

“We Believe the Hand of the Lord Is in It”

Memories of Divine Intervention in the Zion’s Camp Expedition

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On February 23, 1834, Joseph Smith attended a high council meeting in Kirtland, Ohio, and heard Lyman Wight and Parley P. Pratt explain how over a thousand members of the Church of Christ—now The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—had been violently ejected from their homes in Jackson County, Missouri. The Saints had been forced to leave the county—which had been previously identified by revelation as Zion—by irate Missouri citizens who saw Church members and their beliefs as a political and ideological threat. Hearing this report, Smith arose from his seat and declared “that he was going to Zion to assist in redeeming it.” He asked for volunteers to join him. That same day, a revelation instructed Smith to recruit up to five hundred men to march to Missouri.¹ Church leaders planned that upon reaching

1. “Minutes, 24 February 1834,” and “Revelation, 24 February 1834,” in Gerit J. Dirkmaat and others, eds., *Documents, Volume 3: February 1833–March 1834*, vol. 3 of the Documents series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, ed. Ronald K. Esplin and Matthew J. Grow (Salt Lake City: Church Historian’s Press, 2014), 456–63 [D&C 103], and on Church Historian’s Press, *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/minutes-24-february-1834/2>; <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-24-february-1834-dc-103/12>. See also D&C 57:1–3; John Corrill, *A Brief History of the Church of Christ of Latter Day Saints, 1839*, in Karen Lynn Davidson, Richard L. Jensen, and David J. Whittaker, eds., *Histories, Volume 2: Assigned Histories, 1831–1847*, vol. 2 of the Histories series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, ed. Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman (Salt Lake City: Church Historian’s Press, 2012), 149, and on Church Historian’s Press, *The Joseph Smith*

the state, the group would contact Missouri governor Daniel Dunklin and request that he call out the state militia to escort Church members back to their Jackson County lands. The members of the march—which would become known as the Camp of Israel, paralleling the name given to the children of Israel in Exodus 14:19, and still later as Zion’s Camp—would then remain in Jackson County as a protective force so that mobs could not drive the Saints from their lands again.²

Smith and a contingent of men departed from Kirtland in May 1834; another contingent was recruited in Pontiac, Michigan Territory, by Hyrum Smith and Lyman Wight and joined the Kirtland group in June 1834 in Missouri. The camp totaled approximately 205 men and around twenty-five women and children.³ It entered Missouri in June 1834 but was disbanded at the end of June after Dunklin expressed unwillingness to call out the militia and after Smith received a revelation stating that it was not yet time for Zion’s redemption. An outbreak of cholera hastened the camp’s dispersal, eventually killing thirteen participants and two other Church members.⁴ By the first of August 1834, Joseph

Papers, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/john-corrill-a-brief-history-of-the-church-of-christ-of-latter-day-saints-1839/48>.

2. Sidney Rigdon and Oliver Cowdery to “Dear Brethren,” May 10, 1834, broadsheet, Church History Library, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, https://dcms.lds.org/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps_pid=IE5714970.

3. “History, 1838–1856, Volume A-1 [23 December 1805–30 August 1834],” 477–78, Church History Library, on Church Historian’s Press, *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-a-1-23-december-1805-30-august-1834/483>; Andrea G. Radke, “We Also Marched: The Women and Children of Zion’s Camp, 1834,” *BYU Studies* 39, no. 1 (2000): 147–65.

4. “Letter to Emma Smith, 4 June 1834,” in Matthew C. Godfrey and others, eds., *Documents, Volume 4: April 1834–September 1835*, vol. 4 of the Documents series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, ed. Ronald K. Esplin, Matthew J. Grow, and Matthew C. Godfrey (Salt Lake City: Church Historian’s Press, 2016), 54, and on Church Historian’s Press, *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-emma-smith-4-june-1834/1>; “Revelation, 22 June 1834,” in Godfrey and others, *Documents, Volume 4*, 74 [D&C 105:9–11], and on Church Historian’s Press, *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-22-june-1834-dc-105/4>; Nathan B. Baldwin, Account of Zion’s Camp, 14, MS 499, Church History Library, https://dcms.lds.org/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps_pid=IE8648741; Joseph Holbrook, Autobiography and journal, circa 1860–1871, 1:38, MS 5004, Church History Library, <https://dcms.lds.org/delivery/>

and many camp members had returned to Kirtland, and the Missouri Saints were still not restored to their lands.⁵ On its face, then, the expedition appears to have failed in its goal of redeeming Zion, or helping the Saints regain their Jackson County lands. No Saints moved back to Jackson County because of Zion’s Camp, nor did the Saints receive any compensation for their lost property.⁶

Although some who participated in the expedition focused on what it did not accomplish and Joseph Smith’s shortcomings as a leader, many participants did not regard the excursion as a failure.⁷ Instead, they saw the experience as valuable for several reasons. One of the main reasons was that they believed the hand of God and his intervention was prevalent throughout the journey; reminiscences and autobiographies of members of the camp are replete with examples of such intervention. This essay will examine examples given by camp participants of divine intervention and how memories of these events developed over time. In doing so, it will demonstrate that although accounts of divine intervention are present in contemporary Camp of Israel documents, they become more frequent, pronounced, and detailed in reminiscences and autobiographies written later by camp members. The increase in mentions of divine intervention does not mean that these later memories are necessarily false, embellished, or exaggerated. Rather, it shows that

[DeliveryManagerServlet?dps_pid=IE10179315](https://dcms.lds.org/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps_pid=IE10179315), image 51; George A. Smith, *Memoirs of George A. Smith, 1817–September 10, 1847*, 39–40, 50, George A. Smith Papers, box 1, folder 2, Church History Library, https://dcms.lds.org/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps_pid=IE714718; Max H Parkin, “Zion’s Camp Cholera Victims Monument Dedication,” *Missouri Mormon Frontier Foundation Newsletter* 15 (Fall 1997): 4–5.

5. “History, 1838–1856, Volume A-1,” 528.

6. For a discussion of the success or failure of the Camp of Israel, see Matthew C. Godfrey, “‘The Redemption of Zion Must Needs Come by Power’: Insights into the Camp of Israel Expedition, 1834,” *BYU Studies Quarterly* 53, no. 4 (2014): 133–39; Roger D. Launius, *Zion’s Camp: Expedition to Missouri, 1834* (Independence, Mo.: Herald Publishing House, 1984), 166–73; and James L. Bradley, *Zion’s Camp, 1834: Prelude to the Civil War* (Salt Lake City: Publishers Press, 1990), 249–50.

7. Historian Marvin Hill, for example, argued that a lack of confidence in Joseph Smith that manifested itself in dissension of many Church members in Kirtland, Ohio, in 1836 and 1837 “had its roots in the failure of Zion’s camp two years earlier.” Marvin S. Hill, “Cultural Crisis in the Mormon Kingdom: A Reconsideration of the Causes of Kirtland Dissent,” *Church History* 49, no. 3 (September 1980): 287–88.

the events of the Camp of Israel took on additional meaning to individuals as they progressed through life and had different experiences in the Church and with the outside world. Scholars should still carefully analyze these reminiscences and autobiographies before using them, but the prevalence of accounts of divine intervention indicate that seeing God's hand in the expedition was a key factor in how participants remembered the journey.

That members of the Camp of Israel would view their experiences through the lens of divine intervention is not surprising. Drawing on a long tradition both in England and in the American colonies, many US citizens in the nineteenth century believed in both "personal providentialism" and "national providentialism"—that God operated in their individual lives and in the trajectory of the United States as a whole. Although notions of divine personal intervention were regarded by some as "superstitious and backward," many Americans still regarded God as involving himself in their personal lives. Mormon participants in the Camp of Israel, who believed that God personally intervened to restore the gospel and regularly delivered modern-day revelation, would thus naturally turn to divine intervention to interpret events in their own lives and in the Church's history.⁸

Background

The historical record of the Camp of Israel includes both contemporary journals and letters and a host of reminiscences. However, contemporary documentation is not as robust as one might hope. Frederick G. Williams was the camp historian, but his records were lost at some point, although a brief letter he composed to his wife, Rebecca, does survive.⁹ Elijah Fordham kept a record of the Michigan contingent of the camp, but his account covers only the journey from Pontiac, Michigan Territory, to the Salt River in Missouri.¹⁰ Joseph Smith wrote two letters

8. Nicholas Guyatt, *Providence and the Invention of the United States, 1607–1876* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 5–6; Mark A. Noll, *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 170–74; David D. Hall, *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment: Popular Religious Belief in Early New England* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989), 77–78.

9. The letter to Rebecca is a postscript appended to a letter from Joseph Smith to Emma Smith. See "Letter to Emma Smith, 4 June 1834," 58–59. See also George A. Smith, *Memoirs*, 43.

10. "Journal of the Branch of the Church of Christ in Pontiac, 1834," May–June 1834, MS 4610, Church History Library.

to his wife, Emma, while on the journey; he also prepared a declaration that outlined the purposes and objectives of the camp on June 21.¹¹ In addition, copies of the June 22, 1834, revelation (now Doctrine and Covenants 105) that disbanded the camp are available.¹² Other contemporary records include a brief letter Joseph wrote to individuals then negotiating with Jackson County citizens, stating that the camp would disband, financial sheets showing the donations made by camp members to the expedition and expenditures captains made from these funds, and minutes of meetings held in August 1834 that recount events that occurred on the expedition.¹³ Outside of these sources, few contemporary records exist. Most participants in the camp did not keep journals—or, if they did, such records have not survived. Instead, reminiscences and recollections from participants, some made decades after the conclusion of the camp, compose the bulk of the source material.¹⁴

The concept that God intervened in numerous ways in the Camp of Israel is present in the few contemporary records that survive. In one of Joseph Smith’s letters to Emma Smith, for example, he explained how observers of the expedition frequently overestimated the number of participants in the camp. “All these things serve to help us,” he concluded,

11. See “Letter to Emma Smith, 18 May 1834,” in Godfrey and others, *Documents, Volume 4*, 48–52, and on Church Historian’s Press, *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-emma-smith-18-may-1834/1>; “Letter to Emma Smith, 4 June 1834,” 52–59; “Declaration, 21 June 1834,” in Godfrey and others, *Documents, Volume 4*, 59–69, and on Church Historian’s Press, *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/declaration-21-june-1834/1>.

12. “Revelation, 22 June 1834,” 69–77 [D&C 105].

13. “Letter to John Thornton and Others, 25 June 1834,” in Godfrey and others, *Documents, Volume 4*, 84–88, and on Church Historian’s Press, *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-john-thornton-and-others-25-june-1834/1>; “Account with the Church of Christ, circa 11–29 August 1834,” in Godfrey and others, *Documents, Volume 4*, 135–55, and on Church Historian’s Press, *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/account-with-the-church-of-christ-circa-11-29-august-1834/1>; “Account with the Camp of Israel, ca. 11–29 Aug. 1834,” in Godfrey and others, *Documents, Volume 4*, 156–63, and on Church Historian’s Press, *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/account-with-the-camp-of-israel-circa-11-29-august-1834/1>; “Minutes, 28–29 August 1834,” in Godfrey and others, *Documents, Volume 4*, 120–35, and on Church Historian’s Press, *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/minutes-28-29-august-1834/1>.

14. For an additional discussion of Camp of Israel sources, see Godfrey, “Redemption of Zion Must Needs Come by Power,” 127–29.

“and we believe the hand of the Lord is in it.”¹⁵ The journal kept by Elijah Fordham in the Michigan contingent also expressed the belief that God was blessing the expedition. “Truly the Lord is with us,” Fordham wrote on May 18, 1834. “All things go smoothly and we are rejoicing.”¹⁶ Several months after the journey, Joseph Smith explained to a Church conference “the circumstances attending us while journeying to Zion, our trials, sufferings &c. &c.” He then declared that “God had not designed all this for nothing, but he had it in remembrance yet” and that God would select out of those members of the camp individuals who would “be ordained to the ministry and go forth to prune the vineyard for the last time.” Thereafter, Smith, Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris selected the Twelve Apostles, eight of whom had been members of the Camp of Israel. Two weeks later, Smith would select members of the Seventy, all of whom had been on Zion’s Camp. Part of the purpose of God’s intervention in the camp, then, at least in Joseph Smith’s eyes, was so that he could test individuals before calling them to be leaders in his Church.¹⁷

As time passed, and as Church members experienced persecution in Missouri and Illinois, the idea of God’s oversight of the Camp of Israel became more pronounced. Key in the development of this theme was the earliest extensive history of the camp, written around 1840 by Heber C. Kimball, at the time one of the Church’s Twelve Apostles. This account was published serially in the Church periodical *Times and Seasons* in 1845.¹⁸ Kimball—who before composing the history had just

15. “Letter to Emma Smith, 4 June 1834,” 56.

16. “Journal of the Branch of the Church of Christ in Pontiac, 1834,” May–June 1834, 5.

17. “Minutes, Discourses, and Blessings, 14–15 February 1835,” in Godfrey and others, *Documents, Volume 4*, 225, and on Church Historian’s Press, *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/minutes-discourse-and-blessings-14-15-february-1835/1>; “Minutes and Blessings, 28 February–1 March 1835,” in Godfrey and others, *Documents, Volume 4*, 255–64, and on Church Historian’s Press, *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/minutes-and-blessings-28-february-1-march-1835/1>. The four apostles who did not participate in Zion’s Camp were Thomas B. Marsh, William E. McLellin, and David W. Patten, all of whom were already living in Missouri, and John F. Boynton, who was preaching in Maine at the time. Introduction to “Minutes, Discourses, and Blessings, 14–15 February 1835,” in Godfrey and others, *Documents, Volume 4*, 221 n. 18.

18. “Elder Kimball’s Journal,” *Times and Seasons* 6 (January 15, 1845): 770–73; “Extracts from H. C. Kimball’s Journal,” *Times and Seasons* 6 (February 1,

experienced the horrific events in Missouri that drove the Saints from that state in the winter of 1838–1839—framed his account as a narrative of persecution: The reason for the camp was religious persecution in Jackson County, Kimball feared additional persecution on the march, and persecution was continuous throughout the journey, thus necessitating God’s protection.

Kimball’s account appears to have heavily influenced other retellings of the expedition. The “official” account of the camp, written in Joseph Smith’s manuscript history (which was published as *History of the Church*) drew much from Kimball’s account and reinforced his overall themes of persecution and protection.¹⁹ After these two accounts were made, and as participants in the expedition aged and achieved some sense of stability after moving to the Salt Lake Valley in the late 1840s and 1850s, they gradually began composing their own accounts of the expedition—many of them as part of longer autobiographies and reminiscences.²⁰ The tendency to begin recording reminiscences in the 1860s and beyond was not unusual; according to historian David M. Wrobel, “Within a couple of decades after the first permanent white settlers arrived in a particular western region, . . . individual settlers began to record and publish their reminiscences.” These accounts, together with the formation of pioneer societies and reunions of settlers, were ways of “forging a sense of place and a sense of belonging among members

1845): 787–90; “Extracts from H. C. Kimball’s Journal,” *Times and Seasons* 6 (February 15, 1845): 803–5. William Clayton noted in his journal that he spent “three or four days” in July 1840 “writing Brother Kimball’s history.” Some historians have taken this history to be the “History of the British Mission,” signed by Kimball, Orson Hyde, and Willard Richards, but it appears that Clayton was referring to Kimball’s autobiography, which Clayton scribed. I am indebted to Mitchell K. Schaefer for his research into this. George D. Smith, ed., *An Intimate Chronicle: The Journals of William Clayton* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1991), 57–59; James B. Allen, *No Toil nor Labor Fear: The Story of William Clayton* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 2002), 35–36; Heber C. Kimball, *Autobiography*, circa 1842–1858, MS 627, box 1, Church History Library (this manuscript is closed to research).

19. Dan Vogel, ed., *History of Joseph Smith and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: A Source- and Text-Critical Edition*, 8 vols. (Salt Lake City: Smith-Petit Foundation, 2015), 1:xv; 2:67–145.

20. For examples, see Joseph Holbrook, *Autobiography and journal*, circa 1860–1871, MS 5004, Church History Library; Harrison Burgess, *Autobiography*, 1848–1882, MS 893, Church History Library; and Levi Hancock, *Autobiography*, circa 1854, MS 8174, Church History Library.

of these older generations,” providing “a degree of self-validation for individuals,” a way to ensure that the achievements of older generations were not forgotten and that the accomplishments of those who created a foundation for later generations were celebrated.²¹ Reminiscences of those who participated in Zion’s Camp—together with specific histories of the expedition, such as those composed by George A. Smith and Wilford Woodruff—accomplished those goals. These reminiscences also largely followed the earlier reconstructions of Kimball and Smith’s manuscript history; at least one reminiscence—that of Nathan Baldwin—sometimes repeats word-for-word passages from Kimball’s history.²²

Along with composing reminiscences, participants in the Camp of Israel “share[d] formally in the collective memory of the frontier process”²³ through holding reunions. In 1864, to commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of the Camp of Israel, President Brigham Young held a reunion for members of Zion’s Camp who were still alive, and these reunions continued annually through 1870. The reunions consisted of a large dinner, singing, dancing, a light supper, and opportunities for those who had gone on the expedition to testify about their experiences. One report stated that the reunions allowed participants to “have an opportunity of enjoying themselves, and of talking over the history of their labors for the kingdom of God when it was in its infancy.”²⁴ In doing so, camp members participated in the formation of a collective memory of the Camp of Israel—one that influenced what they remembered about the camp.

Because most of the sources about Zion’s Camp are memories, historians need to be cautious when using those sources to reconstruct the

21. David M. Wrobel, *Promised Lands: Promotion, Memory, and the Creation of the American West* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002), 121–23, 126.

22. See George A. Smith, *Memoirs*; Nathan Baldwin, *Account of Zion’s Camp*; and Wilford Woodruff, “The History and Travels of Zions Camp, 1882,” MS 1193, Church History Library. On cautions regarding the George A. Smith account, see Godfrey, “The Redemption of Zion Must Needs Come by Power,” 128–29.

23. Wrobel, *Promised Lands*, 123.

24. “Incidents of the History of Zion’s Camp,” *Deseret News*, October 19, 1864, 4; “Festival of the Camp of Zion,” *Deseret News*, October 12, 1864, 5; “Zion’s Camp Festival,” *Deseret News*, October 17, 1866, 5; “Zion’s Camp Party,” *Deseret Evening News*, October 14, 1868, 285; “The Zion’s Camp Party,” *Deseret News*, October 13, 1869; “Party at the Social Hall,” *Deseret Evening News*, October 19, 1870, 1; Zion’s Camp festival papers, 1864–1867, October 10, 1865, MS 14789, folder 3, Church History Library.

history of the expedition. Memory scholar Daniel Schacter explains that although we sometimes think of memory as “passive or literal recordings of reality,” in truth, “memories are records of how we have experienced events, not replicas of the events themselves.” As such, a wide variety of factors determine memory. Schacter notes that “we are usually correct about the general character of our pasts, but are susceptible to various kinds of biases and distortions when we recount specific experiences.”²⁵ Indeed, memory is notoriously unstable and can be distorted by factors including time, the way someone else remembers the same event, and our “current knowledge and beliefs.”²⁶

Collective memory—or how communities or groups of individuals recall past events—also strongly influences an individual’s memory. “The forms memory takes . . . vary according to social organization,” scholars Jeffrey K. Olick, Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Daniel Levy have argued, “and the groups to which any individual belongs are primary even in the most apparently individual remembering.”²⁷ Memories themselves, other scholars have stated, help “to create or sustain the group, just as the group supports the continued existence of the memories.”²⁸ Thus, how a group or community recalls an event—such as at a Zion’s Camp reunion, for example, or in a Church newspaper—can influence the way an individual remembers it.

The context in which an individual recalls something also influences memory. “Autobiographical memory is a constructive process,” scholars Michael Ross and Anne E. Wilson have noted. Inevitably, when people remember, they mix their present with their past: “current goals and knowledge influence recollections.” The act of writing autobiography consists of conscious decisions of what to include and exclude, and an individual’s current beliefs directly impact the way memories are

25. Daniel L. Schacter, *Searching for Memory: The Brain, the Mind, and the Past* (New York: Basic Books, 1996), 5–6, 9.

26. Daniel L. Schacter, *The Seven Sins of Memory: How the Mind Forgets and Remembers* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2001), 4–5.

27. Jeffrey K. Olick, Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Daniel Levy, introduction to *The Collective Memory Reader* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 18; see also Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, trans. and ed. Lewis A. Coser, with an introduction by Coser (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 38. Halbwachs was one of the first scholars to meaningfully engage and explain the concept of collective memory.

28. Amy Corning and Howard Schuman, *Generations and Collective Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 1.

framed.²⁹ Autobiographies and reminiscences about the Camp of Israel, therefore, not only reflect events that occurred in 1834, but also the concerns and context of the later time periods in which the reminiscences were composed. As one scholar has noted, the examination of reminiscences and memories of events can serve “as a mirror to reflect the outlook of those doing the reminiscing.”³⁰

Examining accounts of specific Camp of Israel events illuminates all of these aspects of memory. They reveal that collective, interpretive memories of God’s intervention developed over time and meshed into a narrative of God keeping watch over the camp and revealing his presence through a variety of ways, most prominently through chastisement and protection. It is not the intent of this essay to evaluate the accuracy of the memories of individuals about specific events. Instead, it will examine the interpretive memories of divine intervention in the Camp of Israel, how these memories developed over time, the context that may have influenced these memory formations, and why it was important for Camp of Israel participants to attribute events to God’s intervention.³¹

It is important to note that this article is not meant to be a thorough analysis of how memories found in the records of Zion’s Camp changed over time. Instead, this essay acknowledges the issue of memory in the historiography of an important event in Mormon history; by looking at when records were written, one can see that some interpretations appear to change over time and that individual recounting of the expedition—both in personal reminiscences and in reunions—formed a collective memory. This analysis is important not only to provide insight into the function of memory in the recounting of significant events, but

29. Michael Ross and Anne E. Wilson, “Constructing and Appraising Past Selves,” in *Memory, Brain, and Belief*, ed. Daniel L. Schacter and Elaine Scarry (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000), 232–33; see also Paul John Eakin, “Autobiography, Identity, and the Fiction of Memory,” in *Memory, Brain, and Belief*, 290–306.

30. Wrobel, *Promised Lands*, 13.

31. Mormon historians have used the work of memory scholars to illuminate other aspects of Church history, including different accounts of Joseph Smith’s 1820 vision of deity. This area of study is also applicable to the reconstruction of Zion’s Camp. See Steven C. Harper, “Remembering the First Vision,” in *A Reason for Faith: Navigating LDS Doctrine and Church History*, ed. Laura Harris Hales (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2016), 7–19; and Ann Taves and Steven C. Harper, “Joseph Smith’s First Vision: New Methods for the Analysis of Experience-Related Texts,” *Mormon Studies Review* 3 (2016): 53–84.

also to show how some of the best-known stories about the Camp of Israel developed over time and to offer ideas on why such development occurred.

For the sake of organization, I have grouped examples of God’s intervention into five groups:

- Inspiring individuals to volunteer for the camp and/or to donate money;
- Providing food and water for participants;
- Chastising participants;
- Healing those who were sick; and
- Providing protection to the camp (manifested most clearly in accounts of a June 1834 storm at Fishing River in Missouri).

Although there are examples of divine intervention that do not fall into these categories,³² these seem to be the five major ways in which participants saw God’s hand in the journey. Elements of many of these examples appear in contemporary records. For other examples, the memories developed over time. Still others appear for the first time in reminiscences and autobiographies constructed years later. All cases provide examples of how important evidences of divine intervention were to those remembering their Zion’s Camp experience.

Inspiring Volunteers and Donations

Participants in the Camp of Israel saw the Lord’s hand in the expedition from the very beginning—even when Joseph Smith and other Church leaders were trying to find volunteers for the camp. A February 24, 1834, revelation instructed Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, Parley P. Pratt, Lyman Wight, Hyrum Smith, Frederick G. Williams, Orson Hyde, and Orson Pratt to “gather” together “the strength of [the Lord’s] house” to redeem Zion “by power.” These men were supposed to travel through “the congregations in the eastern countries” and proclaim the need for men and money to accomplish Zion’s redemption.³³

32. For example, several participants regarded the discovery of a skeleton in a mound in Illinois and Joseph Smith’s identification of the skeleton as Zeph, a white Lamanite, as a revelation from heaven. For a discussion of Zeph and the sources that deal with it, see Kenneth W. Godfrey, “The Zeph Story,” *BYU Studies* 29, no. 2 (1989): 31–56.

33. “Revelation, 24 February 1834,” 461–63 [D&C 103:22, 29–40].

Accordingly, the men held recruitment meetings in the eastern United States. Although the results of these efforts were disappointing, given that only approximately one hundred recruits joined the ranks,³⁴ Joseph Smith and others still saw the hand of the Lord in inspiring those who did respond. On one occasion, after Smith had petitioned the Lord to bless him and Parley P. Pratt “with the gift of utterance to accomplish the Journey and the Errand on which [they were] sent,” the two held a recruitment meeting in Perrysburg, New York, at the home of Freeman Nickerson. According to Smith’s journal, as he prophesied to the gathering, “the spirit of the Lord came mightily upon them and with all redyness the yo[u]ng and mid[d]le aged volenteered for Zion.”³⁵

Smith’s journal provides a generalized account of the Spirit influencing a group of people to respond. Later reminiscences give details as to how God’s spirit convinced individuals to join. Nathan Baldwin, who was twenty-two years old in 1834, provides a good example. Baldwin recounted in his 1882 account that he was preaching in New York in 1834 when “the Spirit said to me ‘Go west.’ I immediately turned my face to the west and began to retrace my steps, asking the question at the same time, what shall I go west for? The answer was, ‘Go west to your brethren.’” Baldwin followed this counsel. When he reached Oswegatchie, New York, he was informed by Reuben Foote about the expulsion of the Saints from Jackson County and about Joseph Smith’s plans to gather a force to help them. Baldwin resolved to become part of this group and headed for Kirtland. This, he believed, was why the Spirit told him to go west. Otherwise, he never would have heard about the expedition in time.³⁶

34. Scott G. Kenney, ed., *Wilford Woodruff’s Journal: 1833–1898*, 8 vols. (Midvale, Utah: Signature Books, 1983), 1:9; “Elder Kimball’s Journal,” *Times and Seasons* 6 (January 15, 1845): 771; see also “History, 1838–1856, Volume A-1,” 474, 478.

35. “Journal, 1832–1834,” March 3, 1834; March 4–6, 1834, in Dean C. Jessee, Mark Ashurst-McGee, and Richard L. Jensen, eds., *Journals, Volume 1: 1832–1839*, vol. 1 of the Journals series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, ed. Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman (Salt Lake City: Church Historian’s Press, 2008), 29, 31–32, and on Church Historian’s Press, *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/journal-1832-1834/55>.

36. Nathan Baldwin, Account of Zion’s Camp, 6–7; see also Matthew C. Godfrey, “The Acceptable Offering of Zion’s Camp,” in *Revelations in Context*, <https://history.lds.org/article/doctrine-and-covenants-zions-camp?lang=eng>.

Parley P. Pratt, who continued to recruit after the camp began its march to Missouri, later remembered in his autobiography, which he began about 1854, a specific example of divine intervention helping him in his efforts. At one point, Pratt had been traveling the entire night to reach branches where men might be motivated to join the camp. He stopped at noon for his horse to feed and "sank down overpowered with a deep sleep." Pratt believed that he would have "lain in a state of oblivion till the shades of night had gathered about me," but a voice, "more loud and shrill than I had ever before heard," declared, "*Parley, it is time to be up and on your journey.*" Pratt instantly awoke and continued on his way. When he related this experience to Joseph Smith, Pratt recalled, Joseph "bore testimony that it was the angel of the Lord who went before the camp, who found me overpowered with sleep, and thus awoke me."³⁷ Pratt wrote his autobiography "to spread the Mormon message . . . in a narrative of the lived experience of an early Latter-day Saint."³⁸ Recounting a story of how an angel considered it important enough to wake Pratt so that he could continue recruiting for the Camp of Israel was certainly one way of indicating God's involvement with the Saints.

Wilford Woodruff also recalled in his 1882 account a specific example of funding being obtained for the expedition through divine means. According to Woodruff, sometime in April 1834, Joseph told him and several other men that he needed "money to help fit out Zion." He did not appear to be concerned, however, saying, "I know I shall have it." The next morning, Woodruff remembered, Joseph received a letter containing money "from Sister Vose of Boston," likely Mary (Polly) Vose. Showing the money to those around him, he declared, "Did I not tell you last night that I should soon have some money and here it is." Joseph did not explicitly say that the money came because of God's intervention, but the fact that he prophesied that it would come implies that connection.³⁹ Evidence of God's hand in the recruiting and funding of the

37. *The Autobiography of Parley Parker Pratt* (New York: Russell Brothers, 1874), 122–23, italics in original.

38. Terry L. Givens and Matthew J. Grow, *Parley P. Pratt: The Apostle Paul of Mormonism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 349.

39. Woodruff, "The History and Travels of Zions Camp, 1882," 3–4. Although other women donated funds for the Camp of Israel, the large sum of money that Vose gave—nearly half of the \$330 donated by Church members before the camp began its journey—stood out in Woodruff's mind fifty years later. Matthew C. Godfrey, "Wise Men and Wise Women: The Role of Church Members

camp was present, then, in Joseph Smith's own contemporary records. But the details of how God worked on individuals to donate their time and money mostly appear in accounts from participants remembering their individual experiences years later—perhaps in part because participants were trying to justify the expenditures of time and money to the camp by noting that they were inspired by God to make such sacrifices. For such individuals, God's spirit was behind their decision to volunteer for the expedition and behind efforts to fund the camp.

Providing Food and Water

In addition to the Lord inspiring individuals to volunteer for and donate to the expedition, participants believed that he at times miraculously provided food and water. Interestingly, such miracles do not appear in any contemporary record of the camp, but they exist in several reminiscences. It may be that as participants recalled their experiences in the Camp of Israel, they remembered that the camp was patterned after the Israelites' trek from Egypt and looked for similarities to the biblical exodus. Several recalled that, like the Israelites, the camp at times did not have sufficient food and water, although those instances were the exception rather than the norm. Deprivation of these necessities occurred most frequently when the camp was crossing prairies or long stretches of sparsely inhabited land. Camp members remembered God sometimes providing for them in these times when provisions were "scant."⁴⁰

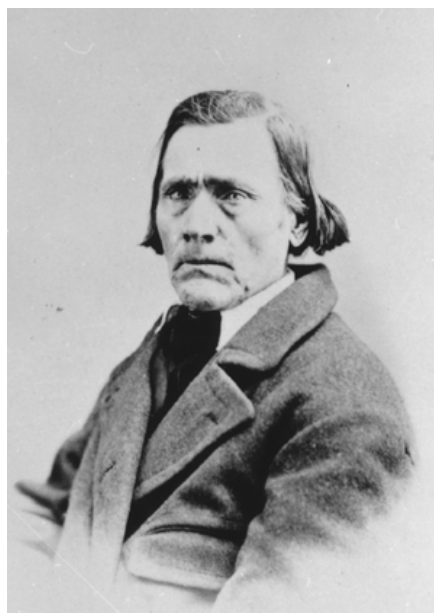
In the Old Testament, Numbers 20 describes an incident among the children of Israel when, as they marched to their promised land, they complained about the lack of water. The Lord told Moses to smite a rock with a rod. Moses did, and water poured out of the rock. Some participants in the Camp of Israel remembered God replicating this miracle on their journey to Missouri. At a location where fresh water could not be found, some explained, God inspired a member of the camp to dig in the ground, thereby discovering a spring.

For many Latter-day Saints today, this has become one of the defining miracles of the Camp of Israel, in large part because of a video produced by the Church's Seminaries and Institutes department that is sometimes shown in classes on Church history. This video depicts this

in Financing Church Operations, 1834–1835," *Journal of Mormon History* 43, no. 3 (2017): 10–11.

40. "Elder Kimball's Journal," *Times and Seasons* 6 (January 15, 1845): 771.

miracle and portrays Joseph Smith as the man inspired to dig in the ground.⁴¹ Examining the records around this miracle—all of which are later reminiscences—provides instructive material into how memories of a camp miracle were constructed. Levi Hancock, one of the camp participants, was apparently one of the first to record the event, probably around 1854. Hancock did not specify who discovered the spring. “One man took a spade and said, ‘Who knows but what I can find water here,’” Hancock remembered, “and put the spade in the ground and dug a small hole and it filled with water, good water.” Hancock declared that “some said it was as much of a miracle as when Moses smote the rock and water came out,” but he did not find it significant to record who had discovered the spring—and perhaps he did not even remember who it was.⁴²



Levi Hancock was one of the first individuals to recount the miraculous discovery of a spring of water, although he did not identify who discovered the spring. Courtesy Church History Library.

George A. Smith also gave an account of the miracle, probably in the 1870s, stating that he was the one who found the water: “We camped on the West Bank” of the Kaskaskia River, Smith recalled, and because the water was “very poor, I discovered a wet place at the foot of the West Bluff and commenced digging and found a spring of excellent water.”⁴³

41. *Zion's Camp*, in *Doctrine and Covenants and Church History Visual Resource DVDs* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2010), beginning at 5:00, also available online at <https://www.lds.org/media-library/video/2010-07-090-zions-camp?lang=eng>.

42. Levi Hancock, *Autobiography*, circa 1854, 144.

43. George A. Smith, *Memoirs*, 20. It is not clear when Smith wrote his account. He put together “a series of notes” about the journey around 1845 and

But later recollections placed Joseph Smith—who, like Moses, was the leader of the camp—as the spring’s discoverer. In 1888, Oliver B. Huntington, who was not on the expedition, said that participants Zera Cole and William Cahoon insisted that Joseph Smith dug the well.⁴⁴ Huntington said that Cahoon informed him of Smith’s digging of the well when they attended the dedication of the temple in Manti, Utah Territory, in May 1888—a time when the Church was under intense pressure from the federal government to end plural marriage. Perhaps the identification of Joseph Smith as the one who found the water was one way for Cahoon—and Huntington—to remember Joseph Smith’s prophetic abilities at a time when the Church he founded was under extreme fire.

B. H. Roberts’s *History of the Church*, published in the early 1900s, followed George A. Smith’s account by identifying George as the one responsible for finding the well.⁴⁵ Yet when Seminaries and Institutes produced a Zion’s Camp video, it instead portrayed Joseph Smith as the responsible party. It is not clear why the creators of the video made that choice, but they were perhaps influenced by what scholars Terryl Givens and Matthew J. Grow have referred to as the “hagiographic tradition surrounding Joseph Smith,” wherein Smith is depicted in historical events as “a hero of inspiring proportions.”⁴⁶ Huntington’s account of Smith miraculously finding water to stave off the thirst of Zion’s Camp participants fit well into this heroic mold.

then constructed his narrative “from memory” some ten to thirty years later. George A. Smith, *Memoirs*, 43; George A. Smith, *Autobiography and journals*, Tuesday, May 17, 1834, MS 17190, image 37, Church History Library, https://dcms.lds.org/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps_pid=IE7698183.

44. Oliver B. Huntington, *Diary and reminiscences, 1843 June–1900 January*, 301, MS 1648, Church History Library.

45. Joseph Smith Jr., *The History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2d ed. rev., 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1971), 2:73.

46. Givens and Grow, *Parley P. Pratt*, 144. See also Andrea Radke-Moss, “Silent Memories of Missouri: Mormon Women and Men and Sexual Assault in Group Memory and Religious Identity,” in *Mormon Women’s History: Beyond Biography*, ed. Rachel Cope and others (Vancouver, B.C.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, forthcoming, 2017), wherein Radke-Moss discusses Joseph Smith’s “Majesty in Chains” speech in the jail in Richmond, Missouri, as an example of this hagiographic tradition.

Chastisement

Not all memories of divine intervention in the Camp of Israel were positive. Just as the children of Israel were sometimes chastised by the Lord,⁴⁷ many Zion's Camp participants saw the hand of the Lord in misfortunes and illnesses that beset them, regarding these as divine punishments for disunity and disobedience. This outlook on disasters stemmed from long-standing Protestant beliefs that the judgments of God awaited those who were disobedient, that "violation of the moral order would provoke awful warnings or more awful judgments."⁴⁸ Such beliefs were prevalent in the June 22, 1834, revelation that disbanded the Camp of Israel. In that revelation, God told camp participants that his "people must needs be chastened, until they learn obedience if it must needs be by the [things] which they suffer."⁴⁹ Camp members thus knew on June 22 that God did chasten them because of their disobedience, but the idea that specific events constituted that divine chastisement was a later conclusion and largely came in later reminiscences.

Heber C. Kimball was one of the first (writing in 1840) to explain how God chastened the camp. He recalled that on Saturday, May 17, 1834, the expedition made camp for the weekend in Richmond, Indiana, so they would not have to travel on the Sabbath. That evening, Sylvester Smith, one of the camp participants and a member of the Kirtland high council, exhibited a "rebellious spirit." Displeased with Sylvester's disunity and with others that exhibited a similar spirit, Joseph Smith called the camp together and told them, according to Kimball, "that they would meet with misfortunes, difficulties and hindrances '*and you will know it before you leave this place.*'"⁵⁰

The next morning, Kimball remembered in his 1840 history, camp members discovered that nearly every horse was "so badly foundered" that they "could scarce lead them a few rods to the water." According to Kimball, the condition of the horses was the fulfillment of Joseph Smith's prophecy. Upon seeing the horses, Smith, perceiving "the

47. See, for example, Exodus 32:35.

48. David D. Hall, *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment: Popular Religious Belief in Early New England* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989), 78.

49. "Revelation, 22 June 1834," 73 [D&C 105:6].

50. "Elder Kimball's Journal," *Times and Seasons* 6 (January 15, 1845): 772; italics in original.

hand of God . . . in this misfortune,” declared that if camp members “humble[d] themselves before the Lord,” God would restore the horses’ health. By noon, Kimball recounted, “the horses were as nimble as ever, with the exception of one of Sylvester Smith’s which soon afterwards died.” To Kimball, who remembered these events just after Joseph Smith and Church members had experienced intense persecution in both Ohio and Missouri at least in part because of dissenters from within, the incident starkly depicted “the effects of discord” and the Lord’s displeasure with disunity.⁵¹

A couple of weeks later, Kimball explained in his 1840 account, the expedition heard another dire prophecy from Joseph Smith that, in Kimball’s retelling, again touched on calamities that would befall those who dissented. Concerned about “the fractious and unruly spirits” in the camp, Smith said that God had shown him a great scourge that would afflict the camp, making them “die like sheep with the rot.” Repentance and humility would alleviate the severity of the scourge, Smith continued, but the Lord was determined to punish camp members “for giving way to their unruly temper.”⁵² Sometime probably in the 1870s, George A. Smith also recalled this prophecy in his autobiography, stating that when he heard Joseph Smith make the prophecy, he interpreted it to mean that a battle would break out between the camp and mobs of non-Mormons in Missouri, resulting in the deaths of several camp members.⁵³ Instead, most participants remembering the scourge depicted it as a disease much dreaded in nineteenth-century America: cholera.

In 1832, a cholera epidemic began in the eastern United States, killing over two thousand individuals in New York City alone by the end of July. It continued to afflict residents of the United States into 1834, especially along waterways.⁵⁴ As the epidemic raged, Joseph Smith and others in 1832 saw it as a judgment from God “upon all the face of the earth”—the

51. “Elder Kimball’s Journal,” *Times and Seasons* 6 (January 15, 1845): 772; Levi Hancock, *Autobiography*, circa 1854, 138. In his autobiography, George A. Smith provided an account of this incident that closely resembles Kimball’s. George A. Smith, *Memoirs*, 18.

52. “Extracts from H. C. Kimball’s Journal,” *Times and Seasons* 6 (February 1, 1845): 788.

53. George A. Smith, *Memoirs*, 26–27.

54. Charles E. Rosenberg, *The Cholera Years: The United States in 1832, 1849, and 1866* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), 25–34; J. S. Chambers, *The Conquest of Cholera: America’s Greatest Scourge* (New York: Macmillan, 1938), 64; “The Cholera,” *Evening and the Morning Star* 1 (September 1832): 1.

cultural context for those later remembering the cholera outbreak in the Camp of Israel.⁵⁵ Around June 23, 1834, after Joseph had dictated a revelation directing that the camp be disbanded, some participants began exhibiting symptoms of cholera. Within the next few days, the disease hit the camp in full force. By the time it subsided, thirteen members of the camp had died, as well as two other members of the Church who were living in Missouri.⁵⁶

For camp participants recalling the epidemic, cholera was the scourge that Joseph Smith had prophesied. Writing around 1835, Wilford Woodruff saw the Lord’s hand in the disease. “Brother Joseph prophesied That . . . a scourge awaited the camp,” Woodruff said. “And as it was prophesied of So it was fulfilled. For soon after we had camp’d . . . we were visited by the destroying angel and 8 or 10 of our brethren were immediately lade helpless beneath the stroke.”⁵⁷ Likewise, William Cahoon, writing probably sometime in the late 1870s, stated that God “sent a scourge among us (*The Cholera*),” which “caused great sorrow and mourning in our Camp.” The plague, Cahoon continued, taught him that “it is a fearfull thing to fall under the displeasure of the living God & to openly rebel against Him & murmer at the council of His servant the Prophet.”⁵⁸

John Murdock, whose young daughter Phebe was one of the Missouri Saints who died from the disease, likewise saw the cholera epidemic as a judgment from God. “Although the Lord delivered us from our enemies,” Murdock recalled, “yet he had a whip for us, for whom he loveth he chastens, and some of us had become slothful in duty and found fault.” Murdock stated that as he traveled through Liberty, Missouri, a non-Mormon told him that it looked like cholera was “a judgement on our people.” Murdock agreed, declaring, “Judgement is to begin at the house of God’ and I think it has begun.”⁵⁹

55. “Letter to William W. Phelps, 31 July 1832,” in Matthew C. Godfrey and others, eds., *Documents, Volume 2: July 1831–January 1833*, vol. 2 of the Documents series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, ed. Dean C. Jessee and others (Salt Lake City: Church Historian’s Press, 2013), 267.

56. “Revelation, 22 June 1834,” 72 n. 334 [D&C 105].

57. *Wilford Woodruff’s Journal*, 1:12.

58. William Cahoon, *Autobiography*, 43, in *Autobiography and family record, 1878–1931*, MS 20731, Church History Library; emphasis in original.

59. John Murdock, *autobiography*, 31–32, in *Journal and autobiography circa 1830–1867*, MS 1194, Church History Library; 1 Peter 4:17.



John Murdock believed the outbreak of cholera among the Camp of Israel was a judgment from God. His daughter Phebe died from the disease. Courtesy Church History Library.

Outside of Woodruff's 1835 account, the attribution of cholera as a divine punishment, as well as the notion that Sylvester Smith's disunity led to God foundering the horses, is not present in contemporary records. Indeed, Joseph Smith wrote a letter to Emma the day that the camp's horses were supposedly afflicted because of Sylvester Smith's disobedience, but he did not mention anything about Sylvester Smith or any problems with horses.⁶⁰ Sources from 1834 do indicate that Sylvester Smith exhibited a rebellious spirit during the camp, and the death of individuals from cholera in late June and early July is a fact.⁶¹ But it appears that participants such as Heber C. Kimball, who at the time of writing his recollections had just seen the Church

nearly ripped apart by dissenters, provided specific meanings to these events when they remembered them later in their lives. The afflictions and disease became stark examples of what happened when Church members refused to follow their leaders or complained about them.

Healing the Sick

Some Camp of Israel members recalled several examples of the Lord extending healing to those who were ill. Contemporary records do not provide any examples of healings, although Joseph Smith did write Emma on June 4, 1834, that camp members were "all in

60. "Letter to Emma Smith, 18 May 1834," 50–52.

61. See, for example, "Minutes, 28–29 Aug. 1834," 125–32; "Afflicting," *Evening and the Morning Star* 2 (July 1834): 176.

better circumstances of health apparently than when we started from Kirtland.”⁶² Specific memories of healing came in later recollections.

Thomas Colburn, for example, told a Zion’s Camp reunion in 1865 that after he was “seized with cholera,” he “knelt down & prayed & covenanted with God” that he would serve the Lord if his life was spared. Colburn then “got some tea & was healed.”⁶³ Joseph Bates Noble recalled contracting the disease and being blessed by Brigham Young, Joseph Young, Heber C. Kimball, Orson Hyde, Peter Whitmer, “and three or four others.” Noble believed that he was healed “through the faith of my brethren.” “Never,” he concluded, “had I experienced before such a manifestation of the blessings of God as at this time.”⁶⁴

Hiram Winters also recalled in an account published in 1883 an incident where Joseph Smith not only healed Burr Riggs of cholera but also apparently raised him from the dead. Winters, who was “sergeant of the night-guards,” commenced checking on the guards one night around midnight and discovered that “Riggs was missing from his post.” Looking around the area, Winters discovered Riggs “behind a log that lay about a rod away, as stiff as the log itself.” Winters asked Alexander Whiteside to carry the body to Winters’s tent and then found Joseph Smith and told him what had happened. Joseph, Hyrum Smith, and Frederick G. Williams came to the tent and administered to Riggs, who was brought back to life in full health. According to Winters, “It was not over fifteen minutes from the time I found him till he was back at his post.”⁶⁵

Even those who were not on the expedition recalled instances of healing—including one example where Lucy Mack Smith, Joseph’s mother, declared in a memoir published in 1853 that Joseph and his brother Hyrum were healed by divine intervention at Lucy’s behest. Lucy explained that during the cholera epidemic, Joseph and Hyrum were both so afflicted that they “were greatly alarmed fearing that [they] should die in this western wilderness so far from [their] families without even the privilege of blessing [their] children or giving them one word of parting counsel.” They prayed to God for deliverance, Lucy continued,

62. “Letter to Emma Smith, 4 June 1834,” 54.

63. Thomas Colburn, in Zion’s Camp festival papers, 1864–1867, October 10, 1865.

64. Joseph Bates Noble, *Autobiography*, 7, in *Reminiscences, 1836–1866*, MS 1031, Church History Library. Noble may have written his account as early as 1836, but possibly much later.

65. Hiram Winters recollections, in Lycurgus, “Recollections of Zion’s Camp,” *Juvenile Instructor* 18 (March 15, 1883): 86.

but “still grew worse.” It seemed to them that “the Heavens seemed sealed against [them] and every power that could render [them] any assistance shut within its gates.” At this crucial moment, the brothers beseeched the Lord again to heal them. Hyrum then “sprung to his feet and exclaimed Joseph we shall return for I have seen an open vision in which I saw mother on her knees under an apple tree praying for us and she is even now asking in tears God to spare our lives that she may behold us again in the flesh and the spirit testifies to me that her prayers and ours shall be heard.”⁶⁶ Lucy, of course, was not on the expedition, and one presumes that she heard this story from Joseph and Hyrum. No contemporary records mention this event, but Lucy—writing after her two sons had been assassinated in Illinois in 1844—portrayed it as an example of God’s hand protecting and healing her sons. Remembering the incident in this way allowed her to focus on a time when her prayers were instrumental in God protecting her sons, in contrast to what had occurred in 1844. It also followed Lucy’s process in her memoir of depicting Joseph Smith as a heroic figure whom God protected.⁶⁷

Although numerous accounts of healing appear in reminiscences, other participants remembered Joseph Smith specifically being forbidden to heal those who suffered from cholera. Levi Hancock explained that after his brother Joseph contracted the disease, Joseph Smith prayed for him but was told that he “must stand aside or [he] shall [be] smitten of the Lord.” Without a blessing from Smith, Levi had to care for his sick brother, who survived the disease, but only after night-and-day attention from Levi.⁶⁸ According to Heber C. Kimball, when Smith tried

66. “Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1844–1845,” book 13, pp. 13–14, on Church Historian’s Press, *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/lucy-mack-smith-history-1844-1845/165>.

67. For example, Lucy Mack Smith recounted an incident in New York that occurred when Joseph Smith was taking the manuscript of the Book of Mormon to a printer in Palmyra for printing. According to Lucy, although there were rumors of a mob of forty men lying in hiding to ambush him on his way in order to steal the manuscript, Joseph told his mother to disregard the rumors and that God would protect him. On his way to Palmyra, Lucy said, he encountered the leader of the mob, tipped his hat to him, wished him a good morning, and passed on without any incident occurring. Upon returning, he told his mother, “Did I not tell you that I should be delivered from the hands of all my enemies?” “Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1845,” 157, on Church Historian’s Press, *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/lucy-mack-smith-history-1845/164>.

68. Levi Hancock, *Autobiography*, circa 1854, 147. Interestingly, a later family history of Joseph Hancock stated that he “was healed under the administration

to offer a healing blessing to John S. Carter, Smith was “smitten blind” and told that he “must not stay [God’s] hands, or he will slay us.”⁶⁹ Wilford Woodruff remembered a more general proclamation from Joseph Smith when the cholera epidemic hit. “I told you what was coming to pass,” Woodruff remembered Smith saying, “and when affliction came I stretched out my hand to stay it, and I came very near falling by it myself.”⁷⁰ Yet, as explained above, other accounts clearly stated that Joseph Smith and others blessed those with cholera and in some instances healed them.

Reasons for these discrepancies are not entirely clear. Perhaps in the case of John S. Carter, Kimball was trying to find a reason why a diligent Church member like Carter died and concluded that it was because Joseph Smith had been prevented from healing him. Perhaps Wilford Woodruff was similarly trying to clarify in his own mind why thirteen members of the camp died even with Joseph Smith present. Smith, however, was apparently not concerned with such things. Joseph Young recalled in 1878 that in February 1835, Joseph Smith declared that he had seen that those who had died from cholera in the camp had received a mansion in heaven.⁷¹ They may have suffered temporally, but their spiritual state was secure.

Over time, members of the camp recorded these instances of healing and of being forbidden to heal, possibly because they wanted to memorialize Joseph Smith, who had died by that time, but also because such instances provided key examples of God’s oversight of the expedition. Why these were not recorded by anyone at the time of the expedition may be just because participants did not have time to put on paper their experiences until later in their lives. But it is also likely that these instances took on new meaning for the Saints as they experienced continued hardship, including sickness and disease, as they made their

of Joseph Smith, the Prophet.” This indicates that Joseph Hancock may have later attributed his recovery from cholera to a blessing from Joseph Smith and not from his brother’s care. Amy Hancock, “Biography of Joseph Hancock, circa 1893,” MS 11362, Church History Library.

69. Heber C. Kimball, in *Zion’s Camp festival papers, 1864–1867*, October 10, 1864.

70. Wilford Woodruff, in *Sixty-Eighth Annual Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Publishing, 1898), 29–30.

71. Joseph Young, *History of the Organization of the Seventies: Names of First and Second Quorums* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Steam Printing Establishment, 1878), 1.

way from Missouri to Illinois and from Illinois to the Great Basin. At times in these later years, God did not heal those who were sick; recalling instances in the Camp of Israel where healing did and did not occur likely comforted those who had seen friends and loved ones pass on.

Providing Protection

Although participants tended to see God's hand in misfortune and disaster, members of the Camp of Israel also recalled the Lord protecting them from their enemies. This apparent contradiction shows that camp members could see God's hand in both good and bad events; they could believe that God is in all aspects of life. God can be both in the reward and in the punishment, in both chaos and order.⁷² The overlying belief, at least for members of the Camp of Israel, seemed to be that when the expedition was in need of chastisement, God provided it; when they were obedient, God protected them from misfortune.

The idea of the Lord's protection appears in contemporary documents of the camp. In June 1834, for example, Joseph Smith wrote a letter discussing the Lord watching over the camp and protecting it from enemies. "The Lord shows us to a good advantage in the eyes of their spies," he stated, "for in counting us the[y] make of our 170 men from five to seven hundred and the reports of the people are not a little calculated [to] frighten and strike terror through their ranks."⁷³ Yet most examples of protection come in reminiscent accounts. Heber C. Kimball, for instance, noted that when the company crossed the Illinois River on June 2, 1834, the ferryman believed they were 500 in number, although they were closer to 150.⁷⁴ Joseph Bates Noble, meanwhile, explained that he had heard individuals say the camp was "a thousand strong" and that he "never heard of our being numbered less than twice our actual number."⁷⁵

Kimball provided other examples of divine protection, drawing on the Old Testament's record of angels going before the children of Israel.⁷⁶ "God was with us, and angels went before us," Kimball declared, "and

72. Hall, *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment*, 77–78.

73. "Letter to Emma Smith, 4 June 1834," 56.

74. "Extracts from H. C. Kimball's Journal," *Times and Seasons* 6 (February 1, 1845): 788.

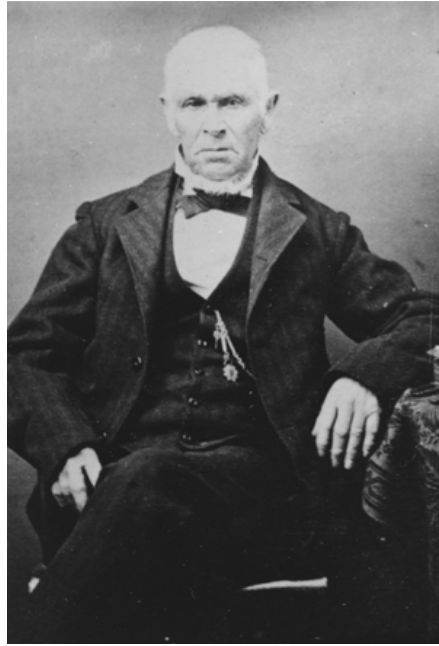
75. Noble, *Autobiography*, 6.

76. See Exodus 23:20.

we had no fear of either men or devils."⁷⁷ Later, at an 1864 Zion's Camp reunion, Kimball provided a specific example. To cross a stream near Indianapolis, Indiana, Kimball explained, the camp had to go down a steep embankment. When an out-of-control wagon flew over the embankment, "some of the brethren saw an angel hold up the wagon until it came right again in the track." Indeed, Kimball continued, "angels were with us all the time."⁷⁸ Joseph Smith's manuscript history, written in the mid 1840s, made a similar assertion: "Notwithstanding our enemies were continually breathing threats of violence, we did not fear, neither did we hesitate to prosecute our journey, for God was with us, and his angels went before us . . . for we saw them."⁷⁹

Reuben McBride echoed these declarations, saying that on one night, enemies threatened the expedition. Camp members felt safe, however, because "Joseph said he knew the angels of God were with us for he had seen them."⁸⁰

As the camp got closer to Clay County, Missouri, where the bulk of Church members in Missouri were living, tensions ran even higher—something that Joseph Smith recognized. In a June 1834 letter to several individuals who had served as legal counsel for the Church, Smith declared



Reuben McBride was one of several Camp of Israel participants who believed that God protected the camp from danger. Courtesy Church History Library.

77. "Elder Kimball's Journal," *Times and Seasons* 6 (January 15, 1845): 772.

78. Heber C. Kimball, in Zion's Camp festival papers, 1864–1867, October 10, 1864.

79. "History, 1838–1856, Volume A-1," 481. See also Woodruff, "History and Travels of Zions Camp, 1882," 20.

80. Reuben McBride, *Reminiscence*, 3, MS 8197, Church History Library.

that Governor Daniel Dunklin's "ears [were] stifled with reports from Jackson [County] of our hostile intentions &c."⁸¹ Smith also received resolutions from a committee of citizens in Lafayette County, Missouri, declaring that they had "120 to 130 persons assembled in the Town of Independence County of Jackson" ready to "interfer[e]" if the Camp of Israel crossed the Missouri River into Jackson County.⁸² Another newspaper account declared that rumors were rampant that the Mormons intended to enter Jackson County in hostile array. If that occurred, the report asserted, much blood would be shed.⁸³

In this atmosphere, an event occurred that Church members later interpreted as an example of divine protection. A June 1834 Missouri newspaper reported that a boat carrying several Jackson County citizens, including Samuel C. Owens and James Campbell, sunk as they were crossing the Missouri River, presumably to preemptively attack the Camp of Israel. Because of the sinking, Campbell and four other men drowned.⁸⁴

Sometime between March 1842 and August 1843, William W. Phelps, who was working on Joseph Smith's manuscript history and who had been living in Clay County in June 1834, recorded a description of this event into the history.⁸⁵ According to Phelps's account, a group of about fifteen individuals, led by Owens and Campbell, tried to cross the Missouri River with the intention of preventing the Camp of Israel from entering Clay County. Campbell swore that "*the eagles and Turkey buzzards shall eat my flesh if I do not fix Jo. Smith and his army so that their skins will not hold shucks before two days are passed.*" As the group crossed the river, the history continued, "the angel of God saw fit to sink the boat, about the middle of the river, and seven out of twelve that attempted to cross, were drowned." Campbell himself "floated down the river some four or five miles, and lodged upon a pile of drift wood, where the eagles, Buzzards, ravens, crows, and wild animals [ate] his

81. "Letter to John Thornton and Others, 25 June 1834," 86–88.

82. "Resolutions of Committee from Lafayette County, Missouri, 23 June 1834," in Godfrey and others, *Documents, Volume 4*, 79–80, and on Church Historian's Press, *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/resolutions-of-committee-from-lafayette-county-missouri-23-june-1834/1>.

83. "The Mormon Controversy," *Daily National Intelligencer*, July 23, 1834.

84. "Distressing," *Missouri Intelligencer and Boon's Lick Advertiser*, June 28, 1834.

85. Vogel, *History of Joseph Smith*, 1:clxxxiv; 2:113–14.

flesh from his bones, to fulfill his own words." Owens, the history explained, survived "after floating fourteen miles down stream" and returned home, "rather shy of the vengeance of God."⁸⁶ Phelps's account—written at a time when Joseph Smith was facing the possibility of extradition to Missouri by his enemies—depicted the misfortune of Campbell and Owens as God intervening to protect the Camp of Israel. Perhaps Phelps hoped that a similar fate would befall those who, in his mind, continued to persecute Joseph Smith.

The best-known memory of God's protection came in accounts of a storm that occurred at Fishing River, Missouri, just a few days after the sinking of the boat. Charles C.

Rich provided what appears to be the only contemporary record of this storm: "it commenced raining at dark and rained and litteniged and thunderd to exceed all an alarm of an atack but no attack."⁸⁷ Reminiscent accounts provided meaning to this storm and the lack of a suspected attack. According to Heber C. Kimball's 1840 account, as the camp approached Fishing River, an old woman—identified in George A. Smith's record as an African-American woman—told camp members that "there is a company of men laying in wait here who are calculating to kill you this morning as you pass through." Kimball recounted that



Charles C. Rich provided what may be the only contemporary account of the Fishing River storm. Courtesy Church History Library.

86. "History, 1838–1856, Volume A-1," 494–95, emphasis in original. See also Woodruff, "History and Travels of Zions Camp, 1882," 55–56.

87. Charles C. Rich, *Diary*, 1834 May–July, MS 703, Church History Library. This version of Rich's journal was copied by Thomas Bullock and contains a notation that it is "a revised copy," meaning some of what is in the journal could have been added by Bullock.

throughout the day, wagons broke down, wheels fell off of wagons, and “many things . . . hinder[ed] our progress,” meaning that the group did not encounter a mob in the morning as expected. That night, however, a group of men rode into the camp proclaiming that it would “see hell before morning” and that a large contingent of men “armed with guns” were preparing to attack that night. “Nothing but the power of God could save” the camp, Kimball recalled the men declaring.⁸⁸

Not long after the men threatening destruction had left the camp, Kimball noted, “a small black cloud” began “rising in the west; and not more than twenty minutes passed away before it began to rain and hail.” “The thunders rolled with awful majesty,” he continued, “and the red lightnings flashed through the horizon.” The storm had such fury that “the earth quaked and trembled, and there being no cessation it seemed as though the Almighty had issued forth his mandate of vengeance.” Fierce winds blew down the tents of the camp, and the wind and rain forced camp members into a nearby log meetinghouse. Because of the storm, Kimball explained with perhaps some exaggeration, the river rose nearly forty feet, and the mob, which was on the opposite side, could not cross it. Although little to no hail fell on the Camp of Israel, it “fell so heavy” on the camp’s enemies “that it beat holes in their hats, and in some instances even broke the stocks off their guns.” Horses ran away, gunpowder was soaked, “and it was evident the Almighty fought in our defence.” Because of the storm and the rise of the river, the mob could not attack the camp.⁸⁹ Just as the Lord used the Red Sea to protect the children of Israel from Pharaoh’s army, so too did God intervene at this time—at least in Kimball’s memory—through nature.⁹⁰

Perhaps influenced by Kimball’s account of the divine origin of the storm, nearly every participant who left a record of the Fishing River storm thereafter attributed it to God’s intervention. Elias Hutchings, for example, informed a meeting in 1845 that “the Lord protected [the camp] by sending a storm of Hail Thunder & Lightning snow & rain upon” the mob, while Levi Hancock, after relating other miracles that he believed had occurred on the expedition, stated that “the greatest

88. “Extracts from H. C. Kimball’s Journal,” *Times and Seasons* 6 (February 1, 1845): 789–90; George A. Smith, *Memoirs*, 36.

89. “Extracts from H. C. Kimball’s Journal,” *Times and Seasons* 6 (February 1, 1845): 790.

90. See Exodus 14:21–31.

miracle” was the storm that God produced at Fishing River.⁹¹ Joseph Bates Noble agreed, declaring, “One thing I was assured of—the God of our fathers was our defense. . . . How plain we could discern the hand of the Lord in our preservation.”⁹² Nathan Baldwin concurred. “The Lord had previously said He would fight the battles of His saints,” Baldwin explained, “and it seemed as though the mandate had gone forth from His presence, to ply the artillery of Heaven in defense of His servants. . . . All were conscious that God was engaged in the conflict, and thankful that they were under his special care and protection.”⁹³ George A. Smith echoed these sentiments: “I have ever felt thankful to my Heavenly Father that he by this storm and sudden rise of the streams prevented our having a bloody conflict with our enemies who were thereby prevented from attacking us.”⁹⁴ As Lyman Littlefield, who was only fourteen years old when he was on the journey, stated nearly sixty years later, “We understood that the Almighty had sent that storm for the special preservation of Zion’s Camp”—a “great truth that was plain to our comprehension.”⁹⁵

According to Mormon sources, even members of the mob acknowledged that the Fishing River storm came from God. Kimball stated in his 1840 writing that when a delegation of men from Ray County, Missouri, came into the Camp of Israel a couple of days after the storm, their leader, who apparently had been one of the mob, admitted that there was “an Almighty power that protects this people.”⁹⁶ In an addendum to Joseph Smith’s manuscript history of the Church added around 1845, Thomas Bullock, probably using notes provided from George A. Smith, explained that during the storm, one of the Saints’ enemies was killed by lightning and another lost a hand when a horse he was holding bolted. These circumstances led one of the mob to declare, “If that was the way, God fought for the God damd Mormons, they might as well go home

91. 3rd Quorum of the Seventy Minutes, January 8, 1845, 51, in *Seventies Quorum Records, 1844–1975*, CR 499, reel 4, Church History Library; Levi Hancock, *Autobiography*, circa 1854, 144.

92. Noble, *Autobiography*, 9.

93. Baldwin, *Account of Zion’s Camp*, 12.

94. George A. Smith, *Memoirs*, 36–37.

95. Lyman O. Littlefield, “The Prophet Joseph Smith in Zion’s Camp,” *Juvenile Instructor* 27 (March 1, 1892): 147.

96. “Extracts from H. C. Kimball’s Journal,” *Times and Seasons* 6 (February 15, 1845): 804.

about their business.”⁹⁷ Joseph S. Allen had a similar memory, stating that the day after the storm, members of the mob said “that the Mormons carried hell with them, and they swore that they would be friends with the Mormons.”⁹⁸ At least some participants of the Camp of Israel, then, remembered the storm as being so powerful that even those who were bitterly opposed to the Church recognized God’s hand in it.

These examples indicate that camp members believed that God’s protection was evident throughout the expedition, especially in making the group’s numbers larger in the eyes of their enemies than they actually were, in providing angels to guard the camp and prevent misfortune, and in pronounced displays of power such as the Fishing River storm, which prevented a mob attack. Although evidences of such protection are contained in some contemporary records, most of the details come in later reminiscences as camp participants had time to record their experiences and as they reflected on them in light of the persecution the Saints had faced in Missouri, Illinois, and even in the Great Basin. Seeing protection from God during the Camp of Israel likely helped them to cope with the memories of other difficulties they had faced.

Reasons for Perceiving the Hand of the Lord

As these examples show, those who participated in Zion’s Camp remembered God exhibiting his hand in numerous ways throughout the expedition, just as the Old Testament recounted divine intervention among the children of Israel. The accuracy of some of these memories may be called into question. For example, if, on the one hand, several individuals remembered that God would not allow Joseph Smith to heal those afflicted with cholera, why, then, did the Lord permit Smith to heal Burr Riggs, or why did several members of the camp recall being healed? Historians need to ask such questions, but it is also important to remember that such discrepancies are normal when dealing with memory. Historian Steven Harper has argued that “memories are both accurate and inaccurate. They are both distorted reconstructions of the past and true perceptions of the past as seen from the present.”⁹⁹ Thus, what is important is that participants believed that the events they described had happened and that they had specific reasons for believing it.

97. “History, 1838–1856, Volume A-1,” 16 [addenda] n. 16.

98. Joseph S. Allen, in *Zion’s Camp festival papers, 1864–1867*, October 10, 1864.

99. Harper, “Remembering the First Vision,” 10.

Why were those in Zion’s Camp prone to see God’s hand so prominently in the expedition? Certainly one reason is simply that members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, both then and today, strongly believe that God is aware of them and that he will intervene in their lives when necessary. These beliefs are part of their identity, prompting members to look at ways in which the Lord has interacted with them in their lives, both in the present and in the past. The fact that these Saints believed themselves to be modern-day members of the House of Israel also likely encouraged them to see ways that the Lord protected them as he had the children of Israel.¹⁰⁰

Another reason for so many accounts of God’s intervention may have been to answer critics who asserted that God had nothing to do with the camp—that it was just one of Joseph Smith’s follies. Eber D. Howe’s book *Mormonism Unveiled*, published in late 1834, depicted camp participants as “dupes” who believed Joseph Smith’s false declarations that God commanded the formation and march of the Camp of Israel.¹⁰¹ T. B. H. Stenhouse’s 1872 publication *Rocky Mountain Saints*, meanwhile, declared sarcastically that the Missouri Saints, who were chastised in a December 1833 revelation commanding the organization of the camp, “could not be expected to command so great a manifestation of divine power as would have been necessary to restore them to their homes and farms.”¹⁰² This kind of skeptical attitude from detractors, combined with the believers’ will to interpret their lives in terms of divine intervention, likely motivated members of the camp to recall times when they felt that God *was* with the expedition.

In addition, experiences of the Saints in the years after 1834 may have informed how participants remembered the camp. As Taves and Harper have argued, “Remembering involves *piecing together a past that*

100. Henry B. Eyring, a member of the Church’s governing First Presidency, for example, counseled Church members in 2007 to keep a record of how they see the hand of God in their daily lives. By doing so, he continued, Church members would be able to see “how much God loves us and how much we need Him.” Henry B. Eyring, “O Remember, Remember,” *Ensign* 37 (November 2007): 66.

101. E. D. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled [sic]: or, a Faithful Account of That Singular Imposition and Delusion, from Its Rise to the Present Time* (Painesville, Ohio: By the author, 1834), 158.

102. T. B. H. Stenhouse, *The Rocky Mountain Saints* (New York: Appleton, 1872), 56–57.

*makes sense in the present.*¹⁰³ Therefore, it is important to explore what the “present” of the Saints was when Camp of Israel reminiscences were made. Heber C. Kimball initially composed his recollections of Zion’s Camp in 1840, only about a year removed from Church members’ violent expulsion from the state of Missouri.¹⁰⁴ In that case, there was no storm provided by God to protect the Saints from their enemies, nor was there any other intervention from the Lord to prevent the expulsion. When Kimball’s recollections were published in 1845, it was at a time when the Church was again facing persecution from its enemies, which would result in the migration of the Saints from Illinois, and just a year removed from the death of Joseph Smith—a time when God did not protect his prophet. For Kimball, recollecting times when God was with the Camp of Israel and when Joseph Smith exerted prophetic leadership perhaps helped him deal with the loss of his beloved leader.¹⁰⁵

Much of what was composed in Joseph Smith’s manuscript history about Zion’s Camp was likewise heavily revised in 1845 and then revised again in 1859, not long after the 1857–1858 Utah War, when Church leaders in the Great Basin believed they were under siege from the federal government because of the march of US soldiers to Utah Territory.¹⁰⁶ Throughout the rest of the nineteenth century, when many of the reminiscences of individual members of the Camp of Israel were written, Church members faced legal prosecution because of their practice of polygamy, reinforcing their belief that the world was against them.¹⁰⁷ In such circumstances, it would be natural for Church members to turn to the past to find examples of God acting on their behalf and for their well-being, as well as finding specific examples of God protecting them from their enemies.

103. Taves and Harper, “Joseph Smith’s First Vision,” 60, italics in original.

104. Godfrey, “The Redemption of Zion Must Needs Come by Power,” 127–28.

105. Glen M. Leonard, *Nauvoo: A Place of Peace, a People of Promise* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2002), 525–50.

106. Vogel, *History of Joseph Smith*, 1:xv; 2:xii. For an explanation of Johnston’s Army and the conflict in Utah Territory in the 1850s, see Norman F. Furniss, *The Mormon Conflict: 1850–1859* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1960); David L. Bigler and Will Bagley, *The Mormon Rebellion: America’s First Civil War, 1857–1858* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2011).

107. Kathryn M. Daynes, *More Wives Than One: Transformation of the Mormon Marriage System, 1840–1910* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 47–50.

The Camp of Israel may have served as a perfect model because, just as in Missouri, Illinois, and the conflict surrounding plural marriage, the expedition did not end with the Saints triumphing over their enemies. Yet the narrative still provided numerous instances of God working on Church members’ behalf. In this way, the interpretive memories of Zion’s Camp could comfort the Saints and highlight that even if the outcome was not what was expected or desired, it did not mean that God was not with them.

Church leaders also used examples from the camp to warn Saints of what could befall them if they were not obedient to leaders’ directives. Believing that “a lack of unity and obedience” among the Saints was one cause of Joseph Smith’s death in 1844, Brigham Young and other Church leaders preached frequently on the necessity of obedience.¹⁰⁸ Yet examples of disobedience abounded in Utah Territory, including in the late 1860s and early 1870s when a group of Latter-day Saints led by William Godbe opposed Young’s economic teachings, believing that he was too focused on economic concerns.¹⁰⁹ Facing such opposition, Young and other leaders could point to the fate of Sylvester Smith’s horse and the cholera outbreak as examples of what misfortunes God could bestow upon individuals who refused to take counsel from the prophet and complained about directions from their leaders. Memories of the Camp of Israel and of the Lord’s hand in the expedition thus could serve not only as comfort but also as warning.

Conclusion

Whatever the reasons, those who participated in the Camp of Israel strongly remembered God being with them and often intervening in the camp’s affairs, whether that was through assistance in recruiting, funding, feeding, healing, or chastising. Examining examples of these memories helps historians see the need for caution when using reminiscences and autobiographies by highlighting how some of the memories evolved. It also shows that a collective memory of God’s intervention developed over time as participants interpreted their experiences in

108. John G. Turner, *Brigham Young: Pioneer Prophet* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2012), 146.

109. Turner, *Brigham Young*, 355–58. For the best discussion of the Godbeite movement, see Ronald W. Walker, *Wayward Saints: The Godbeites and Brigham Young* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998; repr., Provo, Utah: BYU Press, 2001).

a context of violence, forced relocations, and persecution in Missouri, Illinois, and Utah Territory. Perhaps the most striking point coming from this analysis, however, is that the participants strongly believed that God's intervention was both ubiquitous and necessary in Zion's Camp. Participants clearly portrayed that God did not forsake them during the expedition, even if the camp did not meet its goal of helping Church members regain their Jackson County lands. Such memories reinforced to them that even in times when God seemingly is absent, his hand is there if individuals choose to see it. "We believe the hand of the Lord is in it," Joseph Smith wrote to his wife Emma in June 1834 about the expedition.¹¹⁰ The accounts of many camp members overwhelmingly agreed.

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110. "Letter to Emma Smith, 4 June 1834," 56.