

# Brigham's Gospel Kingdom



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My aunt told me a story as she lay in a hospital bed. She had pioneered in Idaho, as one of the last generation who moved out to the frontiers to build what Leonard Arrington has called the Great Basin Kingdom in a process begun by Brigham Young, and she was telling me why she loved "Brother Brigham." "You know why it took many years to build that stone wall, the one you can still see a part of east of the Beehive House? When the immigrants would come in the wagon trains, many of them didn't have a thing. They had used up all they had, just to get here from England or the East. Sometimes there were a few who didn't even have a place to go for a home or work. So Brigham would hire them to work for him. It was usually some worthwhile, needed job on his farms and orchards, but if those were all taken he would say, 'See the pile of rocks in that corner; I need it over in this corner.' Whatever the job he gave them, he would pay them enough to live on but not as much as the work was paying elsewhere. So they were anxious to leave and start their own farm or shop or hire out to others in the colonies. The next year others would come in and he would say, if there was nothing else, 'See the pile of rocks in this corner; I need it over in that corner.' And that is why it took so long to build that little wall. They thought they were smart to earn what they could and get out of the employ of such a hard man, but he was the smart one. He never gave charity, but he helped many make their new lives." Then, with her face livened by her special form of calm assurance and her thin, strong fingers gesturing, she added, "He didn't tell them what he was doing but he just did it; he made them feel worth something down in here."

Brother Brigham knew what he was doing, and he was sometimes explicit:

My soul feels hallelujah, it exults in God, that He has planted this people in a place that is not desired by the wicked; . . . I want hard times, so that every person that does not wish to stay, for the sake of his religion, will leave. This is a good place to make Saints, and it is a good place for Saints to live; it is the place the Lord has appointed, and we shall stay here until He tells us to go somewhere else.<sup>1</sup>

Of course, it was not mere persecution, or work as an end, that he was after, or even the building of a mighty empire, but that sense of self-worth that my aunt treasured from her own pioneering, that realization of joy-bringing satisfaction that comes only from doing something worthwhile—

something honest and developing—with our own divine potential. Brigham Young was intent on fulfilling his growing vision of the promise he had made the Nauvoo Saints in the dark hour of their bewilderment at Joseph's death: "There is an Almighty foundation laid, and we can build a kingdom such as there never was in this world."<sup>2</sup> And that is what they did—after the trial of people and leaders in the Nauvoo expulsion and the Iowa crossing and the Winter Quarters death and the early starvation in the Valley. They built, under President Young, a kingdom such as the world had not seen, an unearthly kingdom—though a kingdom partly made of rock walls and nail factories and "Rag Missions" and sorghum molasses—that made people into Saints. It was a kingdom that, though it had no dangerous political ambitions, appalled the politicians and economists and the moralists of the western world and finally had to endure the crushing intervention of the United States Government. Meanwhile it attracted tens of thousands of dedicated converts from all over the world and secured the material and spiritual foundations of the modern Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. And it set the vision for all future generations of Mormons, even in the areas where it was defeated, of an ideal someday to be reached or completed.

Most Mormons, including those who know little else about him, and many non-Mormon writers, including those who admire nothing else in Mormonism, have been impressed by the kingdom Brigham built. They have called Brigham Young the greatest western colonizer and praised the disciplined dedication and courageous resourcefulness with which he and the Mormons created a thriving and harmonious commonwealth in a desert wilderness. For instance, Christopher Lasch, a fine non-Mormon historian while reviewing some books on the Mormon experience in 1967 expressed his admiration that "in Utah, under Young's leadership the Mormons created a self-sufficient, cooperative, egalitarian, and authoritarian economy devoted not to individual enrichment but to the collective well-being of the flock." Lasch cited the present LDS Church Historian, Leonard Arrington, who in his landmark study of the Mormon economy, *Great Basin Kingdom*,

shows how the Mormons accomplished, through a system of cooperative and compulsory labor, impressive feats of planning and development—irrigation, roads, canals, sugar beer factories, iron works—without generating the institutions or the inequalities elsewhere associated with industrial progress.

Lasch concludes: "Cooperation and planning caused the desert to bloom, in marked contrast to the exploitive patterns of agriculture which on other frontiers exhausted natural resources and left the land a smoking waste."<sup>3</sup> But even in this high praise, Lasch, like most other commentators, seems to miss the point of Brigham Young's kingdom—and therefore

misses its highest achievement. He fails to see the relationship of successful kingdom building to basic Mormon religious principles; he therefore cannot see the continuance in the twentieth century Church of those remarkable but for him inexplicable pioneer virtues. He cannot see that the principles continue with Mormons as a foundation for other, just as dedicated, forms of kingdom building and remain the basis for a continuing idealism that envisions a kingdom—as literal as Brother Brigham's—to be built in preparation for the coming of Christ.

It is interesting that one of the few scholars who have clearly seen these things is Ernst Benz, a non-Mormon professor of religion at the University of Marburg, Germany. Speaking at a forum at Brigham Young University in March 1976, Professor Benz commented on the increasing secularization, or worldliness, of all the world's religions, which has taken the form of a decline not only of institutional churches but of the influence of religion on all areas of modern man's thinking and behavior. He then pointed out a quite different, positive kind of "secularization" or involvement of the divine with the world, God's penetration into

the matter of the world to model and shape it according to his own will, for modelling mankind, for building up His kingdom. Considering this type of secularization we must as historians admit that Mormonism is the best example of this positive secularization of the Christian gospel because it was driven from its very beginning by the aim to prepare and even to anticipate the promise of the coming kingdom of God. . . . The persecution and the destruction of their holy places drove them finally into the western desert, and there they fulfilled the most admirable and astonishing work of making the desert blossom under the most atrocious exterior conditions of nature, of climate, of absence of material resources.

But Benz goes on to see much deeper into that achievement than others such as Lasch. He points out why Mormons have differed from all other millenarian movements in having unique resources for avoiding the great danger of such positive secularization, the tendency of successful building of a literal physical kingdom (even though in explicit preparation for Christ's literal coming to reign at its head) to "proceed so far into worldliness, that it comes in the advanced state of it to be an interruption or a loss of contact with the original or heavenly source and with the heavenly aim."

With a kind of insight into Mormon theology and experience that is extremely rare, Benz points to three basic Mormon concepts which he has faith will prevent the ideal of the Mormon kingdom from declining into a "social gospel" effort merely to solve man's material problems: First, the concept of the "Everlasting Gospel," a body of truth (what Joseph Smith called the "ancient order of things") which does not evolve or decay but is revealed again and again in its original power, including the permanent

duty of mission—the divine call and power to spread that Everlasting Gospel from the kingdom throughout the whole earth. Second, the “permanent presence of the gifts of the Holy Spirit”:

Mormons always preserved a very living feeling and consciousness of the presence of the Holy Spirit and of the activity of his gifts, above all of prophecy as a living element of the guidance of the Church. Prophecy is more than mere adaptation, more than compromise, it is the way of divine guidance through the dangerous deserts and rocky mountains of human history, it inspires and enables the believers in the future as it did in the past to prepare and to anticipate so far as possible the coming kingdom of God.

Third, and most important, in Benz’s opinion, in keeping Mormons from perverting the kingdom through the wrong way of secularization, is their unique idea of the origin and destiny of man—the “incarnation of preexisting spirits in human bodies” as part of a God-given opportunity “to advance in the grand scale of being, in which he is to move in the eternal worlds”:

In a free decision man enters the way of endless progression, and with the full knowledge of all the risk of it, the great law of increasing complexity, the law of endless development of all his powers in the midst of a universe becoming increasingly complex. In this concept of man there is practically no place for the sense of the loss of the consciousness of the transcendent origin and aim of man. Denying his heavenly origin, man would deny himself, would deny the sense of his life, the meaning of the community of man in which he lives, the sense of the universe in which he dwells.

. . . The will of developing this image of God, the will to perfection, the will to reach the end of the development of all his power given him from above is deep-rooted in man’s life; hope and aim of perfection is a basic element of life itself.<sup>4</sup>

Benz quotes only one example of how this religious vision was translated into practical terms by Brigham Young, but it is in a central area, related to all others—that is, Brigham’s understanding of life as education, which he expressed in the powerful image, taken literally in Mormon theology, of the world as a school:

Intelligent beings are organized to become Gods, even the sons of God, to dwell in the presence of Gods, and become associated with the highest intelligences that dwell in eternity. We are now in the school, and must practice upon what we receive.<sup>5</sup>

It is impossible to understand adequately Brigham Young’s character and actions, or to appreciate properly his achievement in building “the kingdom of God,” without seeing that its greatness did not derive merely from a fortunate combination of people and circumstances that produced a colony successful materially—or even admirable morally—but from a

religious vision shared by President Young and his people that produced a school for educating men and women he thought of literally as “potential Gods.” And Benz is right that central to that process were Brother Brigham’s commitments in the three areas that have uniquely kept Mormon secularism truly religious: his undeviating loyalty, in all his kingdom building, to establishing and disseminating worldwide an ancient order of truth, the Everlasting Gospel; his personal reception and wide cultivation of the gifts of the spirit, including prophecy, both in working out his own and his family’s salvation and in blessing the Saints throughout his kingdom; and his constant talking about, occasional ecstatic exultation in, and consistent planning in terms of the divine potential of every human being in this earthly school. As my aunt would say it: “He knew what he was doing; he made them feel worth something down in here.”

These resources are the key to understanding not only the miraculous success of the tangible kingdom in the desert but to answering certain historical and biographical puzzles: For instance, a constant mystery to gentiles who overlook the background of Mormon persecution has been the source of Brigham Young’s apparently absolute power over a people raised in democratic traditions—his ability to direct them to make incredible sacrifices, even to the death, when they could have pulled up and left at any time. And a puzzle even to some Mormons has been the source of Brigham’s apparently enormous personal wealth—what seems to critics an inconsistent involvement of a prophet in profits and politics and a greedy accumulation of a lion’s share of scarce resources among a destitute people. But there *are* answers now, which both Mormons and gentiles need to look at.

It is important to see that it was Brigham Young’s success in winning the Mormons, loyalty to him as the true successor to Joseph Smith—by sharing with them and consistently developing in them Joseph’s vision of their earthly purpose and possibilities and by truly functioning as a prophet to them—that gave Mormons an other-worldly perspective, but one that paradoxically freed them for energetic, courageous building in this world. Their fundamental loyalty, reinforced by bitter persecution and despite deep-seated, scripturally validated loyalty to the Constitution of the United States and its principles, was not to Europe or the United States, or even Nauvoo or Salt Lake City, but to an eternal City of God, an ideal to be realized in their hearts and minds as well as in buildings and to be fully realized only in the future; thus they could endure setbacks and losses, move and rebuild, or move out to colonize again and again at the call of the prophet. Confident that President Young was receiving divine direction concerning this whole unified spiritual and physical kingdom and receiving it according to changing circumstances as they developed, they could accept, with clear-eyed but persistent obedience, the directions from their prophet on

all aspects of their lives, from health remedies to architecture to marriage choices, and then adjust with equanimity when the directions changed, even reversed, as conditions changed. These people were not dupes or fools; they were willing to give such power over their lives only to one who they were convinced, on continuing evidence both of his enjoyment of the gifts of the spirit and of his practical success, was indeed God's spokesman.

This turning back to a pre-Enlightenment desire to unite power and goodness in one person, in a prophet-king, appalled most non-Mormons. The federal officials appointed to Utah who tried magnanimously to interject the individualism and divisions of Eastern-style democracy and laissez-faire capitalism into the Mormon theocracy were amazed at the rejection of their attempts by the people themselves. They failed to understand that Brigham Young's power was freely given him. And those who were (and are) offended at Brigham's imperious one-man leadership, his involvement in business development, and his seeming carelessness in mixing his own and Church resources simply fail to understand both the times and his fidelity to the basic Mormon concept of stewardship in building the Kingdom of God. All-labor and capital, windfalls and profits, talents and time—all was to be used according to his God-given responsibility to direct, and was to be used for one purpose, the good of the kingdom.

Such a perspective also helps us understand Brigham Young's amazing confidence about the kingdom, even from the frightening days of early 1849, when for many of the Saints the issue of survival was still very much in doubt and some were thinking very seriously of moving on to California. At the lowest point of morale, in February, he said to the Saints,

We have been kicked out of the frying-pan into the fire, out of the fire into the middle of the floor, and here we are and here we will stay. God . . . will temper the elements for the good of His Saints; he will rebuke the frost and the sterility of the soil, and the land shall become fruitful. Brethren, go to, now and plant out your fruit seeds. . . . As for gold and silver, and the rich minerals of the earth there is no country that equals this; but let them alone; let others seek them, and we will cultivate the soil. . . . Brethren, plow your land and sow wheat, plant your potatoes.<sup>6</sup>

Indeed, it seems that over the next few years irrigation leached the sterile alkali from the soil, and the combination of plentiful water through that irrigation and yet hot, continuous sunshine, unimpaired by rainclouds, began to produce exceptionally fine crops; it even seems, according to modern climatologists, that a general worldwide warming trend brought sufficiently long growing seasons. But the most important thing is that the Saints, with very few exceptions, did resist the lure of California, and even the temptation to exploit Utah's own mining potential (and thus avoided the mining camp evils of greed, boom and bust economy, and



degeneration of morals). They plowed their lands and planted potatoes. And along with the windfall of needed goods, and a market for their surplus teams, wagons, and food, that came with the influx of forty-niners that summer, they began to harvest enough to sustain the 5,600 residents in the valley the winter of 1849–50 (plus a number of stranded gold-seekers) and still leave a large surplus in storage. The next summer continuing immigration from the Winter Quarters area back on the Missouri brought the population to 11,000. The “starving period” was over and Brigham Young began to act on his already formed plans to colonize the whole area and build the political and economic, the industrial as well as agricultural base for the literal kingdom.

As he began to build, Brigham, as their Moses, did not forget, in all his apparent self-confidence, the true source of the protection and success the Mormons had enjoyed in their role as modern Israel. On 28 July 1850, he wrote Orson Hyde, in charge back at the Winter Quarters area way-station, by then centered at Kanessville, Iowa, where 7,000 still waited their turn and others were coming in from Europe:

We feel no fear. We are in the hands of our heavenly Father, the God of Abraham and Joseph Who guided us to this Land, who fed the poor Saints on the Plains with Quails, Who gave his people strength to labour without Bread, who sent the Gulls of the Deep as Saviours to preserve (by Devouring the crickets) the Golden Wheat for Bread for his People and who preserved his Saints from the wrath of their enemies, Delivering them from a bondage more cruel than that inflicted upon Israel in Egypt. He is our Father and our Protector. We live in his Light, are Guided by his Wisdom, Protected by his Shadow, Upheld by his Strength. . . .

Dear Brother . . . we will do the Best we can to Get along with our Domestic affairs with the Blessing of the almighty. We shall none of us have to Die but once.<sup>7</sup>

But as we have seen, Brigham thought a man a fool—worse than a fool, a neglectful steward of God's gifts—if he relied only on such miracles. He was certain God was in charge and thus he was able to work without fear or even undue haste or anxiety, especially after the chastening of the Iowa experience. He was confident that he must only do his best and God's will for the kingdom would be realized, even if God occasionally had to take up the slack of human failure or inability with his miracles. This confidence helped greatly in freeing Brigham to act decisively and to move others to do their best—both through his actions and through his exhortations such as that letter to Orson Hyde.

So President Young sat down in the desperate spring of 1849 with his General Council of Fifty (a kind of town meeting of the chief leaders of church and community) and began to plan the kingdom. It did not surprise him later when the enterprise was saved from failure by the exceptionally

good harvests of 1849 and 1850 and the windfall profits of various kinds from the gold rush. He was willing to take the Lord's blessing, without blinking at the irony (any more than he did again in 1858–60 when the economy was bolstered by U. S. army trade and surplus) that the kingdom was profiting from something that was in some ways a serious threat to it—and without compunction at charging what the market would bear: “What! sell bread to the man who is going to earn his one hundred and fifty dollars a day, at the same price as you do to the poor laborer, who works hard here for one dollar a day? I say, you men who are going to get gold to make golden images . . . pay for your flour!”<sup>8</sup> Those two profitable years gave President Young the confidence to move rapidly ahead with bringing the thousands of Saints still remaining in Iowa and to plan for immigrating the 30,000 converts from England; to send out missionaries, especially starting in 1852, to many parts of the world; and to spread out colonies up and down the central corridor and even into distant parts of the huge provisional State of Deseret confidently envisioned in those meetings in 1849.

That “state” functioned quite fully, with the Church President also as its “governor,” for two years while the Mormons sought federal approval, and again it functioned as a kind of “ghost government” from about 1860 to the ‘70s, during a time when the executive and judicial branches of the central territorial government were regarded as an alien collection of carpetbaggers. Late in 1849, Brigham’s astute friend, Thomas Kane, who knew the ways of Washington, had warned the Mormons against settling for less than statehood. Wilford Woodruff reports an interview with him in Philadelphia, in which Kane described President Polk’s continuing animosity (spurred by Missouri Senator Benton) and Polk’s clear intention, despite Kane’s efforts with him, to appoint territorial officials from the East who would not be friendly. Woodruff quotes Kane as saying,

You are better off without any government from the hands of Congress than with a Territorial government. The political intrigues of government officers will be against you. You can govern yourselves better. . . . You do not want corrupt political men from Washington strutting around you. . . . You have a government now, which is firm and powerful, and you are under no obligations to the United States. . . .

Brigham Young should be your governor. His head is not filled with law books and lawyers’ tactics, but he has power to see through men and things.<sup>9</sup>

Unconcerned with Mormon preferences, Congress created Utah Territory under the Compromise of 1850, which settled the controversy over slavery in the new territories acquired from Mexico (California was given statehood with slavery forbidden and Utah and New Mexico were made territories and left to decide about slavery, which they both rejected). This decision also reduced the ambitious size of the original “state,” which had

included all of present-day Utah and Nevada, large parts of Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, Wyoming, and Oregon, and, to make possible what Brigham envisioned as a corridor to the sea, most of Southern California. And, though Brigham Young was appointed governor (in what was, given the national opposition to Mormons, a rather courageous choice by President Millard Fillmore) this action introduced the first of many presidentially-appointed non-Mormon officials to Utah.

There was difficulty almost immediately, of the kind Kane had foreseen. One of the gentile officials, Associate Justice Perry Brocchus, asked to speak to the Saints in a special conference in September 1851, shortly after his arrival. There he made some remarks about polygamy that were insulting, especially to the Mormon women present. President Young, responding in obvious anger, publicly criticized Brocchus and the other officials. After other disagreements developed in the next few weeks, especially over control of a \$24,000 federal appropriation to the Territory (including the prerogatives of the elected territorial legislature), most of the gentile appointees left, taking with them the money and also the first of a series of vindictive reports about Brother Brigham and the Mormons that led eventually to much trouble, even a massacre, and a threatened occupation by federal troops.

The departure of these officials created a central judicial vacuum, which Brigham Young filled ingeniously and to the general benefit of the Saints but, as with many other such actions, to the consternation and eventual opposition of outsiders. Governor Young had the territorial legislature extend criminal jurisdiction to the county probate Judges. As a result, even when federal courts were again able to be in session, accused persons, as well as applicants for citizenship, etc., could choose the probate judge, often the natural leader of the town, the Mormon bishop, rather than an anti-Mormon federal appointee who was dead set, for instance, against polygamy. This combining of local church authority with government authority (usually including both judicial and executive power) was attacked by outsiders as subversive of American principles. But to Brigham and the Mormons (and ironically to some Utah gentiles who preferred the spirit of amicable arbitration for the public good in Mormon courts) it seemed by far the best way to reach substantive, as opposed to merely procedural, justice.

President Young's attitudes and actions toward the gentiles structured much of the Mormon history of the 1850s. Soon after he first arrived, on 28 July 1847, he had lectured the then isolated Saints:

We do not intend to have any trade or commerce with the gentile world, for so long as we buy of them we are in a degree dependent upon them. The Kingdom of God cannot rise independent of the gentile nations until we

produce, manufacture, and make every article of use, convenience, or necessity among our people. . . . I am determined to cut every thread of this kind and live free and independent, untrammelled by any of their detestable customs and practices.<sup>10</sup>

He then proceeded to spend two thousand precious dollars of Battalion pay to buy out the only gentle landholder in the area, Miles Goodyear, who had a homestead at what became Ogden. Despite the economic costs in transportation and the lack of capital goods and know-how he continually rejoiced in the isolation that resulted from moving 1,000 miles beyond the frontier into a land that had as its chief virtue the fact that “nobody else wanted it.” He planned and developed the kingdom using the beehive (“Deseret” means honeybee) as a symbol and model—of unified (even to the edge of uniform), orderly, cooperative work for the public well-being rather than individualistic struggle for private profit. These values, expressed both in the colonization and irrigation process and in industrial development, though antagonizing to proponents of the new rugged individualism and laissez-faire capitalism that gained sway in the rest of the United States after 1850, were quite similar to the economic policies of the earlier Puritan Northeast. In fact, in a final irony that Arrington has noted, policies of central direction, cooperation, and long-run planning (much like what Mormons had developed earlier in the face of government opposition), “as the result of the failure of individuals, the success of large corporations, and the impositions of government, came to characterize national policy with respect to the West in the twentieth century” and have become the policies the United States has advocated in its efforts to help many developing countries.<sup>11</sup>

In forming the root values of the kingdom and persisting in action that conformed to those values, Brigham Young was able to be patient, even optimistic, in what many felt to be a hopeless task (and which in fact brought many failures) because of absolute faith in his calling and in the divine guarantee of ultimate success in what mattered. Thus, though some colonies had to be abandoned (a few at great economic loss when they were called back during the 1857 Utah War) and many developed in ways quite different from the original intent, and though the ambitious attempts at developing a wholly self-sufficient industrial base seemed more often than not to end in drastic cut-back or abandonment without Brother Brigham’s prophetic vision and drive much less perhaps nothing-would have been achieved.

Of course, great success did come in the important things. The towns were built and the schooling in faith and endurance, in ingenuity and unselfishness, went on. The first expansion from the Salt Lake Valley formed an “inner cordon” of settlements in the irrigable valleys along what

is now known as the Wasatch Front, a 250-mile north-south barrier of mountains that produces rain and snowfall sufficient to bring year-long streams into the nearby valleys. Sending out colonies north and then south and then north again, by 1856 Brigham Young had fully established settlements along the two to twenty-mile-wide arable strip from Cache Valley south to Parowan, and these towns were constantly growing from an influx of immigrants. In the meantime he had ringed the kingdom with colonies at strategic points of entry: Carson Valley where the California trail crossed the Sierra; Fort Bridger and Fort Supply on the Oregon Trail in Wyoming; and Lemhi in northern Idaho. Also, following a systematic exploration under Parley P. Pratt between Salt Lake City and San Diego Brigham had formed the skeleton for a great "Mormon Corridor," a proposed trade and immigration route to the sea, with twenty-seven settlements, including present-day Las Vegas, Nevada and San Bernardino, California.<sup>12</sup>

The Mormon colonization process was developed in part under Joseph Smith: preliminary exploration, followed by a "call," much like a mission assignment, issued to a carefully chosen company, who were fully equipped and extensively exhorted to properly build the kingdom and who then moved out in the fall or winter to build a fort and homes before beginning spring planting. This was turned into a smooth routine by President Young, as we can see in the Iron County mission sent out in December 1850, under Apostle George A. Smith: The 167 persons reached their site, an untouched sagebrush valley 250 miles south of Salt Lake City, on 10 January, immediately nominated county officials, and on the 15th had elections. By 28 January a meetinghouse was being built and letters were sent to Washington, D.C., for a post office charter and meteorological instruments. Houses were up by the end of February and work was progressing on a school, canals, roads, and a gristmill and on development of the iron works that was, along with establishing a link in the Mormon Corridor, one of the colony's major responsibilities. On 4 July, Smith reported in his journal, "All was silent, not a gun fired, nor a drunken man seen in the streets," feeling no need to notice that what six months before had been an empty wilderness now had peaceful lanes and ripening crops and a full civil and religious society—a school for making Saints. But he and the other leaders, under Brigham's tutelage, were well aware that that was what they were doing, as we see from a comment the next year on this same group of people by Apostle Erastus Snow, who went to Parowan with Apostle Franklin D. Richards to spur development of the iron industry, which was already successfully begun by these pioneers but was having some cooperation problems:

We found a Scotch party, a Wel[s]h party, an English party, and an American party, and we turned Iron Masters and undertook to put all these

parties through the furnace, and run out a party of Saints for building up the Kingdom of God.<sup>13</sup>

Despite the achievement of the colonists in turning out quality iron in just one year and the boost given the work by the reorganization and capitalization under Elders Snow and Richards, the effort to establish an iron industry (which Brother Brigham favored because iron, unlike gold, was a “civilizing” metal) suffered a series of setbacks and finally failed. This was true in varying degrees of other major industries attempted by President Young in his efforts to provide a self-sufficient commonwealth. Development of a paper mill was the most successful enterprise and gives us insight into Brigham’s methods: After one abortive effort in 1851 under a skilled papermaker converted in England, better machinery was obtained and the first successful mill west of the Mississippi established—mainly to provide for the Church’s paper, the *Deseret News*. An even superior set of engines was purchased in 1860 and, to meet the continuous and growing need for rags to make a good quality paper, George Goddard was called by the prophet to serve a “Rag Mission”:

When President Young first made the proposition, the humiliating prospect almost stunned me [Goddard had been a merchant, had gone to Brigham Young for business advice and now found himself called to “go from door to door with a basket on one arm and an empty sack on the other, enquiring for rags”], but a few moments’ reflection reminded me that I came to these valleys of the mountains from my native country . . . for the purpose of doing the will of my Heavenly Father. . . . I therefore answered President Young in the affirmative, and for over three years . . . my labors extended, not only visiting many hundreds of houses during the week days, but preaching rag sermons on Sunday. The first time I ever spoke in the Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, . . . was a rag discourse, and Presidents Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball backed it up with their testimony and enlarged upon it.<sup>14</sup>

A pottery plant, Deseret Pottery, also established in 1851 by skilled converts from England, was much less successful and was abandoned at substantial loss in 1853, though a profitable pottery business was established privately by 1856. Attempts to establish wool manufacturing with imported sheep, machinery, and convert-experts from Europe met a similar fate, the effort dragging out over ten years and finally failing due to insufficient sheep, many having been killed by coyotes and wolves; it was revived years later with several mills.

Perhaps most interesting of these pioneer enterprises was the attempt to implement in Utah the process that had been developed in France to extract sugar from beets. In his effort to make the kingdom self-sufficient—in this case to stop the potential outward flow of over \$200,000 a year for sweetenings—President Young experimented with the sugar beet seeds in 1850 and then pushed hard to develop the industry. Apostle John Taylor,

who was serving a mission in France, was appointed to obtain seed and machinery, which, with the aid of a young French convert-engineer, he brought to Utah at great cost and heroic efforts by 1852. After attempts to get the machinery working in Provo failed, Brigham took over the financially pressed private company that had been organized by Elder Taylor and made it part of the Church's public works program. A factory was to be built with tithing labor in what came to be called Sugarhouse in southeast Salt Lake City.

The President had been enthusiastic about the project, sending Church aid to bail the company out of unexpected expenses on the trip from France, encouraging farmers to plant beets even though there was continual failure to produce edible sugar, pushing hard on Elder Taylor ("... Get that machinery in operation. I want to see some sugar").<sup>15</sup> Finally, in a meeting with the concerned principals about the takeover, President Young shows us much about his strengths and weaknesses and his methods as steward of the Lord's Kingdom. From the two somewhat different sets of minutes for that meeting on 17 March 1853, one set apparently by George D. Watt, we can determine the following: Brigham Young was first concerned to know what the fundamental loyalties of the people in the company were: "I want to know if these other men [some present whom he hadn't previously met] come for Mormonism and if they are going to stay. Then I shall know how to propose to those men-if they came for money or to build up the kingdom."<sup>16</sup> This initial assessment of the character and intentions of those he was dealing with was basic to Brigham's leadership style. Hugh Nibley reports his grandfather Charles Nibley's reminiscence that President Young always placed first-time visitors to his office in a black leather chair,

facing the strong light of day and calm blue eyes of Brother Brigham who sat there at his desk, his back to the window, quietly waiting for his guest to say something. . . . [He] would never say a word for the first three minutes. And at the end of those first three minutes he always knew exactly the sort of man he was dealing with, and the nature—greedy, benign or sinister—of his business. . . . Brigham Young used to say that no man, if allowed to speak, could possibly avoid revealing his true character.<sup>17</sup>

After hearing from the men in the bankrupt sugar company their reasons for being there and satisfied that most were devoted to the kingdom, President Young was confident he could test their faith with bluntness. He made it clear that he would assume no personal obligations but only act in his role as Trustee-in-Trust for the Church. And the Church's obligations he could not assess until the bills were presented and settlements made. If this was President Young's first announcement of such a condition it may well have invited resentment, but he seemed to know his audience and continued with customary directness to speak his mind; as reported by Watt:

I should say to you brethren I shall do with you as I please. . . . And if you do as you are told and the Lord blesses us we shall be well enough off. . . . It is not for the profit of it, but in a few years it will be; but I never expect to cease my operations until that is perfect and the Iron business and the Cotton and everything else. By and by we shall be independent and not be depending upon our enemies. . . . The country is too new for you to receive your wages every Saturday night. But you can take what you need now in potatoes and flour.

In the other set of minutes Brigham then repeats to them what he says he told the converts he made in England when they talked of coming to Zion in Nauvoo, that he could only promise them they would have “hard fare, persecution and tribulation. . . . Only live to your religion, and you shall receive it until you are satisfied.” But along with this psychological preparation for them to sacrifice for the kingdom, Brother Brigham also creates a fine sense of unity with them:

If I hired a man out of the Church to work for money I should expect to pay him money for his labor; but you are Brethren, and should feel the same interest as I feel for the upbuilding of our Common Cause. You will do as I instruct you if you wish to be saints; and if we live, we will live together; if we die we will die together. . . .

. . . If you will work anyhow, and do as I do, that is, abide by the Church whether she be in a swimming or a sinking condition, I will put you in a situation; but I cannot at the present juncture of affairs promise that you shall be as well off, in a temporal point of view, as you were in your native country. I can say, however if you will stay here and do the best you can for the establishment of the kingdom of God, you shall be blessed.

Because they trusted Brigham Young’s calling as a true Prophet of God, that promise meant everything to the men, and his effectiveness is revealed in part by the report of one man’s discussion with him at the end of the meeting in which he asks if Brigham still wants to hire him. Brigham says, “Yes, you are a pressman are you not?” The man replies, “Yes, sir. But I came here to do whatever I am told to do; if you want me I am willing to serve you.”

Despite some problems, President Young had similar success, because of a fundamental unity of faith and purpose, in the very delicate matter of dealing in the meeting with John Taylor. Elder Taylor may have initially had hopes for making some profit since the company, though instigated by Brigham, had started as a private venture and the apostle had expended his own means and become somewhat proprietary in his feelings, though to this point the project had been nothing but a headache to him. As Watt reports it, Brother Brigham was extremely hard on Elder Taylor in this meeting, probably too hard, blaming him for every problem encountered in getting the machinery there: “I want to relieve you from the responsibility,



and when we get the machinery together I don't want you to dictate. . . . I know you are just as wild in your calculations as any man can be." When Elder Taylor objected to such treatment, President Young pressed further, but also made an important distinction:

If I have not the right of judging you here the Community can. It is nothing against your moral or religious character, and I have a right to judge you as a good man, a saint or a preacher, but as to money you don't know anything about it. . . . A man's judgment in temporal matters has nothing to do with religion. . . . I can go with Bro. Taylor into the Holiest of Holies and pray with him, but that does not say he knows anything of business. . . . I have no feelings but what I freely tell.

Clearly that last was one of Brother Brigham's great understatements, but again, as with Parley P. Pratt earlier, Brigham knew his man. The harrowing scene ends with this reported interchange: Young: "Bro. Taylor and I are just as good friends as we were twelve months ago." Taylor: "I would go and fight for Bro. Brigham today." Young: "And I would do everything for him." Taylor: "I am thankful I can swim in the same stream with men who know what is right."<sup>18</sup>

President Young did seem to *know* what was right—and was essentially right—even when he was, as he was here, in some ways wrong. The upshot of the meeting was that he took over direct management of the whole affair, with Orson Hyde ("a snug business man") appointed to superintend construction of the building. Brigham had sound, unblinking accuracy in judging men and knew Hyde would do better—even though he trusted Elder Taylor more than Elder Hyde in Church affairs and ultimately recognized him in the place of seniority in the Quorum that assured he would be Brigham's successor as President. But Brother Brigham was, in his characteristic hyperbolic bluntness, perhaps too harsh with his tongue, and he probably underestimated the problems of producing sugar—which included faulty machinery and possibly wrong or incomplete information from France on the process. This time his supreme confidence in his ability to "financier" in practical matters did not prove out, because the factory, after more years of trouble and of faithful farmers producing unused beets, finally was given up for good in 1856 at a loss of over \$150,000 to the Church, investors, and beet raisers.

What are we to make of such "failures"? For one thing, daring major Church enterprises like the sugar factory and the iron mill reached close enough to success that they encouraged sporadic continuing efforts that eventually led to some of Utah's major private industries. For another, such bold efforts to establish economic foundations for a totally new and independent religious commonwealth had special goals—to utilize the skills of European immigrants in building a literal Kingdom of God to function as

a divine school—that paradoxically made the usual forms of “success” more difficult but also assured that even in “failure” the enterprises would achieve the most important goals and the kingdom would press on. As Arrington has suggested, the Mormons were crippled by a fundamental problem of lack of sufficient capital to see the projects through to final success, and their efforts would have achieved more of traditional *financial* success if knowledgeable private interests had been allowed a freer hand in the day-to-day direction, and a stronger voice in the making of basic decisions.<sup>19</sup> But mere financial success was not the basic goal; the Mormon businessman “was not a capitalistic profit-calculator, but an appointed overseer of a part of the Kingdom,” and besides serving the more basic religious goals, “this concept of collective entrepreneurship and administration . . . saved the Great Basin Kingdom from the oblivion which seemed inevitable when so many of its major projects fell through.”<sup>20</sup>

So, despite the harsh environment, formidable setbacks from poor harvests in 1847–48 and 1855–56, and the failure or near failure of many major experimental efforts, Brigham Young continued to build his kingdom. He succeeded because of major windfalls, yes, but also by achieving superior organization of what scarce capital was available, including willing and skilled human labor as well as machinery, livestock, and money; by motivating in the original pioneers what is to us hardly believable individual sacrifice and cooperative, obedient effort in a great cause; and by maintaining that vision in the new generation that grew up and the thousands of new immigrants that came in a constant stream—nearly 70,000 by his death.

It was Brother Brigham who had organized the real beginning of immigration from Europe in Liverpool in 1840, as well as leading in the establishment of a missionary effort so fruitful that it continued to bring in converts by the thousands each year, all anxious to “gather to Zion.” Although a significant purpose in the immigration was to fulfill the Mormon religious principle of gathering a modern Israel out of the world to build a separate, exemplary kingdom, the special economic and organizational needs of that kingdom were also important. Even in 1840 Joseph Smith had instructed Brigham Young to first emigrate those with the skills and capital to build an economic base for those who would follow. In 1850, when a “Perpetual Emigrating Fund” was organized under the laws of the provisional State of Deseret, President Young’s instructions to Church agents in Europe were to first find iron and textile manufacturers, metal workers, and potters, “artisans and mechanics of all kinds,” to have them emigrate immediately in preference to anyone else, and to bring machinery, tools, and blueprints with them.<sup>21</sup>

The emigration system was developed on the foundation laid by Brigham in 1840: It began with a member’s application to a local Church

agent in Europe; the gathering and organization of companies for each ship at Liverpool followed; then the long voyage to New Orleans and up the Mississippi to St. Louis and the Missouri to Kanesville (after 1854 to New York and by train as far west as possible); finally along the Pioneer Trail to Utah and assignment to an established community. It became the most successful privately financed immigration system in United States history, praised not only by Charles Dickens, who saw it operating in Liverpool, but by modern scholars who have studied its overall achievements.<sup>22</sup>

Most interesting in understanding Brother Brigham is the spirit of consecration which, under his direction, informed and motivated the system of emigration. If emigrants had been required to pay their own way many would have been left behind or doomed to a long wait in saving the approximately \$100 needed. So companies were formed according to ability to pay: self-supporting "cash" emigrant companies (about forty percent); "Ten Pound" companies frugally designed to cost about that much—about \$50 per adult and \$25 per child (another forty percent); and "P.E." companies of those who could pay nothing. Systematic saving in established funds was encouraged in the European Mission of the Church, and added to this were nearly all European tithing receipts and contributions of wealthy converts (beginning with Jane Benbow's gift to Brigham back in 1840). But by far the main contributions to the Perpetual Emigrating Fund—labor, produce, cattle, etc., as well as cash—were those of the Saints already in Zion, estimated in 1900 to have totaled \$8,000,000. Of course, those aided were themselves expected to make the Fund "Perpetual" by repaying the loan as fast as they could (they pledged by signed contract to "hold ourselves, our time and our labor, subject to the appropriation of the perpetual Emigration Fund Company, until the full cost of our emigration is paid") and many did work for the Church, through Brigham's Public Works, which in turn gave tithing resources to the Perpetual Emigrating Fund.

Brigham Young's ingenuity in marshaling these diverse resources—including such things as stray cattle and unclaimed property turned over by the Territory—into a working process is impressive. Especially important, and possible only because of the trust and spirit of consecration President Young shared with the Saints, was the use of what Arrington calls "sight drafts," by which resources physically present in one place could be used in another form elsewhere. For instance, the Saints left any cash they had in Europe or at outfitting stations like St. Louis to be used by the Church to pay ship and wagon costs, etc. They were in turn given drafts for food, implements, etc., in Utah that had been donated there to the Fund. Or a Utah Saint could contribute labor or food to his local tithing office and receive a draft on the Church's tithing resources in Europe to emigrate his family. Brother Brigham was much involved in this process, not only as

planner and motivator but as personal guarantor in his complex role as spiritual and temporal leader. And when he was not able to meet all the drafts coming in he spoke his mind with characteristic verve:

When Br. Erastus Snow arrived on the first of this month, he came in that morning and informed me that he had run me in debt nearly fifty thousand dollars to strangers, merchants, cattle dealers, and our brethren who are coming here; he said; "Prest. Young's name is as good as the bank."

. . . I will pay you when I can, and not before. . . It is the poor who have got your money, and if you have any complaints to make, make them against that Almighty for having so many poor. . . I cannot chew paper and spit out bank bills that will pass in payment of those debts.<sup>23</sup>

Sometimes he came down hard on the immigrants who were still in debt:

I want you to understand fully that I intend to put the screws upon you, and you who have owed for years, if you do not pay up now and help us, we will levy on your property and take every farthing you have all earth.<sup>24</sup>

But, as in other cases we have seen, this was merely Brigham's sharp bark to make a point and encourage the genuine backsliders rather than a threat with much bite in it. Most immigrants could not really generate a surplus, and the chief form of "repayment" was contributions of labor and tithing, as is revealed by the growing total of accrued debt (counted up each year by the block teachers who visited each home monthly), which reached over \$1,000,000 by the time of Brigham's death.

Rather than "put the screws" on those unable to repay, President Young put his energy into cutting down expenses and finding better ways to use the variety of resources he had in the kingdom. For instance, when immigration was resumed in 1860, after the Utah War hiatus, Brother Brigham took advantage of a surplus of teams and wagons obtained from the abandonment of his express company and the army surplus sales, both brought on by that war, and after careful experimentation in 1859 began to send ox trains out from Utah to bring the immigrants from the Missouri Valley. Brigham's nephew, Joseph W. Young, found that properly cared for oxen could make the 2,200-mile round trip in six months and delivered a sermon in October Conference on "the science of Ox-teamology." By order of the First Presidency, needed men, teams, equipment, etc., were apportioned to various communities and gathered in Salt Lake City in April, where they were inspected and organized. Surplus cattle and other expendable goods were taken east to be sold, thus reversing the cash flow that had been draining resources at the outfitting stations. And the President didn't miss a chance for other, more spiritual benefits. Those who went were called as "missionaries" and carefully shepherded by good leaders; they were often unmarried men who looked for and found prospective brides

among the immigrants they brought back. On the economic side, during the sixties the equivalent of about 52,400,000 was used for immigration, but very little actual money changed hands. As the intercontinental railroad moved west the trips to the railhead became shorter and shorter until, with the completion of the railroad in 1869, "Ox-teamology" ended.

A more dramatic example of Brigham Young's ingenuity in bringing over the immigrants to his kingdom was the handcart companies, which were his response to economic depression. Despite the hostile environment and failure of some early enterprises, the kingdom survived the crucial building period of the early fifties, largely on the strength of a series of increasingly good harvests; but beginning in 1855 crop failures (reduced by one-half to two-thirds by grasshoppers and drought) and loss of nearly half the cattle in the disastrous winter of 1856 completely depleted surpluses and quickly reduced the 35,000 settlers to a condition of semi-starvation similar to early 1849. Brother Brigham used every resource of wit and power at his command. He wrote circulars advising on conservation of food (glean the fields and use more efficient seed-drills) and cattle (mend fences) and on use of land ("let every inch of field and garden be put in the highest state of cultivation").

President Young's ultimate resource was the faith of the Saints, and in the extremity of the 1855-56 winter he asked them to adapt to the crisis the long-standing but sporadic custom of fasting, by going without food on the first Thursday of each month and donating the food thus saved for the poor, a practice that was so effective it has continued in the modern Church as the monthly first Sunday "fast day." Ultimately Brigham had to ask each head of family to place his household on close rations (one-half pound of breadstuff per day) and use all surplus in feeding those in need:

Set the poor to building your houses, to making fences . . . or doing something, and hand out your grain to them. . . . If you do not pursue a righteous course, we will separate you from the Church. Is that all? No. If necessary we will take your grain from your bin and distribute it among the poor and needy, and they shall be fed and supplied with work, and you shall receive what your grain is worth.<sup>25</sup>

This is hyperbolic rhetoric again, Brother Brigham's half-humorous but effective way of making sharp enough a serious point (there is no evidence that a forced levy was ever used, any more than in getting immigrants to pay debts to the Perpetual Emigrating Fund). What he actually did was feed nearly 300 persons throughout the famine with the resources directly available to him, employing many of them in building an extra house and barn and in work on that wall my aunt told me about:

I build walls, dig ditches, make bridges, and do a great amount and variety of labor that is of but little consequence only to provide ways and means for sustaining and preserving the destitute. . . . Why? I have articles of food,

which I wish my brethren to have; and it is better for them to labor, . . . so far as they are able to have opportunity, than to have them given to them.<sup>26</sup>

President Young called another 300 unemployed men in Salt Lake City on missions—both colonizing (to Las Vegas, Carson Valley, etc.) and proselyting (the East Indies, Australia, etc.). Though most of the missionaries had to be supported from Church resources, this put them to productively building the kingdom.<sup>27</sup>

With such efforts the kingdom survived, but though none died the community came close to starvation and with tithing and Perpetual Emigrating Fund donations next to nothing (and Perpetual Emigrating Fund cattle killed by the winter), it seemed the expensive “gathering of the poor” from Europe would have to stop. But President Young, unwilling to curtail such an essential part of the purpose and success of the kingdom, instead revived an idea first suggested in a General Epistle in 1851, when he had ventured that immigrants could come on foot, like the forty-niners with their wheelbarrows, in seventy days.

I am . . . thrown back upon my old plan—to make handcarts “and let the emigration foot it” and draw upon [the carts] the necessary supplies. . . . They can come just as quick “if not quicker” and much cheaper—can start earlier and escape the prevailing sickness which annually lays so many of our brethren in the dust.<sup>28</sup>

That letter was to Apostle Franklin D. Richards, in charge of the European Mission. On the same day Brigham Young wrote his son-in-law Edmund Ellsworth, serving on a mission under Elder Richards:

I do believe that I could bring a company across without a team and beat any ox train if I could be there myself. Would you like to try it? It will by much relieve our Brethren from sickness and death, which I am very anxious to do. There is a railway from New York to Iowa City and will cost only about 8 dollars for the passage, then take handcarts, their little luggage with a few good milk cows, and come on till they are met with teams from this place, with provisions.<sup>29</sup>

It was a good plan on paper and there is great optimism in the General Epistle Brigham sent to Europe on 29 October 1855, to be published in the *Millennial Star* (“let them gird up their loins and walk through, and nothing shall hinder or stay them”). Such promises infected Elder Richards, who wrote a series of enthusiastic editorials for the *Star*. This brought an excited response, and nearly 2,000 signed up for the much cheaper (under \$50) but untried method. Perhaps too many signed up, or there was some other misunderstanding between Church agents in Liverpool and those at the outfitting station, because the last two of five companies had to wait for their handcarts to be built—many from green lumber that later broke up—and were disastrously late on the trail.

The first three companies seemed to justify President Young's confidence, arriving in remarkable time (about sixty-five days) by the end of September without suffering more than the usual number of wagon train deaths and still proudly carrying letters they had meant to send on ahead but couldn't because no one passed them. Church leaders were extremely pleased. Elder Woodruff wrote, "As I gazed upon the scene, meditating upon the future result, it looked to me like the first hoisting of the flood-gates of deliverance to the oppressed millions. We can now say to the poor and honest in heart, come home to Zion, for the way is prepared."<sup>30</sup>

As if on cue from a Greek tragedy, this expression of pride was followed immediately by the arrival of Franklin D. Richards and other missionaries returning from England (including Brigham's son, Joseph A.) with the solemn news that two more companies were still behind them. Elder Richards was still optimistic and could speak in the General Conference the next day about the handcart pioneers, faith that God would turn away the storms so that they would not suffer more than they could bear. But President Young was as usual not about to wait for a miracle. As soon as he understood that there were still 1,000 walking immigrants five to seven hundred miles out on the trail where winter storms could come at any time he announced a new theme for the conference:

The text will be—to get them here! I want the brethren who may speak to understand that their text is the people on the Plains, and the subject matter for this community is to send for them and bring them in before the winter sets in.

That is my religion; that is the dictation of the Holy Ghost that I possess, it is to save the people. . . .

. . . This is dividing my text into heads; first, forty good young men who know how to drive teams. . . ; second, sixty or sixty-five good spans of mules, or horses, with harness . . . thirdly, twenty-four thousand pounds of flour, which we have on hand. . . .

I will tell you all that your faith, religion, and profession of religion, will never save one soul of you in the celestial kingdom of our God, unless you carry out just such principles as I am now teaching you.<sup>31</sup>

Wallace Stegner, who has written the most perceptive and moving account of this episode, describes what followed:

"You may rise up now," he told them, "and give your names."

They rose up and gave their names, and more than their names. Though they had no information on exactly how bad the condition of the companies might be, they had enough experience to guess. With the unanimity of effort which had always been their greatest strength, they oversubscribed Brigham's first request, and when new requests were made, they met those too. By October 7, three days after Richards' arrival, the first contingent of the rescue party was heading eastward into the mountains. . . . The presence of . . .

Brigham's son Joseph A. Young, Cyrus Wheelock, and others, was significant. They were the missionaries who had converted a good many of the handcart emigrants in the first place. . . . They may have felt partially responsible, or have felt the Church to be responsible, for the delays at Iowa City. Whatever may be said of their excessive zeal in the first place, they were neither indifferent nor cowardly once they knew the handcart companies might be in distress. Separated from their families for two years or more, restored to the valley no more than forty-eight hours, they turned unhesitatingly around and drove out again with the rescue wagons.<sup>32</sup>

President Young sent 250 wagons out to keep the trail open and to provide a relay of supplies and fresh teams down to the Valley. He goaded the vanguard rescuers (who at one point turned back because of the blizzards) until they pushed themselves at a desperate pace up through the already snow-blocked passes and reached the two companies camped in snowdrifts, out of food, and waiting for the end. They were literally angels of mercy for people among whom death was a constant presence after the delays from collapsing carts and loss of their supply wagons in a buffalo stampede had put them into the increasing mountain cold, nearly exhausted, and without sufficient food. Stegner writes,

It is hard to imagine the emotions of rescue, the dazed joy of being snatched from the very toppling brink. . . . It is quite as hard to visualize the hardship that even rescue entailed—that jolting, racking, freezing, grief-numbed, drained and exhausted 300 miles on through the winter mountains to sanctuary. In Echo Canyon, between the battlements of red sandrock [where a year later, some of these rescuers would face an advancing U.S. Army], a child was born in one of the wagons. . . . He was wrapped in the “garments,” the holy underwear, of one of the young rescuers, and they named him, with a haunting appropriateness, Echo. Against all probability, both he and his mother lived.<sup>33</sup>

But the deaths continued along that 300 miles until the number reached over 200, compared to 11 and 40 in the more famous Fremont and Donner disasters:

Perhaps their suffering seems less dramatic because the handcart pioneers bore it meekly, praising God, instead of fighting for life with the ferocity of animals and eating their dead to keep their own life beating, as both the Fremont and Donner parties did. And assuredly the handcart pilgrims were less hardy, less skilled, less well equipped to be pioneers. But if courage and endurance made a story, if human kindness and helpfulness and brotherly love in the midst of raw horror are worth recording, this half-forgotten episode of the Mormon migration is once of the great tales of the West and of America.<sup>34</sup>

It is clear who the victims of this classic tragedy of overreaching were: not only those who died of cold and hunger and exhaustion, but the many more who wore lasting scars of body (almost all had frozen hands and feet)



and spirit (some later apostatized). Even the rescuers suffered lasting damage. For instance, William Kimball, who spent a whole day carrying women and children through floating ice on a crossing of the Sweetwater, and who, according to the journal of one of them, “staid so long in the water that he had to be taken out and packed to camp and he was a long time before he recovered as he was chil[le]d through and in after life he was allways afflicted with rhumetism.”<sup>35</sup>

The heroes are fairly obvious too: the rescuers like Kimball and Joseph A. Young, who bucked his way back and forth along the trail many times. Perhaps especially Levi Savage, the lone voice raised in opposition when the decision to go on despite being over a month behind was made at a mass meeting of the two companies back on the Missouri in mid-August. After arguing forcefully against risking their lives in blind trust that snowfall would be late, and seeing everyone else vote to go on, he is reported to have announced:

Brethren and sisters, what I have said I know to be true; but, seeing you are to go forward, I will go with you, will help you all I can, will work with you. will rest with you, will suffer with you, and if necessary I will die with you.<sup>36</sup>

Savage did not die, but he later endured Elder Richards' allegation (when the missionaries from England passed the companies) that his opposition had been simply lack of faith in God, and he saved the lives of less hardy and experienced companions in the final agony.

To those trying to identify a scapegoat for the tragedy, blame seems to have been fixed publicly by the Church President on Elder Richards:

Are those people in the frost and snow by my doings? No, my skirts are clear of their blood, God knows. If a bird had chirped in brother Franklin's ears in Florence [Nebraska], and the brethren there had held a council, he would have stopped the rear companies there, and we would have been putting in our wheat, etc., instead of going on to the Plains and spending weeks and months to succor our brethren.

But to anyone who has read many of Brigham Young's speeches—or examined his actions carefully enough, that speech of rebuke is fairly standard in tone and color, actually quite mild compared to some. It could even be read as providing, in the face of growing anxiety on the part of relatives and friends of the pioneers still struggling toward them, authoritative explanation of what had happened and a *defense* of Elder Richards: “Here is brother Franklin D. Richards who has but little knowledge of business . . . and here is brother Daniel Spencer . . . and I do not know that I will attach blame to either of them.” The speech is largely a very frank discussion, like the one with Elder Taylor about the sugar factory (“I have no feelings but what I freely tell”), of what had caused the disaster (the late start, not

prevented, as it should have been, by the Church agents) and how the problem would be prevented in the future: "I am going to lay an injunction and place a penalty, to be suffered by any Elder or Elders who will start the immigration across the Plains after a given time; and the penalty shall be that they shall be severed from the Church, for I will not have such late starts."<sup>37</sup> Elder Richards, and the other missionaries, had encouraged the emigrants to rely on miraculous intervention to protect them from needless folly in a practical decision—something Brother Brigham would never do; he understood and forgave such a mistake but wanted no misunderstanding about what the mistake was.

At the same time there is a certain defensiveness in Brigham Young's speech, and here we come closest to a possible tragic flaw in this protagonist of the handcart tragedy. President Young was clearly wounded by this disaster, in a way that the failures of dozens of industries could not touch him. Here was where his stewardship touched human lives and where the old abhorrence of violence and unneeded, unredemptive suffering came to the fore—and he wanted very much not to feel responsible. He was right most of the time and wanted to be right all the time. When he made some of the usual miscalculations that plague us all, considering the stakes with which he played, the costs were proportionately much greater. Even in these, such as the economic failure of the sugar factory, he maintained a singular equanimity, essentially because of his unbounded faith that he was God's steward and God would over-rule all according to His will, salvaging good out of even his errors and weaknesses, or providing strength, as He had given him in the Iowa crossing, to regroup and try again. But when it came to violence, I see a new dimension: avoidance if possible at whatever cost; deep pity and haunting heartbreak on the positive side; but a certain resentment of those responsible, including himself, and a desire for vindication. In this case, determined that the handcart scheme should prove itself despite the tragedy, President Young sent a company of seventy missionaries back along the trail by handcart (and without commissary wagons) to Florence in forty-eight days as soon as possible in the spring. He then made other ambitious efforts to facilitate continuing the scheme, but bad publicity and the interference of the Utah War kept the numbers very small, and in 1860 the roundtrip ox-team caravan from Utah was established.

Deeper than any vindictiveness, however, and deeper than the need to be right, was Brother Brigham's heroic acceptance at a personal level of the pain of responsibility. That two months of rescue operations must have been the longest two months of his life. Speaking to the Saints in the Old Tabernacle on Sunday, 2 November, he reminded them how comfortable they were despite the recent famine:

We can return home and sit down and warm our feet before the fire, and can eat our bread and butter, &c., but my mind is yonder in the snow, where those immigrating Saints are, and my mind has been with them ever since I had the report of their [late] start. . . . I cannot talk about any thing, I cannot go out or come in, but what in every minute or two minutes my mind reverts to them; and the questions—whereabouts are my brethren and sisters who are on the Plains, and what is their condition—force themselves upon me. . . .<sup>38</sup>

A classic and oft-quoted statement of the LDS doctrine of faith and works is President Young's great sermon on hearing that some survivors of the Martin company were entering the valley on Sunday morning, 30 November 1856. He instructed the bishops and other brethren on placing the refugees in good homes, and then he announced:

The afternoon meeting will be omitted, for I wish the sisters to go home and prepare to give those who have just arrived a mouthful of something to eat", and to wash them and nurse them up. . . . Were I in the situation of those persons who have just come in, . . . I would give more for a dish of pudding or a baked potato and salt, . . . than I would for all your prayers, though you were to stay here all afternoon and pray. Prayer is good, but when baked potatoes and milk are needed, prayer will not supply their place.<sup>39</sup>

But I see more of his real anguish in the luminous autobiography of Mary Goble Pay, who as a child of thirteen in the Martin company froze her feet at the last crossing of the Platte, who saw her two little sisters die on the trail and her mother finally expire on the day they arrived:

Three out of four that were living were frozen. My mother was dead in the wagon. Bishop Hardy had us taken to a home in his ward and the brethren and the sisters brought us plenty of food. We had to be careful and not eat too much as it might kill us we were so hungry.

Early next morning Bro. Brigham Young and a doctor came. . . . When Bro. Young came in he shook hands with us all. When he saw our condition—our feet frozen and our mother dead—tears rolled down his cheeks.

The doctor amputated my toes using a saw and a butcher knife. Brigham Young promised me I would not have to have any more of my feet cut off. The sisters were dressing mother for the last time. . . . That afternoon she was buried.<sup>40</sup>

The girl refused to have her feet cut off, despite the pressing advice of another doctor when they didn't heal for a while:

One day I sat there crying. My feet were hurting me so—when a little old woman knocked at the door. She said she had felt some one needed her there for a number of days. . . . I showed her my feet and told her the promise Bro. Young had given me. She said, "Yes, and with the help of the Lord we will save them yet." She made a poultice and put on my feet and every day after the doctor had gone she would come and change the poultice. At the end of three months my feet were well.

I hope President Young knew about that healing of Mary's frozen feet through faith in his promise, as surely as he knew he was ultimately responsible for their being frozen.

Brother Brigham was not one to linger long in self-doubt or despair. He not only sent out that spring the missionary company to revive faith in his handcart scheme, but he immediately set to work planning the extremely ambitious Brigham Young Express and Carrying Company (known as the Y.X. Company) with a series of way stations along the trail, to carry freight, mail and immigrants. Arrington has written:

As the largest single venture yet tackled by the Mormons in the Great Basin, the Y.X. Company was a bold and well-conceived enterprise, which, if "war" had not been its outcome, would undoubtedly have changed the whole structure of Mormon, and perhaps Western, economic development. . . . [It] anticipated the Pony Express, the Ben Holladay Stagecoach line, and the Russell, Majors, and Wadell freight trains of the late '50s and '60s.<sup>41</sup>

After it was learned, in February 1857, that the U. S. mail contract had been awarded Hiram Kimball, an agent for the Church, President Young spent much time that spring choosing the spots for the way stations, which were to be actual settlements with farms, etc.; soliciting and organizing the contributions of men, wagons, cattle, material, provisions (over \$100,000 worth in the first half of '57); and counseling and setting apart the "express missionaries," who were to see their work as religious duty and live accordingly—including treating their teams with kindness! The effort proceeded rapidly; mail was being carried by the middle of February, and by July many of the way stations were nearly completed and stocked. But as the chorus in a Greek tragedy would have pointed out, even while Brigham Young was proudly reporting the progress of this enterprise to the Saints in the April conference, bragging that "the company is the Latter day Saints . . . this is the only people that can do it,"<sup>42</sup> U.S. President James Buchanan was considering actions that would not only destroy the Y.X. Company at great loss but bring the Church to the very brink of battle with federal forces and put Brigham and the succeeding leaders in a defensive position against the government and outsiders for the next forty years.

Events had come together like diabolical Fates. In 1856 the new Republican Party formed itself around opposition to slavery and to the notion of popular sovereignty, which would allow territories to decide about slavery. It used Utah polygamy as a sensationalistic example of what could happen under such popular sovereignty. The Republicans resolved that "it is both the right and the imperative duty of Congress to prohibit in the Territories those twin relics of barbarism—Polygamy and Slavery." They lost the election, but many anti-polygamy resolutions subsequently appeared in Congress, and Democratic President Buchanan, unwilling to

move against slavery in the South where his major support was, chose to oppose polygamy so he would not be vulnerable to Republican attack on both issues. In this mood he reacted precipitately to a vitriolic letter of resignation in March 1857 by W. W. Drummond. Drummond was a gentile who had been appointed associate justice in Utah in 1854 and had soon come into wideopen conflict with President Young and the Mormons when he attacked the probate court jurisdiction and especially when it was discovered he had deserted his family and brought with him a mistress, whom he actually had sit beside him in court. Without investigating Drummond's character or the substance of his false charges that Governor Young had destroyed court records and was heading what amounted to a rebellious dictatorship, and without even notifying the Mormons, Buchanan canceled the mail contract and dispatched an expeditionary force of 2,500 troops to install a newly appointed Utah governor, Alfred Cumming.

There was fine dramatic irony in the patriotic displays in which Brigham Young led the unknowing Saints on 4 July and 24 July, even while troops were marching against them under the flag the Mormons were saluting. In fact it was on 24 July itself that definite word arrived of the army's approach, though there had been rumors before. President Young and the Church leaders were gathered at the top of Big Cottonwood Canyon with 2,500 Saints for a jubilant celebration of their entrance into the valley a decade before, when Abraham Smoot, who had heard in Missouri of the government actions and rushed back the 1,000 miles to Utah in twenty days, rode up to Brigham's tent with the news. Brother Brigham calmly let the Saints continue their celebration in peace that night, but to his close colleagues he began a characteristically hyperbolic call to arms that clearly grows out of the bitter experiences of the preceding twenty years:

I said if [Expedition Commander] General Harney came here, I should then know the intention of the government; And it was carried unanimously that if Harney crossed the *South Pass* the *buzards* should *pick his bones*. The feeling of mobocracy is rife in the "States." The constant cry is Kill the Mormons. *Let them try it.*<sup>43</sup>

Even when faint rumors had begun to come in earlier in July Brigham had taken a hard line: "I wish to avoid hostilities with the United States, but before I'll see this people suffer as they have done heretofore I will draw my sword, in the name of Great God, and say to my Brethren let our Swords fall upon our enemies."<sup>44</sup> On 20 August he reflected,

The Day I entered the Salt Lake Valley 24 July 1847 I remarked—if the devil will let us alone for 10 years—we will bid them defiance. July 24 1857—10 years to a day—I first heard of the intended expedition to Utah under Genl. Harney. I feel the same now. I defy all the powers of darkness.<sup>45</sup>

On Sunday, 26 July, in speaking to the Saints at the Bowery, President Young seems fixed on defending the Saints and their rights against literally Satanic forces: "The Kingdom of Heaven is here, and we are in it, and they are angry at us solely for that. . . . All hell and its devils are moving against it."<sup>46</sup> But another dimension in his feeling and thinking is apparent in the note for his Secretary's Journal that that night at the usual prayer circle they "have prayed for our enemies." On the one hand, there was anger and anxiety over the renewal of persecutions he had led the daring exodus to the desert partly to escape, as well as some resentment at the government's disdainful launching of its expedition without investigation—without even consulting him as governor. Mormon scouts in disguise among the oncoming soldiers had heard them brag about "scalping Old Brigham" and helping themselves to "extra" Mormon wives. In the absence of contrary evidence, Governor Young chose to regard the expedition as an enemy mob and girded Zion for battle. He called back missionaries from the East and Canada and eventually from foreign lands; he called in the outpost settlements at San Bernardino and Carson Valley; he mobilized the Nauvoo Legion and sent out guerilla forces to spy on them and then harass the troops and destroy supply trains and Mormon forts that might be used by the enemy; his sermons and letters escalated the rhetoric of total war (e.g., the Secretary's Journal for August 16: "Warning the brethren to prepare for the worst. And bring their minds to making every town a 'Moscow' and every mountains pass a 'Potters field,' ere they would permit a mob to desecrate the Land which God has given us"); finally on September 15, he, as governor, declared the Territory under martial Law: "Citizens of Utah—We are invaded by a hostile force who are evidently assailing us to accomplish our overthrow and destruction. . . . [I] forbid all armed forces, of every description, from coming into this Territory under any pretence whatever."<sup>47</sup>

On the other hand there is a clear strain of calm, assured pacifism. President Young forcefully instructed the guerrillas under command of his counselor, General Daniel H. Wells, to burn forage, drive off cattle, even burn supplies—all as delaying tactics—but absolutely to shed no blood. On August 30, he said to the Saints:

Cannot this Kingdom be overthrown? No. They might as well try to obliterate the sun. God is at the helm. . . .

Sow your grain early this fall. Many wish to know whether I think we shall reap. I do not care whether we do or not, but I intend to sow early this fall so that it will ripen next season. . . .

The Lord has suffered the wicked to drive us about, that we might accomplish his designs the sooner. . . .

. . . do not be angry with [the army], for they are in the hands of God. Instead of feeling a spirit to punish them, or anything like wrath, you live

your religion; and you will see the day when you will pray God to turn away from your eyes the sight of their afflictions.<sup>48</sup>

And indeed forces were already at work to defuse what by the end of the year became known in the East as “Buchanan’s Blunder.” Commanding General Winfield Scott had early seen the military folly of the expedition, but his letter of opposition was kept secret from Buchanan by Secretary of War John B. Floyd, who, it later turned out, benefited through kickbacks from the huge supplier contracts. General Harney saw the same problems and found an excuse to resign his command in Kansas, which resulted in its being given to Colonel Albert S. Johnston, whose name thus became notorious in Mormon legend. A Captain Stewart Van Vliet was sent ahead, arriving on 8 September, to convey the troops, peaceful intent and secure cooperation by the displaced governor (who was addressed in the letter from Harney as “President Young of the Society of the Mormons” in what Brigham saw as calculated insult) and to buy provisions for the troops. Van Vliet was treated courteously but firmly by President Young, who considered him a “gentleman” who “understood our position,” and the officer returned sobered by the Saints’ unanimous determination (he had been present at a large meeting where they all shouted “Amen” to the proposition “All of you that are willing to set fire to your property and lay it in ashes, rather than submit to their military rule and oppression”<sup>49</sup>). Despite the reluctance of his superiors to believe him, Van Vliet then began to work toward securing the peace commission from Washington that successfully negotiated a truce nine months later.

The Lord did seem to be at the helm, because the harvest that fall, in sharp distinction to the previous two, was huge (according to Wilford Woodruff “the largest ever known in these valleys”<sup>50</sup>), big enough to support the called-in settlers and missionaries and the militia and to compensate for the disruptive evacuation of all northern Utah the next spring. The guerrillas succeeded in slowing down the army until snow had so blocked the passes they had to winter in misery near the burned-out Fort Bridger. Though they finally marched through Salt Lake the next June, it was a somber triumph. They set up Camp Floyd in the desert about forty miles south of Salt Lake and finally left in 1860, after providing the Mormons another great windfall through trade and the disposal, for next to nothing, of the army’s surplus property.

But Brother Brigham’s rhetoric, effective in meeting his goal of rousing the Saints to faith and energetic action, this time may well have helped tip the balance toward a tragedy that eventually caused him great anguish and hurt the kingdom badly in terms both of national sympathy and internal confidence. During the tinderbox conditions of August 1857, a company of emigrants was making its way south from Salt Lake City toward southern

California. There were constant irritations caused by the unwillingness of the Saints—mobilized for defense and suspicious of any strangers—to carry on normal sales of food. More seriously, there was also a firing of the smoldering hatred for Missourians, caused by a band of them, attached to the company, who boasted of their part in the murder and rape of Mormons in 1838 and threatened more of the same. The company had a series of run-ins with Indians, some of whom—and one Mormon—were supposedly killed by an ox the emigrants poisoned. The impending war between their friends the “Mormonees” and the gentile “Merocats” had made the Indians even more hostile than usual toward the emigrants. The Indians finally attacked on September 7 and then besieged and sporadically fired upon the company at Mountain Meadows near Cedar City. At that city a few days previous, the emigrants, furious at the Mormons, continued refusal to sell food, had destroyed some property and threatened that they would return with troops from California to drive them out. After the emigrants left Cedar City, angry and frightened civil and Church authorities had sent a rider the 260 miles north to get President Young’s advice. But when three emigrants escaped the siege and had an encounter with some Mormons where one emigrant was killed and the other two fled, some of the local Mormons seem to have feared certain retaliation from California if the main body escaped, and planned a massacre for 11 September. A group of them, led on the field by John D. Lee, who had been called in as a local Church agent among the Indians and later claimed the Indians had threatened to kill him if he did not help them, somehow got the emigrants to disarm and leave their barricades for safe passage to Cedar City. Apparently Lee’s command, “Do your duty,” started the planned massacre—which called for the fifty Iron County militiamen to slaughter the men and the 200 Indians to kill the women and older children—about 120 killed. Only seventeen small children survived to be eventually returned to the East.<sup>51</sup>

The messenger rode in to Salt Lake City while Brigham Young was entertaining Van Vliet and remained only four hours before turning back for another hard three-day ride under Brigham’s command, “Go with all speed, spare no horse flesh,” and with a letter to Isaac Haight, presiding Church authority at Cedar City:

You must not meddle with them. The Indians we expect will do as they please, but you should try to preserve good feeling with them. There are no other trains going south that I know of. If those who are there will leave, let them go in peace.<sup>52</sup>

But the messenger was two days late. An official report to Governor Young on 30 September by the local Indian agent described the massacre as wholly the work of Indians, and Brigham, preoccupied with an impending war, seems to have had no contrary suspicions until sometime later, when



gentile investigations and the pall of guilt that lay over Cedar City must have slowly made the truth apparent to him. The process of determining guilt and responding to it was complicated by distance and the delay caused by the war; by the fact that, as Nels Anderson has said, "most investigators were not so much interested in the facts as in using the incident to indict Brigham Young";<sup>53</sup> by the oath of secrecy the participants made with each other; and by the incalculable tragic emotion and traumatic defensiveness felt not only by them and their friends and families but by all Mormons, who had come to think of themselves as God's chosen people, veritable Saints—the victims, not the perpetrators, of massacres.

It would seem impossible to understand Mormon history without understanding *both* the Haun's Mill Massacre, when Mormon men and children were murdered and mutilated and Mormon women tortured and raped, *and* the Mountain Meadows Massacre, where Mormons murdered many men and consented to the murder of women and children. Levi Peterson has written a superbly intelligent and compassionate essay on how Juanita Brooks, in her studies of the Massacre and of John D. Lee, has brought to Mormon historical consciousness much of the truth of the tragic massacre and the tragic cover-up and scapegoating that followed. He shows that she has functioned not only as truth-revealing historian but as a classic tragedian in that her work not only arouses the tragic emotions of loss of innocence, of pain and anguish and sympathy at intolerable loss, but does that in a way, because of her own empathetic commitment to the Mormon people and the kingdom, and because of her courage and skill, that is healing and redemptive. Peterson poses the challenge:

Mormons are still hard put to confront the massacre. If good Mormons committed the massacre, if prayerful leaders ordered it, if apostles and a prophet knew about it and sacrificed John D. Lee, then the sainthood of even the modern church seems tainted. Where is the moral superiority of Mormonism, where is the assurance that God has made Mormons his new chosen people? For many Mormons, these are intolerable questions and they arouse intolerable emotions.<sup>54</sup>

Brigham Young came to feel those emotions, probably more acutely than most because of his more acute aversion to bloodshed than most of his frontier-conditioned associates. On 27 January 1857, with the handcart tragedy still weighing on him, the President had talked to his office staff, meditatively, almost obsessively, about the terrible crime of shedding innocent blood: "If I should hereafter, say 50,000 years, in the spirit world meet a man in my journeys . . . [who] asked me 'did you not . . . spill my blood 50,000 years ago, . . . I never wish to have this feeling in the eternal world.'"<sup>55</sup>

In 1866, while challenging gentile members of his audience at the Old Tabernacle to prove in court the private insinuations some were making about his involvement in a recent murder in Salt Lake, he said,

I will tell the Latter-day Saints that there are some things which transpire that I cannot think about. There are transactions that are too horrible for me to contemplate. The massacre at Haun's mill and that of Joseph and Hyrum Smith, and the Mountain Meadows Massacre and the murder of Dr. Robinson are of this character. I cannot think that there are beings upon the earth who have any claim to the sentiments and feelings which swell in the breasts of civilized men who could be guilty of such atrocities; and it is hard to suppose that even savages would be capable of performing such inhuman acts.<sup>56</sup>

We know that Brigham Young's enemies were wrong in accusing him of perpetrating or condoning the Massacre, but his role in the cover-up—as accessory after the fact—and in the fate of John D. Lee is still unclear. Blame was increasingly focused on Lee by those who broke silence, and he was summarily excommunicated by the Church in 1870 and was executed by civil authorities on the massacre site nearly twenty years after the event, 23 March 1877, just five months before Brigham's own death.

There are a few hints of Brother Brigham's complex feelings: John D. Lee was part of Brigham's own family, a son through the sacred early Mormon ceremony of "Adoption," a loyal and tried Saint and intrepid builder of the kingdom. But it apparently became clear to the President that Lee had participated in a kind of thing Brigham Young almost irrationally abhorred, and that he had lied to Brigham about it. In addition, the cancer of that action threatened the kingdom from within and without. The complexity of response is indicated in John D. Lee's continuance for a while in positions of trust in southern Utah that could not have been possible without President Young's approval—but the sudden withdrawal of Brigham's support and association after a certain point. In this tragic dilemma, Brother Brigham may have experienced a loss of innocence, in choosing the kingdom over full candor and then over loyalty, even greater and more painful than the one in Iowa. I do not know how he might have done better, given the narrow alternatives. If he could have, but did not, it is difficult to feel other than empathy and forgiveness for a prophet of God who so deeply and personally suffered the tragedy. And it is possible to feel new understanding of what it may cost a mere mortal to be called to that role of prophet. As Peterson has written,

The pain of tragic loss is best coped with through recognition and expression rather than through repression and denial. Because of the work of Juanita Brooks, more and more Mormons will be able to recognize and speak of the tragedy that occurred to Mormons at Mountain Meadows. More and more of her readers will respond to her realistic concept of sainthood, the sainthood of those for whom . . . perfection is a struggle to achieve rather than the achievement itself. There will be more and more who can accept human frailty in prophets and apostles, knowing that if God has chosen to work through human beings, he has thereby chosen to work through imperfect means.<sup>57</sup>

Brigham Young was perfectly candid about being imperfect. In the year following the Mountain Meadows Massacre he had ample opportunity to show as well that he was a prophet. Perhaps most impressive in that showing is his firm and well-vindicated reliance on God's protection of the kingdom: "It is a solemn time. The armies of the Gentiles are making war upon us because of our religion. . . . We have to trust in God for the result. We shall do what we can, and leave the work in his hands."<sup>58</sup> And yet he was constant in his recognition—and in reminding the Saints—that whatever the outcome of this attack on the kingdom they had built with their hands, the adversity they were passing through could serve, depending on their righteous response, to further the basic goals of the kingdom:

Should we live in peace, year after year, how long would it be before we were glued to the world? . . . It would be contrary to our feelings to attend to anything but our own individual concerns to make ourselves rich. . . . This shows to us that all things pertaining to this world are subject to change, and such changes as we cannot control.<sup>59</sup>

It is true that President Young continued to make dramatic and invigorating speeches to the Saints as God seemed to them to fight their battle—to close up the passes with snow and bring Buchanan under congressional attack:

If [the soldiers] come here, I will tell you what will be done. . . . Men shall be secreted here and there and shall waste away our enemies. . . .

. . . I want you to prepare to cache our grain and lay waste to this Territory; for I am determined, if driven to that extremity, that our enemies shall find nothing but heaps of ashes and ruins. . . .

. . . With us it is the Kingdom of God, or nothing; and we shall maintain it, or die in trying—though we shall not die in trying.<sup>60</sup>

However, throughout the "war" Brigham constantly affirmed his readiness to negotiate with anyone who would deal with him fairly and not under threat of force. According to one gentile writer's report, Brigham Young's constant emphasis was to avoid bloodshed "so that if another course should be adopted . . . the feeling of revenge should not hinder the . . . peace."<sup>61</sup> Thus, when his old friend Thomas Kane suddenly showed up as a mediator from President Buchanan in February 1858, after a heroic journey through Panama and up from Southern California that injured his health, Brigham welcomed him as an answer to his prayer for a bloodless solution: "Friend Thomas, the Lord sent you here, and he will not let you die . . . till your work is done. You have done a great work, and you will do a greater work still."<sup>62</sup> President Young later reflected on this crucial time:

When Colonel Kane came to visit us, he tried to point out a policy for me to pursue. But I told him I should not turn to the right nor the left, ONLY AS GOD DICTATED. I should do nothing but what was right. When he

found that I would not be informed, only as the Spirit of the Lord led me, he felt discouraged, and said he would not go to the army. But finally he said, if I would dictate he would execute. I told him that as he had been inspired to come here, he would go to the army and do as the Spirit of the Lord led him, and all would be right. He did so—and all was right.<sup>63</sup>

This was of course a memory recorded after successful resolution of the conflict, but in fact Kane did make another dangerous trip, out through the snow to the army camped at Fort Bridger. There, after some difficulties with the belligerent General Johnston, he convinced Cumming, the appointed governor, to travel unescorted to Utah to investigate the situation. When he arrived in April Governor Cumming was treated with good-humored respect by the Mormons. Brigham Young convinced him of the falsity of Drummond's charges and that he would be accepted fully as governor if the army kept out.

In March the Church leaders had agreed with the President's feeling that if Kane were unsuccessful and Johnston marched on them when the passes opened up, resistance would lead to much futile bloodshed and that evacuation and a "scorched-earth" policy was the best course. Some have pointed out that this tactic served to turn world opinion in favor of the Mormons and thus was designed to allow Brigham Young to save face after his belligerent threats of the previous fall. There is no doubt that Brigham played a cagey and effective game with the federal powers. But the "Big Move," as it came to be called, was no game, and the 30,000 people leaving their homes and trekking south in wagons was an awesome sight that greeted Cumming as he traveled down Weber canyon and then south from Ogden to Salt Lake City. President Young was dead serious, bringing to fulfillment a plan that had been in his mind since the first news of invasion. He had written on 6 January 1858, to W. I. Appleby, President of the Eastern Mission:

Rather than see my wives and daughters ravished and polluted, and the seeds of corruption sown in the hearts of my sons of a brutal soldiery, I would leave my home in ashes, my gardens and orchards a waste and subsist upon roots and herbs, a wanderer through these mountains for the remainder of my natural life.<sup>64</sup>

Whatever the outcome, Brother Brigham knew this was a way of testing, and therefore developing through its exercise, the faith of the builders and beneficiaries of the kingdom. Their feelings, as they responded immediately to President Young's call to leave all behind again, are captured by a teen-age participant:

We packed all we had into father's one wagon and waited for the command to leave. . . . One morning father told us that we should leave with a large company in the evening. . . . Along in the middle of the day father

scattered leaves and straw in all the rooms and I heard him say: "Never mind, little daughter, this house has sheltered us, it shall never shelter them." . . . That night we camped on Willow Creek in the south end of the valley, and at ten o'clock every soul with bowed head knelt in prayer to God. As I dropped to sleep I heard my mother whispering that the Lord had heard our prayers and that our homes should not be burned.<sup>65</sup>

But the Saints were *ready* to burn those homes, and Brigham Young stood firm in the face of Cumming's pleas, even commands, to have the people return. They remained, Brother Brigham with them, in Provo and further south until late in June, when Buchanan's peace commission had arrived and successfully negotiated a settlement; in it the Mormons received a full "pardon." President Young said, "I thank President Buchanan for forgiving me, but I really cannot tell what I have done") and Johnston led his army in an eerie "triumphal march" through the city, which was completely deserted except for the men who stood ready to set it to the torch if one soldier stepped out of line.

One incident during the negotiations with the peace commission seems especially revealing of Brigham Young's character and style. From the minutes of the meetings and the somewhat expanded account by Tullidge in his contemporary *Life of Brigham Young*, it seems that, despite the assurances of the peace commission that Johnston would not begin to march toward Salt Lake City until hearing from them, at a delicate point, when agreement to allow the "occupation" was close, Porter Rockwell burst into the room and whispered something in President Young's ear. Brigham then severely announced that the troops were moving and, despite the objections of the commissioners that such could not be the case ("My messenger would not deceive me," said Brigham), he turned to William C. Dunbar, a noted Scotch singer present, and commanded, "Brother Dunbar, sing 'Zion.'" Brother Dunbar then sang a stirring song which had been composed that year to rally the Saints—and is still sung by the Mormons (though now in a less martial version):

In thy mountain retreat, God will Strengthen thy feet;  
On the necks of thy foes thou shalt tread,  
And their silver and gold,  
As the prophets have told,  
Shall be brought to adorn thy fair head. . . .  
Here our voices we'll raise, and we'll sing to thy praise,  
Sacred home of the prophets of God;  
Thy deliverance is nigh,  
Thy oppressors shall die,  
And the gentiles shall bow 'neath thy rod.<sup>66</sup>

Whether it was the song, or the determination reflected in the eyes of the Mormons around the table moving their lips fiercely in unison with

Brother Dunbar—or Brother Brigham’s words the next day, which took full advantage of this fortuitous situation to drive home his demands—the peace commission acquiesced in his conditions:

We are willing those troops should come into our country, but not to stay in our city. They may pass through if it needs be, but must not quarter less than forty miles from us. . . . Before the troops reach here this city will be in ashes, every tree and shrub will be cut to the ground, and every blade of grass that will burn shall be burned; . . . as God lives, we will hunt you by night and day until your armies are wasted away. No mob can live in the homes we have built in these mountains. That’s the program, gentlemen, whether you like it or not. If you want war you can have it, but if you wish peace, peace it is; we shall be glad of it.<sup>67</sup>

The ten years that followed the peace were full of irony for the Saints. The occupation by a huge gentile army (Camp Floyd became the largest military post in the United States) and its vice-filled satellite community of camp followers would seem to have ended Brigham Young’s drive for an isolated and self-sufficient kingdom. But the Church leaders held firm to their policy, even financing their efforts at home industry with profits from such windfalls as the occupation and trade with gentile-developed mines<sup>68</sup>—thus turning to their own purposes the very forces that threatened self-sufficiency. The soldiers, who jeered the impoverished and somewhat humiliated Saints when they returned from the “Big Move” to their hard-won homesteads, were pulled out of Utah to fight in the bloody Civil War, leaving to the Mormons the camp and surpluses; and Johnston, an effective commander who reduced potential antagonisms with his fairness but remained implacably disdainful of the Mormons as rebels, himself then joined the Southern rebellion, as did those other rather self-righteous instigators or participants in the crusade to put down the Mormon “secession,” Governor Cumming, Secretary of War Floyd, and even President Buchanan.

Meanwhile the Mormons, expected by many (including some who thought them justified) to join the Confederacy—and, in fact despite feeling that this war would perhaps destroy the country and usher in the Millennium—remained firmly loyal to the Constitution and the Union. But they did not send soldiers and only participated in the war by responding to Abraham Lincoln’s request to Brigham for a company of cavalry to protect the mail route through Wyoming. Even this ended when Colonel Patrick Connor arrived from California on October 1862 at the head of the Third California Volunteers, took over the postal guard duty from the Mormons, and built Camp Douglas on Salt Lake City’s East Bench expressly to intimidate Brigham and the Saints. Connor joined with other gentiles in the city determined to destroy Mormon hegemony, especially involving

himself in prospecting activities in Utah mountains with the explicit purpose of attracting so many gentiles to these riches that the Mormon culture would be overwhelmed.

Brigham Young remained quite aloof from all this, actually going into a year of near isolation in his home and office after Cumming took over, which seemed (besides being a precaution against the threats of gentiles encouraged by the presence of Johnston's soldiers) to be a way of showing that whatever the title bestowed on Cumming, the Utah government could not operate except with Brother Brigham's consent. Though Utah's applications for statehood continued to be denied in the growing crusade against polygamy in the '60s, President Young operated the "ghost" government of the State of Deseret and that political reality was recognized by Lincoln in his direct approach to the Mormon leader for the guards for the mail route. Lincoln told a visitor from Utah that the Mormons were like the logs he occasionally encountered as a youth clearing timber, "too hard to split, too wet to burn, and too heavy to move," and added "You go back and tell Brigham Young that if he will let me alone I will let him alone."<sup>69</sup> And generally that is what Lincoln did, attempting to be fair with Utah appointees and refusing to push prosecution of the Morrill Anti-Bigamy Act of 1862, which disincorporated the Church and limited its real estate holdings to \$50,000.

It was partly in response to the Morrill Act, and subsequent Acts aimed at destroying the Church's power through direct economic attack, that President Young made some, to him, very natural transfers of Church property into his own name. These actions have contributed to a misunderstanding and suspicion about him that ranks in seriousness with the questions about the Mountain Meadows Massacre. Jack Adamson, in his perceptive and moving introduction to Dean Jessee's edition of Brigham Young's letters to his sons, quotes from a hasty note written in 1856 to Joseph A. in England: "I want you to be faithful that you may [be] worthy of your stashon in my Kingdom." And then Adamson comments: "My Kingdom? Did he mean in my Father's kingdom where there are many mansions . . . ? It was late and Brigham was wearier than he realized. Who can know what he meant?"<sup>70</sup> But there is no mistake, and no mystery. Brigham meant "my" kingdom—and in a way that ought to be clearer than it is, even to Mormons themselves, inheritors of the tradition of consecration and stewardship President Young so firmly established. He meant it in precisely the way he said "my family"—meaning the nearly 1,000 people at any one time included in the total of his wives and children, those sealed to him by "adoption," and the families of men hired by him to work on "his" various and expanding projects, all those to whom he felt responsible as a patriarch. And that use of "my" ought to be understandable since it is

close to the same sense in which any member of a closely knit modern family might refer to that unit, where he feels responsible to all and all of whose resources he shares and helps direct for the common good. President Young's position as prophet and his special skills combined to make it natural for him to be the center of the process of developing the new economy in Utah—especially given the integrated vision of temporal and spiritual effort and success that he shared with his followers. As an outsider saw it,

Brigham Young is at the head of everything; . . . he receives the revenues, and he spends them,—both without any apparent accountability; the best farms are his, the largest saw-mills, the most prospering manufactories; . . . There is immense wealth in his possession; but what proportion of it he calls his own, and what the church's, no one knows,—he apparently recognizes no distinction.<sup>71</sup>

Actually President Young did recognize a distinction, especially in his clerk's carefully kept books, but the distinction was not absolute because it was not very important to the central purposes of the kingdom. Brother Brigham used the available resources in whatever way his judgment and inspiration told him was for the good of the kingdom—whether in using the Church's tithing resources to feed unemployed people to whom he had given work on "his" farm or in making drafts on his personal accounts to pay for emigrating people to Utah when "the Church's" Perpetual Emigrating Fund resources were insufficient.

Brigham Young did develop great "personal" wealth and holdings. Originally this happened through his own basic abilities, as craftsman, farmer, and entrepreneur, and then it continued and increased through his use of the resources and trust accorded his position to get the pioneer economy going—especially through personally directing a book credit system by which labor and material resources could be put to use in the time before a money and industrial economy had been created. His wealth seemed greater than it actually was because he at the same time managed the similar—and interchangeable—Church system as "Trustee-in-Trust." The confusion became even greater—and has unfortunately persisted to the present, even among Mormons—because beginning in 1862 much Church property was consciously put into private hands (other trusted leaders, as well as President Young's) to avoid escheatment by the federal government.

Gentiles were mystified, eventually infuriated, by this casual mixing of religious and economic power, by what seemed to them a primitivistic affront to the new American ways that the Enlightenment and the Revolution had made possible. But it is some of the gentiles who provide us the best testimony concerning Brother Brigham's honesty and ability. Fitz Hugh Ludlow, who visited in 1868, concluded that if Brigham Young had to support himself by farming,



he understands soils, stock, tools, rotation, irrigation, manures, and all the agricultural economies so well that he would speedily have the best crops within a hundred miles' radius. With his own hands he would put the best house in the settlement over the heads of himself and his family.

Ludlow described President Young as sitting in the Church office, "managing a whole nation's temporalities with such secular astuteness that Talleyrand or Richelieu would find him a match . . . and the Rothschild family could not get ahead of him if the stakes were a financial advantage."<sup>72</sup> These qualities, and Brigham's style of operating as if all were included in his kingdom, continued to be perplexing, even offensive, to some, but it is easy to see that the advantages to the Church and the community—the gospel kingdom—were at least as great as to himself.

For himself, Brother Brigham actually claimed nothing, except that God had appointed him steward over the kingdom, which of course meant everything. If he can be condemned in the economic area at all it must be with his developing love of quality that led him, not to personal luxury in life-style (though he loved well made watches, carriages, etc.), but to build and furnish with fine things homes in Salt Lake City and St. George and perhaps occasionally indulge some of his wives, and daughters, special tastes. Even these indulgences are revealed mainly by his strong, even public, efforts to curb luxurious tastes in his family and others (for instance, his formation of the Retrenchment societies); and his efforts to achieve quality in his homes and decorations were mainly a part of his felt responsibility to set standards for this pioneer community struggling to build a civilization in the wilderness. Certainly he cannot be seriously criticized (although he might well have prepared better) for the difficulties that attended settlement of his estate after his death, when some members of his family did not understand fully his tacit assumptions about the holdings all belonging to the kingdom.<sup>73</sup> Just as Joseph did not succeed in making clear to everyone the proper mode of succession of authority that should follow his death, Brigham did not succeed in making clear to all his vision of consecration to the kingdom before he died.

Of course, President Young did not seek or originally plan to take such a direct role in secular matters, at first delegating to "Presiding Bishop" Newell K. Whitney the responsibility for tithing and public works. But one ward bishop much later recalled that Bishop Whitney

seemed quite at a loss to make a move . . . [And] in a short time the spirit of the Aaronic [more temporally oriented] priesthood seemed to come upon President Young and he immediately set men to work, and he has had upon him more or less the responsibility of both priesthoods every since.<sup>74</sup>

With that assurance and that spirit Brigham Young acted boldly and decisively to build the kingdom: "When it comes to sleep, I do not stay

awake contriving how we are to financier. I can understand in a very few minutes all that is necessary and possible to be done, without taking very great thought in the matter.”<sup>75</sup> He acted with the continually legitimized confidence that he expressed in 1856: “There is not a person in this Church and kingdom but what must acknowledge that gold and silver, houses and land, etc., do multiply in my hands. . . . that I am as good a financier as they ever knew, in all things that I put my hands to.”<sup>76</sup> One evening in 1859 as his clerks were discussing the game of chess, which he remarked he knew nothing about, he commented that, instead of manipulating mere wooden pieces, “I have had to play with the kingdoms of the worlds as a board and living characters as pieces.” A clerk commented that President Young had played very well and he replied, “Yes and I am not displeased with nor regret any move that I have made.”<sup>77</sup> Mormon folklore, which like any other preserves not so much literal historical truth as the group’s basic values and perceptions, has passed along an anecdote that, whether it actually happened or not, should have, because it so aptly captures this sense of assurance in Brigham Young and the somewhat amused and amazed appreciation of that assurance felt by his people. Brother Brigham was looking over the burgeoning Salt Lake Valley with a visiting minister from the East, who was much impressed: “What you and the Lord have done with this place is truly amazing.” “Yes, Reverend,” Brigham replied, “and you should have seen it when the Lord had it alone!”

That seeming arrogance did not amuse some of Brigham Young’s gentle contemporaries, notably Ralph Waldo Emerson, who objected to such “one-man power.”<sup>78</sup> But Brigham was only acting and speaking with his characteristic plain honesty about a fundamental Mormon concept, that of stewardship. By this he understood that all the world is God’s, to be used for God’s purposes in providing eternal joy and progress for all his children, and that he uses human beings to safeguard and develop those resources. President Young believed he happened to be placed at the head of God’s earthly kingdom and given commensurate gifts, and it was his job to make the most of them:

Man is destined to be a God—and has to act as an independent being—and is left without aid to see what he will do, whether he will for God, and to practise him to depend on his own resources, and try his independency—to be righteous in the dark—to be the friend of God and do the best I can when left to myself, act on my Agency as the independent Gods, and show our capacity.<sup>79</sup>

And of course, by acting responsibly with his capacities as God’s steward, and by consecrating everything to the building of the kingdom, he felt he was able to receive God’s aid, not only in making up for his inadequacies and the losses incurred at the hands of nature and the kingdom’s enemies,

but in making the kingdom into a blessing for all. To the “ghost” legislature of the never recognized but nevertheless functioning “State of Deseret” he said in 1866:

Trusting in God, and exercising those energies with which He has endowed us, let us continue to found new Settlements, built new towns and cities, make roads, construct canals and water ditches, both for navigation and irrigation, and contribute with our means and strength to every improvement which will extend our area of civilization, enhance the fertility, beauty, and greatness of our State and add to the comfort, convenience and happiness of our fellow citizens and the stranger who may visit it.<sup>80</sup>

Brigham Young's supposedly selfish efforts to build “his” kingdom did not come to success in all the details he intended, or even in its apparently central religious goal, that of self-sufficient unity and order, but it did succeed in building the Utah Commonwealth in ways that have been a blessing to Mormons and gentiles alike. Leonard Arrington has pointed out that the remarkable thing about Brother Brigham's building of his kingdom was not his pragmatic flexibility, great as that was. It was rather his stubborn adherence to policy he believed was revealed from God, in the face of those who saw Mormonism as a barrier to the spread of individualistic and competitive economic and political principles and who therefore produced the “stream of laws, administrative directives, judicial decisions, and occupation armies which progressively reduced the scope of Church and group economic activity.”<sup>81</sup> And Arrington has also pointed up the irony that despite its natural and human obstacles the kingdom “by the end of the century . . . had provided the basis of support for half a million people in an area long and widely regarded as uninhabitable” and thus “demonstrated the effectiveness of central planning and voluntary cooperation in developing a large semi-arid region.”

Despite having given up, gradually during Brigham Young's lifetime and then altogether in the 1890s, what seem his central goals of self-sufficiency and isolation from the gentile “Babylon,” when to persist would have done even greater harm, Mormons have continued to hold fast to Brother Brigham's ideals of community and order. In fact, in Arrington's words, Mormons, “having no doubt of its attainability and inevitability, . . . still discuss the type of society that will exist when the kingdom is finally realized.”<sup>82</sup> They continue to prepare themselves—in vows of consecration to the gospel kingdom of *all* their time, talents, and means; in storing a year's supply of food and clothing; in practicing gardening, canning, sewing, and many other skills of self-sufficiency; and in continual sharing with the needy through fast offerings and the welfare plan—for a time when they firmly believe God will call them by his prophets to step forward and complete the building of Brigham Young's kingdom.

President Young continued to build throughout his life, adding over 150 new communities in the 1860s, with the impetus for self-sufficiency brought by the Utah War and the peace ironically given Utah by the Civil War. For example, the prototypical and heroic “Dixie Mission” was sent to southern Utah in 1862 to grow cotton for the kingdom. As late as 1872 Brigham was discussing with Thomas Kane, who came to Utah and visited the southern settlements with him, the prospects for expanding the colonization into Mexico. Even at the end of his life, Brother Brigham was planning and beginning to develop additional colonies in Arizona, as irrigable land in Utah became fully used. Always his vision remained constant, as a letter to the editor of the *New York Herald* in 1873 indicates. He explains with terse wit his resignation from various business responsibilities in favor of others “competent to succeed me” and then gives us, in his unique personal voice, the essence of his life and its continuing challenge:

For over forty years I have served my people, laboring incessantly, and I am now nearly seventy two years of age and I need relaxation. . . . We intend establishing settlements in Arizona, in the country of the Apaches, persuaded that if we become acquainted with them, we can influence them to peace. . . . In Utah we have a fine country for stock raising and agriculture and abundance of minerals awaiting development, and we welcome all good citizens who love peace and good order to come and settle with us. . . . It has been frequently published that I have a deposit of several millions of pounds sterling in the Bank of England. Were such the case I would most assuredly use the means to gather our poor Church members. . . . All my means are invested here improving this Territory. All my transactions and labors have been carried on in accordance with my calling as a servant of God. I know no difference between spiritual and temporal labors. God has seen fit to bless me with means, and as a faithful steward I use them to benefit my fellow men—to promote their happiness in this world in preparing them for the great hereafter. My whole life is devoted to the Almighty’s service, and while I regret that my mission is not better understood by the world, the time will come when I will be understood, and I leave to futurity the judgment of my labors and their result as they shall become manifest.<sup>83</sup>

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