an insight from Hans-Georg Gadamer, says that here is "the fusion of horizons;"

the reader overcomes the strangeness of another horizon not by empathizing with the psychic state or cultural situation of the author but rather by understanding the basic vision of the author implied by the text and the mode-of-being-in-the-world referred to by the text.12

One is henceforth freed of the burdens of "psychologizing" and is less burdened by concern over the exact reference to literal historical events.

Are there analogies in "ordinary Christians'" approaches to the issues of trace or testimony and event in respect to the resurrection of Jesus? How far does historical inquiry and doubt go and where must one make that leap "from trace to event" which is at the basis of narrative and, in some respects, of faith itself?

In a conservative Protestant survey, evangelical biblical scholar Daniel Fuller set forth a typology that began with "attempts to sustain knowledge of the Resurrection apart from historical reasoning," and then "partially from historical reasoning." Of greatest interest to Fuller is a third category, German theologian Wolfhart Pannenberg's "attempt to sustain knowledge of the resurrection wholly by historical reason."

Fuller's choice of Pannenberg was fortunate, because Pannenberg is an extremely formidable and sophisticated theologian, not someone to whom the term "fundamentalist" could be applied in any pejorative sense. "True faith is first awakened through an impartial observation of events." Revelation is mediated only by history because "the events of history speak their own language, the language of events, [and] this language can only be heard in the world of ideas of the people in which these events occurred."

Pannenberg moves, then, from universal history to the testimony of the first witnesses and then and thus jumps to the events that presumably lie behind it. Fuller paraphrases this leap on the basis of a lecture by Pannenberg:

While there is much in the resurrection reports that is mythical, yet it is impossible to explain them wholly as the work of the apostles' imagination. The apostles were too discouraged after the death of Jesus to have talked themselves into believing that Jesus was risen. The only satisfactory explanation for their sudden faith was that Jesus appeared to them. Furthermore, the early Christian community could not have survived if the tomb of Jesus had not been empty. An occupied tomb would not only have destroyed their faith, but it would have given the Jewish polemic against the church an invincible weapon. Hence it is impossible to charge off the Biblical reports of the resurrection wholly to the imagination, and, consequently, we may arrive at an historical verification of the resurrection.

Many critics have pointed out that Pannenberg as philosopher of history makes claims that no ordinary detective-historian would be content with. One body snatcher could have emptied the tomb. So Pannenberg does not have "material" evidence but only oral-and-then-written "testimony."

Fuller judges that Pannenberg has "provided some insights into how it is possible for historical reason to bridge Lessing's ugly ditch and therefore find a complete basis for faith in history." However there are at least two difficulties. Pannenberg's mode of reasoning to get to a basis for faith in history is extremely complex and abstruse. It is grounded in philosophies many believers would find alien. Therefore "only those can have an immediate knowledge of revelation who are trained historians." Or, only those can have faith who tend to be dependent upon sophisticated historians. For him, there should be no talk of supernaturalism, which is unacceptable for the critically oriented reason of the historian, because it arbitrarily cuts off historical investigation of immanent causes and analogies through the assertion of a transcendental intervention."
Fuller chooses to see the basis of faith better outlined by an earlier historian, the author of Luke-Acts. He contrasts how faith is born in the light of Luke’s testimony or that of the early Christians about whom he writes:

Pannenberg it will be remembered, wants to make faith the possibility for all men by having what is, virtually, a priesthood of historians. Theology’s task, as he sees it, is to assert the credibility of the Christian proclamation, so that laymen can believe it because of the authority that the theologian, with special historical skills, can provide. It does not seem, however, that Luke, who finds the basis for revelational knowledge in history, makes historical reasoning the exclusive way to such knowledge. Acts 11:24 is a passage of particular interest in this connection because it tells how a number of people came to believe on the basis of the moral impact of the minister, rather than by accepting his authority or by employing historical reasoning to get back to the truth of the resurrection. “[Barnabas] was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And [as a result] a large company was added to the Lord.”

So with Paul: the argument for the resurrection is made as a result of Paul’s change in conduct.

Thus it is understandable how Luke could have stressed that the faith of the apostles and of a Theophilus must come through a reasoning based on infallible proofs, and yet declare that many believed as Barnabas preached, for Barnabas was himself an infallible proof of his message . . . Faith is possible for every man who is confronted with a Barnabas, for everyone who is rational is capable of seeing the infallible proof represented by such a man. Such a system of thought does keep Christianity as an historical religion, rather than one whose knowledge is immediately accessible to all . . . But such a system does not make all men dependent upon a priesthood of theologians who can follow historical reasoning to know that Jesus rose from the dead.

The claim, then, is simple, bold, and emphatic: the historical craft never allows us to revisit any events except in and through and insofar as traces are satisfying. The empty tomb is not convincingly recoverable today to provide a basis for faith in the resurrection. The texts repeating the testimony of Paul, Barnabas, and other early witnesses and those dependent upon witness is all that Christians have — and that is enough. These texts disclose meanings and offer possible modes of thinking and being for those to whom faith in the resurrection and its fruits would otherwise not occur. So with Mormon texts, the testimony of Smith and witnesses.

CONCLUSION

How frustrating all this must be to someone who wants to prove Smith a prophet or a fraud, or to make the issue the only one to interest insider or outsider historians! We have argued that it is impossible for historians as historians to prove that Smith was a prophet and improbable that they will prove him a fraud. Instead, they seek to understand. That is a modest but still important task in the communities of both faith and inquiry. Similarly, historians cannot prove that the Book of Mormon was translated from golden plates and have not proven that it was simply a fiction of Joseph Smith. Instead, they seek to understand its revelatory appeal, the claims it makes, and why it discloses modes of being and of believing that millions of Saints would otherwise not entertain.
If what I have outlined makes any sense at all, it might be a contribution to a lowering of suspicions of historians by Mormon guardians. At the same time it does not try to pretend away the depth of the crisis of historical consciousness for history-based Mormondom. The motive for this all is not to commend Mormon history to the secular academy, as if the Mormon historians had to be driven by a push for relevance and respectability. The secular academy which despises Mormonism also has to despise Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, all of which make theophanic and revelational claims similar to those of Mormonism. Yet Islamic, Catholic, and Protestant historians have found means of pursuing their work and displaying their integrity.

There are many kinds of integrity. Some of these are appropriate to insiders and others to outsiders, some to church authorities and some to historians, some to those with “primitive naivete” and others to those who live in “second naivete.” Confusing these integrities is almost as destructive to them as is dismissing those sorts which are appropriate to other people in other callings. Discernment of them and empathy across the lines of the vocations of people who display them seem to be the most promising forms of address to the present crisis of historical consciousness.
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Plan Ahead for Future
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Twentieth Annual Meeting: Independence, Missouri, 1985
Indulging in Temperance:  
Prohibition and Political Activism  
in the RLDS Church  

By Paul Shupe

For most of its existence, the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints has undergone an internal debate related to the consumption of alcohol. The church was barely three years old when Joseph Smith, Jr. sent to his church, then assembled at Kirtland, Ohio, a document “sent by greeting, not by command or constraint, but by revelation and the word of wisdom.”  

Inasmuch as any man drinketh wine or strong drink among you, behold it is not good, neither meet in the sight of your Father, only in assembling yourselves together, to offer up your sacraments before him. And behold, this should be wine; yea, pure wine of the grape of the vine, of your own make. And again, strong drinks are not for the belly, but for the washing of your bodies.  

This passage is relatively clear and distinct. Though alcohol has not always been the foremost concern of the church, it is easy to see why, with this docu-

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2 Ibid., p. 221.
3 For the purposes of this paper, the term "church" is intended to describe both the official stated positions of the church authorities (i.e. the General Conference, First Presi-
ment firmly established in its heritage, the RLDS church would have supported the temperance movement of the late nineteenth century. It should be equally apparent that a church claiming itself to be divinely led through a prophet of God would be quick to maintain that the culmination of the temperance movement in the Eighteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which prohibited consumption of alcohol after 1920, was little more than a nation affirming the truth that the church had known since 1833. When Apostle J. F. Garver wrote in the Saints’ Herald in 1913, praising the merits of the newly proposed national prohibition, he must have spoken for the majority of the Saints, for reform of the liquor situation in the United States had become the focal point for church social concern. About prohibition, he wrote:

Latter Day Saints should be able to support such a movement and such an action since this has been the position of the church from the beginning . . . In this, as in many other matters, the church as instituted in the last days is a generation ahead of the times.  

Despite this claim, however, evidence indicates that the RLDS Church followed along with, rather than led the temperance movement, and offered little to it that was distinctively the church’s own. During its early years, the church could be relatively tolerant of alcohol, as even its prophet enjoyed an occasional libation. Only with the escalation of temperance activity near the turn of the century did the church step up its own concern with proclaiming the Word of Wisdom. Official church response to prohibition was shaped and determined by secular temperance activity, with the Women’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) and the Anti-Saloon League (ASL) having major impacts on the position of the church to this and related social issues.

The early 1830s found the church gathered in and around Kirtland, Ohio, an area seething with temperance activity. On October 6, 1830 the Kirtland Temperance Society was organized with 239 members. On February 1, 1833, just twenty-seven days before the date of the appearance of the Word of Wisdom, all Kirtland and Mentor, Ohio distilleries were ordered closed. A temperance meeting was held in nearby Painesville, Ohio on February 22, 1833, only five days before the publication of the Word of Wisdom. There is no

dency, Quorum of Twelve) and the attitudes and beliefs of the overwhelming majority of the membership. The claim to know what the majority of Saints believed about a particular issue may indeed be pretentious. However, this author found no compelling evidence in primary source material to indicate that there was more than one feeling among church members with regard to alcohol. With the exception of material relating to Joseph Smith, Jr., letters, books, periodicals and oral recollections are unanimous in their claim that liquor is evil. How the church responded to this evil was to change over time, but never the underlying assumption that liquor was an abomination.

5 Discussed below.
7 Ibid., p. 38.
evidence that Joseph Smith or other church authorities attended these meetings. Clearly however, the church was surrounded by temperance activity at the time of the giving of the Word of Wisdom.

Perhaps the event which had the biggest impact on the teaching of temperance in the church was the conversion of Sidney Rigdon. Rigdon, who had been a preacher and temperance lecturer of some renown before joining the church in the early 1830s, soon became Smith's chief counselor. According to Fawn Brodie, Rigdon was a "fanatical temperance enthusiast" who kept pressure on the prophet to make a stand against alcohol.  

Another indication of Rigdon's key role in the early church's response to drinking is found in the report of the conference of the church held in Far West, Missouri in 1837. "The Congregation, after a few remarks by Pres't. Rigdon, unanimously voted not to support stores and shops selling spirituous liquors, Tea, Coffee or Tobacco."  

Rigdon's influence was surely largely responsible for the strong position advocated in the Word of Wisdom since Joseph Smith, Jr. seems to have enjoyed the "fruit of the vine" too much to have ever become a temperance reformer. Following a double wedding which he performed in 1837, his journal records: "We then partook of some refreshments, and our hearts were made glad with the fruit of the vine. This is according to the pattern set by the Savior himself, and we feel disposed to patronize all of the institutions of heaven."  

In 1835, Elder Almon Babbitt was brought before the High Council of the church for failing to uphold the Word of Wisdom. His defense was that he had "taken the liberty to break the Word of Wisdom from the example of President Joseph Smith Jun." It is also noteworthy that when the church was in Nauvoo, Smith was given by the city council the only license to sell liquor in the town. 

The evidence thus indicates that even in the first days of its history, the official church response to the liquor question was shaped by and perhaps even caused by the actions of the temperance movement outside of the church. That the Word of Wisdom was at least in part a response to outside activity cannot be doubted. Further, it is more than idle speculation to suggest that Smith's own commitment to the Word of Wisdom was less than whole-hearted. It can also be argued that though Smith brought his church into line with the temperance movement, he himself was not prepared to be a radical champion of abstinence. Thus even before the death of the founder, a precedent had been set. Temperance would be a major issue in the church only when it was in the rest of the nation.

Joseph Smith III came to lead the Reorganized Church in 1860, but did not strongly advocate observance of the Word of Wisdom until the late 1870s.

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12 Smith, History, 2:252.
13 Smith, History, 6:111.
when temperance was again an issue nationally. By 1880, Smith had developed into a temperance lecturer of some ability. The RLDS Church had relocated to Lamoni, Iowa, and throughout the immediate area many denominations and temperance groups were anxious to have him speak, though not about his church. Smith recorded in his memoirs: “People it seems were often willing to listen to me as a temperance speaker who would not come to hear me as a preacher of the word.”

His lectures were apparently effective. In 1882, voters in Decatur County, Iowa, which includes Lamoni, approved a county-wide prohibition law. The Saints in Lamoni spoke with one voice on the measure, as Lamoni voted 134–29 in favor. An 1888 local option vote in Independence, Missouri, where there was a sizable group of Saints, saw the church members vote unanimously for prohibition in a losing cause. Joseph Luff expressed pleasure with the vote in the *Herald* by writing that “not one member of this branch voted ‘wet’ that we could learn of.” Thus clearly by this time the church had taken a unified and vocal position on the temperance question. Yet, despite local option votes such as these, which were common throughout rural America, not even the most fanatical temperance reformers were seriously pushing for national prohibition. Temperance supporters viewed alcohol as a moral and health problem, not necessarily curable by political solutions as comprehensive as national prohibition. Church literature from the period speaks of liquor in terms of its moral evil, and not about the absolute imperative to remove it by force of law. At this point, there was still a balance being carefully struck between the church’s desire to see abstinence become universal and the conviction that such a condition must be reached at the end of moral, and not political reform.

During the 1890s, the last arguments asking whether it is possible or even desirable to seek to prohibit alcohol began to appear. Though local option votes were common, there was not a loud outcry for prohibition in church literature, and certainly not for a constitutional amendment mandating it. Rather, leaders continued to promote the popular idea that if the churches could only be completely successful at drawing persons to them, then the liquor traffic would wither and die. Wrote Smith in a *Herald* editorial:

> Wherever the church can and does reach men; those who are won to its ranks are won from the liquor traffic; and could we be but universally successful, men now engaged in the service of the Demon of strong drink would be compelled to find other sources of labor and support.

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15 *Decatur County Journal*, July 6, 1882. Quoted in Alma R. Blair, “A Loss of Nerve,” *Courage* 1 (September 1970) : 35. Because the church was so small numerically, it is difficult accurately to gauge the impact of its bloc votes in favor of prohibition. Primarily as a consequence of this, church voting statistics are not readily available.


17 *Saints’ Herald* 45 (June 8, 1898) : 50.
Shupe: Prohibition in the RLDS Church

Thus although it was toughening its rhetoric against liquor, the church had yet to even hint at prohibition, preferring instead the same traditional temperance arguments employed by the WCTU and ASL and other groups.

In 1902, church officials seemed to back away even further from the rigid prohibitionist position they were soon to adopt. In the Herald, Smith said “The Word of Wisdom . . . cannot justly be made a test of fellowship. It has been tried at various times and has resulted in unnecessary disturbance and failure.” 18 Here the church declined to make the Word of Wisdom into prohibitory law even for its own members. The church was not backing away from its condemnation of alcohol, but had conceded that it was inappropriate to make blanket statements about personal conduct which would ignore the experience of the individual. To do so would cause “endless contention and strife, and a sad restricting of the Holy Spirit.” 19 If the church president ever made a truly predictive prophetic statement about prohibition, this was it, though not recognized as such at the time.

Within the next two years, however, the church shifted its basic position on the issue. The ASL, the major secular proponent for prohibition, proposed a drawing together of all temperance societies, churches, and other organizations to discuss what kind of moral, social, and economic pressure could be brought to bear to prevent the spread of the saloon. Specifically, this plan included renewed pressure for temperance education in public schools, boycotts of restaurants and motels serving liquor, and a continued push for local option votes. The plan visualized the nation’s Protestant churches so united on the temperance question that Congress could not ignore them, and would thus allocate the funds necessary for rigid enforcement of already existing laws regulating the liquor industry. On May 11, 1904, I. N. Cash of the Iowa ASL urged that the Saints, then assembled in conference in Lamoni, adopt this approach. His speech was reported in the Herald by Frederick Madison Smith. 20 The proposal was one the church could support, for it did not rely solely on a political solution to the liquor question, and still demanded the application of a higher moral standard toward the reforming of society. It nonetheless represented a subtle, though important shift in policy. The church was now saying that it could legitimately try to place moral demands upon others when the reform desired was to overcome an evil of the magnitude of that caused by the liquor interests. Moral pressure was no longer viewed as the only means appropriate for hastening the demise of the saloon.

As time passed, the church was to make more congenial its relationship with the ASL. The League attracted church support for several reasons. It was non-partisan politically, which meant that the church could endorse its platform without promising allegiance to any cause other than temperance. In addition, at least prior to the final drive for prohibition which began in 1913, the goals of the League were to enforce existing law, and to do away with the

19 Ibid., p. 298.
saloon, which church leaders felt was the center of political bossism and machine politics.\textsuperscript{21} Finally, the church felt that the ASL was the only organization that was revealing the roots of the liquor problem. The League was based upon the belief that the woes caused by the liquor interests far outweighed the revenue gained from taxing it, and the employment that the industry created.

As a consequence of these beliefs, the church often entertained representatives of the League as speakers at church conferences and meetings, and many church members were active in the League as well.\textsuperscript{22} By 1909, Elbert A. Smith could write about the ASL that "in the broad sense, their fight is ours. We admire them for the enemies that they have made."\textsuperscript{23}

Though at no time did the church leadership expressly endorse the ASL, or formally link the church to it, the League could count on the support of at least individual members of the church and, in some cases, groups of Saints as well.\textsuperscript{24} In addition, the leadership, while not always anxious to take a church position, often urged individuals to acquaint themselves with the parties involved in the temperance question before making a decision about political candidates or associations.\textsuperscript{25} The ASL was the most often quoted of all temperance groups, and as such it was the major source of material for church writings about prohibition.

Not all of the responses of the church to prohibition took the form of Herald articles. Sermons, fictional works, church school materials, and other writings dwelt upon the warning of Doctrine and Covenants, Section 86. These materials offer a good understanding of the moral arguments of the time both inside and outside of the church.

One of the leading RLDS women of her day, and a prominent spokesperson for temperance was Marietta Walker. Through her "Mother's Home Column" in the Herald, she reached many homes each week. She was a strong believer in temperance and in 1907, published a book titled Temperance Object Lessons.\textsuperscript{26} The volume, throughout a bitter fictional indictment of the evils of "demon rum," is a remarkable combination of genuine temperance concern and scare propaganda.

The book contains several short stories, the focal characters of which are all brought to ruin by alcohol. An Indian man, made a slave to strong drink by the white man, becomes so desperate for it that he abandons his wife and child, literally curses God and dies. A young boy, forced into the city to find work, discovers relief for his loneliness in the warm saloon that seduces him with the promise of free cider. But the taste for cider soon gives way to one for beer, and then for whiskey. The young man loses all his wages in the saloon, breaks his


\textsuperscript{22} Minutes of the 1919 General Conference, p. 2765. Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints Library and Archives, Independence, Missouri.


\textsuperscript{24} Interview with Howard Sheehey, Sr., January 28, 1981, Independence, Missouri.

\textsuperscript{25} Interview with Percy Farrow, January 27, 1981, Independence, Missouri.

\textsuperscript{26} Marietta Walker, Temperance Object Lessons, or, the Indian Maiden and Her White Deer (Lamoni, Iowa: Publications Board of the RLDS Church, 1907), p. 22.
ties to his family, and is killed by a train as he lies in a drunken stupor on the tracks. A wild, drunken Irishman forces whiskey down a child's throat, thereby earning Walker's most severe condemnation:

Yet there is one thing I do know, for God has declared it. A curse has been pronounced upon him that putteth strong drink to his neighbor's lips, and be it man or woman who does this, the curse of God sooner or later will overtake them. 27

Walker's overriding point is that everyone knows that liquor is always an evil, and everyone knows that all crime is traceable to it, and yet society refuses to reform against it, and cast it from the land. No one, it seems to Walker, will prevent the annihilation of the young men of the nation. Government refuses to move because of the revenue it gains from taxation and

men sitting in church persist in calling themselves Christians, men calling themselves patriots, lovers of their country, cast into the ballot box their votes demanding the continuance of this traffic. 28

In 1915, Elder J. S. Roth compiled a volume of sermons and articles titled The Gospel Messenger. In it, one finds much of the same type of comment. In a sermon called "A Dialogue Between Uncle Sam and the Saloon Devil," the saloon is blamed for virtually all evil in the world.

The Saloon Devil went to work with a high hand . . . the result of his work was very disastrous: He made such things as produced ruined souls, broken hearts, broken homes, and all manner of woe, want, wretchedness and death; to say nothing of all the almshouses, asylums and penitentiaries that he helped to fill. 29

From such sources, one can begin to see that by 1915, the church was becoming more vocal and militant in calling for an end to the liquor traffic. The hyperbole of Roth and Walker serve as excellent examples of the type of argument which characterized the dry position. To a more objective observer, removed from the environment in which these works were produced, the stories seem extremely emotional if not ridiculous. Yet they indicate the fevered pitch to which temperance arguments had been raised by this time. For the temperance reformers, whether inside or outside of the RLDS Church, there was no room for a middle position. One could not tolerate liquor in any form, for it was the one root of all social evil.

By the time of American entry into the First World War, many church publications contained sections about alcohol. Joe Pine, a children's book written by Elbert A. Smith had a typical temperance lecture in one chapter, and Autumn Leaves, the church youth magazine, carried temperance material as a regular course. 30 Frederick M. Smith wrote The Higher Powers of Man, a combination of religion, philosophy, and psychology, which included a discussion of alcoholism. 31

27 Ibid., p. 122.
28 Ibid., p. 52.
In the period immediately preceding prohibition, the Sunday school materials of the church included lessons on the dangers of alcohol. Though few in number, these were the only lessons on topics other than church scripture, doctrine or history. For example, one manual had a dozen lessons on the life of Jesus, and one on demon rum. Clearly, prohibition took precedence over other social issues.

In 1914, a change in church leadership was to alter the scope of the church response to the issue. Just before an important local option vote in Independence, the new headquarters of the church, Joseph Smith III died, and left the prophetic office to his son, Frederick Madison Smith. Like his father, the younger Smith believed alcohol to be the cornerstone of social evil. But unlike Joseph III, Fred M. was willing to use his church to promote a political settlement to the temperance question.

Consequently, when the local option vote was held in Independence, Smith mobilized his Saints as voters. The first and fourth wards of the city were inhabited by a majority of Saints. It was clear that the Saints could have a real effect upon the outcome of the vote. On July 12, 1914, in a sermon in Independence, Smith proclaimed: "There is no argument to be offered for the existence of the saloon, and if I have any influence with you, I want every Latter Day Saint to go to the polls and vote for a dry town in a most emphatic manner." Later, on election day, he would order patrols of the streets by his Saints to prevent voter fraud. The town voted dry.

Smith felt throughout his life that prohibition and its enforcement were not so much political problems as they were a call for Americans to respond to a higher set of values. As a consequence, he was bitter about talk of moderating the law. Yet his position and active voice may have only added support to an already decided question. By the time he assumed the presidency, many were already feeling that the liquor question was simply another proof of the prophetic nature of the church. From the literature of the time, one clearly sees that the church saw itself as a prophetic body. For example, the Herald responded to a 1915 Missouri State Supreme Court ruling which closed all saloons in Jackson County not already closed by the 1914 local option vote in Independence, by writing:

It is a matter of congratulation to the saints that their position on alcoholics is being vindicated, and that too, in Zion, from which place, because of these convictions and other advanced opinions, they were once required to withdraw.

Thus any effort at promoting prohibition also helped to fulfill what the church believed to be prophecy.

Church support for prohibition had evolved in step with the ASL, which had adopted national prohibition as its only aim in 1913. In December of

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34 Hunt, p. 396.
that year, Apostle J. F. Garver described for the Herald the new ASL position. In his judgment, "The kind of prohibition proposed by the action of the Anti-Saloon League is reasonable." He further urged Saints to support such a movement.

Thus the church position with regard to liquor had been taken to its most extreme position by 1914. The president of the church had urged members to "vote dry" and had declared that there were not two ways to go; the church was either for liquor or against it and for prohibition. Reinforced by the belief that prohibition was public vindication of a long-held religious tenet, the church had become among the most hardline of prohibitionist groups, just as prohibition fever was reaching its peak.

The Eighteenth Amendment was added to the Constitution in 1919. Writers for the periodicals of the Saints made it a time of rejoicing. Zion's Ensign, the church missionary paper, was the chief organ for church comment on prohibition. The columns of the January 23, 1919 issue celebrated the coming of national prohibition as a great victory in which the church had figured prominently. From the point of view of the church, what had happened was that the law of the land had been brought into harmony with the law of God which had been revealed to Joseph Smith, Jr. nearly a century earlier. The Latter Day Saints had hastened the bringing together of the spiritual and temporal law.

Yet passage of the amendment could not eliminate the demand for liquor. The new law proved most difficult to enforce. In order to keep up the pressure and momentum, many felt it was necessary to press for worldwide prohibition. The Ensign joined the rush, urging the Saints to be active in "organizing the majority of Americans to continue the fight until not only America but the world goes dry and stays dry.

In addition, the dry movement recognized that continued pressure on Congress was essential since prohibition could be made less stringent by only a majority vote. Consequently, the ASL placed heavy emphasis on the voting records of members of Congress, and made them aware that they were being watched on the issue of prohibition. The support of dry candidates at the polls became the most pivotal and public way in which Saints affirmed their support for prohibition. Since the church had long resisted the temptation to endorse a political party, non-partisan pressure was a tool that they could use to support prohibition. It was promoted above all other issues, with the Ensign proclaiming: "We should not permit partisan politics to swerve us from our duty in this, and we will not."

By 1923, enforcement of the amendment was becoming a major problem, and church writers focused attention on it. This marked yet another shift in church writing about prohibition, from the joy that accompanied its coming to a quest for ways to make it work. "On the question of enforcement," wrote

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bishop S. A. Burgess in 1923, “it seems quite evident to a careful student that there is illegal consumption of liquor.” According to Burgess, the church must not only continue its support of prohibition at the ballot box, but should also communicate its support to enforcement officers in their home areas, encouraging them on to better performance. Further, Burgess realized that the movement to keep enforcement a priority issue would require a financial commitment.

But the wet effort to convince the nation that prohibition had failed was already underway. The most dramatic case of this belief in failure was the withdrawal of New York state funds from the enforcement cause in the Empire State. To the church, the move was the betrayal of a sacred trust, a symbol of disregard for the laws of the land. A Herald editorial stated that “the action of the governor and the legislature of New York is regrettable,” and further declared that those New York officials were either “weak in the moral code,” or “traitors” for refusing to abide by the constitutional law of the land. A few years later, in another Herald article, Apostle R. J. Lambert was willing to make the support of prohibition, and not merely temperance, “a test of our religion.”

In an effort to counter the failure argument, articles were written for the church which proclaimed the economic and crime-cutting successes of the Eighteenth Amendment. The church claimed that there were higher savings rates, lower insurance premiums and reduced debt as a result of prohibition. This may have in fact been the case, but the crash of the stock market and the advent of the Great Depression reduced to impotence any argument that prohibition brought prosperity with it.

The church also joined with the ASL in claiming that prohibition was reducing crime. Indeed, statistics provided by church sources for the first two years of prohibition indicate that arrests for drunkenness were indeed down. However, after 1923, the church could not and did not make such claims, for it seemed to be no longer true. Organized crime had taken over the task of supplying liquor to a nation that still wanted it. Later, the crime argument was changed to a defensive one, as church writers insisted that prohibition was not responsible for the crime wave; in fact, without it, the crime problem would be much worse.

Despite the increasing unpopularity of prohibition, RLDS writers joined others who rejected compromise in all forms. Ensign editor Garver believed that the return of beer to the open shelves would be sufficient to restore nine-tenths of the liquor business. With profits from beer sales, it was feared that the

42 Ibid., p. 125.
46 See especially Saints’ Herald 69 (August 23, 1922): 286; and 70 (February 21, 1923): 171.
47 Ibid.
liquor interests would buy their way back into politics. A year later, Garver was still writing on the same theme, declaring that the reform to allow the return of beer would be enough to bring the brewery back into politics, the saloon to the cities, and a state of suffering to innocent women and children. Finally, in reference to a move to compromise the rigidity of prohibition, the *Ensign* wrote with less than Christian charity, "The wanton wets, for unadulterated hellishness they cannot be surpassed." 

A bit later in the prohibition period, the wets raised what would seem to be a legitimate constitutional issue, claiming that prohibition stripped the individual of rights guaranteed by other amendments to the Constitution. The Supreme Court had ruled state prohibition constitutional, yet the cry for personal liberty became a wet rallying point. As always, the church responded. The arguments for personal liberty made little sense when giving up the freedom to drink had such beneficial effects on society. For the church, "freedom of action on the part of the individual must be submerged as a sacrifice to the good of the whole." Again, as before, the church felt a mission to call others to prohibition, a purpose higher than pleasure of the self. As early as 1923, the *Herald* was calling for jail sentences for prohibition offenders.

In the last half of the 1920s, the prohibition question was discussed at the General Conference of the church. The conference of 1927 unanimously approved a resolution which stated essentially the following: 1) the church affirmed support for the constitutional law of the land, for in it lay "the safety and freedom of God;" 2) the church would work with any organization that was working to see the law upheld; 3) it was a responsibility for Saints to use the vote wisely and well in electing candidates to office who had strong records in favor of prohibition. Further, it was an equal responsibility to see that officials who were "tardy or weak in such matters" be removed from office.

The next year's conference also saw prohibition work its way onto the floor of the business meeting. The conference was held in April, and the nation was to choose between Alfred Smith and Herbert Hoover for President the following November. In response to this choice, the church took the strongest position it ever took regarding prohibition. The resolution there adopted is strong evidence in support of the claim that secular dry organizations profoundly influenced the church. All dry groups staunchly opposed Smith, who campaigned publicly as a man who liked to drink. His platform called for repeal of the Eighteenth Amendment. The church declared that it was "under moral obligation to speak whenever there is need for leadership on social and moral issues," and therefore it must speak on prohibition.

Therefore, be it resolved that we... do hereby affirm our faith in and support for the prohibition laws of this land, and pray that every Latter Day Saint voter of the United

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51 "Zion's Ensign" 36 (June 5, 1924) : 354.
53 Minutes of the 1927 General Conference, p. 4287. RLDS Library and Archives, Independence, Missouri.
States will regard his or her franchise privilege as a sacred trust and responsibility, and will not fail to go to the polls on November 6, next, and there express himself or herself in favor of a sympathetic and strict enforcement of the prohibition amendment to our Constitution and the enforcement laws.55

It is clear that Al Smith did not have the support of the Saints. The church had become a politically active body, with a definite platform that demanded the support of its members. Yet this commitment came at a time when the strength and popularity of prohibition was fading fast. Within five years, the Eighteenth Amendment would be repealed. Naturally, the church responded to that action.

The years between 1928 and 1933 saw the center of power switch from the drys to the wets. Prohibition was no longer a popular cause outside of the most radical of dry groups. Political moderates no longer accepted the dry arguments. Debate continued, but the consistent, hard-line dry arguments, which the church joined in offering, were forced to the defensive, as the wets called the drys to accounting. For the church, the new wet positions were weak. When the wets wrote that reinstating the liquor industry would create jobs and get money flowing, the Saints responded by declaring that the working class would be robbed of its wages by the saloon.56

Where the wets threw blame for the crime wave on prohibition, the church responded by saying that no method of liquor control had ever been one hundred percent effective, and that prohibition was still working better than had been originally thought. In fact, wrote the church leaders, the crime problems were caused by the fact that persons who wanted liquor would not respect the law, nor talk of a higher morality of purpose.57

Up to the bitter end, the Saints continued to decry the use of alcohol and attempts at repeal, believing their position to be right, and therefore to be ultimately victorious. Bishop A. B. Phillips claimed that an unselfish regard for the moral good of others would keep prohibition in effect, and would call the world on to greater things with a "power that ever leads to victory."58

The October 19, 1932 issue of the Herald was a special prohibition number. Extra copies were printed, and the Saints were urged to purchase additional copies for friends and neighbors. Numerous articles reminded the Saints that the presidential election was critical for prohibition, and urged them to vote. Also included was an article entitled "How the Presidential Candidates Stand on the Prohibition Question," a summary of the positions of both Hoover and Franklin Roosevelt.59 In light of the preceding years of strong prohibitionist articles, there was no confusion: the Saints were to vote for Hoover.

But even with Hoover's defeat, and the introduction of the Twenty-first Amendment to repeal the Eighteenth, the church hung on grimly to its pro-

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55 Ibid., p. 59.
58 Ibid., p. 370.
hition position, vowing to continue the fight. Fred M. Smith indicated that the Saints should continue to patronize businesses which still refused to serve or sell alcohol.60

James Evans, writing "Observations on Repeal,"61 said that the Saints should not be a part of those enterprises, such as movies, which glamorized the liquor trade. The media too deserved non-partisan supervision to help avoid the prejudicing of all young people to be favorably disposed toward drinking.62 He wrote further:

It is my belief that prohibition was defeated, not on the merits of the opposing case, but almost wholly through a vicious system of propaganda applied with utmost cunning to all individuals and to all strata of society.63

Evans made no mention of the fact that in 1919 the wets had accused the drys of using the same tactics.

Yet, some church officials knew what was probably closer to being the real cause of the defeat of prohibition. Too late to alter repeal, or to modify the church position, Cyril Wright wrote that:

We made our most tragic mistake when the educational forces which had created the sentiment for prohibition were dismissed, when we placed our reliance upon legal, rather than moral authority.64

This comment brought to full circle the RLDS position with regard to prohibition. Under Joseph Smith III, the church had argued for abstinence on moral grounds, and the perpetual call of the prophet had been to a higher moral position. But the church found itself pulled into the larger movement which became political and legal in its scope. In the end, the church was faced with the realization that as the legal argument died, so did the claim that national events were proving the church to be truly prophetic with regard to the prohibition question. It had entered the movement slowly, found a home in it at the peak of its popularity, saw concern and support for prohibition dominate its social concern for a decade, and then watched it crumble as repeal came.

And so, with the rest of the drys, the church made a half-hearted vow to continue the fight for prohibition, and then, a bit tired of the whole thing, left prohibition behind. Prohibition writings eased their way out of church literature, though an occasional temperance piece still appeared. Prohibition died quickly, and so did church fascination with it as a major social issue. The church continues to oppose the use of alcohol: a recent addition to its Doctrine and Covenants reinforces counsel against its use. But the church is far from advocating any but individual reform. Like other groups which maintain a temperate position, it does so quietly and internally. For the church, and for the nation, consumption of alcohol has been an issue of minor importance since the repeal of prohibition.

61 Saints' Herald 81 (December 6, 1933) : 73-4, 82-3.
62 Ibid., p. 74.
63 Ibid., p. 74.
64 Cyril E. Wright, "Prohibition and the Home," Saints' Herald 79 (October 6, 1932) : 1036.
MORMON HISTORY ASSOCIATION
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On February 8, 1917, the governor of Utah signed a law bringing state-
wide prohibition, making Utah the twenty-fourth state to do so. Since active
Mormons, whose beliefs proscribed use of alcohol, controlled the political sys-
tem, why was prohibition so long in coming to the state?

Part of the answer lay in the state’s peculiar political party system. There
were three political parties in 1908: Democratic, American, and Republican.
The Democratic party, having only two representatives in the legislature and
holding no other state or national offices, was ineffective during election cam-
paigns. What supporters they did have were in favor of prohibition.

The American party was largely composed of “gentiles” strongly opposed
to the LDS Church and prohibition. Although the party had a limited mem-
bership, they were vocal and exerted an influence greater than their numbers
would indicate. The Americans gained control of Salt Lake City municipal
government in 1905 and retained it until 1911; however, they did not win state
or national offices. In reality they did not play a major role in the prohibi-
tion fight, but their existence was used as a reason by Mormons to oppose
prohibition.

The state’s Republican party was heavily under the influence of Reed
Smoot, a Mormon apostle who had been elected to the U.S. Senate in 1902.
Although he had little to do with Utah politics before becoming a senator, he

Brent G. Thompson is an archivist living in West Bountiful, Utah. A version of this paper
was presented at the Seventeenth Annual Meeting of the Mormon History Association, Ogden,
Utah, May 8, 1982. This article draws from Brent G. Thompson, “Utah’s Struggle for Prohibi-
had subsequently been quite adept at organizing a strong political machine in the state, a machine which became known as the "Federal Bunch" because so many of its leaders were minor federal officeholders. Many businessmen, including those involved in the liquor industry, supported the party. President Joseph F. Smith and other church leaders were strong backers as well.

National enthusiasm for prohibition had begun in the early 1900s and by 1908, when the issue became an important question in Utah, was gaining considerable momentum. Three states — Maine, Kansas, and North Dakota — had adopted it before 1900. Georgia and Oklahoma had passed statewide prohibition laws in 1907. Thirty-three other states had local option laws which allowed counties, cities, and towns to prohibit the sale of alcoholic beverages, and in most states some local units of government took advantage of these laws to ban the sale of alcoholic beverages in their communities. Utah did not have a local option law; it would take nine more years before prohibition was adopted.

Although by 1908 the Word of Wisdom had been accepted by the general church and local leaders (bishops and stake presidents), the active members did not always comply with the revelation. Heber J. Grant wrote in 1908 that the Word of Wisdom was "sadly neglected by Latter-day Saints and that a revival of the observance of this law of God was very much needed." Liquor was readily available in all parts of Utah. The American Prohibition Yearbook noted that Utah had six commercial distillers, five brewers, twenty-seven wholesale liquor dealers, seventy-two wholesale malt liquor dealers, and 957 retail liquor dealers. The LDS Church reported that in 1908 there were over six hundred saloons in the state.

As 1908 began, prohibition and local option became important issues in Utah. By March the Mormon First Presidency and the Council of Twelve Apostles were holding intense sessions to discuss the relative merits of the two approaches to liquor control. Some, feeling prohibition impossible to obtain, advocated local option. At a meeting held on March 18, 1908, the First Presidency and Council of the Twelve could not decide whether to support and work for local option or statewide prohibition.

But such General Authorities as Heber J. Grant, Hyrum M. Smith, David O. McKay, John R. Winder, and George Albert Smith were actively preaching prohibition in stake conferences and other public meetings. During this period Louis E. Fuller, a Methodist minister and superintendent of the Anti-Saloon...
League for the Intermountain West, was urging prohibition and trying to build support among the influential people of the state. The Intermountain Republican, a party newspaper, also favored prohibition during the spring of 1908. Another non-Mormon group—the gentile businessmen—feared the economic consequences of prohibition, wanted help from the Federal Bunch to defeat it. The gentiles persuaded Smoot not to support prohibition, a fact underscored by the Intermountain Republican's abrupt dropping of its advocacy on June 21, 1908.

By July 1908 there were clear indications that the LDS Church had thrown its support to prohibition and the Anti-Saloon League. On Sunday, July 12th, Reverend Fuller was given an opportunity to speak in behalf of prohibition at the regular 2:00 P.M. service in the Salt Lake City Tabernacle. He was also given “the time he cared to use” at stake conferences and votes were taken of the membership in support of prohibition. Apostle Francis M. Lyman recorded that at one conference the members “unanimously voted to sustain the movement with all our influence.”

The culmination of these months of activity was the October 1908 general conference with its twin themes of prohibition and the Word of Wisdom. Preaching the 89th Section of the Doctrine and Covenants, which is the Word of Wisdom, Joseph F. Smith opened the sessions. After telling the Saints that Brigham Young had made it a commandment to follow the Word of Wisdom strictly, he added that many men and women in the church were failing to keep it. He concluded by saying: “We endorse any movement looking to temperance.” Another speaker, Heber J. Grant, first preached a strong sermon on prohibition and the Word of Wisdom and then read the following resolution:

Believing in the words and teachings of President Joseph F. Smith, as set forth this morning, on the subject of temperance, it is proposed therefore, that all officers and members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints will do all in their power, that can properly be done, with lawmakers generally to have such laws enacted by our legislature, soon to be elected, as may be necessary to close saloons, otherwise decrease the sale of liquor . . .

The clerk recording the talk wrote, “On motion, the immense congregation voted in favor of the resolution submitted, proclaiming ‘Aye’ in a unanimous shout.” (After the conference, undoubtedly through Fuller’s influence, Heber J. Grant was named to the national board of the Anti-Saloon League.) General Authorities who endorsed the Grant resolution or preached prohibition during the conference included Anthon H. Lund, John Henry Smith, Hyrum M. Smith, George Albert Smith, George F. Richards, Orson F. Whitney, David O. McKay, John R. Winder, and Seymour B. Young. In his closing remarks
Joseph F. Smith said he was thankful that Utah was "represented in the halls of Congress by honest men, men after God's own heart, men who loved their people and who were just and impartial and true to the interests of their state." With this statement Smith endorsed both prohibition and Reed Smoot's Federal Bunch in the same conference.

When the November elections were over, William Spry, a member of the Federal Bunch, was elected governor; Joseph Howell, also a Republican, was returned to the House of Representatives. The legislature consisted of sixty-one Republicans and two Democrats, neither of whom were in the state senate.

Naively the prohibitionists seemed to assume that the Grant resolution would automatically mean passage of a prohibition law during the next legislature. It is interesting to note that the Reed Smoot papers show no record of any prohibitionists writing to him concerning his views on liquor control. On Sunday, January 3, 1909, an important meeting was held in the Salt Lake Temple with the First Presidency, most of the Council of the Twelve, and the Betterment Committee (an anti-vice and liquor organization) present. The second counselor in the First Presidency, Anthon H. Lund, recorded the decision reached:

We agreed to stay by the resolution passed by Conference in October to do all in our power to stop the traffic in liquors and this means 'prohibition.'

As the legislature was getting ready to convene for the 1909 session, B. F. Grant, Heber J. Grant's brother and head of the Betterment Committee, went with Joseph J. Cannon, a legislator, both of whom had attended the temple meeting, to meet with Governor Spry and E. H. Callister, a Republican party leader, in the governor's office. Callister reported the meeting to Smoot in a letter:

Fred Grant and Joe Cannon came down to the Governor's and said they were sent by Prest. Smith to talk... Grant said that Prest. Smith wanted absolute prohibition and he was instructed by him to tell us... Grant was very aggressive and wanted to know right out our position. We blamed him off. Unless we get busy they are likely to pass a prohibition measure. Very few want to go against Luther [code name for Joseph F. Smith] as you know.

Spry and other Republican party leaders were so concerned with Cannon's and Grant's report that they met with Presidents Smith and Lund later that same day. As Lund records:

Gov Spry and three of his colleagues met with Prest. Smith and said they did not want to oppose him but they considered the measure of Prohibition could not become a law and they asked that he would not be down upon them for the stand they were taking. He [Joseph F. Smith] said that he knew they were honest in their stand but he stood upon the resolution passed by the conference.
Callister's account of this meeting appears more favorable to the Republican position:

Spry Jas H [James H. Anderson] Tom [Thomas Hull] and myself had a long talk with Luther and Denmark [Anthon H. Lund]. We went over the ground thoroughly. Luther told us to go ahead and use judgement and that other parties must quit using the First Presidency's name. Lund, who favored prohibition, emphasized that Joseph F. Smith stood by the conference resolution supporting prohibition; Callister, on the other hand, who was opposed to prohibition, stressed that Smith had told them to use their own judgment and upheld them in what they were doing. Smith's ambivalent feelings toward prohibition caused him to speak in such general terms that Lund and Callister could both hear what they wanted to believe. It is doubtful that the Republican party would have continued to oppose prohibition had Joseph F. Smith clearly told them their course of action was contrary to the church's wishes.

Because prohibition was a divisive issue for their fragile political coalition, Reed Smoot and the Federal Bunch were concerned about it. Although they were loyal church members, they had won the support of some gentiles and wanted to sustain it. There was no evidence that Smoot was philosophically opposed to limiting the sale of alcoholic beverages, as evidenced by a letter to Callister:

I judge that the prohibition question is going to bother us considerably. I can see no other course for us to pursue than that mapped out and so thoroughly understood by all concerned before the move was ever made. If this thing is forced to an issue I am afraid it will bring a great deal of trouble in the future, and I doubt whether our word would ever be taken again by men who assisted in making it possible to win the last county election.

Smoot had agreed at that time to block prohibition in return for the political support of such gentile businessmen as the liquor interests, to whom he had offered assurance that prohibition would not occur until after 1909. It would seem that Smoot wanted to avoid speaking publicly on the prohibition question until after the legislature met to consider his re-election to the Senate. By doing so he was able to keep both Mormon and gentile support until after he was re-elected by an overwhelming majority of 61-2 on January 19, 1909.

After his re-election Smoot came out in open opposition. Putting his views on the prohibition question in writing for the first time, he told President Smith:

I do not believe that prohibition is so important to the people of Utah as to jeopardize our interests and to ruin every chance in the World of losing what we have so long fought for; namely, the destruction of the American party in Salt Lake City and the ruin of the Salt Lake Tribune. I have no doubt that if prohibition is passed this session of the legislature that within two years Salt Lake, Weber, Summit, and Tooele Counties will be in Gentile hands.

14 Callister to Smoot, January 8, 1909, Smoot Papers.
15 Smoot to Callister, January 10, 1909, Edward H. Callister Papers, LDS Church Archives.
He closed with an appeal for help: "I know with your assistance it will be impossible to pass through the Senate." He was not entirely open with President Smith, however, for he did not tell him of his promise to gentile businessmen to oppose and defeat prohibition during the 1909 legislature.

During this period those General Authorities who did support prohibition were actively promoting it both at the grass roots level and with the state legislators. Francis M. Lyman's diary gives an account of an attempt to influence a state senator:

State Senator Miller of St. George called upon me about Prohibition. I let him know that the Presidency and Twelve were a unit in favor of Prohibition and his constituents were in favor of it. I promised him he would never regret it if he did all in his power to bring about the legislation.

As the legislature met to discuss the prohibition issue, the arguments grew increasingly heated. John Henry Smith, a member of the Council of the Twelve and an early Republican party supporter, gave the following description:

A most intense feeling is growing in the legislature over the question of prohibition of the liquor traffic. It looks much like a storm.

Known as the Cannon bill after its chief sponsor Joseph J. Cannon, the prohibition bill easily passed the Utah House by a vote of 39–4 on February 11th.

Meanwhile, between the passage of the Cannon bill in the Utah House and its consideration in the Utah Senate, Joseph F. Smith traveled to Hawaii, a trip Callister described to Smoot:

Luther leaves in the morning for the Sandwich Islands... I guess he is tired of standing between two fires.

Prior to his trip to Hawaii President Smith had sent a letter to Smoot in which he neither condemned nor condoned Smoot's efforts to defeat prohibition. Smith, glad Smoot had been elected to the Senate, wished him success in that office. He explained that Grant had become a member of the Anti-Saloon League after the October conference and commented:

Whatever Heber undertakes he goes at it with all his might, and he is responsible for his personal course and not I. Nevertheless I have frequently tried to modify his zeal.

Concluding the letter by telling how friends had tried to get him to support a milder form of liquor control, President Smith affirmed that he would not become involved.

On February 18 Callister telegraphed Smoot the following message: "Will try to kill Cannon bill in Senate tomorrow all depends on Badger." Then on February 20 Smoot sent Carl Badger, his former secretary and current member of the state senate, a short but pointed telegram: "Give us strict regulation.

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16 Smoot to Smith, January 21, 1909, Smoot Papers.
17 Lyman Diary, January 19, 1909.
18 John Henry Smith Diary, February 3, 1909, University of Utah Archives, Salt Lake City, Utah.
19 Callister to Smoot, February 15, 1909, Callister Papers.
20 Smith to Smoot, February 15, 1909, Smoot Papers.
21 Reed Smoot Diary, February 18, 1909, Brigham Young University Archives.
and local option and vote against Cannon bill.”  

That same day the Senate voted 12–6, with Badger in the majority, not to consider the Cannon bill any further. (A two-thirds vote was required to deny a bill further consideration.)

Heber J. Grant viewed the bill’s defeat in moral terms. He could not see any reason for anyone, especially LDS church members, to oppose the cause; therefore he assumed something sinister had occurred:

"Today the Senate killed the Cannon Prohibition liquor bill. I cannot help but fear some kind of deal has been made by our brethren who are managing the Republican party with the liquor interests."  

Believing prohibition too drastic at that time and that local option was needed, Carl Badger introduced a local option bill to the Senate. Based on Smoot’s support of local option, Badger promised that William Spry would support his bill. The Badger bill passed the Senate unanimously on March 12, with the House amending it and passing it 33–10 on March 17. Although the senate approved the amended bill on March 20, the last day of the legislative session, Spry vetoed it on March 23. No evidence was found to indicate that Smoot had encouraged Spry either to veto or not to veto.

After being absent for nearly a year Smoot returned to Utah in August. He attended the Council of the Twelve meeting in the temple on August 10 and recorded the following: “I went to the meeting and was wonderfully received by President Smith and some of the others but Winder and Heber J. and Hyrum M. were rather cool.”  

Then on August 18 Smoot met with Joseph F. Smith to discuss the political situation. When he told President Smith that insistence on prohibition would enable the American party to succeed, Smith encouraged him to “win the fight if possible and . . . let prohibition rest.”  

Although President Smith would have preferred prohibition as a measure to strengthen church members in their observance of the Word of Wisdom, he was more interested in the defeat of the American party, which he viewed as a thorn in the side of the church.

That party continued to be a thorn in Salt Lake City when in the November election, Mayor Bransford and ten members of the city council were elected from the American party, five Democrats were elected, and none of the Republican candidates were successful. But on November 11 Smoot gained an important ally:

"Had a talk with C W Nibley on the results of the last election and he now admits we cannot secure statewide prohibition and is satisfied with local option."  

Only eight months earlier, Nibley had sent a strong telegram which was critical of Smoot. The American party victory had convinced him that Smoot was correct in seeking gentile support by opposing prohibition. It was important to secure Nibley as an ally not only because he was Presiding Bishop of the Church

22 Ibid., February 20, 1909.
23 Grant Diary, February 20, 1909.
24 Smoot Diary, August 10, 1909.
25 Ibid., August 18, 1909.
26 Ibid., November 11, 1909.
but also because he was a close personal friend of Joseph F. Smith. On November 16 Smoot held a long discussion with Presidents Smith and Lund. Smoot’s diary entry relates:

I told Pres Smith and Lund if we insisted upon statewide prohibition we would lose the state and a number of counties including Salt Lake and in three years the American party would control the State. After a discussion of 1 ½ hours Pres Smith stated he agreed with me and also Pres Lund agreed. Local option is all we should seek for the next campaign. The meeting was most satisfactory and vindicated our position on the liquor question. 27

Smoot had finally been successful in obtaining President Smith’s unequivocal support for his prohibition position, but Smith was not willing to advocate it before the Council of the Twelve Apostles, as Lund’s diary for March 24, 1910 shows:

Council in the Temple lasted until nearly three o’clock. The question of prohibition came up and Prest. Smith took the same stand he has always taken and that is that he would not be dragged into this fight. 28

The state Republican committee met on September 6 to discuss the platform for the upcoming state convention. Many platform planks were undoubtedly discussed at this meeting, but Smoot mentions only one in his diary: “We will declare for local option with strict regulation and absolute prohibition outside of the incorporated areas.” 29 Although Smoot tried to meet with Joseph F. Smith that same day, the meeting did not take place because Smith was suffering from a severe case of lumbago. Two days later they did meet for half an hour and Smoot “told him of [their] agreement with the State Committee.” 30 A week later President Smith, still having severe back problems, was confined to his home. Anthon H. Lund and John Henry Smith visited with him there before the regular meeting with the Council of the Twelve. Lund gives an account of this important meeting:

We asked him if he had any word to send to the council. He said ‘yes I want the brethren to say nothing of state-wide Prohibition. We may get Local-Option and I think that is the best we can do.’ I brought the Council his message, and quite a discussion arose. [Three of the apostles were very] chagrined. 31

Heber J. Grant’s diary for that day says simply: “No prohibition heartsick indeed.” He was so upset that he was unable to sleep the nights of the 15 and 16. 32 On the 17 he met with President Lund, telling him “An exception should be made in my case on the prohibition conditions.” 33 Grant must have felt that, since he was a member of the national board of the Anti-Saloon League

27 Ibid., November 16, 1909.
28 Lund Diary, March 24, 1910.
29 Smoot Diary, September 6, 1910.
30 Ibid., September 8, 1910.
31 Lund Diary, September 15, 1910. The passage in brackets is translated from the French.
32 Grant Diary, September 15, 1910. Grant suffered from insomnia all of his adult life, but this still shows the emotional turmoil he was undergoing.
33 Ibid., September 17, 1910.
Thompson: Mormons and Prohibition

and such a strong supporter of prohibition, he should be allowed to continue public advocacy of his cause. Lund makes no mention of this conversation, but his answer obviously was "no."

Smoot wanted and needed the support of those Republicans who had supported prohibition during the 1909 legislature. On September 24 he met with Nephi L. Morris, Joseph J. Cannon, J. B. Keeler, and George H. Brimhall, all of whom had been strong prohibition advocates. Nibley was at the meeting to help convince them to support local option. Smoot recorded that after a long meeting, they "agreed to favor local option." 34 Certainly President Smith's announcement via Lund to the Council of the Twelve nine days earlier to support local option was used openly to convince the Republican leaders to adopt Smoot's position. He was so successful at this and other meetings that the Republican convention offered no obstacle for him.

Meanwhile, B. F. Grant was speaking both at prohibition rallies held in church buildings and in church meetings. Irritated, the Federal Bunch complained to the First Presidency, who made the decision to prevent such activity. In the Deseret News appeared a notice to stake presidents and bishops that church buildings or meetings should not be used for "the purpose of any political party, whether such is under the guise of a temperance meeting, prohibition meeting or anything else." 35 The notice also objected to the use of the name or names of the First Presidency in support of prohibition.

Coupled with President Smith's request that the Council of the Twelve not preach prohibition, this notice undoubtedly helped Republicans in the November election. Howell was again returned to the U.S. Congress, and the state legislature was again overwhelmingly controlled by the Republicans. Reed Smoot described the celebration:

As soon as it was positively known that the Republicans had carried Salt Lake County we went up to President Smith's and he served refreshments. It was a glorious victory. All are feeling fine over it especially President Smith. 36

Openly supporting Reed Smoot and the Republican party, Joseph F. Smith was not neutral in politics, either privately or publicly. He sincerely believed that statewide prohibition would benefit the church but did not support it because he believed the harm done to Reed Smoot and the Republican party would outweigh the good.

The following year, 1911, proceeded in the manner Reed Smoot had predicted. On March 18 a local option bill was signed into law which stated that an election would be held in every incorporated Utah town on June 27 to determine which communities desired to allow alcoholic beverages.

In spite of solid church backing, including April conference addresses and President Smith's appeal in the Deseret News, no one thought Salt Lake City would vote out the saloon. Although no census information is available to show the Mormon/non-Mormon population division of Salt Lake City (Salt Lake County was only 40.3 percent Mormon), the gentiles had a clear major-

34 Smoot Diary, September 24, 1910.
35 Deseret News, October 25, 1910, p. 3.
36 Smoot Diary, November 7, 1910.
ity. The election results came as no surprise. Salt Lake City cast 14,008 “wet” votes and 9,327 “dry” votes, keeping 141 saloons in operation. In addition, Ogden and twenty-one small mining and railroad towns also stayed “wet.” However, the rest of the incorporated towns in the state voted “dry”; the total vote for the state was 39,766 “dry” to 31,477 “wet.” (Approximately one-third of the state’s population lived in “wet” territory and two-thirds in “dry” territory.) This, of course, did not satisfy the prohibitionists, who wanted all liquor banned from the state.

President Smith did not want the October 1911 conference addresses favoring a new move for statewide prohibition. He met with the Council of the Twelve and, according to Reed Smoot’s diary, said:

The members of this Quorum should not advocate statewide Prohibition. We should support the present law and see how it works out. We have at the present time prohibition in nearly all the cities and settlements of the Mormons, but trouble would result from any attempt to enforce prohibition in Salt Lake, Ogden or some of the mining camps. McKay, Hyrum M. and Heber J. did not like this very well and made some objections but after some discussion it was voted unanimously not to work for state-wide prohibition until some future time when the President would decide it should be tried.\(^37\)

One reason that President Smith did not want prohibition pushed at this time was the upcoming municipal elections, in which he hoped that the American party would be defeated. The new commission form of city government made it easier to defeat the American party, as did the Americans’ internal party problems. On November 7 the slate supported by the Deseret News, which consisted of two Republicans, two Democrats, and one Socialist, defeated the American candidates in every race.

Although the American party was never again to win or play a major role in any Salt Lake City or Utah election, its possible revitalization would continue to be used by Smoot and the Federal Bunch as justification for opposing prohibition.

The year 1912 saw very little demand for prohibition in the state. Spry was re-nominated and elected governor, even though the Democrats campaigned on a platform of state-wide prohibition. The voters of the state apparently did not object to Spry’s prohibition stand enough to vote Democratic. This suggests that local option was politically successful.

Reed Smoot returned to Salt Lake City for the October 1913 conference. While there he attended the meeting of the First Presidency and the Council of Twelve:

Statewide prohibition was brought up. Pres Smith gave the Quorum to understand that we were not to lead out in the controversy again, as before, and by so doing array the non-Mormons against it. I suggested that the question never again be made a political one, and most agreed to the suggestion.\(^38\)

Instead Smoot proposed that the “legislature set apart a day on which the state should vote for State-wide prohibition . . . as in that event partisan politics

\(^37\) Ibid., October 4, 1911.

\(^38\) Ibid., October 2, 1913.
would not be involved in the issue." 30 The senator did not want it to appear that his party was forcing prohibition upon the gentiles; therefore, he desired the citizens to cast their votes. It is clear that he believed a prohibition law would be passed in 1915.

In 1914 prohibition was discussed in general conference for the first time since 1909. Joseph F. Smith began by telling the Saints, "It is gratifying to know, as the records show, that through the benefits of our local option laws, the saloon has been eliminated in communities wherein the Later-day Saints predominate." 40 Once again he was supporting local option but was not advocating all-out statewide prohibition.

In his opening remarks Heber J. Grant told of his recent attendance at the national meeting of the Anti-Saloon League in Columbus, Ohio. He quoted William Jennings Bryan and other national prohibition supporters and ended by saying:

I believe that a majority of the citizens of the State of Utah is, always has been, and always will be against liquor . . . let us have a statewide vote and we will have prohibition; because then the men who are trafficking and dealing in this damnable stuff in our cities will no longer control our majority. We are citizens of the United States where the majority should rule, and all we ask is a fair battle and we are sure to win because we are right. 42

Heber J. Grant was following the advice that Smoot gave in October 1913 when he proposed that the voters be allowed to decide the question of prohibition.

Political parties were busy preparing for the first direct election of a senator in the state of Utah. Smoot was running against James H. Moyle, a staunch prohibitionist who had helped to found the Democratic party in Utah, but neither party had platform planks dealing with the liquor question. The issues were the tariff question and the charge that Smoot represented special interests rather than the common man. There was, however, an effort by prohibition supporters to introduce their issue into the campaign. Charles W. Nibley explained to Smoot in a letter what was being done to counteract those efforts:

Yesterday I went with Senator Sutherland and Ed [E. H. Callister] to confer with Luther on prohibition matters that some of our folks are unwisely pushing at this time. We think we have the matter well in hand, and we are doing everything possible to keep that question out of the campaign this fall. 42

The Federal Bunch were again using President Smith to remove the prohibition heat from their candidates, especially Reed Smoot. Joseph F. Smith responded the next day in the meeting of the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve. Lund's diary provides the account:

The question came up on prohibition and Prest. Smith told the brethren that he did not think this should be made a political issue. The brethren voted to make this unanimous the feeling of the council. 43

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30 Journal History, October 2, 1913, LDS Church Archives.
40 Conference Reports, April 1914, p. 7.
41 Ibid., p. 27.
42 Nibley to Smoot, September 30, 1914, Smoot Papers.
43 Lund Diary, October 1, 1914.
Although Heber J. Grant did not like the decision, he would follow it. Smoot defeated Moyle in a close election by a vote of 56,281 to 53,129. The vote might have been closer or even meant defeat for Smoot had Grant been allowed to wage an aggressive campaign to force candidates to take a public stand on prohibition prior to the election.

Before returning to Washington, Smoot met with several groups of people to discuss the Republican strategy for the 1915 legislature. Smoot traveled to Ogden and met with gentile supporters including Gus Becker, the brewer. He told them that the Republican party should:

- take the lead in providing for future statewide Prohibition but if possible allow beer for exportation . . . also give time for the saloons to dispose of their property have it take effect in cities of the 1st class Jan 1/17 and all other places Jan 1/16 . . .
- They [Ogden gentiles] thought perhaps it was the best that could be done. 44

When Smoot presented his plan to the First Presidency later that day, it was "satisfactory to them." The next week he met with Governor Spry, Callister, and Mont Ferry, who would be president of the state senate:

I presented my views on what the legislature ought to do on the question of prohibition and the plan was generally approved. 45

Smoot had gained support for his prohibition plan from gentile businessmen, including those in the liquor trade, as well as the First Presidency and Republican party leaders. However, he did not have support among the grass-roots Mormons, the Council of the Twelve, and, most importantly, the bulk of Republican state legislators.

The prohibition fight of 1915 did not prove to be an effort to convince the legislature to support prohibition but rather a fight against time. The legislature was authorized to meet from January 12 to March 16. They had the additional problem of moving during the legislative session to the newly-constructed Capitol building, necessitating long flowery speeches praising the new facility. The House spent the first week of the legislature trying to select a speaker, which became time-consuming because of a tie vote. Both sides claimed victory and it took five days to break the tie. Furthermore, the Senate would not conduct business until the House selected a speaker.

Finally, after the selection, the Senate met and the Wooton bill was quickly introduced on January 20. This detailed bill, 7,000 words in length, provided for absolute prohibition to take effect June 1, 1916, without the approval of the voters. John M. Whitaker, the president of the Utah Federation of Prohibition and Betterment Leagues, said this condition was decided upon because the attorney general had told him that submission to the voters would be unconstitutional. 46 It is true that the constitution made no provision for referenda, but a constitutional amendment for prohibition could have been approved by the state legislature and submitted for the approval of the electorate. This was not done because the prohibition advocates did not want the delays a constitutional amendment would have involved.

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44 Smoot Diary, November 13, 1914.
The Wooton bill differed in two major respects from the plan Smoot proposed: first, it did not submit prohibition for the approval of the voters and, secondly, it took effect on June 1, 1916, seven months earlier than Smoot desired.

The Senate passed the Wooton bill by a vote of 15–3 on February 11th. It then went to the House, where it remained in committee for fifteen days. The House hoped to delay action on the bill until the Senate passed an initiative and referendum bill which had already passed the House. Apparently there was strong support in the House for a referendum vote on prohibition. The Senate was not persuaded to approve the referendum bill, so the House finally passed the Wooton bill by a vote of 40–5 on Monday, March 1. Four amendments had been added to the original bill during the debate on the House floor, necessitating the bill’s return to the Senate to be sent to committee and be approved on the Senate floor. The amended bill came before the entire Senate on March 5.

Since the governor was allowed five days to consider a bill before vetoing it and returning it to the legislature, the Senate had to approve the Wooton bill that day and send it to the governor in order to avoid a possible pocket veto. After several lengthy delays the bill was passed by a vote of 16–2. After still more delays the bill was formally drawn up and signed by House and Senate leadership. The Senate then appointed Senators Wooton, Seegmiller, and Bradley to deliver the bill to Governor Spry so that a possible pocket veto could be avoided. The time was about 6:15 P.M.

Governor Spry had an important meeting earlier that day which would affect what occurred that evening. Anthon H. Lund provided a long account of this meeting:

After Temple meeting I went to the office. Gov Spry, Ed. Callister and Bp. Nibley came in and told Pres. Smith that they feared that the Prohibition Bill would bring much trouble upon the Church. The Governor wanted, for the good of the State, to veto the bill and asked that we try to get some of the Senators to not pass it over his veto. I said we cannot do that. We have encouraged the legislature to pass the bill, and by so doing such a thing we would lose the confidence of the people. The Governor said ‘Oh, the people will do what you people want them to do!’ Bp Nibley was much exercised over what the Gentiles would do, and he had met with a hundred of them this morning. They threatened to bring back the American Party. The President felt that he did not like to expose the Church to any danger of that kind ... I said: ‘Governor, I think the best you can do is sign the bill.’ What good will it do? said Bp Nibley. ‘It will kill the saloons,’ said Pres. Penrose. Pres. Smith [here Lund continues in Pittman shorthand] promised the Governor that if he should see any of the Senators he should tell them that he had studied the matter and has his reasons for vetoing the bill [end of shorthand passage] & I [Lund] am afraid that this will lead us in a fix should he veto the bill and it be charged to us.47

47 Lund Diary, March 5, 1915.

As many other Mormon Republicans had done, William Spry came looking for help with a political matter. Spry, Callister, and Nibley wanted Smith to understand that, for the good of the Church, it was necessary to veto the Wooton bill. Although Spry had not foreseen it, the veto would end his political career in Utah and help to destroy the Federal Bunch before the end of the
following year. This lengthy entry cited from Lund’s diary shows that, even though the American party had not won an election in five and a half years, President Smith still feared such a threat. It is impossible to determine what Spry would have done if Smith had told him to sign the bill. Instead, President Smith neither supported Spry’s decision nor opposed it. Smith’s action encouraged Spry to veto the bill and claim that he had Smith’s support in doing so.

Spry must have returned to his office from President Smith’s in the afternoon and awaited the arrival of the Wooton bill. He was obviously surprised when six o’clock came and the bill still had not arrived, as the account of his meeting with President Smith makes it clear that he did expect it. Sometime after 6:00 P.M. Spry left his office and shortly thereafter Wooton, Seegmiller, and Bradley arrived at the governor’s office with the prohibition bill, only to find that the governor had already gone home.

The Deseret News reported that later that evening Spry heard that a committee had been appointed to deliver the Wooton bill to him. He then went to the Hotel Utah and located the committee members and denounced them for resorting to the undignified procedure of appointing a committee to deliver the bill to him. The governor asked why a messenger was not used, as was done with other bills. Wooton and Seegmiller explained that time was running out on the bill and that consequently a committee had been appointed to deliver it in person. Spry told the committee that he would not accept the bill that night but would be in his office the next day to receive it.

The following day Heber J. Grant met with Presidents Smith and Lund and told them

It was whispered around that President Smith was opposed to the Prohibition law. Pres. Smith told him that I [Lund] had told the Governor to sign the bill and Pres Penrose had done the same.

Although what Smith said was true, he misled Grant by not telling him what he had told Spry. Only twenty-four hours had elapsed before Lund’s fears of the Church being blamed for the veto materialized.

Governor Spry met with Senators Colton, Seegmiller, and Eckersley on March 8th. The three senators were presidents of the stakes in Vernal, Kanab, and Loa, respectively. Spry had decided that if the First Presidency would not speak to some key senators, then he would tell them what Joseph F. Smith really wanted. Eckersley wrote an account of this meeting:

We waited upon him at his office. He told us, after addressing us as his brethren, of a conference of the First Presidency, Prest. Francis M. Lyman, Reed Smoot, Ed Callister, held some months ago, when it was decided not to make a campaign for Prohibition because of the bitterness of our enemies in Utah. He assured us that he would veto the Bill and asked us to support him in his position. He was given assurance that we would not promise to do this.

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48 Deseret News, March 6, 1915, p. 3.  
49 Lund Diary, March 6, 1915.  
50 Joseph Eckersley Diary, March 8, 1915, LDS Church Archives.
By the next day word of Spry’s meeting with the three Senators reached the First Presidency: “We hear rumors that the legislature are told President Smith is opposed to the bill!” 51

Unlike the 1909 prohibition campaign, Smoot was not actively involved in the 1915 campaign. His diary between November 20, 1914 and March 9, 1915 contains not one reference to prohibition and very little about local Utah politics; he was concerned instead with national Republican party matters. On March 10, 1915, Smoot did refer to prohibition when he noted in his diary:

It begins to look to me that Governor Spry is going to veto the Statewide prohibition Bill. I hope he does not do so. A majority of the people of Utah are in favor of it and it ought to be settled. 52

The veto became official on March 17, 1915; the reaction was predictable. The Herald Republican agreed with Spry completely. The Deseret News voiced President Smith’s position, as presumably they had been told to do. A News editorial argued that Spry had been guided by his firm belief that what he was doing was in the best interests of the state. Heber J. Grant, speaking at stake conference in Richfield the Sunday after the veto, strongly criticized Spry’s action.53

Reed Smoot returned to Utah in late March and met with the First Presidency and Council of the Twelve on April 2. Smoot recorded in connection with the meeting, “The question of the Governor’s veto of the prohibition bill was discussed and some very bitter criticism of him was indulged in.” 54

A few days later President Smith spoke in the general priesthood session of April conference, a meeting neither open to the public nor reported in the press or the official conference reports. Francis M. Lyman recorded what President Smith said:

[President Smith] observed that the question was agitated about how he stands on the question of Prohibition. He declared that his life should witness that he has always stood for and advocated temperance to come from the conversion of men to the truth. He did not declare for prohibition. His remarks were at once interpreted to be opposed to Prohibition.55

Lyman was upset by Joseph F. Smith’s non-advocacy of prohibition, as his next day’s diary entry illustrates:

Pres. N. G. Miller, Pres Kline and 4 others came for instructions on Prohibition since Pres. Smith has plowed around it. I told them to continue to do their very best for statewide prohibition and let the consequence follow.56

At the close of general conference Joseph F. Smith discussed the excitement which had been generated by his general priesthood meeting address:

I believe that the time will come and it is close by, when the people of this state will have to join in the procession of other states and adopt a law of state-wide prohibi-

51 Lund Diary, March 9, 1915.
52 Smoot Diary, March 10, 1915.
53 Grant Diary, March 20, 1915.
54 Smoot Diary, April 2, 1915.
55 Lyman Diary, April 3, 1915.
56 Ibid., April 6, 1915.
Smith was telling the Latter-day Saints that, while he personally believed in abstinence from alcoholic beverages, he would not consider it wise to adopt statewide prohibition if such action were to alienate large numbers of Utah’s gentiles or lead to anti-Mormon reactions. However, he was offering hope when he said that Utah could soon join the other states who had adopted prohibition; if the entire nation were doing so, gentiles could not feel that the Mormons were threatening their lifestyle or destroying their profits from the liquor trade. So, though prohibition had been defeated for the time being, most people recognized that it would be adopted two years later.

Reed Smoot and the Republican party in Utah were concerned with two things in Utah in 1916: first, whom they would nominate for governor, and secondly, how to persuade the voters that their candidate would deliver statewide prohibition. Men such as E. H. Callister, who in the past had been opposed to prohibition on political grounds, were convinced by the adoption of prohibition in Washington, Oregon, and Idaho that it was now politically safe for Mormon Republicans to support such a measure in Utah. Governor Spry remained opposed to prohibition and, despite his unpopular veto, wanted to run for re-election. Smoot told him that “no party could be successful in Utah declaring against prohibition [and if Spry] was nominated he could not be elected on account of his prohibition position and the 3rd term question.”

Just prior to April general conference in 1916 the First Presidency and Council of the Twelve met: “Each of the brethren spoke . . . and all spoke in favor of trying to secure prohibition at the coming election.” The next day Grant gave an entire sermon in general conference devoted to prohibition and two days later spoke in an overflow session in the Assembly Hall, again devoting the entire time to statewide prohibition. Over the next two months Grant covered the state preaching prohibition.

It was obvious to most observers that prohibition would come in 1917. Heber J. Grant and the Betterment League were taking no chances; Grant wrote letters to all stake presidents asking them to organize prohibition support within their stakes. He dictated thousands of letters to friends and acquaintances all over the state requesting support. An organizer was hired, with Grant raising money to pay his salary and other campaign costs. But while such efforts might have helped secure prohibition in 1915, they were unnecessary in 1916.

On April 9, just two weeks prior to the state Democratic convention, Simon Bamberger announced his candidacy for governor. Bamberger, who offered to pay $1,000 for a portrait of a man who was a better prohibitionist than he, was easily nominated. The Republican convention became a Spry

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87 Conference Reports, April 1915, p. 139.
88 Smoot Diary, March 7, 1916.
89 Grant Diary, April 5, 1916.
90 Conference Reports, April 1915, pp. 37-46.
91 Grant Letterpress Copybook, July 1916, LDS Church Archives.
Thompson: Mormons and Prohibition  51

... anti-Spry fight. Reed Smoot was not present, nor did he try to influence the convention. Since over two-thirds of the Republican delegates were prohibitionists, Spry was easily defeated and Nephi L. Morris, president of the Salt Lake Stake and the Progressive candidate for governor in 1912, was nominated.

The November election then saw Bamberger win by a vote of seventy-eight thousand to sixty thousand to become the state's first Jewish chief executive, while Democrat William King defeated George Sutherland's bid to return to the U.S. Senate by a vote of eighty-one thousand to fifty-six thousand. Both men elected to the national House of Representatives were Democrats, with the Republicans thus losing one seat. In nine state Senate contests, Wooton, Seegmiller, and Colton, three Republicans who were closely identified with prohibition, were re-elected, but all the other seats were won by Democrats. In the state House, one Republican and one Socialist were elected, together with forty-four Democrats. To some extent it would seem that Utah was merely following national trends, as Woodrow Wilson captured Utah's electoral votes by a margin of eighty-four thousand to fifty-four thousand, but a closer look suggests that Reed Smoot and the Federal Bunch had been so damaged by their past opposition to prohibition that they could no longer control Utah politics. Prohibition destroyed the Smoot machine.

On January 19, 1917, Heber J. Grant met with the Betterment League and then recorded in his diary that they "agreed on a bill to be presented to the legislature." 62 Richard W. Young, Grant's close friend, became the chief sponsor of the bill. The Young bill was accepted by the House and Senate and sent to Governor Bamberger, who signed the bill on February 8, 1917. 63

Statewide prohibition became effective in Utah on August 1, 1917. Thus ten years of struggle — both behind the scenes, as well as in the public eye — came to a close.

The Utah voters had an opportunity to accept prohibition when they approved a dry amendment to the state constitution in 1918. In 1919 the state legislature ratified the Eighteenth Amendment to the Federal Constitution. By this time even the Salt Lake Tribune had climbed on the prohibition bandwagon, with an editorial predicting, "within a few years the now most violent objectors to prohibition will acknowledge it as a blessing." 64 That would continue to be the belief of most residents of the state, both Mormon and non-Mormon, for the next ten years. To be certain, liquor was not eliminated, as those with the desire and means purchased large quantities prior to prohibition, which lasted in some cases until repeal. 65 Others consumed homebrew or purchased illegally manufactured or imported liquor. LDS Church leaders, led by President Heber J. Grant, continued to support prohibition and encouraged its strict enforcement by law enforcement officials. During the 1920s there was...
always some interest nationally in the repeal of prohibition, with the wet forces steadily gaining support after the Depression began in 1929. Many Mormons had also become convinced that prohibition was a failure, including Richard Young, the sponsor of the 1917 state prohibition bill. Heber J. Grant, however, remained a staunch prohibitionist. Utah's citizens voted on November 7, 1933 for both national and state repeal. A month later prohibition ended in Utah and the nation. Repeal first allowed beer to be manufactured and sold in the state, while in 1935 the State of Utah began selling liquor through state stores. An era had ended.
It has been my understanding that it is permissible for the presidential address to be somewhat personal and reflective, rather than a typical research paper. Mine is in that style.¹

Unlike most who are professional historians, I drifted into the field of history. My undergraduate major at Graceland was in religion. I didn't even take the standard two-semester sequence in Western Civilization. Nor did I take the standard two-semester survey of United States history. The only history courses I took were in religious history: the one-semester freshman level course in Latter Day Saint History and the junior level two-semester sequence in the History of Christianity. These were all taught by Roy Cheville, a theologian/sociologist with a Ph.D. from the University of Chicago.

In Cheville's classes you did not have to read the text. If you listened attentively in class and absorbed his basic ideas, you did well. But I bought the text and read it anyway. Williston Walker's History of the Christian Church is one of the most important books I have ever read.² This provincial young Latter Day Saint discovered the "liberalizing power of the study of history."

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which often serves to free a person from his or her own "cultural bondage." As Sterling McMurrin wrote in his recent book, "The most genuine and humane sophistication attaches to a person who is aware of history, for he has had his vision freed from the blindness imposed by his own place and time, and therefore knows more of himself and his own world by knowing more of others and their worlds." It makes us "less amenable to authoritarianism and churchly control." From Williston Walker I discovered that there is a rich diversity of religious expression in early, medieval, and modern Christianity. I began to wonder whether the claims of many of them might be just as valid as those of the Latter Day Saints. I recall being attracted to the congregational form of church government.

To a certain extent my real education came after graduation from Graceland, and history was central to that education. (I might also add that I had never met a Mormon until about one year after I graduated from Graceland.) Shortly after graduation I was offered a position as assistant editor of the Saints' Herald, and editor of Stride, the youth magazine of the RLDS Church. It was quite an opportunity — a responsible position of church-wide leadership for a lad of twenty-two, who was just a priest. I was on my way!

While at Herald House I began to take part-time courses at Saint Paul School of Theology, a new Methodist seminary in Kansas City. I began with the first year Bible sequence. I plunged into the historical study of the Bible, which in the years that followed became perhaps the most intellectually exciting experience in my life. It was fascinating to discover that the Biblical writings were created in a historical context, written by persons facing real life situations. Lindsey Pherigo, perhaps the best teacher I have ever had, taught us that the New Testament documents were produced as the result of four crises that faced the early Christian Church: (1) missionary problems produced by attempting to take a religion originating in a Jewish setting to a Gentile world; (2) problems resulting from the passing of the first generation of disciples without the expected return of Jesus; (3) problems arising from official persecution; and (4) internal problems in the church, such as the rise of the Gnostic heresy in the second century.

Professor Pherigo skillfully analyzed the internal evidence in the various Biblical writings, piecing together clues as to who wrote the documents, when, where, and for what purpose? Perhaps the most significant question was the purpose for the writing. I suppose I had sort of assumed the Biblical writings were produced when God decided He had something to say, to the Corinthian saints, for example. Pherigo's internal analysis opened to me the likelihood that the gospels of Matthew and Luke were written to correct what the authors thought were errors in the gospel of Mark. Mark simply made the disciples look too stupid and Jesus too human. Matthew and Luke rehabilitated the disciples' reputation, toned down any showing of emotion on Jesus' part, and heightened the miraculous. Holden Caulfield's negative view of the disciples in

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9 Ibid.
10 Ibid., p. 140.
Catcher in the Rye suggested to me that J. D. Salinger had read Mark but not the more sympathetic accounts of Matthew and Luke.  

Pherigo’s analysis of the purpose of the Acts of the Apostles suggested that one of the special purposes of the author was to smooth over the controversy between Peter and Paul in the early church. Paul was the great missionary to the Gentiles, who fought Peter on the question of whether obedience to the Mosaic law was required of the saints. Paul’s assertion of Christian freedom from the requirements of the Mosaic law made his missionary success among the Gentiles possible. Yet Acts has Peter making the first convert among the Gentiles. Paul insisted his authority came directly from Christ, and not from the apostles at Jerusalem. Yet, contrary to the assertions of Paul in letters written several decades earlier, Acts has Paul at the council in Jerusalem submitting to the decision of the apostles. I was further influenced by the Jewish scholar, Samuel Sandmel, who, in his The Genius of Paul, concluded that much of the New Testament was written to counter or neutralize Paul. In addition to Acts, the legalism of Matthew and the Epistle of James — countering Pauline freedom — are particularly good examples.

What does all of this have to do with Mormon history? Inevitably the question arose in my mind, why not apply the same methods of historical analysis to the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants, and to Joseph Smith’s “New Translation” of the Bible?

An important part of that first year Bible sequence was the study of the history of the Biblical text, as it was translated into various languages, including many differing English translations or revisions. I learned that in the past few centuries important ancient Biblical manuscripts and other documents have been found, and that the English language had undergone considerable change since the King James Version was published in 1611. My first thought was that Joseph Smith was very perceptive in recognizing the need to “correct” the King James Version of the Bible. Then one Saturday at my Herald House office I read an analysis of the Revised Standard Version which noted about fifty passages of the King James Version which were obviously incorrect now because of either the availability of older Biblical manuscripts, language evolution, or modern discoveries regarding the Biblical languages. I decided this presented a wonderful opportunity to test the “Inspired Version,” as we un-hyphenated Saints call it, or “Joseph Smith’s New Translation,” as you hyphenated Saints more appropriately call it. I discovered that more than eighty percent of these clearly incorrect King James Version passages were unchanged in the New Translation. And when I discovered that a majority of those changed were not in the direction required by the new knowledge of Biblical languages, I concluded that the New Translation might not be a restoration of the original meaning of the Biblical documents.

I had to further rethink the standard RLDS position on the New Translation when I learned that while the Book of Hosea is perhaps the most textually

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corrupt book of the Bible, Joseph Smith regarded Hosea as being correct as it was in the King James Version, and left it unchanged.

I was also disturbed to find that Joseph Smith had watered down certain ideas in the New Testament which I considered to be at the core of the Christian gospel. I recall most vividly my disappointment at three such changes. Where Jesus on the cross, says, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do,” a parenthetical clause is added by Joseph Smith: “(Meaning the soldiers who crucified him.)” In other words, Jesus’ great statement of forgiveness is made not to apply to those really responsible for his crucifixion. Secondly, that great text on which I had preached my first sermon, “And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain” (or two miles) was altered to read: “And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him a mile; and whosoever shall compel thee to go with him twain, thou shalt go with him twain.” Thus the great principle of the un compelled second mile is withdrawn. You only go the second mile if it, too, is compelled. Finally, that great statement of the helplessness of man under the law, in chapter 7 of Romans, is emasculated in the New Translation.

These three changes are problematic not simply because they altered familiar texts, but because these three passages as traditionally translated are consistent with the thought and tone of the rest of the Biblical documents in which they are found, while Joseph Smith’s revisions are not. Since Joseph Smith was an unlettered farm boy who did not know the Biblical languages, I recognized that if his New Translation was accurate, it had to be based on divine inspiration. But the evidence as to the accuracy of the New Translation was hardly impressive.

So, I came to the conclusion that the New Translation is simply the King James Version with changes based on the personal hunches of Joseph Smith. I concluded that while the King James Version has serious problems, the New Translation fails to correct these problems and simply adds additional problems. I concluded that virtually all major modern versions of the Bible are far superior to the New Translation with regard to the matter of faithfulness to the text. The New Translation is simply an important document in early Mormon history. Its value lies in its clues as to the mind of the founding prophet. We simply learn that Smith disagreed with certain passages in the King James Version and presumed that since these passages didn’t square with his doctrinal beliefs, the text must have been altered in the process of transmission. So he changed the passages in question accordingly. The New Translation is the work of a supremely confident young man.

In 1970 Robert Matthews came to Graceland for a visit. He was the first Mormon scholar I had ever met. Shortly thereafter I reviewed his book, Joseph Smith’s Revision of the Bible. It struck me as ironic that Matthews, a Mormon, had a high appreciation for the New Translation while his RLDS reviewer had a limited appreciation for the book.

One of the most interesting parts of my Biblical study was the study of the history of the canonization of the various parts of the Bible. In the RLDS Church, delegates at the World Conference vote on whether to accept purported revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants. (Section 150 even carries the added authority of Leonard Arrington’s uplifted hand at the 1972 RLDS World Conference!) I had presumed that the Biblical writings were ratified by some sort of formal approval process, similar to the process we use to ratify revelations from our RLDS prophet. But I found the Biblical process of canonization was informal rather than formal. The Biblical documents circulated independently for quite some time, sometimes for several centuries, and the community of faith gradually came to the conviction that the documents were normative for the faith of the community.

The New Testament will illustrate. The letters of Paul, the four gospels, and other writings circulated independently for several decades. The first evidence we have of them being cited authoritatively in the manner of the Old Testament writings came in the mid-second century. In response to the Gnostic crisis, the church appealed to the authority of the apostles to refute the heretics. Part of that appeal was to the authority of apostolic writings, which we now call the New Testament. There was a felt need for apostolic authority in the form of writings that bore the names of apostles or were attributed to the apostles or their close associates. Similarly, when Latter Day Saints want to refute what they think is incorrect doctrine they will often cite an utterance by some other high authority in the church. Thus the documents clearly written by apostles were accorded special status — such as the letters signed by Paul. Anonymous writings that were considered orthodox and thus antidotes to the Gnostic heresies were ascribed to the apostles or their close associates. For example, all four gospels are anonymous. Tradition assigned them to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The Epistle to the Hebrews, and some of the other epistles are also in this category. Finally, some documents were written in the name of an apostle. For example, the Pastoral Epistles — I and II Timothy and Titus — were apparently written at the time of the Gnostic heresy, nearly a century after the death of Paul, specifically to refute the Gnostic version of Christianity, with Paul’s name signed to the documents to give them greater authority. Today we would call it forgery. Paul was probably selected because, of the New Testament writers, he came the closest to holding Gnostic ideas himself. It appears that Gnostic Christians like Marcion accepted Paul’s letters but little else among the writings which now make up the New Testament. Thus the orthodox writers of the Pastoral Epistles put words into the mouth of Paul which would refute the Gnostic heresies.

I found the Bible much more exciting when I learned about the historical context in which the various books were written and canonized. It did not diminish the Bible’s authority for me. I now accepted the Bible as authoritative not because God wrote it, but because it was written by men who had a decisive impact on the formulation of the Christian faith. The development of Israelite religion in the Old Testament provided the setting for the career of Jesus. The struggles of Jesus’ disciples after his death — to make sense out of what had happened and to carry on His work — provided us with a literature which
helps us understand the mission of Jesus, and for the most part stands in closer proximity to the Christ-event than any other extant documents.

By contrast, the canonization of the Doctrine and Covenants seemed sterile to me. In early Mormonism the founding prophet had been delivering revelations for more than four years when it was decided to publish them in a book. There had not been a general conference vote to determine exactly which revelations would be included. Nor had documents gone through a long process of use by the Mormon community before being canonized.

In the RLDS Church we have made the canonization process more artificial, even if more democratic, than in early Mormonism. If we simply added new revelations every few years, such as when a new edition of the Doctrine and Covenants is produced, we could omit revelations which did not seem appropriate a few years after their announcement. But instead, we proceed to canonize each document immediately upon its announcement to the church—sometimes on the very same day, prior to when it has even been published in the daily bulletin of the conference. Thus we are in the position of adding to the canon a brand new document, which we frequently have not seen in print. It has merely been read aloud to the conference. It is as if a work of literature were declared a “masterpiece” before it was off the press. This “instant canonization” process is quite contrary to the Biblical canonization process where the documents had been part of the community for a long time prior to canonization, and have stood the test of time. The Biblical canonization process seemed much superior to me.12

A related problem for me was the self-conscious nature of the latter-day revelations, written with the intent to be part of sacred scripture. In contrast, few, if any, of the Biblical documents were originally produced with the intent of their inclusion in a body of sacred writings.

Fawn Brodie’s biography of Joseph Smith gave me some clues as to the historical background of some of the revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants.13 One way that I am distinguished from most of my fellow Mormon History Association members is that I liked Fawn Brodie’s biography and defended her publicly.

I suspect we have become saddled with our particular style of modern revelation as a result of the historical circumstances in which our movement originated. Joseph Smith began with a reasonable observation, i.e., the canon ought not be limited to the writings of the Old and New Testaments. But since he operated in a period prior to the rise of modern Biblical scholarship, he probably assumed that Biblical revelation occurred in the manner that he proceeded to practice it—some sort of religious experience occurs and the recipient writes it down. Inspiration was probably thought of as essentially verbal and propositional,14 and the document which results is perceived from the be-

ginner as scripture and can be so regarded immediately, rather than being elevated to that status after a considerable period of time. Given Joseph Smith’s likely assumptions about the nature of scripture and the process of canonization, the Doctrine and Covenants seems a reasonable result.

Another significant difference between the Bible and the Doctrine and Covenants is the fact that we limit the contents of our modern canon to utterances from the president/prophet, while the Biblical writings were not so limited. As indicated earlier, the authorship of many of the Biblical writings is unknown, and possibly none of the New Testament writings were produced by a person recognized as the leader of the whole Christian community, if such a leader did exist at all.

Not only is the method of canonization we employ far from the Biblical method — the nature of our documents is also quite different. The Old Testament prophets dealt with national and international issues. They tried to interpret what Yahweh was doing in the world in their day. Latter-day revelations dealt almost entirely with ecclesiastical matters. You can read the revelations in the RLDS Doctrine and Covenants and not realize that there were upheavals in Europe in the mid-nineteenth century, slavery in America and a Civil War, the rise of modern challenges to Western Christian assumptions (e.g., Marx, Darwin, Freud), depressions, two world wars, and the development of technology that threatens the very existence of life on this planet. It is difficult to imagine Amos, Isaiah, Micah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, or Jesus living and prophesying in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries without interpreting what God was doing in these events.

I think the RLDS Church would be better off if we did like our Utah cousins, and ceased the custom of routine periodic presentation of new revelations. Yet, the church obviously believes in revelation. There are many alternate concepts of revelation which could evolve. I think we should distance ourselves from our nineteenth century pre-Biblical criticism notion of revelation, and change our canonization process. The rise of modern historical Biblical scholarship requires a re-examination of the question of latter-day revelation.

The last of the three Standard Books of the RLDS Church which I took a new hard look at in light of Biblical historical scholarship was the Book of Mormon. When at the age of twenty-eight I joined the Graceland faculty, teaching religion, I felt guilty for not having read the Book of Mormon. I was surprised to find that my two colleagues in the Religion Department—long since departed—had not read the Book of Mormon either. But there was a course in the college catalog entitled "Latter Day Saint Scriptures." No one wanted to teach it. In my third year I volunteered. My interest in the Book of Mormon had been stimulated by Marvin Hill’s 1959 article, "The Historiography of Mormonism," the first scholarly article by a Mormon that I had ever read, and still one of the best.

I’ll never forget that first day in the LDS Scriptures class. I asked each member of the class to introduce themselves and say why they enrolled in the course. The students generally gave fairly pious responses. They were taking

it for their spiritual growth, and so forth. About halfway through the class list I came to one W. Grant McMurray. Grant brought down the house when he said, "I am taking this course because I have never read the Book of Mormon and this course will force me to read it." Here I had an opportunity to render counsel. "Don't let that bother you, Grant," I replied, "I haven't read it either."

How could I teach the Book of Mormon when I hadn't even read it? My study of the Bible and the history of Christianity, including the history of religion in America, gave me a reasonable background for the study of the Book of Mormon. But clearly it was a case of learning by teaching.

I had the students buy Wilford Wood's reprint of the 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon. I wanted them to read it in the purity of the original. By the time I had finished the first hundred pages I had discovered that Lehi and family, departing from the Old World just before the Exile, understood doctrines and institutions that did not develop in the Judeo-Christian tradition until several centuries later. Lehi and his family understood future events with remarkable precision, in contrast to the rather vague predictions of future events that are seen in the claims of those who imaginatively see numerous Biblical passages as predicting future historical events. The New Testament, for example, gives us only very sketchy information about John the Baptist. Lehi predicts the career of John the Baptist, but unfortunately he does not predict any of John's career that is not later recorded in the New Testament. I discussed these particular problems in my recent Sunstone article.

I also noticed that the concerns of the Book of Mormon sounded quite modern and American. A few years later I encouraged one of the brightest students I had ever taught — Susan Curtis, a Methodist — to write her history senior seminar paper comparing the ideas found in the Book of Mormon with ideas extant in nineteenth-century America. Her paper was published in the John Whitmer Historical Association Journal last fall.

Having concluded before I had finished II Nephi that the Book of Mormon was not historical, I settled in for the long haul as my students and I plodded on through the book. While I do not share Stanley Kimball's characterization of it as "an exciting, readable adventure story," I did find much in the book that was interesting, and I came to appreciate why the Book of Mormon was the vehicle through which many early Mormons were converted to the church.

20 Thomas O'Dea's analysis in chapter two of The Mormons (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957) has been and remains for me a most reasonable analysis of the Book of Mormon.
I concluded that we should not look for truth in the Book of Mormon in the form of information about historical events. For me the book contains truth to the extent that ideas found in it have merit for our lives and the life of the community of faith. As the non-Mormon William P. Collins stated recently in Dialogue: "When I examine the Book of Mormon for truth rather than facticity, my reading reveals powerful, eternal, and relevant truths which are capable of changing and guiding men's lives." I suspect that was its appeal to Sidney Rigdon and many others who were converted to Mormonism by reading the book.

Thus I came to conclusions about the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and the New Translation that were significantly different from the interpretations I had been taught. I came to view them as prime documents for understanding the original faith of Mormonism, having authority similar to the New Testament, the prime sources for understanding the faith of the early Christian community. I simply have had to revise my faith assertions in accord with my conclusions from the study of history, other disciplines, and personal experience. While certain notions in Mormonism, such as the antiquity of the gospel and the idea of the restoration of the New Testament church, imply that true religion "does not have human beginnings or a development in human culture," history teaches us that religious concepts change from generation to generation. My faith is not the same as that of my father. His was different from his uncle, Apostle R. C. Russell, the original Russell convert. I'm sure his faith varied some from the faith of the early Reorganites. They certainly charted a course at variance with the Mormonism of Nauvoo. I believe that religious movements that claim to hold to an unchangeable "original faith" in reality usually adhere to the faith as understood in the generation currently passing from the scene. I am not surprised that the Restoration Voice, the publication of a conservative RLDS faction, features mainly reprints of Saints' Herald articles from the 1950s.

Despite my drastic re-interpretation of the Latter Day Saint scriptures, I remain a "practicing Mormon" (recognizing that some practice more diligently than I). But that is not my purpose for this autobiographical reflection on my loss of innocence. The point is that the historian who examines the Latter Day Saint scriptures needs to confront honestly the scholarly problems that they present. These issues are sensitive ones for persons reared in the tradition. The temptation is for the faithful scholar to avoid these and other sensi-
tive issues. I think we in the Mormon History Association too often have avoided researching the sensitive areas, because dealing honestly with them can be painful. Certainly we run the risk of limiting our potential for status or position in the church if we tackle issues requiring a re-thinking of the "sacred story." But we need to have the courage to research and publish on these important subjects, such as various authors have done recently in some of our independent journals. As James Clayton has written: "Mormon historians habitually skirt a number of controversial issues." He has also stated: "Selecting only those topics, events, and doctrines from history that are comfortable and safe . . . is, to put it bluntly, intellectually dishonest and morally irresponsible." We need to ask, "Is it true?" rather than "Will it offend the Brethren?" (Some people erroneously think I ask myself the question, "Will it offend the Brethren?" and that if the answer is, "Yes," then I publish it!)

Last year at Ogden my good friend Bob Matthews, in his comment on my paper on the Book of Mormon, suggested that I ought to consider my eternal status when I present such papers. If I were to do as Bob suggests, it would no doubt produce considerable internal pressure to conform to established ways of thinking. I did not respond to Bob's comment at that time, but I will now. If there is a hereafter — and I don't know whether there is or not — I'd rather approach the Pearly Gates as an independent thinking, honest searcher for truth, than as one whose research and writing has been devoted to defending the faith that I had received as a child. Certainly Joseph Smith was an independent thinker who radically reshaped the received religion that was his heritage. And I agree with Sterling McMurrin's conclusion in his Seventh East Press interview that church members would have more intellectual freedom if they simply had the courage to take it.

Levi Peterson renewed my confidence that intellectuals must not shrink from publishing their best thinking in independent journals and associations like ours, when he recently wrote, "Mormon intellectuals do not lead an enviable life. Often they sense keenly the distance between themselves and the rest of the Church. Isolated from one another, they may suffer guilt and doubt; at times they may well wonder whether their evolving values, seemingly unpalatable to other Mormons, are not perverse or insane. For this reason, it is important that they form their own communities, both for comfort and for enhancing their effectiveness as agents of change."
Five years ago Jack Newell was a guest in my house. I asked him if, as a Mormon, he encountered much pressure to conform. His answer was “No,” that in Mormonism a person doesn’t need to feel much pressure to conform if he does not have ecclesiastical ambitions. I have thought about Jack’s comment many times since. If, on the one hand, a person is ambitious for ecclesiastical status — or eternal status — the desire to conform to orthodox thinking and to avoid sensitive subjects might be very strong. But if one can tame such ambition, freedom of inquiry will more likely be achieved. I realize that this is asking a lot. As Jonathan Butler has said, the alternative for historians employed by the institutional church may be “publish and perish.”

That is why the Mormon History Association is so important for me. Having been raised on the sacred story of Mormonism, but committed to the value of the dialectical process of scholarship, I find this association most valuable. Here we discuss the issues that scholarship presents to us, in a community where all views are listened to if not accepted. LDS, RLDS, and non-Mormon scholars, with the various perspectives within each of those categories, teach each other a great deal about the Mormon heritage. And it helps us to understand that our evolving values are not perverse or insane. And we can sustain each other as we pursue truth.

And finally, the Mormon History Association has renewed my sometimes flagging faith. For the core of my faith, and the reason I believe I can call myself a Christian, is my admittedly unprovable assumption that in the life of Jesus we get a glimpse of what kind of persons God would have us be. And I believe that the center of the Christian life is rooted in love. In the Mormon History Association I have experienced love in the truest sense: love which is not conditioned upon belief in “correct” doctrine, or upon the practice of expected rituals, or upon actions which are above reproach. This kind of acceptance is often not found in those local wards or congregations where independent thinking and scholarship are not welcomed. And that is why, since 1971, I have made my annual pilgrimage to the Mormon History Association. It has been spiritually as well as intellectually renewing for me. That is why you are a group of people I have grown to love dearly. And that is why — though for most of you our ecclesiastical paths separated about 135 years ago — you, my colleagues in the Mormon History Association, are truly my brothers and sisters.

29 Butler, p. 32.

30 Ibid. Some RLDS liberals smugly assume they cannot learn from their LDS cousins. But for me the fact is that my main source of intellectual stimulation regarding the working out of the conflict between scholarship and the “received” faith has come in recent years from my LDS friends in *Dialogue*, *Sunstone*, and in Mormon History Association meetings.
The Mormon History Association is grateful to Obert C. and Grace A. Tanner for funding the Tanner Lectures on Mormon History. The fifth of these lectures, presented at the 1983 annual meeting of the Association, held in Omaha, Nebraska, was:


The 1984 Tanner Lecture on Mormon History, scheduled for presentation at Provo, Utah will be by Edwin S. Gaustad, professor of religious studies at the University of California, Riverside.
The image of the Latter-day Saint people as supporters of education and learning is one of Utah's well-known and carefully nurtured traditions. Mormon scripture and the teaching of the founding prophet, Joseph Smith, provide such foundation principles as the “glory of God is intelligence,” “A man is saved no faster than he gains knowledge,” and “Thy mind, O man! if thou wilt lead a soul to salvation, must stretch as high as the utmost heavens, and search into and contemplate the darkest abyss and the broad expanse of eternity.” Although less poetic, Brigham Young seemed hardly less ardent. “Cultivate your minds... Learn everything that the children of men know” was his admonition. “Is there truth? It is ours. Is there knowledge? It is for us,” was his boast. Commitment to learning is also part of the rich lore of Mormon pioneering with nearly every community having its tradition of some dedicated matron teaching in a wickiup or some rustic professor improvising.
from slabs and pegs to make benches "for the little fellows" and laying out the three Rs line by line.³

Less carefully cultivated, but still alive in the minds of many is an opposite portrait of nineteenth century Mormons with respect to learning and civilization. According to this point of view, they were anything but appreciative of learning and the enlightenment it made possible, embracing instead such backward looking practices and ideals as polygamy, priestcraft, and tyranny.⁴

However, stereotypes, whether positive or negative, are not sufficient to tell the real story. Beneath them lies a more complicated and more meaningful reality. Leaving Joseph Smith and the Mormons of the Midwest, let us look at attitudes and conditions in pioneer Utah, which for purposes here may be defined not only as the pre-railroad era but those conditions and areas in which the pioneer process was extended until about the end of the century.

In the territory's first years, schools were local ventures within each village and ward with only such administrative structure as the moribund University of Deseret and interested parents could provide. By 1865 legislation had provided for a territorial school superintendent, county superintendents, and enabled, but did not require, localities to tax themselves to support the common schools, which, for all practical purposes, were limited to ungraded primary teaching. After the advent of the railroad in the late 1860s, Protestant missionary schools sought to attract young Latter-day Saints and education was engulfed in the bitter Mormon-anti-Mormon controversy. Nevertheless, until well into the 1880s, public schools remained under the control of the Mormons who stressed religious and moral training. After the Edmunds Act of 1882 Mormon control loosened and finally yielded in the Free School Act of 1890 which provided for full support by taxation and made attendance at school compulsory.⁵

In the earliest years of pioneering, poverty and isolation left little time, energy, or resources for learning in the formal sense. Because the pioneering process extended in successive frontier localities for upwards of six decades after the Mormon arrival at Salt Lake Valley in 1847, many Mormons lived

³ For typical presentations portraying education along these lines see sermons of George A. Smith, Journal of Discourses, 14:371; 17:88-89, and 256-257.

⁴ The literature of the long anti-Mormon campaign is replete with allegations resting on this point of view. It continues to be openly apparent in such twentieth century writers as Stanley P. Hirshson, The Lion of the Lord (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969), and is recognized by implication at least in almost all historical writing about the Mormon conflict.

under conditions unconducive to learning until at least 1910. Primitive schools were built in pioneer times and children sometimes attended; but schooling was a hit or miss affair that had only fleeting influence on the lives of many. There was no secondary education in the modern sense until about 1870 and only five public high schools by 1900, although in the closing decades of the century colleges and universities included preparatory courses, and numerous Mormon and other parochial academies existed.

Teachers were poorly trained. They taught for short periods only. Furthermore, they turned to teaching for a wide variety of reasons, including necessity, inclement weather, idle times, calls from authority, desire to have free tuition for their own children, or as in the case of Martha Cox of St. George, because "the idle boy obliged to be out of school" held their sympathy. But they rarely taught because they were well paid or because teaching carried status in the community or because they belonged to a class or a profession in which they could take pride.

Although written from the perspective of sixty years, the biographical sketch of Martha Cox, which tells of pioneer life in Utah's Dixie during the 1860s and 1870s is instructive on many of these points. Almost totally frustrated in her own youthful yearning to go to school, she

one day passed a group of boys who had stolen out of school to play marbles on the street. The poor old crone, who was trying to teach them must have been glad they had played truant for they were of the age and disposition to be most trying in school. And truly, the fact that a great many children were growing up on the streets of St. George without schooling or moral training even, was truly alarming. I said to the boys mentioned, "If I were your teacher I'd be sorry to have you out of school." A big fellow answered "Oh the old woman's glad we're out." I told the boys "I was sorry to see them growing up without education." "If you're so sorry for us" they said "why don't you teach us? We wouldn't stay out of school if you taught us." "I wish I knew enough to teach you" I said, "and I'd see whether you would." One bright little fellow spoke up "I should think you'd teach us that that you do know." Here was a new thought, there were many children who knew less than I.

Thus prompted, Mrs. Cox ultimately approached the trustees of the St. George Third Ward School, who told her she lacked training. Since no steps appeared to be underway to get the ward school open, she set out to prove her own capacity. She rented a hall, borrowed planks and blocks to improvise seats, found a kitchen table for a desk, and painted a large breadboard for a blackboard. Advised to avoid the "poor white trash" she was quickly informed that the youngsters of the Third Ward weren't fit for uptown kids to associate with. The bishop's wife "volunteered information and advice: I had married into a poor family — was no better than the other wives — go home and take hold with them in the work of the family and not be setting myself up for a school teacher." Others likewise had no confidence in Mrs. Cox and some were afraid to have their children associate with the children of the woman from whom she rented the hall, who "knew nothing except to straddle a horse and swear." Finally, however, the school succeeded. At this development,
interest in the ward school began to revive, and she soon received a call "from the Trustees who told me that my pupils belonged to the Ward School and I should dismiss them and let them go to the Ward. We can see a reason for this claim when we understand that our southern schools were taught on the subscription plan. Hence, the more pupils, the more money." Almost simultaneously she received a visit from the trustees of another ward offering her their school, thus resolving the problem all around. 

As suggested by Martha Cox’s experience, teachers taught in homes, granaries, and in churches. They lived at home or boarded around, and spent much of their time trying to keep records on or collect tuitions that were paid in kind. Some, like Christian Jacobsen in the early 1870s, jobbed almost hopelessly from community to community in northern and central Utah, trying to break into a stable position. Schooled briefly at Draper, during a time when it was under the influence of several men who later distinguished themselves as educators, Jacobsen seemed to belong to no one, nor to any place. He was turned down by a succession of local examining boards — probably with good reason, canvassed the entire Wasatch Front on foot as a sewing machine salesman, slept for warmth on the pumis piles of village molasses mills, bathed in streams on Saturdays, did farm work as the opportunity provided, and in near despair, spent lonely profitless winters trapping in a snow camp high in Cache Valley’s Porcupine Canyon before he finally located a relatively stable teaching position at the sprawling and raw farming district that became northern Utah’s Lewiston.

But the life of a teacher was better for Jacobsen than it was for George William Thurman of Lehi. Popular and successful, he was providing the beginnings of good education in 1871, when his efforts to decorate Lehi’s school/church for a Christmas party were interrupted by a young man he had chastized who shot and killed him.

Although teachers in Salt Lake City, and some other larger communities enjoyed better conditions; even they suffered from the ills of the self-collected tuition system, ungraded schools, and general indifference. Unusual only in degree was the experience of a cultivated young Englishman named Cornaby who taught at Salt Lake City’s Seventeenth Ward. During the hard winter of 1855–1856 he repeatedly canvassed ward members who owed him for tuition, in hopes of finding food for his hard pressed family. He also dug Sego roots and joined an extended fishing expedition to Utah Lake. During what his wife later called “his stay in the country,” Cornaby came to see “the advantages of owning land and raising grain for ourselves, without having, as in the City, to depend upon others.” Learning that Spanish Fork “offered ...
plenty of land, with a good supply of water" the Cornabys soon made the move and became part of the farming frontier.10

It is little wonder that in Salt Lake City as elsewhere through the state teachers quit for any and every reason, including motherhood, missions, bartending, freighting, and salesmanship. Behind many of these actions, and the attitudes that underlay them, was the fact that most of the first generation of American Mormons had little education themselves. Not only had they come from strata of society little exposed to learning as a social value, but they had withdrawn from the mainstream of American cultural development before the doctrines and values upon which public education rested and had become widespread. They were practical and intelligent. They were not learned—not even by the modest standards of mid-nineteenth century America, and they knew it.11

As a result they frequently rejected each other as teachers and hired traveling Gentiles. Some of these proved to be charlatans and quacks. Many provided excellent service. Among the latter was the “splendid teacher, Gentile Harry Haines” who in Salt Lake’s Fifteenth Ward taught in a one-room school from McGuffey’s First Reader, Ray’s Arithmetic, and Pinnios’ Grammar. He also inspired students to learn by apt demonstrations of Demosthenes, speaking with pebbles in his mouth, and devoting time to them both in and out of school that parents and churchmen, busy with building the Kingdom, were unable to give. He left an abiding imprint on many, including James H. Moyle. However, he withdrew from teaching for the “more lucrative business of bartending” in the Murray saloon of “apostate bishop” Andrew Cahoon, where his influence was jokingly acknowledged by the nickname “mayor of Murray.” 12

Another Gentile teacher was Charles St. Clair, a Civil War veteran who was hired to teach John D. Lee’s family at Harmony in 1867. A tempest in a teapot had flared between a Mormon teacher named James Russell and John D. Lee who wrote about it in his diary. In a bitter display of irony Lee first charged that when Russell had been called by Bishop Henry Lunt of Cedar City “to be an Aaron to” his less articulate betters in the community, he had “been lifted up to the highest notch.” Subsequent charges included brutality (beating children with a “gad”), madness (“Puffing & blowing, preaching & stamping like a Mad Man”), and egotism. As Lee put it the school “is to small to hold him alone.” Most intolerable of all were Russell’s inflated ideas about what his pay ought to be. After several days Lee’s attack forced Russell

11 As historian of education in Utah, Frederick S. Buchanan has pointed out, Brigham Young was himself sensitive about his lack of polish in spite of joking efforts to make a virtue out of having spent only eleven days in school and out of the coarseness of his language. See Buchanan, “Education Among the Mormons: Brigham Young and the Schools of Utah,” pp. 442-445 and 446.
to retire and efforts were made to hire another Mormon to teach. When he, too, proved to have enlarged ideas about the value of his time, Lee hired St. Clair, who had evidently been present in town during much of the school crisis, but still had the courage to take the position. 13

That internal frictions often complicated the smooth flow of learning is apparent in many other diaries as well. At Snowflake, one of Arizona’s Mormon villages, a gifted but quarrelsome and unyielding (some said he was unduly heavy handed) English convert named Allen Frost was crowded from his school and ultimately almost from the society. He was succeeded in the classroom by Levi Savage. Equally unyielding and nearly as hotheaded as Frost, Savage’s gifts included two polygamist wives, the daughters of a counselor in the stake presidency. The same cabal that had ousted Frost also brought Savage out of his pedagogical chair for indiscretions of discipline, but he was soon relocated as bishop of a neighboring ward. 14

But at this point it is not my purpose to divert attention entirely from the hiring of Gentile teachers. It would probably be impossible now to know what percentage of all teachers hired in the early public schools were non-Mormon, but I have identified at least two dozen, many of whom became prominent educators. That such hirings were not uncommon is also suggested in the repeated admonitions of church leaders not to hire non-Mormons at any level. Characteristic was the sharp appeal of A. K. Thurber, presiding officer in the Sevier Stake in the fall of 1875. According to notes of a priesthood meeting he had not come here to please any Gentile. Let Lawyers alone. Let Doctors alone. Let sewing machine agents alone. Patronize Mormon school teachers and not infidels. Don’t employ a Gentile Teacher, but a well tried Mormon. 15

From the standpoint of young people, the emphasis upon pioneering and salvation often interfered with opportunities to learn. Utah had no compulsory attendance law until 1890 and many parents were either loath to sacrifice children’s time to learning or feared its influence upon their children's minds and testimonies. A perceptive commentary on this condition was written by English journalist, Philip Robinson, in 1882:

Sitting at the door next morning, (at Monroe) I saw a very trimly dressed damsel of twenty or thereabouts, coming briskly along under the trees, . . . She was the school mistress . . . and very soon her scholars began to pass along. I had thus an opportunity of observing the curious, happy-go-lucky style in which ‘schooling’ is carried on, and I was sorry to see it, for Mormonism stands urgently in need of more education, and it is pure folly to spend half the revenue of the Territory annually in a school establishment, if the children and their parents are permitted to suppose that education is voluntary and a matter of individual whim. Some of the leading members of the Church are conspicuous defaulters in this matter, and do their families a gross wrong

14 For Frost’s experiences see Diary of Allen Frost, 1838–1901. A typescript of this extensive and informative diary, which includes many entries on schools, is found at B.Y.U. Library. For a short account of Savage’s experience, see The Journal of Jesse N. Smith (Provo: J. N. Smith Family Association, 1970), p. 384.
15 Record A, Sevier Stake Historical Record, 1864–1886, LDS Church Archives.
by setting 'the chores' and education before them as being of equal importance. Even in the highest class of the community children go to school or stay away almost as they like, and provided a little boy or girl has the shrewdness to see that he or she can relieve the father or mother from trouble by being at home to run errands . . . they can, I regret to think, regulate the amount of their own schooling as they please. I know very well that Utah compares very favorably, on paper, with the greater part of America, but I have compiled and examined too many educational statistics in my time to have any faith in them.  

How this effected the lives of many young people may be observed in the experience of Levi Savage (whom we met at Snowflake at a later date in his career). Before he was fourteen, young Savage had lived in the home of an aunt while his widowed father filled a mission to Siam. Young Savage pioneered at Scipio and Kanab in southern Utah, participated in the Indian wars of the 1860s, and did the work of a man so often that he never learned to read. Then one February day, fortune — rather than his community's commitment to learning — took a hand when he cut himself badly with an ax. During the months of his convalescence, he finally learned to read.  

One sees learning opportunities from a little different perspective at Salina, still a rough frontier town during the closing decades of the nineteenth century. Schools were primitive and ill disciplined, and teachers were often the laughing stock of young people. A. J. Scorup, later one of the state's leading cattlemen, ruefully recalled disciplinary measures that included imprisonment under the platform used to elevate the teacher's desk and of escape from this makeshift dungeon by tunneling out the back way. Still later, at the remote Mormon settlement of Liberty on New Mexico's frontier, the Wheeler boys found little premium set on school attendance and survived a succession of teachers virtually untouched by the magic of learning. Finally, as they reached young manhood, they were exposed to Will Brooks of St. George, who had acquired a love of learning as well as ideas about discipline at Brigham Young Academy and from John A. Widtsoe at the Agricultural College. One of the Wheelers, larger than Brooks by half a head, plagued the school by chewing tobacco and spitting at a knot hole in the floor. Unable to tolerate the practice, or as the school's janitor, to feel good about cleaning up, Brooks finally threatened to whip him if he continued. After the next chew and spit, a fight took place in which Brooks rubbed young Wheeler's nose in the filth around the hole. After some protest from boy's father, discipline was generally established and a period of genuine learning ensued.  

16 Philip Robinson, Sinners and Saints: A Tour Across the States, . . . with Three Months Among the Mormons (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1883), pp. 188-189.  
17 I have heard Savage, who was my grandfather, tell of this incident and the change it made in his life.  
19 As Brooks recalled William Halls, who was a self-educated superintendent of “district schools of Mancos district in New Mexico” as well as a counselor in the San Juan Stake Presidency, told him, “The young people of Liberty are of fine lineage — bright and capable — but they are growing up there without any training whatever. They have driven out every teacher they had had, and take delight in being tough.” Juanita Brooks, Uncle Will Tells His Story (Salt Lake City: Taggart & Company, Inc., 1970), pp. 118-122.
Other useful insights into pioneering Mormon attitudes toward learning are to be found in the conduct and sermons of leaders. Their statements relative to learning and education show clearly that both were regarded to be handmaidens of larger, more important, objectives. The Mormon formula for advancing mankind lay in the gospel, not in the prospects of science nor in the humanizing engendered by a study of the classics and literature. To neglect gospel learning was to neglect the purpose of life itself. Erastus Snow, for example, commended all good books and every kind of learning, but moved quickly to add that "the foundation of all true education is the wisdom and knowledge of God. In the absence of these," he continued, "we but obtain the froth and lack the foundation on which to rear a proper education."  

To Brigham Young, life was the great school and experience the great teacher. On the other hand, he had years of training in a trade and understood thoroughly how skill and efficient effort contributed to mankind's advance. With him, learning that had its direct influence on needed function was greatly preferred over learning that dealt with the theoretical. Indeed "learning that is based entirely upon theory" was to be little trusted and deserved to be banished from the schools.  

Young was also keenly aware that old world and early American forms of learning tended to create class and professional divisions. As the training places of clergymen, lawyers, doctors, and other professional elites, schools and universities were part of the worldly establishment from which the Saints were trying to withdraw. Fear of them was intense. There also appears to have been little appreciation for institutions of higher learning as the training ground for intelligent citizenship in a democratic country. The University of Deseret existed on paper, but until 1867 it made almost no contributions to higher learning, although its designation as a "parent school" helped establish a precedent that contributed to the development of centralized schools in Utah later. In consequence, for decades few Mormons in good standing had an opportunity to undertake advanced studies either at home or in the east. Such professional training as they enjoyed was almost exclusively of the self-help, home administered variety. As they traveled, Mormon missionaries were alert to things around them. Official Church tours, such as one made in 1872 by a party of Mormon dignitaries, including George A. Smith, a counselor in the first presidency, Apostle Lorenzo Snow, and poetess Eliza R. Snow, stopped frequently at institutions of learning and were constantly alert to industry, transportation, and architecture.  

On the other hand, requests to go outside for schooling were discouraged or denied outright. For example, Orson F. Whitney, son of the first presiding bishop in Utah and grandson of Heber C. Kimball, had his heart set on study-
ing the theater in New York. After long importunings, his mother agreed that
if the young man could sell a certain plot of ground she had inherited from
her father's estate, he could use the proceeds to further this objective. His best
efforts notwithstanding, the land remained unsold for two years as Orson
yearned and dreamed of bettering himself. Finally his thoughts turned to mis-

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sionary activity. When he received a mission call, the land so long on the
market, sold quickly at a good price and the proceeds were used for missionary
finances rather than for learning:

John R. Young, nephew to Brigham, was also denied the privilege of
going east to school, when he suggested such a course after returning from
San Bernardino in 1857. Even Brigham's older sons apparently had no oppor-
tunity for outside learning, although in the last years of life the Mormon
prophet reluctantly allowed younger sons to go to West Point, Annapolis, and
the University of Michigan law school for practical training; and other mem-
bers of his family studied music in the East.

In the years prior to the 1870s law and lawyers were held in special dis-
trust. I find few cases of young Mormons going out for training in law in
the first decades. On the other hand a number took advantage of well estab-
lished custom to study law in local law offices. This was particularly true as
the anti-polygamy crusade picked up. Even such frontier figures as Parowan's
Joseph Fish found opportunity to acquire the rudiments of legal training in the
courts and law offices of Beaver, Provo, Salt Lake City, and Ogden. Especially
notable in this context was Ogden's Franklin S. Richards, brilliant son of
Apostle Franklin D. Richards, who with no law school training whatever
tested the metal of the best barristers and jurists in America as he directed the
church's legal course through the intricacies of the anti-polygamy raid of the
1880s, the statehood adjustments of the nineties and the Smoot hearings early
in this century. In addition at least two young ladies were trained in law
and passed the Utah bar by these same home-grown methods during the 1870s.

It was not until the 1880s that fear of law schools and learning generally
abated sufficiently for church leaders to begin giving their blessing to young
people wanting to study outside. Among those whose lives were touched by
this change was James H. Moyle, later a famed Utah lawyer and Democrat.
His case throws sufficient light on attitudes toward formal learning as to merit
telling here in some detail.

23 Orson F. Whitney, Through Memory's Halls: The Life Story of Orson F. Whitney
24 Memoirs of John R. Young: Utah Pioneer (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press,
1920), pp. 241-243. For a view of Brigham Young's relationship to his younger sons see
Dean C. Jessee, ed., My Dear Son: Letters of Brigham Young to His Sons (Salt Lake City:
Deseret Book Company, 1974).
25 John H. Krenkel, ed., The Life and Times of Joseph Fish, Mormon Pioneer (Dan-
of reading law and practice in southern Utah. Scattered throughout the rest of the book are
references to Fish's role as legal adviser to Mormons in northern Arizona. Unlike Fish who,
brilliant though he was, can only be called a "frontier jack-of-all-trades," Franklin S.
Richards was a professional lawyer, but was nevertheless largely "self-taught." See Gustive
O. Larson, The Americanization of Utah for Statehood (San Marino, California: The
Young Moyle had taken full advantage of the Mormon community's educational opportunities, studying first under Harry Haines, the Fifteenth Ward's Gentile teacher, then at the University of Deseret, and finally at John Morgan's Commercial College. His bishop, Joseph Pollard, with whom he had worked closely as church deacon, had been a careful observer of this and warned him: "Jimmy, you are a good boy, but these educated men are damned rascals." Nevertheless, the fire kindled by Gentile Harry Haines burned within him and he continued to dream and to push for an education. Finally on August 20, 1882, he made bold to take a proposal to go to the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor to Angus M. Cannon, President of the Salt Lake Stake. Moyle was keenly aware of his lowly status as a "Fifteenth Ward clodhopper" and expecting opposition, went armed with arguments and visions of the service he could perform for his people. Even so, he was hardly prepared for his stake president's reaction. In an "outburst of protest" Cannon thumped "his fist violently on the counter of the county recorder's office" and fairly screamed, "You will go to Hell!" Years later Cannon apologized for the outburst but showed he had not changed his position when he asked Moyle to take his son John M. into his Salt Lake office to study law rather than sending him East.

For the moment young Moyle was cowed. He took Cannon's outburst as an authoritative prediction of his future. He, therefore, sought out a former ward bishop Robert T. Burton, who by this time was in the presiding bishopric, and gratefully accepted his council to see George Q. Cannon. Few men carried more power than Cannon who had for years been territorial delegate and an apostle and a counselor in the first presidency since 1880. Yet even he referred the question to John Taylor, president of the church. Taylor at first resisted the plan on the grounds that studying law was dangerous; and that since lawyers took both sides of any question, they were especially subject to duplicity and falsehood. Besides "his experience and that of the church was that lawyers had been a source of great wrongs and injustice." Taylor finally acquiesced, however, and in a solemn prayer blessed Moyle with "wisdom and intelligence" and significantly, in terms of the Mormon approach to all kinds of learning, with the "light of revelation." Echoing Angus M.'s dire prediction, he also warned that if Moyle failed to use his training to "protect the rights and liberties and immunities of His People . . . thou wilt go down and wither away." Thus shored up against the adverse influences of learning, Moyle ventured forth to Ann Arbor where he distinguished himself as a law student and returned to a great and loyal career among his people.20

In much of this one senses severe limitations in the Mormon conception of learning's role. Directed by the Spirit, it could be a gospel tool. If it involved contemplation or implied doubt or recognized conflicting points of view, it was feared and hedged around. Suggestive of this generally is the fact that although much has been made of the planned society that Young and his followers were establishing, he often avoided not only contemplative exercises, but restrictive planning. For example, to give the Spirit free play, Young

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20 Sessions, ed., Mormon Democrat, pp. 130-133.
spoke from the cuff, sometimes refusing even to plan his remarks, much less writing notes, or the entire text.27 Similarly, even some of his planned undertakings were singularly ill-defined, as for example, the United Order, which in spite of some directing guidelines, was in many respects a grand petition that divine direction would express itself in the development of improved methods of cooperation as people experimented with various forms of communal life.28

Some schemes embraced by Young and energetically pursued appear to have been even more directly aberrant from conventional learning, as well as lacking clear initial blueprints. The most notable case of this kind was the Deseret Alphabet. With the prospects of a worldwide gathering looming grandly before them in the early 1850s, Brigham Young and other Mormons hoped to set in motion a reversal of the great confusion of tongues initiated at Babel in biblical times. A Deseret News article of November 24, 1853 describes the ideals that lay behind the experiment:

One thing seems quite certain in regard to language — especially the language of this people; it ought to be adapted to the urgency of these peculiar times . . . Can it be expected that the Apostles of Great Salt Lake City will speak by the immediate power and wisdom of God so that people of every nation and language will forthwith understand them? Or should we rather look for the power and wisdom of God to be displayed in forming a simple, easily acquired language, in which barbarians and Christians, bondmen and freemen, of every grade of intelligence, out of every tribe, caste, language, and country, can, in a short time, interchange their sentiments and praise God unitedly in spirit and understanding? If such a language is ever demanded . . . it seems to be required without delay, even now . . . the people are gathering and the varied and general influx of the diverse tribes, nations, kindreds, and tongue, is even at our doors . . . Can . . . a few interpreters . . . answer the demands of a constant intercommunication between several thousand languages?29

Spurred by mounting baptisms in Scandinavia in the years that followed, Brigham Young kept the Deseret Alphabet alive. It appears to have been prominent in the minds and efforts of the regents of the University of Deseret — apparently to the exclusion of more conventional learning. Courses were offered to acquaint adults with it until the late 1860s. Indian missionaries went through strange and largely incomprehensible efforts as they tried to teach the Deseret Alphabet and words formed from it to the Hopi Indians at Oraibi Mesa in northern Arizona.30 Penmanship in the alphabet was taught in the common schools. Spellers, primers and Mormon scripture appeared in

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28 The experimental character of the United Order was apparent in the variety of programs applied. The effort to have righteous endeavor lead to an order Mormons everywhere could follow was particularly apparent in the early years of the United Order towns on the Little Colorado in Arizona. See Charles S. Peterson, Take Up Your Mission: Mormon Colonizing Along the Little Colorado River 1870-1900 (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1973), pp. 91-122.

29 Quoted in Moffitt, Public Education in Utah, pp. 54-55.

30 Two Indian missionaries, Thales Haskell and Marion Shelton, spent the winter of 1858-1859 with the Oraibi Hops. To begin with the two whites were optimistic, but as the winter lengthened, supplies dwindled and the hospitality of the Indian hosts diminished. They lost heart and finally headed back to Utah in early March. See Juanita Brooks, ed., "Journal of Thales H. Haskell," Utah Historical Quarterly 12: (1945), pp. 69-98.
it; and territorial school superintendent Robert L. Campbell tirelessly promoted its reforms until his death in 1873.31

What can be said of how this remarkable experiment related to learning? Certainly it was bold in its break with the norms of established learning. Indeed it was a radical departure. Herein lies an insight about Brigham Young and the ideas he and other Mormons of his era entertained about learning. In a very real way the alphabet epitomized a Mormon effort to step entirely outside the mainstream of learning and substitute their own system. In the alphabet was no love of English or any other modern or classical language. In it was none of the affinity for Carlyle, Scott and Yeats demonstrated by David O. McKay and other Mormons of his generation. Rather than looking with reverence to literature, the arts and indeed classical learning, church leaders devised an alphabet that may be looked at as an effort to short-circuit much of the world’s tradition. In this sense, it may be said to have been an obstacle to the development of an effective tradition of learning among the Mormons. In another sense, it reflected a willingness to depart from old norms, to see broadly and to experiment courageously. In this it was in learning’s best tradition.

One should also observe that Brigham Young was not a man of letters. He was highly articulate and loved to express himself orally in a wide variety of moods and by his conduct. His sermons were almost always taken down and transcribed. On one occasion he answered critics, who asked why he had produced no revelations, by saying that once he had proofread the transcripts, his sermons were as good scripture as existed.32 In addition he wrote thousands of letters to people in all walks of life. But this contradictory evidence notwithstanding, it may be repeated that he was not a man of letters. It is significant that Young let a pamphleteering thrust of considerable sophistication in the years immediately after he assumed leadership in the Church lapse by the time of his death. With one or two possible exceptions, old veterans of the pamphlet wars had either died, like Parley P. Pratt, or had been downgraded in the Church, as was Orson Pratt in 1875.33 It also seems possible that the so-called New Movement or Godbeite rebellion was in-part the product of the church’s failure to provide meaningful publication opportunities for this highly literate and intelligent group of British converts.34 Fortunately for the church, one of the most gifted English converts, George Q.

33 In a 1977 article David J. Whittaker draws no conclusions as to its implications for learning, but conclusively establishes that a vigorous school of tract writers and pamphleteers came more or less spontaneously into existence by 1845. During the next decade it was brought under “centralized” Church control and after 1857 progressively declined not to be revived again until after Brigham Young’s death in 1877. See Whittaker, “Early Mormon Pamphleteering,” *Journal of Mormon History* 4 (1977) : 35–49.
Cannon, stood fast; but the fact that he founded the greatest nineteenth century Mormon publishing firm (Cannon and Sons) only in 1882, may have had something to do with the fact that Brigham Young was dead, as it certainly did with the fact that Cannon had recently lost his Congressional seat as territorial delegate and had a maturing family to find employment for.

Cannon undoubtedly enjoyed the blessing of John Taylor in establishing this publishing house. Like Brigham Young, whom he succeeded as President of the Church, Taylor could respond to an attack with a verbal blast from the pulpit. But unlike Young, Taylor was likely to respond editorially as well and the position papers he produced were numerous. Taylor's journalistic efforts mark him as a highly literate individual who could and did express himself in writing. By some stretch, Taylor can also be said to have been an educator. A few days before Young's death thrust the effective direction of the church upon him in August of 1877, Taylor was elected to the office of territorial school superintendent. His election to this school position signifies a shift in direction. Not only did it attest that the written word would play a more important role, but it suggested that times generally had changed and that the Church faced new needs, new threats, and new opportunities all of which demanded that a new emphasis be given the role of learning in Mormon society.

Indeed radical shifts had been underway for at least a decade when Taylor became President of the Church. These changes were of several varieties and in conclusion, can be quickly surveyed here.

In the first place, the Mormon frontier was rapidly passing. Mining, railroading, and national reform were becoming part of the Utah scene. In the years ahead learning would be the great gateway to temporal opportunity. In the second place, Protestant churches had quickly sensed that learning was a weak point in the Mormon armor and had established dozens of mission schools. Although the lure of free or low cost education of high quality offered by the mission schools probably never attracted more than ten percent of the Mormon pupils, it doubtlessly did contribute to the growing appeal of learning among young Mormons. Thus goaded Mormons tightened their control on the public schools and broadened their own horizons of learning. To the moral character and enthusiasms of learning in other post-frontier regions of America, the competition of Protestants and Mormons added an evangelical fervor as, what may be called high schools, developed for the first time where gifted teachers created personal followings with deep loyalties. The loyalties were not only to teachers personally, but to the ideals of learning and the

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36 C. Merrill Hough indicates that in 1886 enrollment in the mission schools reached 6,668 while the common schools enrolled 19,437 and concludes, "If even as many as half of the mission school pupils were Mormons, which is unlikely, there were still ten times as many Mormons attending the common schools." See Hough, "Two School Systems in Conflict," p. 122.
prospect of carrying a new temporal gospel to people thirsting for enlightenment after generations largely beyond its reach.

Of special importance in expanding the horizons of Mormon learning was the emergence of what may be called a class of professional teachers. Under their direction and encouragement Brigham Young endowed both the Brigham Young Academy at Provo and Brigham Young College at Logan. Under their patient efforts, many of the conflicts of the Mormon controversy were worked out and a tradition in learning quite in keeping with the developments nationally took place.37

In summary then, what can be said for early Utah's education? In the first place the simplistic stereotypes, whether of heroic ancestors or a retrogressive priestcraft fail to give an accurate picture of the role learning played. As Leonard Arrington points out in referring to the Great Basin's regional economy in which pre-capitalistic and pre-industrial customs pertained, ideas about learning reflected values and customs current in the East during the generation before the Mormons were driven out.38 In addition the pioneering of successive desert frontiers over an extended period of years retarded the development of learning as compared to California and other more affluent regions. Single-minded efforts to build the kingdom also interfered. Revelation, not new ideas and research were seen as the ultimate means of human advance. As in the case of the Deseret Alphabet, Pioneer Mormons sometimes moved on tangents of their own without the support that a full appreciation for earlier learning might have given. At the same time, however, the minds and practices of Brigham Young and other Mormon leaders changed appreciably during the 1860s and the 1870s making it possible for Mormon Utah to profit greatly from the flowering of learning and education in the last quarter of the nineteenth century which itself became one of several important points of embarkation for remarkable achievements by Utahns in the twentieth century.

37 For a treatment of this development as Utah emerged from the pioneer period see Charles S. Peterson, "A New Community: Mormon Teachers and the Separation of Church and State in Utah's Territorial Schools," Utah Historical Quarterly 48 (Summer 1980): 293-312. Probably the best treatment of the role education played in the Mormon conflict is still Ivins, "Free Schools Come to Utah," which was written in 1954 although more general works are giving the matter increasing attention. See for example, Howard R. Lamar, The Far Southwest 1846-1912: A Territorial History (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), particularly pages 385-404.

Historians have largely overlooked or misinterpreted the critical role played by the Mormon court system in early Mormon history. The accepted wisdom of Mormon history depicts the Mormon ecclesiastical court system as exercising a limited and transient influence on Mormon historical development. The story is familiar. The church courts primarily provided a legitimating forum for the surgical excising of errant members, including wayward leaders, from the body of the Saints lest the disease of apostacy spread throughout the religious community. A secondary function is noted by some writers, in temporarily filling the void presented by the lack of civil courts in the early years of the Great Basin period. These accounts commonly portray the Saints as desirous of restoring jurisdiction over civil disputes to the civil courts as soon as practicable.

The few studies available of the church courts exercising jurisdiction over civil disputes during this brief transitional period vary significantly. One view expressed by Raymond Swenson has the church courts following the common law and applicable statutes as closely as possible given a nonprofessional judiciary acting without the assistance of counsel. Swenson argues that especially after the economic watershed of 1869 noted by Arrington, after which the

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Mormon economy became absorbed into the national market economy, the church courts abandoned any attempt to develop or maintain a distinct body of "Mormon law." A radically different view offered recently by anthropologist Mark Leone investigating church court cases in Eastern Arizona between 1884 and 1896 suggests that the priesthood relied on the aura of inspiration to ignore past experience and forget its own history in pragmatically deciding church court cases. Leone maintains that neither civil nor Mormon norms controlled ecclesiastical court decisions. The church courts acted in a strictly ad hoc manner until the establishment of civil courts and secular government superseded the church exercising jurisdiction over civil disputes.

None of the above analyses captures the essence and persistence of the church court system in the nineteenth century. Priesthood control of the ecclesiastical courts played an important role in the Mormon effort to establish Zion amidst Babylon. Early trials, most commonly involving the standing of apostate members, established the legitimacy of the courts in the eyes of the Saints who often participated in the most highly publicized cases. The availability of cost-free forums for dispute resolution, the social cohesiveness of early Mormon communities, the antipathy priesthood leaders held for gentile lawyers and legal processes, and the distinctiveness of Mormon socioeconomic relationships all inclined the Saints toward reliance on the church courts for all types of disputes.

The church courts began to hear civil disputes as early as 1831. The emerging sense of impropriety of one member suing another at law (rather than before the church courts) is evidenced by the excommunication trials of Oliver Cowdery and Apostle Lyman E. Johnson in April of 1838. Charges against Cowdery and Johnson included the "urging of vexatious lawsuits" and forsaking church responsibilities "for the sake of filthy lucre, and turning to the practice of law." This initial ambivalence and increasing antagonism toward divisive litigation resulted by the Great Basin period in the priesthood labeling as "unchristian-like conduct" the filing of any civil suit against another member before the ungodly (i.e., secular courts).

Contrary to most accounts, the exclusive jurisdiction exercised by the church courts over civil disputes did not wane with the establishment of secular government and regular civil courts. Nor did priesthood adjudicators embrace the civil law and attempt to apply its contours to the Mormon frontier experi-

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2 Ibid., pp. 593-94.
4 Ibid., p. 120.
5 Many of the early trials involving priesthood leaders were attended by congregations of the whole church assembled to consider the charges. See for example, the trial of Far West Presidency on February 5, 1838, in *Elder's Journal* 44-46 and *The Far West Record*, The Conference Minutes and Record Book of Christ's Church of Latter-Day Saints, Far West, Missouri, April 6, 1838, pp. 99-105 (hereinafter referred to as Far West Record); see also Sidney Rigdon's trial for attempting to take over leadership of the church after martyrdom, recorded in "Rigdon Trial," *Times and Seasons* 5 (Sept. 15, 1844): 647-55; (Oct. 1, 1844): 660-67; (Oct. 15, 1844): 680-87.
6 Far West Record, p. 21.
7 Ibid., pp. 118-26.
8 Ibid., p. 127.
9 Ibid., p. 128.
Mangrum: Church Courts

Mangrum: Church Courts

Mangrum: Church Courts

Mangrum: Church Courts

Mangrum: Church Courts

Mangrum: Church Courts

Mangrum: Church Courts

Mangrum: Church Courts

cence, as Swenson suggests. Similarly the bishop and high council courts did not
decide cases totally without reference to their own history, as Leone posits.
Certainly equitable considerations, inspiration, and seemingly ad hoc fashion-
ing of results to further the cause of Zion all played a role in the decisions of the
church courts. Nonetheless, Mormon custom and announced church policies
also provided priesthood adjudicators special decisional perspectives.

Common misconceptions of Mormon theological views regarding separa-
tion of church and state have contributed to the misunderstanding of the
church courts. Excessive reliance on general doctrinal statements concerning
the belief that “governments were instituted of God for the benefit of man” 10
and that the United States Constitution was divinely inspired has prompted
the opinion that the Saints did not want to usurp the role of the state in such a
critical area as civil justice. 11 Thus, by this view, the Saints ceased exercising
jurisdiction over civil disputes as soon as frontier exigency no longer required it.
Several observations call into question this superficial account of Mormon views
of the proper relationship between church and state.

First, the Saints were alienated from the secular legal system by the oppres-
sive treatment they received at the hands of civil justice, whether extermination
orders in Missouri or polygamy prosecutions in the Great Basin. They viewed
the civil state and its institutions as susceptible to manipulation by corrupt or
prejudiced civil officers. 12 Second, Mormons believed the cause of Zion tran-
scended the more limited purposes of the state. While constitutional principles
were framed to fit the circumstances of the liberal state they would be super-
seded by the Kingdom of God during the millennial reign of Christ. 13 The
church courts provided the Saints with a theo-democratic judicial system which
allowed members to accept an inspired disposition of controversies in prepara-
tion for the Kingdom of God. 14 Third, the priesthood eschewed the corrupt
influence of gentile lawyers. Brigham Young, for example, minced few words
in his repeated cursing of pettifoggers. 15

Fourth, church leadership reviled against the divisive influence of litigation
before the ungodly. Brigham threatened to send on missions or cast out com-
pletely members who whiled away their time amidst the dark influence of
gentile courts. 16 John Taylor likened the waste associated with gentile litigation

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10 Doctrine of Covenants, 194:1 (hereafter DC).
11 DC 101:77, 80.
12 Orson Hyde's diatribe against the disgraceful conduct of governmental officials in
City, Bookcraft, 1957), 6:133 (hereafter Journal of Discourses). See also Moses Thatcher's
13 See Orson Pratt's political discourse on the kingdom of God superseding the kingdoms
of this world in Journal of Discourses, 3:71.
14 The Mormon theory of government has been characterized as theo-democracy. Klaus
Hansen, Quest for Empire: The Political Kingdom of God and the Council of Fifty in Mor-
Therald N. Jensen, "Mormon Theory of Church and State" (Ph.D. diss., Univ. of Chicago,
1938), pp. 6-22.
15 For examples of Brigham's condemnation of wicked lawyers, see Journal of Discourses,
to two farmers quarreling over the ownership of a cow, one pulling her by the horns and one by the tail with the lawyer sitting between them quietly milking her.17 Fifth, gentile courts, even the probate courts controlled by Mormon judges and juries, operated under civil decisional standards, or man-made laws. The priesthood were desirous of maintaining distinctive property distribution patterns, family relations, contractual arrangements, and normative rules peculiar to Mormon community perspectives.18 The civil courts refused to legitimize Mormon expectations; moreover, the state’s courts were incompetent to apply Mormon standards or religious sanctions in aid of Mormon policies. For these reasons priesthood leaders consistently expressed their opposition to members suing one another before the ungodly, justifying their antipathy toward gentile lawyers and legal processes by reasoning that the dissension associated with civil litigation in secular courts was inimical to the cause of Zion.

Priesthood leaders were not so naive as to suppose that conflict would disappear in Zion if they simply banned lawyers and civil actions. They did assume that the level of animosity present in the community would be affected by control of the forum relied upon to resolve disputes, as well as its procedures and underlying objectives. Retaining jurisdiction of secular dispute resolution despite the availability of alternate civil forums served varied religious purposes: the church courts permitted the adoption of equitable principles and community interests over and above technical rules of law; they reduced costs and expedited the resolution of conflict; they allowed Zion to be autonomous in all things; they elevated the law of God over the law of man.

Accordingly, priesthood leadership adopted an “exclusive jurisdiction” rule throughout the nineteenth century, consistently maintaining that suing fellow Saints before the ungodly constituted an actionable offense of unchristianlike conduct. This principle was applied in disputes involving real property,19 water controversies,20 domestic conflict,21 contractual dis-
By forcing the Saints, upon pain of loss of standing in the church, to look exclusively to the church courts in resolving disputes, Mormon leadership was able to offer uniquely Mormon solutions to the social problems arising in the Great Basin. 24

John Taylor's counsel to the Saints regarding the proper response that members ought to take in the event another member sues them exemplifies the "exclusive jurisdiction" rule:

But when we talk about "popping men through" the courts who do not do thus and so, as has been referred to, I tell you what you should do, whenever a man would attempt to "pop" you through the courts of the law of the land, you should "pop" him through the courts of our Church; you should bring him up for violating the laws of the church, for going to law before the ungodly, instead of using the means that God has appointed. 25

Occasionally a member would resist the "exclusive jurisdiction" rule, but the ban on civil litigation persisted far longer than has previously been suggested. Zerubbabel Snow, for example, attempted a "test case" in 1880. Snow, the only Mormon appointed to the original territorial judiciary in 1851, had abided the "exclusive jurisdiction" rule for years. For a time, perhaps, the church's prohibition against suing members before the ungodly may have made sense, even to a lawyer like Snow.

As the Mormons migrated to the Great Basin the possibility of building a distinctive society, Zion, seemed attainable. Not only were the Mormons isolated geographically, but the crisis over slavery made the collapse of secular

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22 See 1885, Folder 25 (creditor-member criticized for suing another member at law, and debtor permitted to deduct court costs and attorney's fees of $46 incurred in defending the civil suit); 1885, Folder 24 ("in taking [member] to court [on a contractual dispute] before citing him before his Bishop did wrong and acted contrary to the law of the church"); 1882-83, Folder 1 (ZCMI "violated the order of the Church . . . for in violation of a rule laid down for our guidance, they have sued [a member] before the ungodly"); 1881, Folder 2 (ZCMI criticized for suing on a note before the Third District Court).

23 1886, Folder 14 ("we do not justify taking our trouble to law anymore in a case of trespass than for any other debt; we hold that Brother . . . should have exhausted the laws of the church first"); 1893, Folder 3 ("going to the law [in this a trespass case] if becoming prevalent, would hinder our progress as Latter-Day Saints; therefore complainant required to exhaust his remedies before the church courts.

24 Studies of probate court litigation in Utah confirm the infrequency of Mormons suing before even these Mormon-dominated civil courts. Jay Powell's study of the probate courts between 1852 and mid-1855 indicates, first, "that a clear majority of civil suits [in the Salt Lake County Probate Court] were between outsiders, usually emigrants on their way to the coast"; second, church leaders "rarely appeared before the court," despite their extensive property holdings. Brigham Young, for example, filed only two suits, both of which "were withdrawn before trial upon payment of the demanded sums." Ten other suits were brought on behalf of the Perpetual Emigration Fund, all of which "were occasioned by debtors intending to leave the territory without settling up." Jay E. Powell, "Fairness in the Salt Lake County Probate Court," Utah Historical Quarterly 58 (Summer 1970): 256, 258, 260, citing Salt Lake County Probate Court, Docket A-1, June 25, 1852-Sept. 1, 1860, Salt Lake County Clerk's Office, 152, 276; and Juanita Brooks ed., On the Mormon Frontier: The Diary of Hetaa Stout 1844-1861, 2 vols. (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1969), 2:554.

government appear imminent. However, the national government survived the Civil War and thereby delayed immediate millenial hopes. Shortly after the war the transcontinental railroad was completed, bringing an influx of non-Mormons into Utah in 1869 and extension of federal land laws to the territory. Finally the United States Supreme Court in 1879 decided in Reynolds v. United States\textsuperscript{26} that the First Amendment protected peculiar religious beliefs but not peculiar religious conduct, all apparently leading Snow to conclude that the time was ripe to challenge the exclusiveness of the church's jurisdiction over all disputes. Snow successfully sued a constable in federal district court for malfeasance, receiving a judgment for $50 plus $132.60 in court costs and attorney fees. The member-constable, in response, filed against Snow in a bishop's court for unchristian-like conduct in suing him before the ungodly. The bishop chastised both parties, ordering Snow to repay $100 of the judgment to the constable, since both had acted improperly. Snow appealed to the Salt Lake High Council on August 15, 1884. His plea to the high council indicates his "annoyance" in not being able to sue members in the civil courts where he made his living as an attorney:

"I have heard that we were not permitted to go to law with each other except before the Church. I have been a member fifty-two years last May; up to this time I have never preferred a charge against a brother except this time, and if I am in error now, I ought to pay Brother [C] everything that he has lost, but if I am not, then I ought not to pay him one dime."

"I have been an officer in this territory many years, part of the time as prosecuting attorney . . . also as a judge . . . . I think I may be in a position before long to have to bring a number of suits against men, and shall never ask this council if I dare start these suits. I insist that I have as good a right to my money as the president of the Church has to his. I claim I have a right to seek justice, and that when I seek that I am not seeking revenge; and that when I am restrained from getting my rights till I have to go and ask if I can get them, my liberty is hampered."

The high council, however, felt that the changed social circumstances did not merit an abandonment of the church's long-standing policy regarding the exclusivity of church court jurisdiction. The high council affirmed the bishop's decision that Snow had acted unchristian-like in suing before the ungodly and modified the judgment to require Snow to pay $132.60, "that being the amount of expenses of the Court, interest, etc. incurred on going to law."

Zerubbabel Snow appealed on September 12, 1884 to the First Presidency for a reversal of the policy. Though he favored a change in policy, Snow expressed his willingness to comply with the "exclusive jurisdiction" rule if the First Presidency found merit in its continuation:

"I have known for some time the views of the church on these points, but I have differed with them in judgment and still do differ. For this reason I want President Taylor and others to know it. But still as before, if the final decision be against me on the principle [of suing brothers before gentile courts] I shall comply with it.\textsuperscript{27}

There is no decision from the First Presidency in the file, but it is reasonable to assume that they affirmed the lower decision, since the church clearly con-
continued its policy of demanding that members not sue other members in the civil courts.

The “exclusive jurisdiction” rule by the time of this suit had experienced innumerable testings for the more than forty years that it had been the policy of the church. A careful study of relevant church records indicates that the policy, with few exceptions, remained intact for the rest of the nineteenth century despite the fact that the objective of building Zion amidst Babylon had become an increasingly impossible ideal. Mormons, for a variety of reasons, were being assimilated into the mainstream of American society, and the distinctive Mormon judicial system that claimed authority to consider all matters of conflict between members was becoming an anachronism. Nonetheless, the Mormon leadership tenaciously refused to defer to civil courts in the resolution of conflicts for a longer period than has earlier been supposed.

The “exclusive jurisdiction” exercised by the Mormon ecclesiastical courts enabled the priesthood to continue policies designed to further the cause of Zion, despite the existence of the contrary laws of Babylon. Especially noteworthy are examples in the areas of land distribution and domestic controversies.

A number of studies detail the distinctive colonization patterns adopted by the Mormons in settling the Great Basin. Many of these accounts explain the unusual Mormon colonization practices as being in part due to the absence until 1869 of any federal land laws in the Great Basin. One scholar of Mormon land policies, Michael Raber, compares the Mormon experience to studies of other tribal societies, such as Gluckman’s analyses of Barotse landholdings, where the tribal chief traditionally maintains his authority through the distribution of the land. Since Brigham, as the “tribal” land grantor, could act unfettered by any competing land law until 1869, the Mormons were able to institute a distinctive land-based economy. Raber notes “the United States did not so much end the colonization system as did the Mormons themselves, for they developed an apparatus which was designed to cease as soon as secure title to land could be achieved.”

In fact, Mormon land policies continued under the purview of the ecclesiastical courts both prior to and after 1869. Mormon customary rules, not unfettered priesthood discretion, provided the key to ownership from the earliest times, and these rules continued in fact after the land office was set up in 1869. This is not to suggest that the church courts handled land disputes in a formal or mechanistic manner in accordance with Mormon canon law, but rather simply to establish that Mormon custom regarding entitlement claims to land was a more important factor in determining the outcome of specific disputes than civil law. In fact the federal land laws were significant primarily in their providing a set of legal rules that could be worked around to effect Mormon distributional policies.

For example, the Great Salt Lake High Council heard a land dispute on September 7, 1849, involving a claimant with prior occupancy in conflict with

29 Ibid., pp. 38–39.
a claimant predicated on priesthood grant. Following Raber's thesis, the claimant deriving his "title" from a bishop's grant acting as agent for the tribal chief Brigham would have the legitimate claim to ownership prior to 1869; a contrary result would have vitiated Brigham's chiefly status as land giver and eroded the distinctive basis of the Mormon economy in the pre-1869 period. The actual results were otherwise. The court expressed disapproval of the prior claimant going "on his own to Cottonwood Creek before the Presidency arrived to give us our inheritances." Nonetheless, since he had acted "before any bishops or wards" had been organized to distribute land in an orderly manner he was subject to the prior customary rule that "each man's claim shall be his own and we will recognize each other's claims." The stake president's chastisement of the bishop-grantee claimant illustrates the reconciliation efforts of the church courts, and challenges any comparison between Brigham and the absolute authority of a Barotse tribal chief: "I don't believe all this that we are contending for is worth 2 cents — its all right that [the bishop grantee] got his authority all right . . . a proposition was never made by [the bishop grantee] to sister [prior occupant] to buy her out but the course is to root and drive her out of there. . . . Our decision will force a compromise upon them and this ought to have been done in the first place." 30

Raber is equally in error regarding the post-1869 period. Priesthood influence over land disposition did not disappear with the extension of federal land laws. After 1869, when patents to land became available by preemption or homestead, representative members or "trustees" acquired all the land that they lawfully could, and then transferred immediately the land to the prior occupants for the proportional costs it took to receive a federal land patent. The business-as-usual attitude exhibited by Mormon complainants undermines Raber's claim that the establishment of federal land laws in the Great Basin was of pivotal importance. An 1870 response to a dispositional conflict is typical:

We hold ourselves in readiness to deed to our brethren who justly claim land covered by our patent, on their paying the cost of said land, interest on the money advanced and other actual expenses. And we will abide the decision of our Brethren in relation to the distribution of the land.31

An 1884 case filed before the Box Elder High Council further indicates the continuance of Mormon land policies beyond the "epochal" 1869 date. The case presented a direct conflict between priesthood-directed allocation of land to Indians and legal claimants. A member acting as representative for the Indians complained that RH had taken advantage of governmental land laws in defrauding "some unknown Indians," for whom priesthood leaders had set aside certain lands. One high council speaker stressed the preeminence of the kingdom of God over legal entitlements:

We are here as men interested in the welfare of the Kingdom of God. The law of the land may suffer a person to do certain things that justice and equity will not support

30 1849, Folder 12.
31 1870, Folder 6.
Mangrum: Church Courts

and that is the position [RH] occupies. He has taken advantage of the law to defraud the Indians of the land inside the enclosure.

Another speaker commented that "we are not charging [RH] with a breach of law, but of justice." Even the speaker assigned to represent RH could only say that "as an American citizen [RH] had a right to claim that land, but as a brother in the church . . . he should have consulted [the bishop] in regard to the claiming of the land."

The court unanimously sustained the decision requiring that RH "relinquish all claims to the [subject land] inside of the enclosure known as the Indian farm." On appeal to the First Presidency President Taylor, sustaining the high council decision, explained that "he had no fellowship for Brethren that would hedge up the way of the Indians." 32 This case gives little solace to Raber's thesis that after 1869 Mormon land allocational policies disintegrated under threat of being in conflict with controlling federal land laws; it also gives little support to Swenson's thesis that by the 1880s the church courts "avoided placing Mormons in the anomalous position of living under two competing standards of legal behavior."

A Cache Valley boundary controversy further illustrates the point. The stake president in 1881 publicly announced that members were to respect Mormon over federal boundary lines. The announcement prompted one member, TD, to file a quiet title action in federal court to enforce a boundary predicated on the federal survey and incorporated into his patent. In subsequent church court proceedings not only was TD disfellowshipped, but amazingly the council ordered the Mormon attorney who represented him, George Marsh, to pay fifty dollars to the civil defendant, CR, for expenses he had incurred in unsuccessfully defending the civil action. Marsh appealed to the First Presidency, claiming that CR had had two Mormon attorneys representing him, and that as an attorney he ought not be punished for fulfilling his professional responsibilities. The First Presidency, however, sustained the high council's decision that members ought "to adhere to the rules of the church and settle all our difficulties by arbitration," and that Mormon attorneys ought not to aid and abet disobedience to priesthood counsel in land matters. 33 It would be difficult to explain a case such as this under Raber's interpretation.

Land controversies not only refute the Raber and Swenson theses; they also challenge both of Leone's contentions: that priesthood leaders made decisions in a strictly ad hoc manner forgetting their own history, and that their jurisdiction waned as soon as the federal government extended civil courts to the Great Basin wilderness. In a case filed on June 6, 1884 WJ attempted to introduce his patent to a contested parcel of land in a hearing before a bishop's court. The bishop refused to receive the patent as relevant evidence stating that "they were not trying the law but the equity of the case." Contrary to Leone, the bishop cited history in the form of a well known Mormon custom related to land controversies: "There has been a standing rule among us ever since the first settlement of these valleys that when a man entered a piece of land on

32 1884, Folder 25.
33 1885, Folder 18.
those claims the entry man always gives them their portion by their paying their proportion of the expense of entering." Following the longstanding rule (the bishop amazingly remembered history!) the bishop ordered WJ to deed to EC the disputed forty acres and ordered EC to pay WJ the proportional cost of filing at $1.25 per acre plus $1.75 per acre extra which WJ had incurred in proving title before the government.

Some years later WJ appealed on the basis of an editorial in the Deseret News of January 25, 1896 which appeared to deny any inclination on the part of the church to claim any jurisdiction over the adjudication of land disputes. Nonetheless the high council affirmed the earlier decision and on June 20, 1900 the First Presidency sustained the bishop's judgment which had favored Mormon customary claims over federally-established title to land.34

Church courts were also critical in the arbitration of domestic conflict. Contrary to common belief, the priesthood liberally granted divorce if the parties insisted, regardless of the grounds. Professor Richard Aaron, of the University of Utah Law School, considering the liberal provisions of Utah's divorce statute, suggested that it "may have been formulated as a convenient method to allow the faithful to rescind old marriage bonds in order to remarry within the sect."35 Aaron implies that conversely Mormons would have likely limited the actionable grounds for divorce between members in divorce actions heard before the church courts. Anthropologist Paul Dredge, a close scholar of the church courts, supports this opinion. He suggests "[i]t was a social fact that unless there was constant physical abuse or complete abandonment, the thought of divorce or separation did not even enter the minds of most Mormons of the nineteenth century."36 The plentiful divorce cases belie these conclusions.

It is true that priesthood leaders labored diligently to stave off unnecessary divorces. It is also true that only the prophet could authorize the cancellation of a marriage "sealing." Many church court cases depict moral suasion used to patch up intrafamily difficulties as an alternative to recommending to the prophet that a divorce be granted. While spouses seeking to end a marriage, especially husbands, were often chastised for doing so without good cause, an insistent party was seldom denied a divorce. In 1856 the bishop recommended a divorce "on the ground that [JL] don't know enough to keep a wife — too big a fool. He is not fit to have a wife — for three years I caution[ed] all the girls against him. He had no just cause to put away his wife."37

In an 1880 case the bishopric debated the propriety of recommending a divorce where no apparent ground existed. One counselor "thought it would be wicked for the parties to live together with the feelings they had manifested towards each other." Bishop Burt concluded that though "the evidence brought

34 1890, Folder 1.


37 1856, Folder 3.
forward was not sufficient to justify a divorce” Sister JS expressed such a spirit of hostility that he would recommend a divorce and “leave the matter to the judgment of President Taylor.” Similarly in an 1883 case a Fillmore bishop reported: “We consider in our opinion that it would not be wise to compel [MH] although her grounds are not just, to continue to be the wife of [CH] inasmuch as she claims that she does not now nor never did have any affections for him.”

Default divorces became so regular that many stakes adopted a standard form such as one utilized in a divorce recommended in St. George in 1876:

Know all Persons by these presents: that we the undersigned [MAM] and [MAX] his wife, before her marriage to him [MAK], do hereby mutually covenant, Promise and agree to Dissolve all the relations which have hitherto existed between us as Husband and Wife, and to keep ourselves Separate and Apart from each other, from this time forth.

In Witness Whereof, We have Hereunto set our hands at St. George, Utah this 1st day of June A.D. 1876.

Signed in the Presence of

While the liberal perspective of priesthood leaders who initially considered divorce petitions in church court proceedings paralleled the liberality of divorce obtainable in the civil courts under the applicable Mormon-drafted statute, the church courts heard additional domestic cases that the civil courts would not have considered. For example, because Mormons believe “sealed” marriages are for eternity, church courts heard divorce actions involving a deceased spouse where the surviving spouse subsequently decided a lifetime was enough.

The church courts also furthered the cause of Zion by providing a forum for the hearing of disputes arising out of polygamous family relations. Since the civil courts refused to recognize polygamy, the church courts provided the only forum for the resolution of such conflicts. Several cases will illustrate.

The first case involves a complaint filed on November 11, 1880 by a polygamous wife who had suffered abuse in the marriage from the husband and the other wife. The court directed the allocation of property and enjoined each member of the family from harassing any other member:

In regard to the division of the house, we consider it only just that she should have, in connection with the rooms she already occupies, the room now occupied as a kitchen by the first family, together with the room now used as a bathroom. These being really necessary in our opinion to the ordinary comfort of herself and her children; this still leaving the much larger, and by far the better part of the house for the use of the other part of the family.

And we hereby enjoin upon each portion of the family that they shall hereafter scrupulously avoid performing any act that will tend in any way to unnecessarily harass or annoy the other portion.

38 1880, Folder 6.
39 1883, Folder 6. See also 1886, Folder 8.
40 1875, Folder 6. The same printed form was also used in 1879, Folder 3; 1886, Folder 7.
41 See, 1881, Folder 5; 1888, Folder 11; 1884, Folder 10; 1885, Folder 11.
42 1880, Folder 3.
An 1881 divorce recommendation involving a polygamous family is also informative. The bishop in his recommendation noted “we got her to wait almost a year with no reconciliation, therefore, we recommend she have one.” In regard to the property disposition the bishop appointed three polygamists to ascertain the number of persons in his family and the amount of means he has on hand and report the amount [ST] shall have, how many children she shall keep and then make a report to the Presidency of the Stake for their approval of what is done. The Presidency of the Stake shall select a man that [HT] will approve of, who shall hold the property in trust for her and her children, and at her death or marriage the property so held shall go to her children in equal shares. 43

The availability of church courts was also important to the security of polygamous families in the area of estate planning. Where a father of a polygamous family died intestate, the Mormon rule was that the wives and all the children share and share alike. In one case where CL died intestate, Apostles John Henry Smith and A. H. Lund acted as arbitrators between all the claimants. They ordered that the four wives each receive $600 and the 54 children $375. The only non-equal treatment afforded any of the parties was allowing one wife to retain property previously deeded to her “in consideration of the large number of minor children she has to rear and educate.” 44

It is thus clear that many previous studies have either overlooked or misunderstood the critical role played by the ecclesiastical courts in furthering Mormon aims. The priesthood considered the filing of any civil action against another member to be unchristian-like conduct for a much longer period than earlier supposed. The church courts maintained distinctive Mormon policies that consciously deviated from gentile law, and in doing so perpetuated peculiar Mormon property and personal relationships. There is no question but that economic and political factors heavily influenced the viability of many of the distinctive Mormon practices. Nonetheless, as long as the Saints held themselves responsible for building a distinctive community, the church courts maintained exclusive jurisdiction over civil disputes between members in aid of the cause of Zion.

43 1881, Folder 21.
44 1899, Folder 6.
Reflections on the Founding and Purpose of the Mormon History Association, 1965–1983

By Leonard J. Arrington

During the years after World War II, partly because of the assistance given returning veterans by the G. I. Bill of Rights (Public Law 346), graduate research in the field of Mormon history began to flower. Whereas only a handful of historians had written doctoral dissertations on topics connected with Mormon history before 1946, several dozen were completed in the late 1940s and early 1950s—twenty in the 1950s alone. A sizable group of scholars spent their summers working in the Church Archives in Salt Lake City and became intimately acquainted with each other and with each other’s projects. We shared research findings. Perhaps more importantly, we shared strategems by which we could overcome the reluctance of A. William Lund, watchdog of the Archives, to allow us access to the rich materials housed there.

In the years that followed the granting of our degrees, as we prepared books and articles for publication, we continued to visit the Archives to fill in gaps in our research. We also kept in touch with each other by attending historical conventions, often staying up half the night in someone’s room discussing facts and interpretations of the Latter-day Saint past. Virtually all of us were practicing, believing members of the church, and we shared also our experiences in our various wards and branches. We hunted up persons we had not met who had written on the Mormons; and we speculated about the trends in church politics. We also made it a point to become acquainted with professional his-

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torsians who were members of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and spent some evenings discussing our common heritage with them. Some of us talked about the founding of a journal of Mormon history, even toying with possible names for the journal, such as Latter-day Saint Quarterly, LDS Historical Review, or Journal of Mormon History. These discussions were temporarily ended by the founding of BYU Studies in 1959. Although the first editors of Studies were anxious to run sound historical essays, we were taken aback when an interpretive article by one of us was published in the first issue, creating such an opposition on the part of one zealous general authority that the journal was suspended for a year.

Through these activities a community of LDS historians was developed. Our interrelationships, at annual meetings of the American Historical Association, Organization of American Historians, and Pacific Coast Branch of the American Historical Association, were strengthened with the formation of the Western History Association in 1963. They were also buttressed by meetings in Utah of the Utah State Historical Society, Utah Conference on Higher Education, and Utah Academy of Sciences, Arts, and Letters. On our various campuses there were also smaller study groups of historians and social scientists engaged in Mormon studies. At Utah State University where I was teaching, for example, George Ellsworth, Eugene Campbell, Wendell Rich, and myself met once a month with our spouses to read and critique papers we had prepared on aspects of LDS history. We also shared with graduate students the excitement of seminars conducted by George Ellsworth on the sources and literature of Mormon history.

The dullest meetings Utah educators had to attend were the annual September sessions of the Utah Conference on Higher Education. At these sessions administrators from Brigham Young University, the University of Utah, Utah State University, and the various junior colleges in the state harangued us on administrative problems and policies. In anticipation of the conference to be held on September 9, 1965, at Logan, Utah, a group of us decided to hold our own “rump session” to discuss the formation of a Mormon History Association. Professors Ellsworth, Campbell, Rich, and myself arranged the meeting, to be held in the Hatch Room of the Merrill Library at Utah State University. We had strong letters of support from Davis Bitton and John Sorenson, both then at Santa Barbara, California. We also had verbal support from several scholars around the nation, as well as from many at BYU and elsewhere in Utah. In anticipation of such a meeting some of us had acquired information about the American Catholic Historical Association and the Jewish Historical Society which might be helpful. The following agenda was provided to those expected to be in attendance:

**AGENDA FOR A “RUMP” SESSION OF MORMON HISTORIANS**

Hatch Room, USU Library
September 9, 1965 — 1:30-5:30 P.M.

1. Should we organize formally? If so, what is an appropriate name? Organization of Mormon Historians? Mormon Historical Association? LDS History Association? Or what?
2. Do we need a constitution? If so, maybe one of you would write a draft of one. At least, we ought to have a chairman or president or secretary who can serve as a focus for communications. Nominations for such a person or persons are now open!

3. Would it be desirable to publish a newsletter each quarter? If so, how to finance it? Asses each person $1 a year? There is good precedent for this in some of the professional organizations.

4. What stand should we take with respect to the new proposed journal Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought? Should we support it, at least temporarily, or make plans to sponsor our own journal?

5. What kind of arrangements should we make for meeting with other Mormon historians at the time of the American Historical Association meetings in San Francisco December 28–30? Someone should reserve a place and time for meeting and arrange for a program.

Any other business that any member would like to propose?

As the result of the meeting, the following letter went out to a wide circle of historians and social scientists interested in Mormon history.

UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY
Logan, Utah

September 15, 1965

Letter No. 1

Dear Friend:

In line with the suggestions of many persons, a group of Mormon historians met in the Hatch Room of the Utah State University Library the afternoon of September 9, 1965, to discuss the desirability of forming a Mormon history association. Fourteen persons were in attendance, and they included historians from Brigham Young University, Utah State University, and the L. D. S. Institute of Religion in Logan. The following actions were agreed upon.

(1) To arrange to go to the annual meetings of the American Historical Association in San Francisco December 28–30 as a group. Professor Thomas Alexander of Brigham Young University will attempt to arrange a time and place for Mormon historians to meet at the time of that convention. Professor Richard Bushman of Brigham Young University, with the assistance of James Allen, agreed to arrange for a program. Professor Stanford Cazier of Utah State University will attempt to coordinate the transportation so that all of us can obtain group air rates from Salt Lake to San Francisco for ourselves and wives.

(2) To suggest to the Mormon historians gathered there the formation of an organization. The group was evenly divided between two names: Mormon History Association and Association for Mormon History.

(3) Professor Eugene Campbell of Brigham Young University accepted the assignment of preparing the draft of a constitution and by-laws to present to the assembled Mormon historians in San Francisco.

(4) Professor Leonard Arrington agreed to serve as a focus for inter-communications and to send out a newsletter to prospective members. If all of you will send a paragraph mentioning the research interests which you have and research projects on which you are currently working that have any connection with Mormon history, these will be included in the newsletter. For the purposes of supporting financially the preparation and mailing of the newsletter, each prospective member is asked to send $1.00 to me.
(5) We discussed at some length the problems connected with organizing the group. We agreed that it ought to be intended primarily for professionally-trained historians interested in Mormon history. We assumed that most of the members would be Mormons, but there might be others who would want to participate. We also assumed that there would be Mormon members whose primary field of interest is something other than Mormon history, but who would want to belong because of professional kinship. We mentioned the following possible objectives:

a. To sponsor a session at the annual meetings of the Pacific Coast Branch, Organization of American Historians, and American Historical Association. While these would be partly social, we thought it would be useful to have two or three papers on subjects connected with Mormon history.

b. To encourage publication on Mormon history topics. After considerable discussion we agreed to recommend that Mormon historians support the new journal of Mormon thought, *Dialogue* — at least, for the time being. We are hopeful that we might induce the editors of *Dialogue* to publish frequent articles on Mormon history subjects and/or to devote at least one annual issue to Mormon history. We think Mormon historians will be among the most frequent contributors, as well as enthusiastic supporters, of *Dialogue*.

(6) After this discussion the group listened to an interesting paper by Jim Allen on "The Historical Significance of Joseph Smith's First Vision."

Leonard J. Arrington

Within the next few weeks I received letters from many persons — perhaps thirty-five or forty. Most of them enclosed $1.00. This enabled me to send out the following Letter No. 2 on November 10, 1965.

**MORMON HISTORY ASSOCIATION**

**Letter No. 2**

November 10, 1965

1. For those of you who just joined our mailing list, it is proposed that as many of us as can — our wives, friends, and others interested — meet for two or more hours at San Francisco in December in connection with the annual meetings of the American Historical Association. Tom Alexander has arranged for us to meet from 7:30 to 10:00 P.M. on Tuesday, December 28, in the Monterey Room of the Sir Francis Drake Hotel, corner of Taylor and Center, San Francisco. There should be no convention conflicts. The room seats in excess of 60 persons, and should therefore hold all those interested. Jim Allen and Richard Bushman have arranged a program as follows:

Conducting: Leonard Arrington
Discussion of purposes and procedures: 10 minutes
Discussion of a proposed name and constitution: Eugene E. Campbell 20 minutes
Election of officers for the coming year: 15 minutes
Discussion of projects and programs for the Association: Richard Bushman: 30 minutes
Panel and discussion — "The Writing of Mormon History: Prospects and New Approaches." Truman Madsen, Ralph Hansen, Alfred Bush — 30 minutes

2. Many of you responded to our first letter by sending $1.00 to provide money for stamps and paper, and secretarial help in connection with getting started. To this date, I have received $30.00. Of course, this will be considered your dues for the first year.
Arrington: Founding of the MHA

Most of you also appended a note giving enthusiastic support to the idea of forming the Association. Several of you added names to our list of those interested. (The list now has 80 names.) Several of you made extended comments about purposes and procedures. (This is a very exciting thing, both intellectually and emotionally, to be in touch with all these kindred spirits.) On one point, may I respond that the original list was only a beginning, and was drawn up by thinking of those who would be most likely to attend the San Francisco meeting of AHA. No attempt was made to exclude Reorganized historians, non-Mormons, lapsed Mormons, persons who are not professional historians, or anyone else.

3. I have omitted mentioning "the doings" of some of the members in this letter because of the bulk of organizational items which must be included.

Leonard J. Arrington

The organizational meeting was held in San Francisco in connection with the annual meeting of the American Historical Association (their first meeting in the American West), in the Monterey room of the Sir Francis Drake Hotel. Minutes of this founding meeting were as follows:

MINUTES OF THE FORMATIVE MEETING OF THE MORMON HISTORY ASSOCIATION
San Francisco, California, December 28, 1965

This meeting was held in connection with the annual meeting of the American Historical Association. Leonard J. Arrington conducted, and fifty-two persons were in attendance. Among those present were representatives of the Church Historian's Office, major western universities, L. D. S. Institutes of Religion, the Idaho Historical Society, and the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. At least one prominent non-Mormon historian was present.

I. Meeting commenced at 7:30 P.M.

II. Invocation by Earl E. Olson.

III. Introductory comments by Leonard J. Arrington included the following:

A. Welcome and personal introductions of all present. Each person was asked to introduce himself and indicate his interest in the Association.

B. Dr. Arrington discussed the background of the organization, indicating that for some years various people interested in Mormon history had been talking about some kind of formal organization. Last fall in Logan, Utah, a group of historians got together during the Utah Conference on Higher Education and made definite plans which resulted in this meeting. Dr. Arrington was assigned to write the newsletter and do the necessary mailing; Eugene Campbell was assigned to write a proposed constitution; Thomas G. Alexander made arrangements for the meeting place; and Richard Bushman and James B. Allen arranged the program.

C. Dr. Arrington reported that only yesterday he had met with the board of the Pacific Coast Branch of the American Historical Society. The Pacific Coast Branch agreed to allow the Mormon History Association to become affiliated with this organization and to be included in the program of its annual meetings. The only stipulation was that the Mormon History Association remain a professional organization interested primarily in scholarly research and writing. Dr. Arrington was charged personally with keeping the Pacific Coast Branch assured that this was the case. The next meeting of the Pacific Coast Branch will be held on August 30, 31, and September 1, 1966, in Portland, Oregon. This will be our first annual meeting, and we will work to make it most rewarding. Chairman of the session will be Dr. James Clayton and arrangements are under the
A question was raised concerning the reason for having our organization meet at the same time as the Pacific Coast Branch — why not in connection with some other meeting? It was explained by Dr. Arrington that the location of most of the members of the association made it most convenient for the largest number to attend this meeting. It is planned, however, to also have meetings in connection with other associations, but this one will be the official annual meeting.

D. It was announced that three annual awards of $25.00 each will be announced in the next meeting in August. These will go to the author of the best book on Mormon history published in the preceding twelve months; the author of the best article on Mormon history published in the preceding twelve months; and the author of the best thesis or dissertation on Mormon history approved during the preceding twelve months. Awards in all three categories will not necessarily be made every year. For the present, judges will consist of the officers of the Association. Nominations for the awards to be given in August 1966 are welcome.

E. LeRoy Hafen raised a question concerning membership in the Association — is it restricted to Mormons? Dr. Arrington explained that the original thought was that it should include all persons who are interested in Mormon history, regardless of their church affiliation. It should also include professional historians who may not be doing actual research and writing in Mormon history, but who have a kinship of interest. It was seemingly the consensus of the group that there should be no restriction of this nature on membership.

IV. Eugene E. Campbell discussed the proposed constitution, and general discussion from the floor was held on each item. A modified version of the constitution was adopted, and accompanies these minutes. One of the most serious items raised concerned the term of office of the officers. It was suggested that a two-year term would be more meaningful than a one-year term. Dr. Campbell explained that those involved in writing the constitution agreed with this, but felt that it should not actually be written in, in case the people constituting the nominating committee saw the necessity of changing an unsatisfactory officer. It was assumed, however, that the nominating committee would work this out and would probably re-nominate the president and other officers for a second term. It was felt best, however, not to make a constitutional fiat in this respect. The group accepted this explanation. In connection with Article IV of the constitution, dues were raised from $1.00 to $2.00, and all present members were asked to pay their additional $1.00 as soon as possible.

V. Eugene Campbell, as chairman of the nominating committee, nominated the following people as officers of the Association:

- President: Leonard J. Arrington, Utah State University
- 1st Vice President: Eugene E. Campbell, Brigham Young University
- 2nd Vice President: James L. Clayton, University of Utah
- Secretary Treasurer: Dello G. Dayton, Weber State College
- Council Members: Alfred Bush, Princeton University; Robert Flanders, Graceland College; Davis Bitton, University of California at Santa Barbara; Merle Wells, Idaho State Historical Society

Dr. Campbell explained that these nominations generally reflected the names which had been mentioned most frequently on the ballots that had come in. Nominations from the floor were called for. There being no further nominations, these officers were installed by acclamation.

VI. Richard Bushman discussed the general topic: “Projects and Programs.”

A. He indicated that his discussion was only to present ideas of what we might be doing, in addition to our regular meetings and research, but certainly not in-
tended to commit the Association to any of these programs, or to call for immediate action on them.

B. Since Truman G. Madsen, who is director of the Institute of Mormon Studies at B.Y.U., could not attend because of illness, Dr. Bushman gave a brief report on some of the things the Institute might do, and which this Association might be interested in. He explained that the Institute was still involved primarily with doing special research projects of interest to church leaders. Some of these projects, however, would involve some historical research, and money may be available to scholars who are interested in working on such projects.

C. Dr. Bushman suggested that we should be looking forward to the possibility of preparing for a new comprehensive history of the church which could be published in connection with the 1980 sesquicentennial. The administration of B.Y.U., and the Institute of Mormon Studies are interested, and some money is available for appropriate projects. Several things might possibly be done in cooperation with the Institute.

D. It would be important to collect ideas on areas which need to be worked on—a broad survey which would include not only new ideas, but a way of collecting all the materials already being worked on. It would hopefully include a broad listing from many universities, libraries, etc. The Institute of Mormon Studies would volunteer to collect materials, and to dispense one-page summaries of items submitted. The Mormon History Association could contribute by collecting problems, materials, etc.

E. In discussion from the floor, objection was raised to the possibility of an official connection between this Association and the Institute of Mormon Studies. It was generally felt that this Association should stand alone, not being dependent upon any other group for its projects or its activities. Dr. Bushman explained that he did not intend to suggest an official connection, and agreed with the general feeling. He was merely presenting ideas about what needed to be accomplished.

VII. Wesley Johnson, one of the managing editors of Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, reported on the plans for this new publication, the first issue of which will appear early in 1966.

A. He indicated that it will include articles, a book review section (including essay reviews), and bibliographical essays.

B. The present thought is to put out three regular issues each year, plus a special issue on a particular topic or theme. He made an informal proposal that the Mormon History Association take over the third issue as the first of these special theme issues. Leonard Arrington was appointed guest editor for such an issue.

C. He expressed his hope that Dialogue would stand for the spirit of free but responsible inquiry. They have had a wide response from people in all parts of the country with a wide variety of backgrounds.

D. He indicated that Dialogue wanted to stimulate good writing as well as responsible scholarship. The editors invite all interested to submit good articles, and to help obtain good articles from others. Perhaps a series of annual prizes can eventually be awarded by Dialogue.

E. In response to a question about the relationship of the non-Mormon to Dialogue, he indicated that it was intended that basic control of the publication remain with church members. Articles, however, were solicited from all sources, regardless of church affiliation, and there would be absolutely no discrimination on the basis of church membership. The only basis for selection would be good scholarship, good writing, and appropriateness of the material.

F. When Dr. Johnson finished, Dr. Arrington asked that all members submit to him ideas for articles to be included in the third issue which, it was generally assumed, the Mormon History Association would take over. He asked that mem-
bers submit articles by June 1, 1966, and that we also inform others who have good material of this deadline, encouraging them to submit their work.

VIII. A panel discussion was held on the general topic of ideas for new approaches to Mormon history. Participants on the panel were Ralph Hansen of Stanford University and Klaus Hansen of Utah State University. James B. Allen was moderator.

A. Ralph Hansen emphasized the need for more research in primary sources. He suggested the possibility of a more concerted effort to collect more manuscripts and place them in depositories where they would be readily available for research. He decried the fact that so many valuable manuscripts were still highly restricted in their use, and suggested that the best insight into Mormon history can be obtained only when they are available.

B. Klaus Hansen suggested that many non-Mormons are now taking Mormon history very seriously and that Mormons ought therefore to take themselves a little less seriously. By this he implied that Mormons ought not to write their history with the idea of regulating the future, as some have done. An important function of the historian is that of critic. We need to clarify our criticism, and evaluate the past critically, but we should not see ourselves in the role of priest and prophet. That is, we should not assume that our history gives us all the answers. We need to explode a few myths, but we do not need to try to create a new society. We should take ourselves a little tongue-in-cheek, but we ought to consider ourselves as the memory, not the prophets of the future.

C. A brief discussion ensued.

IX. The meeting adjourned at 10:20 P.M.

James B. Allen
Secretary Pro tem

The following constitution was adopted:

MORMON HISTORY ASSOCIATION: CONSTITUTION

Article I — In order to foster scholarly research and publication in the field of Mormon history, and to promote fellowship and communication among scholars interested in Mormon history, an international organization is hereby formed with the name: “Mormon History Association.”

Article II — The officers of the Mormon History Association shall be as follows:

President
1st Vice President
2nd Vice President
Secretary-Treasurer
Council — 3 year term — East: To arrange meetings in connection with the American Historical Association.
Council — 2 year term — Midwest: To arrange meetings in connection with the Organization of American Historians.
Council — 1 year term — Far West: To arrange meetings in connection with the Pacific Coast Branch, American Historical Association.
Council — 1 year term: Immediate Past President.

Article III — The officers shall be nominated by an official nominating committee consisting of the president and any two of the council members. Nominations shall be listed in the newsletters preceding the annual meeting of the Association. Suggestions for nominations may be submitted to the nominating committee by any member, and
additional nominations may be made from the floor at the elections to be held at the annual meeting. The term of office of the president, vice presidents, secretary-treasurer, and past presidents shall be one year. The term of office of each council member, beginning with those elected in 1966, shall be three years. All of the officers shall comprise the Executive Council of the Association.

Article IV — Annual dues of two dollars shall be assessed all members. Such dues must be paid within a month after the annual meeting in order for a member to remain in good standing for the ensuing year.

Article V — The annual meeting shall be scheduled in conjunction with the annual convention of the Pacific Coast Branch of the American Historical Association. Other meetings shall be promoted by the officers in conjunction with the annual conventions of the American Historical Association, the Organization of American Historians, the Western History Association, and at the call of officers or at the request of members.

Article VI — Membership in the Association shall consist of charter members who have paid dues before February 1, 1966, and others who indicate their desire to join by the payment of annual dues.

Article VII — Amendments to this constitution may be proposed from the floor at the annual meeting or by petition signed by five members and forwarded to the president. Voting on proposed amendments shall be by secret ballot sent to each member. The proposed amendment shall become part of the constitution when a majority of the members who submit their ballots before the established deadline shall vote in the affirmative.

Subsequent correspondence invited the submission of articles to be published in the MHA issue of Dialogue; informed members of planned get-togethers at meetings of the Organization of American Historians, Western History Association, American Historical Association, and Pacific Coast Branch; and announced that eighty charter members had paid their dues by February 1, 1966, of which two were Reorganized Church historians and three were non-Mormons (Merle Wells, Jan Shipps, P. A. M. Taylor). The memberships included a liberal sprinkling of professors outside of Utah, LDS Institute instructors, and persons not affiliated with academic or archival institutions (e.g., Juanita Brooks, David L. Wilkinson, Ward Forman). Suggestive of the important role women would play in the organization, there were five women charter members of Mormon History Association. The roster of members included persons living in all sections of the United States and at least two in foreign countries. Some were professors or students specializing in Western American history. Others were in ancient, medieval, modern European, Latin American, and American history. Some were in such other fields as literature, economics, sociology, and anthropology. Others were “amateurs” who wished to deepen their understanding of Mormon history and to support the various undertakings of the Association.

In the three years that followed, 1966–1969, MHA held its annual meeting in August in association with conventions of the Pacific Coast Branch. In 1970 the official meeting was in Los Angeles during the April meetings of the Organization of American Historians. In 1971 the business meeting was held in October in Santa Fe, in connection with the convention of the Western History Association. During these years meetings were also held in association with the Organization of American Historians in April, Pacific Coast Branch in August,
Western History Association in October, and American Historical Association in December.

Finally, in 1972, the officers decided to hold three-day conventions in the spring in chosen settings separate from other historical groups. The flowering of scholarship was such that there was a need for dozens of persons to present papers, and also for the hundreds of interested nonprofessional historians to hear the papers. This move also coincided with the creation of the LDS Historical Department and the appointment of a group of professional historians to do sponsored research, writing, and publication in the field of Mormon history.

Since 1972 the custom has been for MHA to hold meetings one year in historic Mormon settings (Palmyra, Kirtland, Nauvoo, Independence, and Winter Quarters) and the next year in the Far West (Logan, St. George, Rexburg, Ogden, Provo, Salt Lake City). Officers have conscientiously sent out newsletters, arranged programs, and conducted other business appropriate for the Association. In 1974 the organization, with almost one thousand members, felt itself strong enough to begin the annual publication of the Journal of Mormon History. In addition to MHA business and announcements, the Journal has contained papers presented in the annual meeting and other submitted articles.

If one of the purposes of MHA was to stimulate research and the exchange of ideas among historians, the organization has been remarkably successful. The number of papers presented at our meetings now runs into the hundreds, and the vast majority of these have been published in refereed journals. In addition to its third issue sponsored by the Association in 1966, Dialogue has also published other issues specializing in historical topics. For its part, BYU Studies has carried a section in each issue entitled "The Historian's Corner," which carries short articles, notes, and documents of interest to historians. Each summer a special issue is devoted to articles on some historical theme. The number who attend the annual conventions now averages in excess of five hundred persons.

Some reflections on the functioning of MHA in encouraging sound scholarship seem to be warranted. All who profess to be Mormon historians suffer from a certain amount of tension because of a dual loyalty. On the one hand, virtually all of us are loyal, believing, practicing Latter-day Saints. We love the Church and want to render service on behalf of it. On the other hand, we are seekers and writers of historical truth, and are therefore loyal to the best ideals of our profession. We would be ashamed if we, consciously or unconsciously, distorted events as they actually happened to fit the demands of denominational or political prejudice. No one would suggest that our members from BYU or Graceland, or LDS Institutes or seminaries, or the Church Historical Department, or those who write for the Ensign or Saints' Herald, are any more orthodox or loyal than our members at non-Church universities, or who write for Dialogue, Sunstone, Exponent II, or Courage. Clearly, all of us have our place; all can honestly search for truth and make important contributions to our common culture. We all believe in vigorous, open-minded, and creative historical thinking and writing.
This tension between our historical training and our religious commitments manifests itself in several ways. Our testimonies tell us that God intervenes in history, and we see abundant evidence of this both in our personal lives and in our historical research. But our historical training tells us to be skeptical; we may be imagining this, or our religious beliefs may be intruding beyond their proper limits. We see evidence that God’s love and power have frequently broken in upon the ordinary course of human affairs in a direct and self-evident way. But our caution in declaring this is reinforced by our justifiable disapproval of chroniclers who take the easy way out and use divine miracles as a short circuit of a causal explanation that is obviously, or at least defensively, naturalistic.

The professional in us fights against religious naiveté — believing too much. The religionist in us fights against secular naiveté — believing too little. And if this internal warfare weren’t enough, we have a similar two-front war externally — against non-Mormons who think we LDS historians believe too much, and against super-Mormons who think we believe not enough. There is no alternative to this encounter with the four kinds. If we are to succeed as Mormon historians, we must have deep within us a faith, counted to us as righteousness I trust, that a person may be a converted Latter-day Saint and a competent and honest historian. That others support us in this calling, even while criticizing some products of our labors, is suggested by the remark of President Kimball to me before his recent illness. “Our history is our history, Brother Arrington, and we don’t need to tamper with it or be ashamed of it.” A similar statement was made to me before his death by his predecessor, President Harold B. Lee. “The best defense of the church,” he said (in a statement similar to the one made earlier by Pope John XXIII), “is the true and impartial account of our history.”

Let me suggest four principles to help guide us in our struggles to “do the right thing” in writing the history of our people. First, we should rise as far as humanly possible above all parochialism of time and place that might narrow or distort our historical vision. We must judge the people we write about by their own standards rather than by those of our own day.

Second, granted the inevitability of having to make judgments of men, women, organizations, policy-decisions, and programs, we should obtain and weigh all the relevant data before judgment is inferred. Those of us who have been in the field for many years recognize that the result of a long and honest attempt to get at all the historical evidence about any disputed event or personality is an overwhelming sense of the complexity and relativity of the issues. In trying to be fair, we tend to show mercy. To take a concrete case, any historian who writes about the Prophet Joseph Smith is sooner or later forced to take up an attitude toward him. Our ideal must be to see him as nearly as possible as the Lord saw him, in his weaknesses and his strengths, his compromises and his triumphs, his creative decisions and his forced compliances with circumstances beyond his control. In the resulting judgment justice is tempered with mercy.

Third, we should be realistic. We must deal with the competition of individuals and groups for wealth and power, the game of power politics, the cruel-
ties which poverty forces on people, and the awful destruction of earthquakes and wars. At the same time, however, we see instances of unexpected and unexplainable triumphs in human nature. Although we must be realistic, our realism must be balanced by a certain wonder and appreciation of the potentials of goodness and greatness in human beings.

Fourth, we must be relativists; that is, understand that all policies and procedures, standards and expectations, are subject to change. But while man is immersed in history, he may also, with God's help, transcend history. In giving economic, political, and intellectual factors their due, we must also give faith and religion their due.

In a way, we LDS historians have certain advantages in writing the history of our people. We have an obligation to apply in our professional work the doctrine of consecration and stewardship. The work of historical inquiry is a way of sanctifying ourselves — a way of exercising our stewardship. This means that we have an added incentive to be diligent, hardworking, and honest, even when honesty (i.e., fidelity to the documents) forces us to speak contrary to the usual ideas on the subject. Historical research conducted with the usual rigor is for us not only a professional requisite but a spiritual adventure as well. Research into the history of the church is not only a vocation, but capable of becoming a religious experience.

If we members of MHA do our work properly, we will come to be associated in the minds of our nonmember colleagues with a certain attitude toward history, with the quality of our concern about it, with the sense of reverence and responsibility with which we approach our assignments. To say this another way, our self-image and our public image will be influenced by the quality of our individual religious faith and life. There will be a certain reverence and respect for the documents we work with, a certain feeling for human tragedy and triumph in history. We will try to understand before we condemn, and if we condemn we will do it with the sense that we, too, being human, are involved in any judgment we may make of others. We will not use history as a storehouse from which deceptively simple moral lessons may be drawn at random. We will not know it all, and will submit our analyses as tentative and subject to refinement. We will neither sell our fellow human being short, nor overrate them. Behind the personal decisions and the vast impersonal forces of history we will also see divine purposes at work. We will look for the working of God both in the whirlwinds and in the still small voices.

One of the things that excites me about our work is the way in which it enables us to have an encounter with our fellow Saints of former years. LDS history is more than the establishment of certain objective facts — dates, places, numbers, and names. It is a history of Saints, in their mutual relationships, in their conflicts and contacts, in their social intercourse and in their solitude and estrangement, in their high aspirations and in their errors and corruptions. In fulfilling our obligations as scholars we must be responsible to the whole amplitude of human concerns — to human life in all its rich variety and diversity, in all its misery and grandeur, in all its ambiguity and contradictions.

I trust that we will all, as members of MHA, resolve that our histories will be marked by thorough research, superior writing, and the display of the true
I will shortly be turning over my file of MHA early documents to the MHA official archives at the Utah State Historical Society. The documents included here, together with documents supporting all the historical statements will be found there.


The *Journal of Mormon History*, annual publication of the Mormon History Association, reflects the purposes of the association, “to foster scholarly research and publication in the field of Mormon history.”

Manuscripts dealing with all aspects of Mormon history are invited. First consideration will be given to those which make a strong contribution to knowledge through new interpretations or new information. A panel of readers will also consider general interest of the paper, extent and accuracy of research, and literary quality.

For matters of style, consult *A Manual of Style* (University of Chicago Press, 1969) and a recent issue of the *Journal*. Specific guidelines are available upon request from the editor.

Manuscripts should be submitted in duplicate with a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Articles should be typed, double-spaced, with footnotes, also double-spaced, in a separate section at the end. Preferred length is fifteen to twenty-five pages, including footnotes. All manuscripts are deposited in the MHA Archives after review unless accompanied by self-addressed, stamped envelope.

Submit manuscripts to Dean L. May, Department of History, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah 84112.
This paper is a response to ideas expressed by Paul M. Edwards in his 1977 essay "The Secular Smiths." The essay explores the possibility that Joseph Smith's contribution was "a mystical participation of a predominantly Eastern persuasion." Despite the tentative character of Professor Edwards's proposal it has been sufficiently widely received and the suggestion is so interesting as to justify a thoughtful response.

Attempts to explain the phenomenon of Joseph Smith need to account in some way for his allegedly theophanous experiences — the encounters with heavenly beings, the translation of the plates of the Book of Mormon, the visions of the celestial kingdom, and so forth. These experiences have led some to describe Joseph Smith as having been, in some sense at least, a mystic. I would suggest that the term "mystic" is somewhat foreign to the conventional Mormon description of Joseph Smith, and in fact I suspect that, in a church noted for its accent on activity and emphasis upon organizational values, the connotations of such a word have tended to be unfavorable.

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2 Ibid., p. 5.
3 Professor Edwards mentions Leonard Arrington and Jan Shipps as among those who have spoken of the possibility of Joseph Smith's mysticism.
4 In his recent article "The New Mormon Mysticism," Sunstone 5 (March–April 1980): 24, Marden C. Clark expresses this attitude: "In calling it 'mysticism' I risk something: neither the word nor the concept have a good feel for Mormons. We like to think we are
Certainly the theophanous experiences to which I have referred are by their description outside the domain of conventional natural experience, and thereby lay claim to be mysteries to the natural man. And Smith, as a claimed participant in such experiences, could perhaps be called a mystic in this limited and particular sense.

There are, however, many ways in which the word “mysticism” is used, and some students of the subject would exclude from the realm of genuine mystical phenomena such things as visions and voices. This view was taken by Walter T. Stace, who restricted his definition in this way on the grounds that to do otherwise would be to run counter to the accepted usage of those who have been recognized as the great mystics of the world. Stace argued that the burden of their teaching is what might be termed “the unitive experience,” about which I will have more to say shortly, and that those amongst these celebrated mystics who have had visions have themselves disclaimed such phenomena as having any real importance. This was a point of view also put forward by Evelyn Underhill in her classic study of mysticism, where she stated bluntly that “The first thing we notice when we come to this enquiry is that the mystics are all but unanimous in their refusal to attribute importance to any kind of visionary experience.”

Whether Joseph Smith was a mystic in this second sense and whether his mysticism was in any sense Eastern are the critical points in Professor Edwards’s paper which I would like to examine. Before doing so, however, I would suggest that Professor Edwards’s own remarks on the nature of mysticism seem to be in harmony to some extent with Stace’s views on what mysticism is not. In commenting on Thomas G. Alexander’s recent paper “Wilford Woodruff and the Changing Nature of Mormon Religious Experience,” Professor Edwards noted Alexander’s statement that Woodruff and his church “passed through two important periods as ‘the basic nature of mystical experience changed from open supernatural experience,’ during the Nauvoo years, to a period of ‘personal revelation, dreams, inspiration, and to insights connected with missionary work, church ritual, healings, and the dealings of God with practical people and the Gospel a way of life. We certainly do not think of ourselves as mystics.” As I have indicated in my paper, I doubt whether Mormons generally think of Joseph Smith as a mystic either.

A problem with the word “mysticism” and related terms is the looseness of the concept. It probably lets in “too much” for the comfort of most Mormons. This of course is a different sort of objection to that implied by Clark. “Mysticism” in one of its usages does seem to embrace such things as occultism, an association of meaning undesirable from a church standpoint. On the other hand, from a naturalistic point of view, Joseph, with his claims to seership and revelator, would no doubt be perceived as a mystic, of course without recognizing the epistemological validity of mysticism. As I have indicated, the problem of the looseness of the concept isn’t a problem for Mormons only. Stace is at pains in his books on the subject to define what he means by it.


Ibid., pp. 11-12.


Professor Edwards gave as his verdict that “neither of these stages is actually mystical.” He went on to define supernaturalism as “any phenomenon which is expanded beyond the exegetical powers of nature.” His position therefore rules out the definition of Joseph Smith’s mysticism with which I began this paper. Instead he describes mysticism as “an ascent of inner growth,” in which “the events seek to accommodate themselves to the forms that time and place seem to provide them and ‘while the experience is one and the same, the forms in which it [mysticism] is experienced are so many and so varied.”

This seems to brings Professor Edwards close to the crux of mysticism as understood by people like Stace, but he falls short of finding its essence in what I have referred to as “the unitive experience.” He does go so far as to say that “The participatory mystic is one who has realized the presence of the living God and is swallowed up by the experience, seeing it from the inside out rather than from the outside in. He is different from both the spiritualists and the supernaturalists in that the object of his experience is seen as ultimate and the experience is a direct and immediate confrontation.”

In his paper Professor Edwards proposed that “we may have been too quick to fit Joseph into the Christian rather than the Eastern mystical tradition.” He further remarked that “Joseph’s view of God, of man, and of nature, is in no way out of keeping with the Eastern mystical heritage.” It does seem to me, however, that Joseph Smith’s conception of the Godhead, for example, certainly as evidenced in the later years of his life, separates his position quite sharply from that of both Eastern and Western forms of mysticism. Professor Edwards happens to mention in his paper the paradigmatic instances of mysticism in the East and the West, the ninth century Hindu philosopher Sankara, and the thirteen century Christian Dominican scholar and ecclesiastic, Meister Eckhart. Although there are naturally differences in the terminology of these two men, the essence of their speculative mysticism is that the ultimate reality is an impersonal principle that utterly transcends all the known categories of experience.

Certainly Eckhart speaks the language of theism in his more orthodox moments, but often in his flights of oratory in his native tongue he postulates an inexpressible Absolute very much akin to the Brahman of Sankara. For both the essence of the mystical experience is real identity felt between the personal self and this impersonal principle, an undifferentiated spell-binding unity in which the knower and the known are experienced as one. I would suggest that if there is one thing which causes us to categorize together such generally acknowledged mystics as Sankara and Eckhart, in spite of the great differences

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10 Edwards, p. 7.
11 Ibid., p. 7.
12 Ibid., p. 10.
13 Ibid., p. 7.
14 Ibid., p. 8.
15 In one of his most famous statements Eckhart declared: “Some simple people imagine that they are going to see God as if he were standing yonder and they here, but it is not to be so. God and I: we are one.” Raymond B. Blakney, Meister Eckhart (1941; reprint ed., New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1957), p. 182.
between their respective religious and cultural backgrounds, it is this common
core of a sense of oneness with the ultimate reality.

Sankara's philosophy can be summed up in three propositions: (1) Brah-
man is reality; (2) the world has only relative reality; and (3) the individ-
ual self is identical with Brahman. 16 Brahman is conceived in two aspects, the one
real and the other merely apparent. Brahman is advaita, or non-dual; quite
literally one without a second. It is described as being beyond the categories
of space, time, and so forth, although it is also described in more positive al-
though abstract terms as sat, cit, ananda, or existence, knowledge, and bliss. 17

These positive predicates are meant to deny that Brahman is a mere
nothing, but they are in fact a concession to man's inability to get beyond
customary habits of thought. 18 Brahman in this real aspect is known as nirguna
Brahman, or Brahman without attributes. The world of common sense experi-
ence has a status technically called mithya, which is midway between being
absolutely real and absolutely unreal. 19 An accounting for the world from the
aspect of common sense experience, according to Sankara, would lead us to the
concept of saguna Brahman, or Brahman with attributes. Brahman from this
perspective is conceived as the lord and creator of the universe. Brahman in
this secondary sense has the same ontological status as the world it is assumed to
have brought into being from the pre-existing primordial matter. It differs in
this respect from the conventional Christian notion of God creating the uni-
verse out of nothing and appears to share this particular difference with the
Mormon concept of deity.

The resemblance, however, is a very tenuous one, since the Advaitic doctrine
of creation is self-confessedly a mere makeshift of human thought. I cannot
find any evidence to suggest that Joseph Smith regarded creation as anything
other than as a real and palpable process. On the other hand, Sankara's
Advaita postulates that this variegated world we live in is entirely the result of
maya on the objective, cosmic level, which is seen as the creative illusive power
of saguna Brahman. 20 Our individual participation in this scheme is the result
of avidya, or ignorance. Joseph Smith's saying that we will be saved no faster
than we get knowledge does strike a very familiar chord to a student of
Advaita Vedanta. 21 But the saving knowledge and its peculiar role are con-
ceived quite differently by the two men. For Sankara it is knowledge of our
metaphysical identity with Brahman, and this knowledge itself actually con-

16 Chandradhar Sharma, A Critical Survey of Indian Philosophy (London: Rider and
17 Swami Madhavananda, trans., The Brhadaranyaka Upanishad with the commentary
18 Ganganatha Jha, trans., The Chandogyopanisad with the commentary of Sankara
19 There seems to be no evidence that Joseph Smith questioned the reality of the world
of common sense experience.
20 This Advaitic doctrine is somewhat paradoxical since, strictly speaking, saguna Brahman
is no more real than the world which is subject to its overlordship.
21 Joseph Fielding Smith, ed., Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith (Salt Lake City:
stitutes salvation. For Joseph Smith the saving knowledge is of the gospel of Jesus Christ and, just as significantly, conformity to its requirements.

Eckhart's mystical interpretation of the conventional Christian doctrine of the Trinity in certain respects bears a striking resemblance to Sankara's distinction between nirguna Brahman and saguna Brahman. In his extraordinary rhetoric we read in Eckhart of the barren Godhead, a desert into which the soul is plunged, its identity destroyed, where forms and activities are no more and where it has no more to do with things than before it existed. He makes much use of the highly mystical concept of the birth of Christ in the soul, an introverted mysticism highly comparable to Sankara's doctrine of the Atman or indwelling Brahman. It is interesting to note that Eckhart based one of his vernacular sermons on the text from Luke 21:31, which in the King James version reads: "So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand."

Eckhart takes the point further and goes on to assert that indeed "the kingdom of God is within us," a phrase that we find in the King James version of Luke 17:21, which has Christ say: "Neither shall they say, Lo here, or Lo there, for behold the kingdom of God is within you." How did Joseph Smith choose to deal with this text? He substituted for it the following version: "Neither shall they say Lo here, or, Lo there. For behold, the kingdom of God has already come unto you." It is surely significant that a reading of Christ's saying which is virtually a "proof text" of the introvertive mysticism represented by such mystics as Eckhart and Sankara should have been discarded by Joseph Smith in favor of a reading that sees the church restored as the kingdom.

I would suggest that with one notable exception the leading ideas expressed in Sankara and Eckhart, and which have won them their enduring reputation as paradigms of classic mysticism, are quite alien to the thought-world of Joseph Smith. The exception is that each in his own way preaches of the potentiality of man to partake of divinity. (There is a remarkable passage in Eckhart which always reminds me of Joseph Smith's King Follett Discourse: "The seed of God is in us. Given an intelligent farmer and a diligent fieldhand, it will thrive and grow up to God whose seed it is and, accordingly, its fruit will be God-nature. Pear seeds grow into pear trees; nut seeds into nut trees, and

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22 Meister Eckhart, pp. 200-1.

23 In his fascinating and exhaustive comparative study of Eckhart and Sankara, Rudolf Otto writes: "With a little skill it would be possible so to weigh up and present their fundamental teachings that the words of the one would read like a translation into Latin or German from the Sanskrit of the other, and vice versa." Rudolf Otto, Mysticism East and West (New York: Meridian Books, Inc., 1958), p. xvi.

24 Meister Eckhart, p. 129.


26 It is hard to understand why Joseph Smith would have chosen to revise the passage concerned in the way he did if he felt empathy with the kind of mystical experience of which Sankara and Eckhart are classic examples. Whatever the nature of his mystical experience and however we may choose to explain it, contrary to Professor Edwards I feel convinced that Joseph was as much a churchman as was his brother Hyrum.
God-seed into God.” 27) However, there is a critical difference in the nature of divinity as perceived by Sankara and Eckhart and as perceived by Joseph Smith. Divinity for Sankara and Eckhart is in its essential nature beyond all form and plurality, while divinity for Joseph Smith is man made perfect, a being exemplified by Jesus Christ himself. 28 In Sankara and Eckhart the mystical experience of which they speak obliterates the subject-object distinction, and the knower and the known coalesce into an ineffable and irrepressible unity of feeling and being. However, the identity-statements so peculiar to the classic forms of mysticism in the East and the West are conspicuous by their absence in the sermons and writings attributed to Joseph Smith.

In contrasting Christian and Eastern mysticism Professor Edwards went on to remark that “More than any other person, the Eastern mystic is acutely aware of his divine heritage, of his roaming the maze of matter, in search of a way home. This latter view, which can be defined as either Mormon or Personalism, reflects neither the 1830s into which Joseph expressed it, nor the 1820s from which it is all supposed to come.” 29

In another part of his paper Professor Edwards cautioned against our perpetuating a confusion between three quite distinct phenomena: Joseph Smith, Mormonism, and the Mormon church. In the foregoing passage which I have just quoted, which of these categories did he have in mind? I find it very difficult to reconcile the outlook expressed in this quotation under any of these three heads. The point of a maze of course is to get out of it. But the notion of matter as constituting some sort of bondage from which the aspiring spirit seeks release seems to be utterly alien to Joseph Smith and his ideas.

The philosophical anti-materialism implicit in the passage just quoted seems to me to be in direct collision with the personally expressed views of Joseph Smith and the tradition inspired by him. 30 The Mormon acceptance of the doctrine of resurrection, for example, hardly ties in with the metaphysical desire to escape the maze of matter. Certainly it is clear that Joseph Smith himself completely believed in resurrection and relished the prospect of meeting

27 Meister Eckhart, p. 75.
28 The implication of course is Joseph Smith’s final conviction, the plurality of gods. This brings me to a difficulty I felt with Professor Edwards’s apparent assumption in his paper that the prophet arrived at his belief in the plurality of gods through the difficulties posed by belief in pre-existence. Such a revolutionary notion as the plurality of gods surely had a more vital genesis in the prophet’s experience than the teasing of a fine theological point. I think an observation by William James is very much to the point here: “When I call theological formulas secondary products, I mean that in a world in which no religious feeling had ever existed, I doubt whether any philosophic theology could ever have been framed. I doubt if dispassionate intellectual contemplation of the universe, apart from inner unhappiness and need of deliverance on the one hand and mystical emotion on the other, would ever have resulted in religious philosophies such as we now possess.” William James, The Varieties of Religious Experience (1902; London: William Collins Sons & Co., Ltd., 1962), p. 415. Some kind of experience or feeling seems to be the trigger to the felt need to construct some kind of theology. It seems to me this is a principle with which Professor Edwards’s paper is generally in harmony, but for this exception.
30 Consider for example Doctrine and Covenants 131:7–8: “There is no such thing as immaterial matter. All spirit is matter, but it is more fine or pure, and can only be discerned by purer eyes; we cannot see it, but when our bodies are purified we shall see that it is all matter.”
family and friends “on the morning of the resurrection.” 31 Professor Edwards himself remarks that “For Joseph, the dialectician, the one message that lies behind all variations . . . is this: ‘Loved Ones, You Do Not Die.’ ” 32 There is surely no ambiguity in Smith’s known statements as to just what he meant by such survival. Contrast this with Sankara’s doctrine, which looks to a consummation when the personal self or soul will be freed forever from the illusion of its embodied state.33

In his paper Professor Edwards develops the thesis that Joseph Smith’s use of the term “material” constituted a philosophical monism and that it was in this regard that his contribution embraced the Eastern point of view. Professor Edwards contrasts the mind-body dualism of Christian mysticism with the position of the Eastern mystic which suggests that the phenomenal world is one of illusion and envisages a single substance in which the nature of God encompasses all that extends. “On this subject,” Professor Edwards contends, “Mormonism is very different from fundamental Christianity,” and he sums up Joseph’s contribution as a monistic mysticism.34

My own feeling is that if we must categorize Mormon belief in philosophical terms it is surely realistic and pluralistic and not at all a monistic mysticism. Professor Sterling McMurrin sums up the situation in his book Theological Foundations of the Mormon Religion, where he identifies the pluralism of Mormonism at many levels, e.g., the notion of the Spirit as a compound of entities as distinct from the traditional Christian notion of it as a simple indivisible substance; the clear distinction between man, the world, and God; and the tritheistic conception of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost as three ontologically separate beings. These characteristics led Professor McMurrin to remark that “Though the metaphysics of established Christianity is not monistic, it commonly exhibits a less strenuous pluralism than is found in Mormonism.” 35 This is precisely the opposite conclusion to that of Professor Edwards, who distinguishes Mormonism from fundamental Christianity by its monistic character.

Professor McMurrin does draw a distinction between a qualitative monism and a quantitative monism, and under the former head I am able to agree that Professor Edwards has a point. However, there are two considerations which I believe are relevant here. First, the key statements of Joseph Smith on this issue are notable for their scarcity and their brevity.36 Compare this with Sankara’s massive commentaries on the Hindu scriptures and the Brahma Sutra, where his Advaitism (or monism) is a constant refrain on almost every page. Second, full-blooded monistic mysticism of the kind represented by Sankara is quite at

31 An eloquent testimony to the feelings of the prophet in this matter is his funeral discourse on the occasion of the news reaching Nauvoo of the death of Elder Lorenzo D. Barnes in England.
32 Edwards, p. 11.
33 The prospect of further lives, even countless lives, confronts the traditional Advaitin, but this is really of the nature of a penalty, from which liberation needs to be won through the realization of the identity of the self or Atman and Brahman.
34 Edwards, p. 9.
36 Doctrine and Covenants 131: 7–8 appears to be the main source.
odds with a merely qualitative monism. The admission of quantitative differ-
entiation as metaphysically real would be quite repugnant to a monistic mystic such as Sankara. Reality for Sankara is not only destitute of qualitative variation but is entirely devoid of any plurality whatsoever.

Thinking about Professor Edwards's paper led me to reread Bertrand Russell's well-known study of many years ago entitled *Mysticism and Logic*. It seems to me this has some merits in its attempt to define in a systematic way the philosophical tenets of mysticism as widely understood. For this reason it could perhaps be instructive to determine how Joseph Smith and Mormonism measure up under his criteria. Russell laid down four characteristic traits of mysticism: (1) belief in the supremacy of intuition over reason; (2) the illusoriness of plurality and division; (3) the unreality of time; and (4) the illusoriness of good and evil.

One assumes that no one would doubt that Joseph Smith satisfies the first of these criteria. Access to knowledge through the special agency of the Holy Ghost is a doctrine found throughout Joseph Smith's sayings and writings. His account of the translation of the Book of Mormon, from an allegedly ancient language, by, as he called it, the "gift and power of God," is illustrative of the centrality of his intuitive approach. At the same time there seems to be nothing in Joseph Smith of the attitude towards reason which is exemplified in Tertullian's famous phrase "I believe because it is impossible." Tertullian's assertion seems to have arisen from an acute sense of a divide between reason and faith, but it doesn't seem to me Joseph Smith experienced any sense of conflict between the two.

One might observe in this connection that it is very characteristic of systems of monistic mysticism not simply to assert the supremacy of intuition over reason, but to develop a sophisticated negative dialectic aimed at demolishing the fundamental categories of reason, leaving us with the sole option of plunging into the mystic or intuitive consciousness where all contradictions are vanquished. We find this tendency, for example, amongst Sankara and his followers, in the Buddhistic monism of Nagarjuna, and in the West F. H. Bradley shows evidence of it in his monistic philosophy. But there is nothing remotely resembling this tendency in Joseph Smith or the movement he founded. Professor McMurrin's observations, to which I have already referred, clearly show that Russell's second characterization of mysticism as postulating the unreality of plurality and division cannot be applied to Joseph Smith or Mormonism.

As for the third criterion, it seems reasonably demonstrable that, on the contrary, the reality of time is a cardinal article of faith in Joseph Smith and

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38 Time, relation, cause, substance, and quality are among the fundamental categories I have in mind.

39 I am not aware of anyone having actually described Bradley himself as a mystic. It seems somewhat doubtful. On the other hand, his intricately wrought logic seems determined to establish that thought, depending as it does upon the machinery of relations, can give appearance only and not reality. The implications of Bradley's logic seem at home with the dialectical conclusions of the Indian polemicists. It seems not surprising that many Indian latter-day exponents of Sankara find much to commend in Bradley.
Mormonism. The notions of restoration and dispensation which are so central to Mormon thought bear strong witness to this. In this context we may note the comparative lack of an historic sense in those religious cultures most distinguished for a tradition of monistic mysticism. On the contrary, Mormonism shares with Judaism an intense sense of history and therefore of time. Professor Edwards's remark that we have used our history as a theology tends to reinforce this point. With regard to Russell's fourth criterion, one assumes that no one would want to argue that Joseph Smith or the tradition he fostered ever espoused such a view as the unreality of good and evil.

Perhaps Russell's treatment of mysticism is too restricted in scope, since he concerned himself with the highly philosophical monistic mysticism which can be found in the East and the West. It seems quite unlikely that such an acknowledged mystic as Eckhart could satisfy all four conditions cited by Russell. There is no suggestion in Eckhart, for example, of the unreality of the world, as distinct from its contingent character. However, Russell's remarks do seem relevant in the present connection, since it has been suggested that Joseph espoused a monistic mysticism.

Despite the differences I have outlined, the mention of Sankara and Eckhart in connection with Joseph Smith does bring to mind what seems to me to be an interesting similarity. While all of these remarkable men were notable in the productivity of their ideas, all were organizationally active. Sankara is reputed to have traversed the Indian sub-continent and founded monastic institutions, Eckhart appears to have been a busy and much-travelled ecclesiastic, and of course Joseph founded a church. Certainly, in each case they sought to wrest support for their teachings from venerated ancient scriptures, although Smith took the unusual step of introducing what he alleged was a lost scripture, and further, through his prophetic conviction, becoming the mouthpiece of contemporary scripture.

This bracketing also raises the interesting question of whether and in what sense Joseph Smith was a contemplative. It seems to me that there is much evidence to suggest that there was a strong contemplative side to his many-faceted character. The apparently solitary character of his earliest religious experiences, long before the busy and crowded events of his later years, seems to strongly suggest that he had a propensity from early youth for the kind of

40 Indian culture particularly comes to mind.
41 This I feel is well brought out by Truman Madsen, when he lists among Mormonism's manifestations of an historical sense its "vast historical archives," "its genealogical fervor," "the admonition to keep a journal," and "its legacy of commemoration and celebration," etc. Truman Madsen, ed., Reflections On Mormonism (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1978), p. xii.
42 Edwards, p. 12.
43 The place of ethics in Sankara's philosophy is a somewhat involved and contentious issue. According to Radhakrishnan, "Moral growth consists in a gradual correction of the individualistic point of view, and when the correction is complete, the moral as such ceases to exist. So long as the latter exists, the ideal is unrealised. The end of morality is to lift oneself up above one's individuality and become one with the impersonal spirit of the universe." Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, Indian Philosophy, 2 vols. (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1956), 2:626.
quiet brooding or contemplation one would expect of a religiously motivated individual.  

This brings us to an intriguing contrast. There is said to be only a single line in the whole Sankara corpus which refers to his own mystical experience, and even this is oblique in its reference. Nor do there seem to be in the published works of Eckhart any direct allusions to his own mystical experience. This is not of course meant to imply that neither had the kind of experience of which their commentaries and sermons are such an articulate expression. I believe that in this they conform to a certain pattern consistent with their kind of mysticism: a reluctance to speak in the first person. A reader of the Upanishads, part of the Hindu scriptural canon, can hardly fail to notice the same phenomenon there.

On the other hand, while neither Sankara nor Eckhart advert directly to their own personal experience, Joseph Smith refers in his History to the precise experiences which mark him out as a mystic in the rather special sense I suggested at the beginning of this paper, i.e., the recipient of heavenly visitations and so forth. These directly reported experiences appear to be very different from those to which the sermons and commentaries of Eckhart and Sankara indirectly testify. Moreover, in a number of cases, Joseph’s experiences were communal, e.g., the witnessing of the plates of the Book of Mormon. It may be noted that in his tantalizingly brief reference to Joseph Smith in “The Varieties of Religious Experience,” William James described Joseph’s inspirations as predominantly sensorial. We do not read in Sankara or Eckhart of their encounters with heavenly beings and the like, nor would such manifestations really be relevant to what they want to say. On the other hand, Joseph Smith’s claimed supernatural experiences have everything to do with what he wanted to say.

Nothing in what I have suggested of course would appear to be inconsistent with Joseph Smith having been in some sense a contemplative. If it has not been altogether easy to see him in such a light, perhaps this ought not to be too surprising. By far the greater amount of his communications were dictated, with a resulting loss in the kind of intimacy of expression best found in privately written journals and letters and which leads one more hopefully to explore the inner soul of a person. Moreover, the intensely active nature of the prophet’s life has probably compounded the difficulty. The student of his life is confronted with a swirl of activity and events that may bedazzle the beholder and prejudice the judgment as to whether the man had any time at all for the

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44 There is a remark somewhere by A. N. Whitehead that religion is what a man does with his solitude. I believe it is much more than that, but I feel his overstatement is insightful in the point that it makes.

45 T. M. P. Mahadevan, Ten Saints of India (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1961), p. 86. The collected works of Sankara in English translation run to well over three thousand pages.

46 “For how can one man contest the fact of another possessing the knowledge of Brahman... vouched for by his heart’s conviction... and at the same time continuing to enjoy bodily existence?” George Thibaut, trans., The Vedanta Sutras with the commentary by Sankaracarya, 2 vols. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1962 reprint), 1:358.

47 William James, The Varieties of Religious Experience, p. 461.
luxury of introspection. It would seem likely that such factors as these were at least contributory to some of the past negative accounts of the prophet as a religious leader. Fawn Brodie many years ago declared that there are “few men who have written so much and told so little about themselves. To search in his six-volume autobiography for the inner springs of his character is to come away baffled.”48 Given the known circumstances of the writing of Joseph Smith’s History there does not seem to be reasonable ground for such bewilderment.

Dean C. Jessee has, in a paper published several years ago, indicated how misunderstandings can arise through failure to understand the methodology of the prophet’s documentary History, the use of which requires judicious handling by those who would interpret his life.49 That the inner springs of Joseph’s character were of a distinctly religious nature seems to be borne out by a variety of evidences, not the least of which are the private documents actually written by his own hand.50 Quite apart from these holographic materials, the stream of restoration scripture he presented his church, however we may choose to approach this literature, seems incontrovertible evidence of profound religiosity on the part of Smith himself as the transmitting medium of such material. There is also the testimony of those who knew him well.51 Needless to say I do not feel that Professor Edwards and I are in disagreement in respect to the integrity of Joseph Smith’s spiritual convictions. The problem lies in the nature of the experiences apparently giving rise to these convictions. As Mario De Pillis once very aptly remarked in his paper “The Quest For Religious Authority and the Rise of Mormonism,” Joseph Smith’s own testimony is “extraordinarily direct.”52 Explication of such experiences in terms of the kind of mysticism represented by Sankara or even Eckhart seems to me to be frankly unconvincing. His emphasis on such experiences surely puts him into an entirely different class of religious personality. Nurtured and steeped in a strictly literal Biblical view of life and man, he was swept by a force extraordinary in its intensity. It is hard not to get the feeling that there is something irreducibly mysterious about the inner dynamics which drove the man. I do not feel that we are brought closer to the answer by construing the prophet’s experiences in terms of Eastern mysticism.

While I do not find myself able to accept Professor Edwards’ suggestion of a parallel between Joseph Smith’s experiences and views and those of Eastern mysticism, I would conclude that a more fruitful parallel between Joseph Smith and the East may be drawn between Joseph’s conviction that we cannot be saved without our dead and the doctrine of universal salvation in Mahayana Buddhism. We find that, in contrast with Hinayana Buddhism, which is exclu-

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50 Joseph’s letters to Emma come to mind in this regard.
51 The journals and reminiscences of so many individuals who knew Joseph Smith seem to my mind to confirm this impression beyond reasonable doubt.
sively concerned with individual salvation, there is a powerful emphasis in Mahayana Buddhism upon the principle of salvation for all. In the words of M. Anesaki in his "History of Japanese Buddhism": "Individuals may purify themselves and thereby escape the miseries of sinful existence, yet the salvation of anyone is imperfect so long as and so far as there remain any who have not realised the universal spiritual communion, i.e., who are not saved. To save oneself by saving others is the gospel of universal salvation taught by Buddhism." 53 In his anthology of Buddhist writings Edwin A. Burtt has aptly suggested that this important characteristic of Mahayana Buddhism is perfectly suggested in the words of a little poem by John G. Whittier entitled "The Meeting."

"He findeth not who seeks his own;  
The soul is lost that's saved alone." 54

In the context of Christian belief and practice such an attitude seems to have manifested itself in a quite unique and remarkable way in the movement established by the Mormon prophet Joseph Smith.

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54 Ibid., p. 126.
Ten-Year Index

By Melvin L. Bashore

Alder, Douglas D.
"The Mormon Ward: Congregation or Community?," 5:61-78

Alexander, Thomas G.


"All Is Well!" (hymn), 6:56-57

Allen, James B.
"Emergence of a Fundamental: The Expanding Role of Joseph Smith's First Vision in Mormon Religious Thought," 7:43-59


"Amasa Mason Lyman, The Spiritualist," 6:75-87

America, destiny, 8:65

American Party, 10:35


Andersen, Jerry R., polygamy study, 4:115

Andersen, Nels, Desert Saints, 4:103

Anderson, Paul L.

Anderson, Washington Franklin (physician), 5:94-95

anthropology, religious insights, 3:102-4

anti-intellectualism, 4:14

Anti-Masonic movement, 2:5

anti-Mormon literature, 1:62-71


antipolygamy studies, 4:109-10

apostates, treatment of, 1:62

apostles, concentration of power, 1:26-31

apostolic office, 1:26-31

appendicitis, 5:100-103

Appleby, William I., 7:72-75

architecture, moderne style, 9:71-84

Arizona, northern, 3:4-9

polygamy study, 4:108

Arrington, Leonard J.

Melvin L. Bashore is a research librarian and indexer living in Salt Lake City. The editorial staff is grateful to Mr. Bashore for the remarkable willingness and efficiency which he brought to this labor.
Articles of Faith, canonization, 4:49
Assistant Presidents in the First Presidency, 1:25
Avery, Valeen Tippetts, and Linda King Newell
Bachman, Daniel W., polygamy study, 4:112
"New Light on an Old Hypothesis: The Ohio Origins of the Revelation on Eternal Marriage," 5:19-32
Badlam, Alexander, 7:72, 74-76
Bailey, Paul, polygamy experiences, 4:113
banks, 8:22-36
Barlow, Brent, polygamy film, 4:117
Bartlett, Daniel H.C., 2:74
Bean, George Washington, 2:31
Bear River Valley, 9:100, 105-6
"Bearding Leone and Others in the Heartland of Mormon Historiography," 8:79-97
Bedell, Edward A., 8:6
Beecher, Maureen Ursenbach
"Letters from the Frontier: Commerce, Nauvoo, and Salt Lake City," 2:35-51
"A Thread of Tragedy — But Not the Whole Cloth" (comments), 3:105-6
Benedict, Francis Dention (physician), 5:96
Benedict, Joseph Mott (physician), 5:95-96
Bennet, James Arlington, 6:24-25, 28-35
Bennett, James Gordon, Sr., 1:53
Benson, Ezra T., 7:73-76, 93
"Between Two Fires': Women on the 'Underground' of Mormon Polygamy," 8:49-61
Bible, concordances, 4:42
figuralism, 8:66-69
historicity, 10:55-57
Joseph Smith revision, 5:22-28, 10:55-56
19th-century America, 7:4-5, 9
bibliography, Joseph Smith, 5:3-17
Mormon women, 6:125-45
Nauvoo, 5:105-23
birth control, 6:19
bishops, development, 1:34
welfare role, 6:91-93, 102-4
Bitton, Davis
"Mormonism's Encounter with Spiritualism," 1:39-50
blacks, bibliography, 5:115
priesthood denial rescinded, 6:17-18
racism, 8:37-47, 86
Blumell, Bruce D.
"Welfare before Welfare: Thirtieth Century LDS Church Charity before the Great Depression," 6:89-106
book agents, 4:46-47
Book of Abraham, bibliography, 5:116
Book of Mormon, central issue, 10:9-14, 16
historical assessment, 1:10-11, 14-18; 8:94; 10:59-61
historiography, 5:3-5, 11
in biblical culture, 7:3-21
Mormon document, 4:11
"The Book of Mormon in a Biblical Culture," 7:3-21
Brannan, Sam, 7:87, 89, 91-92, 95
"Brigham Himself: An Autobiographical Recollection," 4:19-34
"Brigham Young in Life and Death: A Medical Overview," 5:79-103
Bringhurst, Newell G.
Brink, T. L.
"Joseph Smith: The Verdict of Depth Psychology," 5:73-83
British Mission, church literature, 4:45-49
converts' religious backgrounds, 4:51-66
emigration, 9:3-23
Brodie, Fawn M., impostor thesis, 3:75-77
No Man Knows My History, 5:9-10, 111
review of Leone’s book, 8:89-91
Brock, Juanita, historian, 3:47-54, 106
Brown, James S., 2:26, 30
Bullock, Thomas, clerk, 3:34
Burgess-Olson, Vicky, polygamy study, 4:103
Burrage, Kenelm, New Heaven, New Earth, 3:103-4
Burton, Richard (Sir), 1:55
Bush, Lester E., Jr.
"Brigham Young in Life and Death: A Medical Overview," 5:79-103
Bushman, Richard L., Book of Mormon study, 5:16
Cairncross, John, polygamy study, 4:116
California gold rush, Mormon involvement, 7:83-99
"Mormonism's Encounter with Spiritualism," 1:39-50
blacks, bibliography, 5:115
priesthood denial rescinded, 6:17-18
racism, 8:37-47, 86
Blumell, Bruce D.
"Welfare before Welfare: Thirtieth Century LDS Church Charity before the Great Depression," 6:89-106
book agents, 4:46-47
Book of Abraham, bibliography, 5:116
Book of Mormon, central issue, 10:9-14, 16
historical assessment, 1:10-11, 14-18; 8:94; 10:59-61
historiography, 5:3-5, 11
in biblical culture, 7:3-21
Mormon document, 4:11
"The Book of Mormon in a Biblical Culture," 7:3-21
Brannan, Sam, 7:87, 89, 91-92, 95
"Brigham Himself: An Autobiographical Recollection," 4:19-34
"Brigham Young in Life and Death: A Medical Overview," 5:79-103
Bringhurst, Newell G.
Brink, T. L.
"Joseph Smith: The Verdict of Depth Psychology," 5:73-83
British Mission, church literature, 4:45-49
converts' religious backgrounds, 4:51-66
emigration, 9:3-23
Brodie, Fawn M., impostor thesis, 3:75-77
No Man Knows My History, 5:9-10, 111
review of Leone’s book, 8:89-91
Brock, Juanita, historian, 3:47-54, 106
Brown, James S., 2:26, 30
Bullock, Thomas, clerk, 3:34
Burgess-Olson, Vicky, polygamy study, 4:103
Burrage, Kenelm, New Heaven, New Earth, 3:103-4
Burton, Richard (Sir), 1:55
Bush, Lester E., Jr.
"Brigham Young in Life and Death: A Medical Overview," 5:79-103
Bushman, Richard L., Book of Mormon study, 5:16
Cairncross, John, polygamy study, 4:116
California gold rush, Mormon involvement, 7:83-99
Campbell, Alexander, *Delusions: An Analysis of the Book of Mormon*, 5:4

Canada, colonization, 2:64-65

Cannon, Abraham H., 8:22-23, 33

Cannon, George Q., bank donation, 8:29

European Mission president, 4:47-48

First Vision teachings, 7:54-55

gold missionary, 7:96

influence, 10:74

canonization process, 10:57-59

Carbon County, Utah, labor unions, 4:93-99

Cargo Cults, 3:102-4

Casterline, Gail Farr, research study, 4:110

catalogues, publications, 4:46

Cave-Browne-Cave, Genille (Rev.), 6:112-13

centralization, Church, 4:44-46

Chamberlin, William Henry, evolution, 5:54-58

city work, pre-1930, 6:89-106


Chiocetti, John, 1:64

Christensen, Michael E.


Christianity, Mormon parallels, 9:53-60

Christiansen, John R., polygamy study, 4:115-16

Church courts, 10:79-90

Church Historians, 3:31, 35-36

Church history, as theology, 4:11-12

ceremonial roles, 3:30-33; 8:3-19

Church literature, pamphlets, 4:33-49

Church organization, 5:66-71; 8:71

centralization of power, 1:26-31; 4:44-46

Church programs, correlation, 6:15

policy formulation, 6:20-21

Church-state problems, 8:63-77

Churchill, Winston, 2:82

Clark, J. Reuben, Jr., 9:82

Clayton, William, clerk, 3:34

Nauvoo, 5:26m; 6:37-59

coal mines, unionization, 4:91-100

Cohn, Norman, *In Pursuit of the Millennium*, 3:102

colonization, 2:56-65

Colorado, colonization, 2:61-62

Commerce, Illinois, 2:35-44

community, religious, 5:61-78

concordances, 4:42

congregations, religious, 5:61-78

Constitution, U.S., 8:75-76

conversion studies, Britain, 4:51-66

convert-immigrants, 3:18-22


Counselors to the President of the Church, 1:23-25

Counselors to the Quorum of the Twelve, 1:27n

courts, ecclesiastical, 10:79-90

Cowardy, Oliver, historian, 3:31-32

political statement, 8:74-75

printing concerns, 3:29

Cowardy, Warren, historical clerk, 3:32-33

Cowley, Matthias F., bank business, 8:28, 32, 34-35

Cox, Martha, 10:67-68

Cracroft, Richard H., and Neal E. Lambert

"Literary Form and Historical Understanding: Joseph Smith's First Vision," 7:31-42

creedal statement, 4:49; 7:15

Cross, Whitney R., *Burned-over District . . .*, 5:11; 7:3, 6

Dana, Charles R., 7:65-71, 77-79

dancing, Nauvoo, 6:49

Daniels, William M., 3:42-43; 8:4-5, 14-18

Darwinism, 5:33-59

Davies, J. Kenneth

"Mormons and California Gold," 7:83-99

Davis, David Brion, antipolygamy study, 4:109

Davis, Ray Jay, polygamy study, 4:107

de Windt, Harry, 6:109

Depression (1929), 3:91-94

depth psychology, 3:73-83

DeFillis, Mario S., views on Mormonism, 5:12, 15

"Bearding Leone and Others in the Heartland of Mormon Historiography," 8:79-97

Deseret Alphabet, 10:75-76

DeVoto, Bernard, psychological diagnosis of Joseph Smith, 3:74; 4:10

Dialogue, 10:93-94, 97-98

Disciples of Christ, 7:6

divorce, 19th-century, 10:88-89

polygamous, 4:118

Dixon, William Hepworth, 1:55-56

doctrine, systematization, 4:43

Doctrine and Covenants, historical assessment, 8:94-95
RLDS, 10:58-59
document editing, 3:24-27
Dunham, Jonathan, 9:90-91, 98

“Early Mormon Pamphleteering,” 4:35-49
“Early Mormonism and Early Christianity: Some Parallels and Their Consequences for the Study of New Religions,” 9:53-60
Eccles, David, 3:86-88; 8:26-27, 35
Eccles, Marriner S., 3:85-99
ecclesiastical courts, 10:79-90
economics, 3:85-99
editing, 19th-century methods, 3:24-27; 8:3-19
education, 10:65-78
Edwards, Alice M., 6:61-74
Edwards, F. Henry, 6:67, 69, 71-73
Edwards, Paul M., response to, 10:105-16 views on Mormonism, 9:15
“The Secular Smiths,” 4:3-17
“Emergence of a Fundamental: The Expanding Role of Joseph Smith’s First Vision in Mormon Religious Thought,” 7:43-61
employment assistance, 6:91-92, 100, 103
endowments, Nauvoo period, 6:47-49; 9:32
church literature, 4:45-49
converts’ religious backgrounds, 4:51-66
emigration, 9:3-23
religious milieu, 7:7
Ensign Peak, 9:101
Equal Rights Amendment, Mormon opposition, 6:15-16
Esplin, Ronald K.
“‘A Place Prepared’: Joseph, Brigham and the Quest for Promised Refuge in the West,” 9:85-111
Esplin, Ronald K., and Ronald W. Walker
“Brigham Himself: An Autobiographical Recollection,” 4:19-34
eternal life, central message, 4:11
eternal marriage, doctrine origin, 5:26-31; 6:51
Evans, John Henry, Joseph Smith: An American Prophet, 5:10-11
evolution, 5:33-59
“The Evolution of the Presiding Quorums of the LDS Church,” 1:21-38
Exponent II, 6:20

“Faithful History: Hazards and Limitations,” 9:61-69
Farr, Winslow, 6:54
fast offerings, 6:92-94
feminism, 6:17
figuralism, 8:66-69
Finney, Charles G., 2:11; 7:16-17
First Council of the Seventy, 1:31-32
First Presidency, 1:25
First Vision, changing Mormon perception, 7:43-61
foundational event, 1:9-10; 4:11; 10:9-10, 13
literary form, 7:31-42
radical discontinuity, 9:59
RLDS tradition, 7:23-29
sacred event, 4:6
flag of the kingdom, 9:101
Flanders, Robert B., Nauvoo: Kingdom on the Mississippi, 5:109
text, polygamy, 4:110
Foster, Lawrence, polygamy study, 4:112, 117
“From Frontier Activism to Neo-Victorian Domesticity: Mormon Women in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries,” 6:3-21
“Frederick Madison Smith: The Formative Years of an RLDS President,” 4:67-89
Freece, Hans Peter, 2:74-75
Freemasonry, bibliography, 5:115
religious model, 4:12
“From Frontier Activism to Neo-Victorian Domesticity: Mormon Women in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries,” 6:3-21
frontier, impact on women, 6:9, 13
Fullmer, John S., 8:6-7
Fulton, Gilbert A., The Most Holy Principle, 4:115
fundamentalists, 4:113-15
fundraising campaign (1846-49), 7:63-81
“Furthering the Cause of Zion: An Overview of the Mormon Ecclesiastical Court System,” 10:79-90

Gager, John G.
“Early Mormonism and Early Christianity: Some Parallels and Their Consequences for the Study of New Religions,” 9:53-60
Gause, Jesse, 1:23-25
General Bishops, 1:34, 36
Glendale Ward, 9:74-75
Godbe, William S., literary ventures, 3:61–62
spiritualism, 6:83–84
Godbeite movement, and Edward Tullidge, 3:62–65
and T. B. H. Stenhouse, 1:59–62
spiritualism, 1:42–44; 6:83–84, 86
Godhead, Mormon perceptual development, 7:46–61
gold rush, Mormon involvement, 7:83–99
Gospel Reflector, 4:41
Graham, Winifred, 2:75–76, 79; 6:107–21
Grant, Heber J., labor dispute, 4:98–99
Prohibition, 10:36–38, 40–42, 44–46, 48, 50–52
Utah Loan and Trust Company, 8:21–36
Great Basin Mormon Culture Area Project, 4:117
Great Britain, anti-Mormon campaign, 2:69–88
church literature, 4:45–49
converts' religious background, 4:51–66
Green, Duff, 7:66–68
Hall, G. Stanley, psychologist, 4:73–80
Hamblin, Jacob, 2:21–34, 67
Hansen, Klaus, on Mormon history, 10:98
Hansen, Ralph, on Mormon history, 10:98
Harris, George H. A., 4:57
Harris, Llewellyn, 2:32
Hartwig, Chester Wendell, polygamy study, 4:104
Haskell, Thales, 2:32–33
"Heber J. Grant and the Utah Loan and Trust Company," 8:21–36
Hatch, Ira, 2:33
Hefner, Loretta L.
hermeneutics, 10:14–15
Hickman, Josiah, polygamy study, 4:102
high councils, 1:28
Hill, Donna, Joseph Smith: The First Mormon, 5:14–15, 111
Hill, Marvin S.
"The 'Prophet Puzzle' Assembled; or, How to Treat Our Historical Diplopia Toward Joseph Smith" (comments), 3:101–5
"Quest for Refuge: An Hypothesis as to the Social Origins and Nature of the Mormon Political Kingdom," 2:3–20
Hilton, Jerold A., polygamy study, 4:114
historians, conflict, 3:53
discreditors/defenders, 8:91, 97; 9:55
Edward Tullidge, 3:55–72
Juanita Brooks, 3:47–54
Mormon, 4:13–15; 8:84; 10:4–5, 11–14, 18–19
sacred/secular, 3:14–17, 21–22
Historian's Office, 3:27
historical editing, 3:24–27
historiography, direction of Mormon, 8:79–97; 10:3–19, 61–62, 100–103
faithful, 9:61–69
Joseph Smith, 5:3–17
Nauvoo, 5:105–23
nineteenth-century, 8:3–19
history, as theology, 4:12
"History and the Mormon Scriptures," 10:53–63
History of Joseph Smith, the Prophet, 1:6, 10
History of the Church, Joseph Smith's martyrdom, 8:3–19
reliability, 3:23–24, 27–45
"History's Sequel: A Source Essay on Women in Mormon History," 6:123–45
Holy Ghost, interpretation, 8:93–96
Holy Order, 6:47–49; 9:32
Horne, Mary Isabella, 9:27, 33, 35–38
Howard, Elizabeth, 9:27, 38
Howard, Richard P.
Howe, Eber D., Mormonism Unvailed, 1:13; 4:40; 5:4
Hulett, James Edward, Jr., polygamy study, 4:102–3
Hunt, Larry E.
"Frederick Madison Smith: The Formative Years of an RLDS President," 4:67–89
Hunter, Edward, bishop, 1:37–38
Hurlbut, Philastus, 4:40–41
Hyde, Orson, 7:73–77
Idaho, colonization, 2:58–59
polygamy studies, 4:108
Idaho Falls Temple, architecture, 9:79–82
image studies, polygamy, 4:110–11
immigrants, 2:54; 3:18–22
Indians, Nauvoo-period missions, 9:87–88, 90–91
Utah-period missions, 2:23–34
"Indulging in Temperance: Prohibition and Political Activism in the RLDS Church," 10:21–33
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>122 Journal of Mormon History</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>intellectuals, 6:20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iowa, Mormon settlements, 6:39-41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland, converts, 4:66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ishikawa, Nancy Hiles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ivins, Stanley S., polygamy study, 4:104-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James, Kimberly Jensen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;'Between Two Fires': Women on the 'Underground' of Mormon Polygamy,&quot; 8:49-61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Jacob Hamblin, Apostle to the Lamanites, and the Indian Mission,&quot; 2:21-34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jarman, William, 2:76-77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jensen, Juliaetta Bateman, <em>Little Gold Pieces</em>, 4:115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jensen, Richard L.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Steam Through: Arrangements for Mormon Emigration from Europe, 1869-1887,&quot; 9:3-23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessee, Dean C., polygamy study, 4:113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Return to Carthage: Writing the History of Joseph Smith's Martyrdom,&quot; 8:3-19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jesus Christ, art, 3:48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jews, social organization, 5:72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jones, Dan (Capt.), 8:9-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jones, Daniel W., 2:26, 30-31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Joseph Smith and Mysticism,&quot; 10:105-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Joseph Smith: The Verdict of Depth Psychology,&quot; 3:73-83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Juanita Brooks: The Mormon Historian as Tragedian,&quot; 3:47-54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kane, Thomas L., Mormon relief efforts, 7:64, 71-76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kimball, Heber G., Presiding Bishopric appointments, 1:37-38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kimball, Presendia L., 9:27, 32-33, 35, 37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kimball, Sarah M., 9:27-31, 33, 37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King Follett discourse, 3:40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kingdom of God, political, 5:118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kirtland, plural marriage origin, 5:19-32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knight, Jesse, 8:30-32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knight, Vinson, 1:35-36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knights of Labor, 4:92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kunz, Phillip R., polygamy study, 4:105-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>labor unions, Utah coal mines, 4:91-100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lambert, Neal E., and Richard H. Cracroft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Literary Form and Historical Understanding: Joseph Smith's First Vision,&quot; 7:31-42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>land, dispute resolution, 10:85-88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Larson, Gustive O., polygamy study, 4:108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lawyers, 10:73-74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lee, John D., tragic portrayal, 3:49-54, 106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leone, Mark P., discussions about book, 8:79-91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Letters from the Frontier: Commerce, Nauvoo, and Salt Lake City,&quot; 2:35-51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Institute, 1:49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;The Limits of Learning in Pioneer Utah,&quot; 10:65-78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lincoln, Abraham, 1:55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linford, Orma, polygamy study, 4:106-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>liquor control legislation, 10:21-33, 35-52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little, Feramorz, 1:72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liverpool, England, 4:45-46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Los Angeles Temple, architecture, 9:82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lyman, Amasa M., fundraising mission, 7:72, 76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>goldfields mission, 7:90-92, 94-97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spiritualist, 1:43-44; 6:75-87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lyman, Amy Brown, 6:96, 99, 103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lyman, Francis M., bank business, 8:24-25, 35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McCary, William, 8:39-40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McCune, Alfred W., 8:29-30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McKenzie, Thomas, 7:78-79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madsen, Carol Cornwall, and David J. Whittaker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magrath, C. Peter, polygamy study, 4:107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>man, antiquity, 5:37, 40-41, 43-44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mangrum, R. Collin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Furthering the Cause of Zion: An Overview of the Mormon Ecclesiastical Court System,&quot; 10:79-90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manifesto, bibliography, 4:108, 114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Markham, Stephen, 8:10-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marquis, Kathleen, antipolygamy study, 4:110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>marriage, arrangements, 9:19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>solemnization authority, 5:29-31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Marty, Martin E.
“Two Integrities: An Address to the Crisis in Mormon Historiography,” 10:3-19

May, Dean L.
“Sources of Marriner S. Eccles’s Economic Thought,” 5:85-99

Methodist Church, British converts from, 4:54-60

Mexico, colonization, 2:62-64

migration history, 2:53-68

millenarian movements, 3:102-3

millenarianism, early Mormon mind, 8:69-71; 9:41-51

village setting, 5:63-65

“Millenarianism and the Early Mormon Mind,” 9:41-51

Mittlenacht Star, 4:45-47

Miller, David E. and Della S., Nauvoo: The City of Joseph, 5:109-110

Miller, George, 1:34-37

miners, unionization, 4:91-100

missionary literature, 4:37-49

Missouri, refuge, 2:16-18


Mormon Battation, gold fields, 7:84-92

Mormon Historical Demography Project, 4:117

Mormon history, 4:13-15; 10:3-19

Mormon History Association, 10:91-103

“Mormon Influence on the Unionization of Eastern Utah Coal Miners, 1903-33,” 4:91-100

“Mormon Migration and Settlement after 1875,” 2:53-60

“Mormon Modernity: Latter-day Saint Architecture, 1925-1945,” 9:71-84

The Mormon, 1:53


“Mormon Polygamy: A Review Article,” 4:101-18

“Mormon” (term), 3:43

“A Mormon Town: One Man’s West,” 3:9-12

“The Mormon Ward: Congregation or Community?,” 5:61-78

Mormonism, early characteristics, 8:65-72

new religious tradition, 8:94-95

public image, 1:6; 7:64-81

secular nature, 4:6, 13, 15

social origins, 2:3-20

theology, 4:11-12

“Mormonism’s Encounter with Spiritualism,” 1:39-50

“Mormons and California Gold,” 7:83-99

mortality, meaning, 4:11-12

Mountain Meadows Massacre, tragic portrayal, 3:49-51, 53-54, 106

Mulder, William


Muncy, Raymond Lee, Sex and Marriage in Utopian Communities, 4:116

Mulholland, James, 3:33

mysticism, 4:7-11; 10:105-16

National Miners Union, 4:97-98

Nauvoo, bibliographical survey, 5:103-23

exodus, 7:63-81; 9:102-4

interim gathering place, 9:89-90

letters, 2:45-51

refuge place, 2:18-20

William Clayton’s experience in, 6:37-59

Nauvoo Charter, 2:18

Nauvoo Legion, 2:19; 6:29-31

Nauvoo Temple, 6:48-49

Nelson, N. L., critic of spiritualism, 1:43-48

Nelson, Nels, evolution, 5:49-54

“New Light on an Old Hypothesis: The Ohio Origins of the Revelation on Eternal Marriage,” 5:19-32


New Mexico, colonization, 2:59-61

New York City, Mormon relief campaign, 7:75-76

New York Sun, purported “Emma” letter, 6:23-35

Newell, Linda King, and Valeen Tippetts Avery


Nibley, Charles W., 7:101-14; 10:41, 45, 47

nineteenth century, historical writing, 3:24-27; 8:3-19

Nolan, Max

“Joseph Smith and Mysticism,” 10:105-16

O’Dea, Thomas F., The Mormons, 5:11-12

Ogden, Utah, banks, 8:22-27

Ohio, plural marriage origin, 5:19-32

origins of the Church, bibliography, 1:3-5
characterization of converts, 7:4

Pack, Fredrick, 5:46-49
Palmyra, New York, 2:8-11
pamphleteering, 4:35-49
papyri, Egyptian, 5:115-16
Parrish, Warren, 3:32-33
Partridge, Edward, 1:32-35
Patriarch to the Church, 1:25-26
Peep O'Day, 3:59-62
Perpetual Emigrating Fund, 9:12-18, 23
Peterson, Charles S.
"Jacob Hamblin, Apostle to the Lamanites and the Indian Mission," 2:21-34
"The Limits of Learning in Pioneer Utah," 10:65-78
"A Mormon Town: One Man's West," 3:3-12
Peterson, Levi S., criticism of article, 3:105-6
"Juanita Brooks: The Mormon Historian as Tragedian," 3:47-54
Peterson, Ziba, 1:27n
Phelps, William W., 3:32, 34, 43
philanthropy, 7:63-81
pioneers, philanthropic assistance, 7:63-81
tragic depiction, 3:48-49
"'A Place Prepared': Joseph, Brigham and the Quest for Promised Refuge in the West," 9:85-111
plagiarism, 3:25
plural marriage, bibliography, 4:101-18; 5:114
C. W. Nibley family, 7:101-14
conflict, 2:53
divorce, 10:89-90
doctrinal contradiction, 7:15
doctrine origins, 5:19-32
Nauvoo, 6:44-45, 49-56
status, 3:104
support system, 9:34-35
tragic portrayal, 3:49
underground, 7:106-8; 8:49-61
women's role, 6:7-10
political kingdom, 2:15-16; 5:118
Poll, Richard D., polygamy studies, 4:106-8
polygamy. See plural marriage

Powell, Allan Kent
"Mormon Influence on the Unionization of Eastern Utah Coal Miners, 1903-33," 4:91-100
Pratt, Belinda, 1:54, 56, 61
Pratt, Orson, mission literature, 4:46, 49; 7:19-20
Pratt, Parley P., A Voice of Warning, 4:63; 7:18-19
publication regulations, 4:44, 49
theological role, 4:5, 11-13
pre-Adamite men, 5:37, 40-41, 43-44
pre-existence, 4:9
Presiding Bishopric, 5:32-38; 6:90-106
Presiding Patriarch, 1:25-26
priesthood, early published study (1843), 4:43
priesthood offices, 1:21-38
priesthood ordinations, 1:32n
Prohibition, 10:21-33, 35-52
proof texts, 4:43
"The 'Prophet Puzzle' Assembled; or, How to Treat Our Historical Diplomia Toward Joseph Smith" (comments), 3:101-5
"The Prophet Puzzle: Suggestions Leading Toward a More Comprehensive Interpretation of Joseph Smith," 1:3-20
publishing, centralization, 4:44-46

"Quest for Refuge: An Hypothesis as to the Social Origins and Nature of the Mormon Political Kingdom," 2:3-20
Quincy, Josiah, 7:74
Quinn, D. Michael, kinship study, 4:112
"The Evolution of the Presiding Quorums of the LDS Church," 1:21-38
Quorum of the Anointed, 6:47-49
Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, 1:26-31, 38
quorums, establishment, 1:21-38

racism, 8:37-47, 85-86
railroads, emigration, 9:8-10
Ramsden, George, 9:6-7
refuge theory, 2:3-20; 9:85-111
regional bishops, 1:34
relief campaign, 7:63-81
Relief Society, 6:91-106; 9:29-33, 36-38
religion-government issues, 8:63-77
Reorganized Church, Alice Smith Edwards, 6:61–74
First Vision tradition, 7:23–29
Fred M. Smith, 4:67–89
Prohibition, 10:21–33
scripture canonization, 10:57–59
resuscitation, mouth-to-mouth, 5:83
"Return to Carthage: Writing the History of Joseph Smith's Martyrdom," 8:3–19
revelation, bibliography, 5:116–17
definition, 1:18–19
eternal marriage, 5:19–29
inception, 1:17–18
textual revision, 3:28–29
revivals, 1:7–9; 2:11; 7:4
Reynolds v. United States, 4:107; 8:64
Rhoads, Thomas, 7:85–86, 88, 92
Rich, Charles C., 7:91, 93, 95–97
Richards, Franklin S., 8:22
Richards, Stephen L., 6:95–96
Richards, Willard, 3:34–36; 8:4–5
Rigdon, Sidney, 1:23–24; 3:33; 10:23
Riley, I. Woodbridge, The Founder of Mormonism . . . , 3:74; 5:9
Roberts, B. H., evolution, 5:41–46
First Vision teachings, 7:55–56
historian, 3:41–43
labor controversy, 4:98
Robinson, George W., 3:32–33
Rockwell, Orrin Porter, 7:77, 86, 89–90, 95
Rocky Mountains, early expectations/preparations, 9:85–111
Roots of Modern Mormonism, 8:79–91
rural settlements, 3:4–12
Russell, William D.
"History and the Mormon Scriptures," 10:53–63
Salt Lake City, letters (1850), 2:45–51
Tullidge's History, 3:67–71
Salt Lake Valley, pre-exodus expectations, 9:83–111
San Bernardino, California, 6:77; 7:97
Savage, Henry, British convert, 4:54–55
Scandinavia, emigration, 9:16–18
schools, 10:65–78
Schroeder, Theodore, psychoanalytical study, 3:75
Scotland, converts, 4:66
"Scriptory Book," 3:32–33
scriptures, canonization, 10:57–59
"The Secular Smiths," 4:3–17
settlement process, 2:53–68; 5:67–68
Seventies, 1:31–32
Sharpe, Thomas C., 8:15
Shepard, Lulu, 6:112
Sherlock, Richard
"Mormon Migration and Settlement after 1875," 2:53–68
Shipps, Jan, 4:111; 8:92–94; 10:12–13
Shupe, Paul
"Indulging in Temperance: Prohibition and Political Activism in the RLDS Church," 10:21–33
slavery, 8:37–47
Smart, William H., 8:32
Smith, Alice M., 6:61–74
Smith, Andrew, 4:55–56
Smith, Asael, 2:7–8
Smith, Bathsheba W., 9:27, 31, 33, 37
Smith, Emma, bibliography, 5:113
Nauvoo property, 6:57–58
New York Sun letter, 6:23–35
plural marriage, 5:26; 6:44–45, 52
Relief Society, 9:33
Smith, George A., 3:35–37, 39, 41; 8:4–5, 11–12, 19
Smith, Hyrum, 4:5, 11–13; 6:77–78
Smith, James E., polygamy study, 4:105–6
Smith, Joseph, bibliography and historiography, 3:66–67; 5:8–17, 110–12, 119; 8:3–19
business affairs, 6:43
criticism, 10:56
death, 3:36, 42–43, 105–6; 8:3–19
description, 6:39
discourses, 3:39–41
friends and associates, 6:29
government views, 8:75–76
History, 3:23–24, 27–45
land and property, 6:57–58
leadership, 8:71
literary efforts, 3:28–29
money-digging, 1:12–14; 3:101–2, 104
mystic, 4:5, 7–11; 10:105–16
personality, 1:12, 15
philosophical base, 4:11–12
plural marriage, 5:31-32; 6:44-45, 51-53
prophet/fraud issue, 10:11-16
psychological interpretation, 3:73-83; 4:10
religious background, 2:12
revelator, 5:22-27, 116-17
teachings, 8:73-74
tragic portrayal, 3:48-49
visions, 1:10, 12, 18
western refuge, 9:86-97
See also First Vision
Smith, Joseph, Sr., 1:25-26; 2:8, 12; 7:5
Smith, Joseph F., business, 8:24-25, 28
labor unions, 4:94
Prohibition, 10:36-45, 47-50
wives, 1:56
Smith, Joseph Fielding, evolution, 5:33-38
Smith, Lucy Mack, Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith . . . , 5:6
Smith, Mary Fielding, 6:26
Smith, Melvin T.
"Faithful History: Hazards and Limitations," 9:61-69
Smith, Samuel, II, 2:6
Smith, Timothy L.
"The Book of Mormon in a Biblical Culture," 7:3-21
Smith family, sacred burden, 4:3-4
Smoot, Abraha M., 4:92
Smoot, Reed, 4:93; 8:31; 10:35, 38-51
Snow, Eliza R., 3:45; 5:113; 9:25-26, 34-38
Snow, Lorenzo, 8:34
Snow, Zerubbabel, 10:83-84
Snowflake, Arizona, 3:4-9, 12
social anthropology, religious insights, 3:102-4
social organization, Mormon ward, 5:61-78
social welfare, pre-1930, 6:89-106
"Some Comparative Perspectives on the Early Mormon Movement and the Church-State Question, 1830-1845," 8:63-77
Sorensen, Virginia, Kingdom Come, 3:18
southern Utah, 3:10-11
Spaulding manuscript, 1:10; 4:40-41
spiritual manifestations, 8:70
spiritualism, 1:39-50; 6:75-87
Staines, William G., 9:8
stake high councils, 1:28
"Standing Between Two Fires: Mormons and Prohibition, 1908-1917," 10:35-52
Star Valley, Wyoming, 2:57-58
"Steaming Through: Arrangements for Mormon Emigration from Europe, 1869-1887," 9:3-23
Steele, John, 4:58
Stenhouse, Fanny, 1:51-66, 72; 3:66
Stenhouse, T. B. H., 1:44, 51-72; 5:7-8
"The Stenhouses and the Making of a Mormon Image," 1:51-72
Stevens, Thomas J., 8:22-23, 25-27, 35
succession, 5:119-20; 6:57-58
suffrage, 6:11-12
Talmage, James E., 5:38-41; 6:112, 114
Tanner, Annie Clark, A Mormon Mother, 4:113
Tappan, Paul Wilbur, 4:103
Taylor, John, 8:12-13; 10:74, 77
Taylor, Samuel W., 4:114-15; 5:109
teachers, 10:67-71
Telegraph (newspaper), 1:54, 57-61
temperance movement, 10:21-33
temple ordinances, 5:114; 6:47-49
Tenney, Ammon M., 2:31
testimony, 10:15-18
testimony meeting, 3:48, 105
Texas, expansive considerations, 9:94-95, 97n
teology, millenarianism, 9:41-51
Mormon, 4:11-12; 8:84-87
Thompson, Brent G.
"Standing Between Two Fires: Mormons and Prohibition, 1908-1917," 10:35-52
Thompson, Charles B., 8:37-47
Thompson, Robert B., 3:34
Thorpe, Malcolm R.
"The Religious Backgrounds of Mormon Converts in Britain, 1837-52," 4:51-66
"A Thread of Tragedy — But Not the Whole Cloth" (comments), 3:105-6
tithing, welfare disbursement, 6:92-94
towns and villages, 3:3-12
tracts, religious, 4:35-49
tragedy, 3:47-54, 105-6
tavel agents, 9:9-12
travelling bishops, 1:37
Trustee-in-Trust, 6:48n, 57-58
Tullidge, Edward W., 3:55-72; 6:82
Turley, Louis O., 4:104
Bashore: Ten-Year Index

"Two Intelligences: An Address to the Crisis in Mormon Historiography," 10:3-19

Underwood, Grant
"Millenarianism and the Early Mormon Mind," 9:41-51

United Mine Workers, 4:93-100

United States, Mormon attitude, 8:75-76

Ure, James, 4:55

Utah, acculturation, 6:14
education, 10:65-78
Indians, 2:49-50
labor unions, 4:91-100
politics, 10:35-52
population, 2:54-56
social conditions, 2:53-57, 65-68

Utah Fuel Company, 4:94-95

Utah Loan and Trust Company, 8:21-36

Utah Magazine, 3:61-63

Vancouver Island, 9:102

Victorianism, twentieth-century manifestation, 6:4, 13

villages and towns, 2:54; 5:63-66
visions, 1:18

Wales, converts, 4:66

Walkara, spirit communication, 1:43

Walker, Ronald W.

"Heber J. Grant and the Utah Loan and Trust Company," 8:21-36

"The Stenhouses and the Making of a Mormon Image," 1:51-72

Walker, Ronald W., and Ronald K. Esplin
"Brigham Himself: An Autobiographical Recollection," 4:19-34

Ward, Artemus, 1:55

wards, development, 1:34
social perspective, 5:61-78

Washington, D. C., Mormon relief efforts, 7:66-71, 77

"Welfare before Welfare: Twentieth Century LDS Church Charity before the Great Depression," 6:89-106

Wells, Daniel H., 2:35-51

Wells, Pamela, 2:35-51
western refuge theory, 2:3-20; 9:85-111

Wheelock, Cyrus, 8:7-9, 14

Whitmer, John, 3:31

Whitney, Elizabeth Ann, 9:27, 31, 33, 35, 37

Whitney, Newel K., 1:33-37

Whittaker, David J.
"Early Mormon Pamphleteering," 4:35-49

Whittaker, David J., and Carol Cornwall Madsen

Wight, Lyman, 9:94-95, 97n

William, Daniel, 4:34

Williams, Frederick G., 3:31

Williams, Frederick W., 1:24

Wilson, John F.
"Some Comparative Perspectives on the Early Mormon Movement and the Church-State Question, 1830-1845," 8:63-77

Winchester, Benjamin, 4:39-43


Winter Quarters, women, 9:33-35

Women's Exponent, 6:4, 10-11

women, elite group, 9:25-39
Mormon history sources, 6:123-45
"Raid" period, 8:49-61
role within Mormonism, 6:3-21

Woodruff, Phoebe, 9:27, 33, 38

Woodruff, Wilford, historian, 3:36-37, 39-40; 8:12, 18-19
journals, 3:60

Woods, Catherine, 2:35-51

Word of Wisdom, 10:21, 23, 25

Worrell, Frank, 8:10

Worsley, Peter, The Trumpet Shall Sound, 3:102-3

Wright, Lyle O., polygamy study, 4:114

Young, Brigham, Church literature, 4:48-49
autobiography, 4:19-26
bibliography and historiography, 3:65-66
business counsel, 1:57-59
character, 4:26-34
death, 2:66-67; 5:97-103
education theories, 10:72-77
gold rush policy, 7:89-91, 99
health, 5:79-103
influence, 1:56
Presiding Bishopric appointments, 1:37-38
western removal, 9:85-86, 97-111

Young, Ebenezer R., 8:13

Young, John, 4:20

Young, Joseph, 1:32

Young, Kimball, 4:103-4

Young, Seymour B., 5:90-96, 100-103

Young, Zina, 1:37-38; 9:27, 33-35, 37

Zarahemla, Iowa, 6:40-41

Zion, conception, 9:95-96

Zion's Camp, 3:37-39
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