

# The Shaping of the Mormon Mind in New England and New York

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Recent students of Mormonism have tended to discount or dismiss the influence of the Church's sojourn in New England and western New York on the development of Mormon thought. Within the last decade two scholars have placed major emphasis on what occurred in Kirtland or afterward as determinative in molding the Mormon mind.<sup>1</sup> One of them summarized that "almost all of Mormonism developed after 1830 in the midwest: its economics, theology, and social arrangements."<sup>2</sup> It is my contention that during its "eastern"<sup>3</sup> phase Mormonism assumed its essential orientation in ideas and institutions. The eastern interval was, in other words, formulative, and any student who loses sight of this fact ignores the continuity which clearly exists in early Mormon thought.

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<sup>1</sup>See R. Kent Fielding, "The Growth of the Mormon Church in Kirtland, Ohio" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Dept. of History, Indiana University, 1957), pp. 134-152. Fielding suggested that there was a "new direction of doctrine" in Ohio, but he did not make the point as emphatically as does Mario S. DePilllis in "The Quest for Religious Authority and the Rise of Mormonism," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Vol. 1 (March, 1966), pp. 68-88.

<sup>2</sup>This was DePilllis' reiteration of his previous viewpoint. See "Social Sources of Mormonism," *Church History*, Vol. 37 (March, 1968), p. 60.

<sup>3</sup>I do not wish at this time to examine the ramifications of DePilllis' quarrel with Whitney R. Cross on the applicability of Turner's frontier thesis to the rise of Mormonism. My purpose is to counter Fielding's and DePilllis' argument that what was most characteristically Mormon emerged only after they left western New York. For consideration of the DePilllis-Cross disagreement see DePilllis, *Church History*, Vol. 37, pp. 50-79, and Whitney R. Cross, *The Burned-over District* (Ithaca, 1950), pp. 55-109, 138-150.

That early Mormonism had a "primitive gospel" orientation has long been recognized. This fact was first discerned by Alexander Campbell, who saw the emergence of Mormonism as a gross, satanic imitation of his restorationist movement.<sup>4</sup> It was claimed by some Campbellites,<sup>5</sup> and by some scholars,<sup>6</sup> that the restorationist elements in Mormonism were introduced by the ex-Campbellite, Sidney Rigdon, who after quarreling with other restorationists, purloined the Book of Mormon from Solomon Spaulding and induced Joseph Smith to present it to the world as a divinely inspired work. Without adequate factual foundation,<sup>7</sup> this interpretation is given little credence by most students.<sup>8</sup> But the matter of the primitive gospel facets in Mormon thought must still be considered. Recently Mario DePillis has affirmed that all the primitivists including the Mormons were searching for an authoritarian church to assuage a disturbing insecurity engendered by nineteenth century sectarian conflict.<sup>9</sup> While there may be some truth in this, DePillis has conceived primitivism too narrowly and has thus ignored many ramifications of Mormon thought. He has overlooked the fact that primitivism had eastern as well as western manifestations, and has thereby neglected the eastern roots of the Mormon mind. In truth, the primitivist movement was of national scope, spilling well beyond the limits of its institutionalization by the Disciples of Christ, including among its advocates those who formed other sects, and also many who became Mormons.

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<sup>4</sup>Alexander Campbell, "The Book of Mormon Reviewed and Its Divine Pretensions Exposed," *Painesville Telegraph*, March 15, 1831, pp. 1-2.

<sup>5</sup>Campbell eventually discarded his theory of Joseph Smith's authorship of the Book of Mormon, which he advocated in the above work, and accepted the Rigdon-Spaulding theory. See *The Millennial Harbinger*, Vol. 6 (December, 1856), p. 698. Compare Amos S. Hayden, *Early History of the Disciples in the Western Reserve* (Cincinnati, 1876), pp. 209-215.

<sup>6</sup>See William Alexander Linn, *The Story of the Mormons* (New York, 1963), pp. 64-65; and George Arbaugh, *Revelation in Mormonism* (Chicago, 1932), pp. 9, 12.

<sup>7</sup>I have examined the theory at length and demonstrated its weaknesses in my "Role of Christian Primitivism in the Origin and Development of the Mormon Kingdom, 1830-1844" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Dept. of History, University of Chicago, 1968), pp. 92-97. Basically the thesis is untenable because none of the witnesses ever affirmed that there were two copies of the same manuscript, but E. D. Howe assumed that there were once he learned that the manuscript written by Solomon Spaulding had only a small resemblance to the Book of Mormon.

<sup>8</sup>George Arbaugh still holds to it. See his *Gods, Sex and Saints* (Urbana, 1957), p. 11.

<sup>9</sup>*Dialogue*, Vol. 1, pp. 68-88.

There was in the early nineteenth century a persistent tendency among sectarian-minded Americans to look back upon the early years of Christianity as formative for their institutions and to ignore the intervening years of Christian history.<sup>10</sup> Thus the movement which greatly influenced the character of Mormon thought got underway between the end of the American Revolution and the beginning of the Jacksonian period—a time when the American churches reorganized on the basis of “persuasion” rather than “coercion,” and were alarmed by a developing rationalistic thought which they termed “infidel.”<sup>11</sup> The old-line churches launched a gigantic crusade against the infidel which took the form of organized revivals, preaching, prayers, and voluminous published propaganda.<sup>12</sup> But the campaign partly backfired, for many of the unchurched and some within the churches saw the crusade as menacing. Their “antimission” reaction helped to launch the primitive gospel movement on a nationwide scale.<sup>13</sup>

#### GOSPEL PRIMITIVISM WIDESPREAD

The primitive gospel movement emerged independently in New England, the South, and the West among a variety of groups. Usually each group was led by a layman or a man with limited clerical training who was influenced by a strong, anticlerical bias and who sought to break down any distinction between clergy and laity in the church.<sup>14</sup> These groups took

<sup>10</sup>See Kenneth Scott Latourette, *History of the Expansion of Christianity*, Vol. 4: *The Great Century, A.D. 1800 - A.D. 1914* (New York, 1941), p. 428, and compare Sidney E. Mead, “Denominationalism: The Shape of Protestantism in America,” *Church History*, Vol. 23 (December, 1954), pp. 295-299.

<sup>11</sup>See Sidney E. Mead, “From Coercion to Persuasion: Another Look at the Rise of Religious Liberty and the Emergence of Denominationalism,” *Church History*, Vol. 25 (December, 1956), pp. 317-337.

<sup>12</sup>See Charles Roy Keller, *The Second Great Awakening in Connecticut* (New Haven, 1942), p. 220, and David Ludlum, *Social Ferment in Vermont, 1791-1850* (New York, 1939), pp. 40-53, and compare Cross, pp. 14-51.

<sup>13</sup>B. Cecil Lambert, “The Rise of the Anti-Mission Baptists: Sources and Doctrines, 1800-1840” (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Dept. of Humanities, University of Chicago, 1957), pp. 67-410. Two leaders of primitivism in New England were Abner Jones and Elias Smith. Lambert describes their efforts in detail, but see the *Memoir of Elder Abner Jones by His Son, A.D. Jones* (Boston, 1842), and *The Life, Conversion, Preaching, Travels and Sufferings of Elias Smith* (Portsmouth, 1816).

<sup>14</sup>Alexander Campbell “utterly denied the ‘propriety of the distinction between clergy and laity.’ ” Campbell had not been formally ordained. See James DeForest Murch, *Christians Only* (Cincinnati, 1962), pp. 72, 116.

flight from the existing old-line churches. They saw them as corrupt and apostate in nature and affirmed the necessity of a restoration of the primitive faith and order.<sup>15</sup> Each group was stirred by the revivals which swept the nation during the Second Great Awakening yet reacted strongly against the sectarian conflict which developed in their wake, stressing the need for lasting Christian unity.<sup>16</sup> They each manifested a cautious biblical authoritarianism<sup>17</sup> and a tendency to reject the Calvinistic doctrine of election and affirm man's free will.<sup>18</sup> In addition, they shared a decidedly millennialist perspective toward the unfolding events of the day.<sup>19</sup>

All of these attitudes were apparent in Mormonism before the exodus from New York. Actually, some of them were firmly lodged in the minds of the Smiths prior to their leaving New England and were carried into New York and nourished there until they became incorporated into the new gospel.<sup>20</sup> Lucy Mack Smith, the Prophet's mother, details in her history how she affiliated in New England with several religious groups, including the Presbyterians and Methodists,<sup>21</sup> but

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 67-137.

<sup>16</sup>William Garrett West, *Burton W. Stone: Early American Advocate of Christian Unity* (Nashville, 1954), pp. 1-6, and Murch, pp. 109-121.

<sup>17</sup>For evidence of dependence which primitivists placed on Bible authority see Murch, *Christians Only*, pp. 45-47, 72, 87, 89, and I. Daniel Rupp (Comp.), *An Original History of the Religious Denominations at Present Existing in the United States* (Philadelphia, 1844), pp. 166, 251, 257, 264, 520-521, 731.

<sup>18</sup>See William Warren Sweet, *Religion in the Development of American Culture, 1765-1840* (New York, 1952), pp. 193-198, 203-206, 216-233, and compare Rupp, *Original History*, above.

<sup>19</sup>For examples of millennialism among the Christian primitivists see Elias Smith, *Sermons Containing an Illustration of the Prophecies to Be Accomplished from the Present Time, Until the New Heavens and Earth Are Created, When All the Prophecies Will be Fulfilled* (Exeter, 1808), p. 87; also Elias Smith and Abner Jones, *Hymns Original and Selected for the Use of Christians* (Philadelphia, 1812), pp. 35, 49; James O'Kelly, *Hymns and Spiritual Songs, Designed for the Use of Christians* (Raleigh, N.C., 1816), p. 110, and p. 12 at the back of the book; Barton W. Stone, "Millennium," *The Christian Messenger*, Vol. 4 (June 1830), pp. 164-166; and the *Millennial Harbinger*, Vol. 1 (1830), pp. 1-8, 53-58, 145-147, 311-313, 364-365, 373-375, 504-508.

<sup>20</sup>DePillis ignores this fact, thereby giving undue emphasis to the influence of the "west" on the Mormons. He fails to explain why, if Mormonism was a "continuing quest for religious authority," as he says, the quest could not have begun in New England and been carried into New York. Thus it seems that his notions about Mormonism beginning in Ohio are contradicted by his argument that its primitivism began in New York. Compare his ambiguity in *Dialogue*, Vol. 1, p. 76, and in *Church History*, Vol. 37, pp. 55, 60, 62, 77-78.

<sup>21</sup>Lucy Mack Smith, *History of Joseph Smith by his Mother* (Salt Lake City, 1954), pp. 35-36, 43, 48. This volume was edited with notes by Preston Nibley, and although a few parts of Lucy's original history have been altered, it is sufficiently faithful to the original for my purposes here.

found this experience frustrating and concluded that no existing church would give her life and salvation. While still in Vermont she decided that

there was not then upon the earth the religion which I sought. I therefore determined to examine my Bible, and taking Jesus and His disciples for my guide, I endeavored to obtain from God that which man could neither give nor take away.<sup>22</sup>

Lucy indicates that her husband shared this primitivist outlook, and in 1811, after becoming excited on the subject of religion, he vowed that he would join no church but contend for "the ancient order, as established by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and His Apostles."<sup>23</sup>

Father Smith may have absorbed some of his anti-institutional ideas from his own father, Asael, who refused to join any of the churches during his lifetime because he could not reconcile their teachings with the scriptures.<sup>24</sup> He wrote to his children that they should give some thought to whether religion "consists in outward formalities, or in the hidden man of the heart"<sup>25</sup> and made it clear that he considered the latter choice preferable.

With such a background it was quite natural for young Joseph Smith to acquire a primitivist attitude. His mother relates that shortly after the death of her son, Alvin, 1823 or 1824,<sup>26</sup> a missionary preaching a form of primitive Christianity attempted to unite the churches of the area into "one mind and heart." She was attracted to the group and was inclined to join them, but Joseph Jr. said he would attend none of their meetings. "I can take my Bible," he said, "and go into the woods, and learn more in two hours, than you can learn at meeting in two years, if you should go all the time."<sup>27</sup> He insisted that the leader of the unity movement had no genuine sympathy for the poor in his midst and that he would exploit them for his own profit.<sup>28</sup> Thus Joseph had already developed a deep concern for the social well-being of the poor, and this

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 36.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 46

<sup>24</sup>Mary Audentia Anderson, *Ancestry and Posterity of Joseph Smith and Emma Hale* (Independence, Mo., 1929), p. 60.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 62-63.

<sup>26</sup>There is some disagreement as to the exact year of Alvin's death.

<sup>27</sup>L. M. Smith, p. 90.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 90-91.

may have discouraged his joining the main stream of the primitive gospel movement.

Not only had the Smith family acquired their primitivist outlook in the East, but so also had many of the earliest converts to the faith. Among those who were primitivists before coming into contact with Mormonism were Newell and Joseph Knight, Orson Pratt, Lorenzo Dow Young and others in the Young family, Wilford Woodruff, and Laban Morrill.

Newell Knight, youthful friend of Joseph Smith in Chenango County, New York, was convinced as a young man that there had been an apostasy from the true church and that a restoration was needed. His father, Joseph Knight, also a convert to Mormonism, had been a "universalist" in doctrine but had refused to join any "religious sect."<sup>29</sup> Orson Pratt, reared in New York, was taught by his father to "venerate . . . Jesus Christ, and His Prophets and Apostles, as well as the scriptures written by them," but was told to use caution in accepting any denomination in the "so-called Christian world." His father denounced the "hireling clergy" and would join no church. Orson also refused to unite with any denomination until he became a Mormon, being converted only after his brother Parley, once a Campbellite preacher, brought news of the new dispensation given to Joseph Smith.<sup>30</sup>

Most of the Young family, including Brigham and Phineas, had been Reformed Methodists and were taught baptism by immersion and the principle of faith healing in that splinter denomination.<sup>31</sup> Phineas indicated that he practiced the laying on of hands prior to becoming a Mormon.<sup>32</sup> Another brother, Lorenzo Dow, however, refused to join any church, "not believing that any of the sects walked up to the precepts contained in the Bible."<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>Part of Newell Knight's Journal appears in *Scraps of Biography, Tenth Book of the Faith Promoting Series* (Salt Lake City, 1883), pp. 47-48.

<sup>30</sup>Parley P. Pratt (ed.). *Autobiography of Parley Parker Pratt* (5th ed.; Salt Lake City, 1961), pp. 19, 43.

<sup>31</sup>See Phineas Young's account in "The History of Brigham Young," *The Millennial Star*, Vol. 25 (May, 1863), p. 327, and compare Reverend Wesley Bailey's sketch of the primitivist beliefs of the Reformed Methodists in Rupp, *Original History*, pp. 466-474.

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 327.

<sup>33</sup>*Millennial Star*, Vol. 25 (June 27, 1863), pp. 406-407, and "Lorenzo Dow Young's Narrative," *Sixth Book of the Faith Promoting Series* (Salt Lake City, 1882), pp. 31-33.

Wilford Woodruff, converted in Rhode Island in 1833, had not previously belonged to any church because he "could not find any denomination whose doctrines, faith and practice agreed with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, or the ordinances and gifts which the Apostles taught." As a young man he had been greatly influenced by Robert Mason, "the old prophet," who preached that there must be a restoration of primitive Christianity.<sup>34</sup>

Laban Morrill, who was converted in 1833 in Vermont and later went to Utah, had been a typical primitive seeker. He wrote in his autobiography that his allegiance had been

sought after by different religious sects; but I felt that there was a great opposition among the different religions of the day, and the members and advocates of each claiming their own as the true church. I felt that if one of the many sects was right; the others must all be wrong; for I believed that there should be but one faith and one baptism and one Lord.<sup>35</sup>

It was, as DePillis has argued, the antisectarian ideals of the Mormons which attracted them to a movement which advocated one true, authoritative church.<sup>36</sup> But there had developed among them other primitivist attitudes which exerted much influence in shaping their outlook. There is evidence that prior to leaving New York the Mormons had consolidated their primitivist views into a fairly consistent pattern. They were, like others with their predisposition, rigorous biblicists, hostile toward revivals and missionary societies, and ardent advocates of religious unity. They lamented the spread of infidelity, or "natural religion," believing that its proliferation would undermine Christian faith. They were already firmly

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<sup>34</sup>*Millennial Star*, Vol. 27 (March 25, 1865), p. 182, and Wilford Woodruff, "Leaves from My Journal," *Third Book of the Faith Promoting Series* (Salt Lake City, 1881), pp. 1-3.

<sup>35</sup>"Life of Laban Morrill, Written by His Grandson, with Quotations from His Autobiography," pp. 90-91. A typewritten copy of this journal, dated 1946, is in the Brigham Young University library. Others who joined the Church in the East soon after its organization and held primitive gospel beliefs were Daniel Tyler, Joseph Holbrook, Amasa M. Lyman, and Heber C. Kimball. See Tyler's "Incidence of Experience," *Tenth Book of the Faith Promoting Series* (Salt Lake City, 1883), pp. 22-23; "Life of Joseph Holbrook, 1806-1871," typewritten manuscript, Brigham Young University library, 1942, pp. 11-12, 18-20, 25; Albert R. Lyman, *Amasa Mason Lyman, Vol. I of the History of the Amasa Mason Lyman Family* (Delta, Ut., 1957), pp. 11, 13-14; and Orson F. Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball* (Salt Lake City, 1888), pp. 18-20, 30-34.

<sup>36</sup>DePillis, *Dialogue*, Vol. 1, pp. 68-88.

committed to a lay priesthood and had discarded Calvinistic election for the principal of man's free will and individual merit. They had become firmly committed to the ideal of continuing revelation, not conceiving it as did other primitivists as a gradual unfolding of hidden Bible truths but as additional word of God made known to their prophet. Via this means their theology and church organization were well launched before 1831. Like other primitivists, they were dedicated millennialists, but they made more of the doctrine than most, announcing the principle of the gathering and the building of the New Jerusalem somewhere in the great West.

#### CONCEPT OF A KINGDOM

In addition, there is evidence that in New York they were already committed to the idea of an earthly political kingdom where the Saints would reign, and prior to their departure they planned to establish a communitarian experiment which would sustain the kingdom of God economically.<sup>37</sup> Early in the New York period they were convinced that they were a chosen people, that it was their calling to preach salvation to a perverse generation who must accept their gospel message or suffer impending destruction. As one would expect, non-Mormons did not take kindly to the idea that they were prophetic Babylon and doomed, and that the new revelation would force them to set their own gospel views aside. Their reaction brought verbal abuse and eventual persecution which only made the saints more secretive and more exclusive in their relations with their neighbors. Thus, but few of the basic attitudes or institutions which set the saints apart from the Gentiles in Ohio, Missouri, and Illinois were lacking in 1831. What came afterward were variations on some well-established themes.

The Mormon allegiance to the Bible was affirmed in the Book of Mormon where Nephi was told that when the Hebrew scripture

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<sup>37</sup>DePillis erroneously concludes that communitarianism "entered the as yet inchoate religion as a result of Campbellite and Shaker influences Smith encountered when he fled westward to Kirtland." *Church History*, Vol. 37, p. 60. In fact, Joseph Smith did not have to leave New York to encounter Shaker and other communitarian influence. The Groveland Society of Shakers was located at Sodus, and a Jemima Wilkinson experiment was found at PennYon, both within thirty miles of Manchester.



proceeded forth from the mouth of a Jew it contained the plainness of the gospel of the Lord, of whom the twelve apostles bear record; and they bear record according to the truth which is the Lamb of God.<sup>38</sup>

But, like Alexander Campbell, the Mormons held that some of the truths of the gospel had been lost through erroneous translation. The Book of Mormon declared that when the Bible passed through the hands of "the great and abominable church" many "plain and precious things" were lost.<sup>39</sup> In 1832 the Reverend B. Pixley, a Baptist minister who observed the Mormons closely in Missouri, noted that in their estimation

The Gospels . . . are so mutilated and altered as to convey little of the instruction which they should convey. Hence we are told a new revelation is to be sought—is to be expected, indeed is coming forthwith.<sup>40</sup>

So Nephi wrote in the Book of Mormon that when the American scripture would be revealed it would make known the "plain and precious things which have been taken away" from the Bible.<sup>41</sup> Thus the Latter-day Saints saw their new revelation as support for the ancient faith and considered that any innovations would but constitute a restoration of what had been lost. B. Pixley thought he sensed some incongruity in this position when he commented that "our present Bible is to be altered and restored to its primitive purity."<sup>42</sup>

When the elders first came to Ohio, John Corrill noticed that they placed extra stress on the Old Testament. He said that the Saints

believe as firmly in the Scriptures of the Old Testament as any other people. They look upon their new revelations as bringing about the fulfillment of the Bible.<sup>43</sup>

It was this heavy dependence upon the Old Testament, and the belief that through modern revelation "all things" must be restored before the coming of the millennium, which would provide the Mormons with scriptural justification when they

<sup>38</sup>1 Nephi 13:24.

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*, vs. 26.

<sup>40</sup>Quoted in William Mulder and A. Russell Mortensen, *Among the Mormons* (New York, 1958), p. 74.

<sup>41</sup>1 Nephi 13:40.

<sup>42</sup>Mulder and Mortensen, *Among the Mormons*, p. 74.

<sup>43</sup>John Corrill, *A Brief History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Including Their Doctrine and Discipline* (St. Louis, 1839), p. 14.

began the practice of plural marriage in Ohio.<sup>44</sup> But in New York, before polygamy was introduced, the non-Mormons already feared the implications of extra-biblical revelation, and bitter opposition arose.<sup>45</sup> The effect upon the Mormons was to promote a closer cohesiveness among them.<sup>46</sup>

There can be little doubt that a strong antirevivalism and antimissionism which prevailed among the Saints developed in western New York where the Burned-over District was singled with the exhortations of missionaries for a wide variety of causes.<sup>47</sup> W. W. Phelps, an ex-anti-Mason who had left New York to join the Saints, commented in *The Evening and Morning Star* that

As to so many appendaged societies to the gospel, we must say, that neither the Savior, nor his apostles, nor the Scriptures, have taught any thing more necessary, than to repent and believe on the Lord Jesus, . . . Camp-meetings and protracted meetings, like the wind that blows before a storm, seem to increase, as the judgments of the Almighty are sent forth to purify the world.<sup>48</sup>

Reverend Pixley had noted the Saints "would have no fellowship for temperance societies, Bible societies, tract societies, or

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<sup>44</sup>The Saints quoted Acts 3:19-21 to the effect that there must be a restitution of all things, including polygamy, prior to the second coming of Christ. John Benson, among others, made this point in his letter of February 17, 1844, located in the "Richards Family Correspondence" at Southern Illinois University. Compare *Evening and Morning Star*, Vol. 2 (February, 1834), p. 265, and the *Messenger and Advocate*, Vol. 1 (May, 1835), p. 117. That the practice began in Ohio, and not Illinois, is evidenced by the testimony of Benjamin F. Johnson, Benjamin Winchester, and John Whitmer. See "An Interesting Letter from Patriarch Benjamin F. Johnson to Elder George S. Gibbs" in a typewritten manuscript at the Brigham Young University library, and compare Charles L. Woodward, "The First Half Century of Mormonism," p. 195. This is an unpublished collection of material, including Winchester's reminiscences, located in the New York Public Library. See also "Book of John Whitmer," p. 40, a typed manuscript in the Church Historian's Office, Salt Lake City.

<sup>45</sup>L. M. Smith, *History of Joseph Smith*, pp. 105, 108-109, 143-145, 156, 176, 179-180; also Joseph Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts (Salt Lake City, 1948), Vol. 1, p. 88, (cited hereafter as DHC) and compare *The Evangelical Magazine and Gospel Advocate*, Vol. 2 (April, 1831). Robert Baird, nineteenth century champion of evangelical Christianity, defined the orthodoxed as those "whose religion is the Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing *but* the Bible." He categorized the Mormons among the "unevangelicals" due to their extra-biblical revelation. See Robert Baird, *Religion in America* (New York, 1845), p. 288.

<sup>46</sup>See *A Book of Commandments for the Government of the Church of Christ* (Zion, 1833), p. 61. Here in New York, as a result of this persecution, the members were commanded to gather together into closer proximity.

<sup>47</sup>See Cross, *Burned-over District*, pp. 3-51.

<sup>48</sup>"Signs of the Times," *The Evening and Morning Star*, Vol. 1 (October, 1832), p.[6].

Sunday School societies,"<sup>49</sup> while Oliver Cowdery, a New York convert, later remarked:

In vain will the Gentiles of this generation attempt to reform themselves, or others, or to obtain what they have lost . . . certain the present Gentile world, with all its parties, sects, denominations, reformations, revivals of religion, societies, and associations, are devoted to destruction. . . .<sup>50</sup>

The Saints disparaged the revivals because of the sectarian bitterness and hostility which seemed to come in their wake. William Smith, the Prophet's brother, related how the 1820 revival had sharply divided the community and left the convert in a state of confusion.<sup>51</sup> But Mormon rejection of revivalism put them out of step with the dominant evangelical Protestants who considered support for revivalism and the missionary societies as fundamental among all true Christians.<sup>52</sup>

Like other primitivists, the Mormons desired unity. The Lord told them in New York to "be one; and if ye are not one, ye are not mine."<sup>53</sup> This quest for religious unity was central to Mormonism, as I have demonstrated elsewhere.<sup>55</sup> But where the Campbellites initially had some hopes for interdenominational unification,<sup>56</sup> the Saints condemned the other churches and sought unity within. The resulting effects upon the Mormon mind were profound and reached far beyond the borders of western New York.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>49</sup>Mulder and Mortensen, *Among the Mormons*, p. 74.

<sup>50</sup>*Messenger and Advocate*, Vol. 1 (December, 1834), p. 39. Cowdery was the editor of the *Advocate*. Robert Baird saw the missionary, tract, and other reform societies as evidence of the great worth of the "voluntary principle," the separation of church and state in the United States. See Baird, *Religion in America*, pp. 166-173.

<sup>51</sup>*William Smith on Mormonism* (Lamoni, Iowa, 1883), p. 7, and compare William Smith's statement to E. C. Briggs, *Deseret Evening News*, January 20, 1894, p. 11.

<sup>52</sup>Robert Baird praised revivalism, observing that "it cannot be disputed that our truly zealous, intelligent and devoted Christians, whatever be their denomination, not only believe in the reality of revivals, but consider that, when wisely promoted, they are the greatest and most desirable blessings that can be bestowed upon the churches." He included among those who opposed them "the openly wicked and profane," and those like the Roman Catholics and Unitarians "whose Christianity is greatly marred with errors and heresies." See Baird, *Religions in America*, p. 214.

<sup>53</sup>*Book of Commandments*, pp. 82-83. Compare also 2 Nephi 3:12.

<sup>54</sup>Cancelled.

<sup>55</sup>Hill, "Christian Primitivism," pp. 122-301.

<sup>56</sup>West, *Barton W. Stone*, pp. 110-131.

<sup>57</sup>Hill, "Christian Primitivism," pp. 122-163, 172-176, 180, 184-301.

As with the other primitivists, fear of infidelity weighed heavily upon Mormon thoughts. The Book of Mormon repeated the warning continuously that a nation that denied the faith and would not honor and serve the Lord was doomed to destruction.<sup>58</sup> The Lord affirmed in an early revelation that the ancient American scripture was intended to prove to the world "that the holy scriptures are true; and also, that God doth inspire men and call them to his holy work, in these last days as well as in days of old."<sup>59</sup>

In three early issues of *The Evening and Morning Star*, W. W. Phelps discoursed on the inadequacies of "natural religion." His avowed intention was to

prove that revealed religion hath advantages infinitely superior to natural religion; that the greatest geniuses are incapable of discovering by their own reason all the truths necessary to salvation. . . .<sup>60</sup>

Phelps lamented: "Under pretense that natural science hath made greater progress, revelation is despised,"<sup>61</sup> and argued at length that under the aegis of revealed religion it would be easier to account for such sticky philosophical problems as the source of misfortune and evil in the world.<sup>62</sup> It may well be that in formulating an hostile attitude toward eighteenth century rationalist thought, the early Mormons prepared the way for some of the conflict between reason and revelation which, according to O'Dea, troubles the Church in the twentieth century.<sup>63</sup>

The Mormons were committed to a lay priesthood from the beginning of their movement.<sup>64</sup> While there is some lack

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<sup>58</sup>See, for example, 2 Nephi 17:30-43; Mosiah 26:3; Moroni 7:37-38 and 9:11-22; Helaman 16:15-23; and notice the example made of infidel, Korihor, in Alma 30.

<sup>59</sup>*Book of Commandments*, p. 48. Compare Joseph Smith, *Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City, 1921), Sec. 21, vs. 11, which has been altered slightly.

<sup>60</sup>See "Comparison Between Heathenism and Christianity," *The Evening and Morning Star*, Vol. 1 (September, 1832), p. [4].

<sup>61</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup>See the issues from September through November, 1832. Compare also Lorenzo Dow Young's recollections of the jolting impact which his reading of Voltaire and Tom Paine had on his religious faith. Also notice his warning to youth to shun these works, in *Sixth Book of the Faith Promoting Series*, pp. 25-26.

<sup>63</sup>Thomas F. O'Dea, *The Mormons* (Chicago, 1957), pp. 222-257.

<sup>64</sup>See Wesley P. Lloyd, "The Rise and Development of Lay Leadership in the Latter-day Saints Movement" (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Divinity School, University of Chicago, 1937).

of evidence that all the ramifications of priesthood theory and organization had been worked out this early,<sup>65</sup> the principle of priesthood authority had been affirmed,<sup>66</sup> and a functioning organization was set up with Joseph Smith's right to preside as "prophet and seer" firmly established.<sup>67</sup> Lesser officers, including priests, teachers and elders, were also called to supervise the activities of the local branches.<sup>68</sup> Before the New York exodus it was revealed that the twelve apostles would be appointed to direct the missionary effort,<sup>69</sup> and it was made known that a bishop and others would be called to manage the Law of Consecration.<sup>70</sup> The distinctions between the Aaronic and Melchizedek priesthoods which evolved in Kirtland, and the increasing sophistication of offices and functions which developed there did not alter the authoritarian nature of the organization nor its primitive gospel principle of lay leadership.

Just as the other restorationists participated in the "revolt against Calvinism," so the Mormon view of man was in a state of flux.<sup>71</sup> The prophet Helaman lamented in the Book of Mormon

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<sup>65</sup>The question of the evolution of priesthood concept and organization in the early Church is a different one. I have discussed the pros and cons of Fielding's view that the Melchizedek priesthood was not conceived nor conferred until 1831 in "Role of Christian Primitivism," pp. 110-112. Compare Fielding, "Mormon Church in Kirtland," pp. 111-113.

<sup>66</sup>Eber D. Howe mentions this claim by Oliver Cowdery when he first came to Ohio in *Painesville Telegraph*, November 16, 1830, p. 3. Cowdery proclaimed that until Smith's time the ordinances of the gospel "have not been regularly administered." Howe noted that many who had already been baptized by other denominations were "immersed into the new order of things," and noted in a later issue that Cowdery affirmed that only he and his associates were authorized to administer gospel ordinances. See December 7, 1830, p. 3.

<sup>67</sup>*Book of Commandments*, pp. 37, 45-46, 51-54, 67-70, 83-84. Joseph's authority was completely established only after the incident with Hiram Page. See especially pp. 45-67.

<sup>68</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 51-54.

<sup>69</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 37.

<sup>70</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 83-84.

<sup>71</sup>DePillis comments in *Dialogue*, Vol. 1, p. 87, that "theologically, Joseph Smith's moral and physical departure from New England may be summed up in the second and tenth 'articles of faith,' which were not formulated until 1841. Article Two explicitly rejected the old Puritan maxim in 'Adam's fall we sinned all.'" But as I shall show, the Mormons rejected the Calvinistic conception of the total depravity of man with the publishing of the Book of Mormon. Furthermore, the New Englanders were rejecting it too, en masse, so that Joseph Smith hardly departed from them in this way. For evidence of this see Sweet, pp. 190-210. Also see Sidney E. Mead's biography of a key Congregationalist in New England, *Nathaniel William Taylor* (Chicago, 1942).

how foolish, and how vain, and how evil, and devilish, and how quick to do iniquity, and how slow to do good, are the children of men. . . . O how great is the nothingness of the children of men; yea, even they are less than the dust of the earth.<sup>72</sup>

In accordance with this pessimistic view in the Mormon scripture, man's salvation must come through grace. Jacob admonishes his brethren to "reconcile yourselves to the will of God . . . and remember that after you are reconciled unto God that it is only in and through the grace of God that ye are saved."<sup>73</sup>

But despite this apparent Calvinistic conception of grace, the scripture indicates that man is capable of faith and repentance, and has within himself the will to believe.<sup>74</sup> As a result, man will be rewarded according to his works.<sup>75</sup> In a revelation which came soon after the Book of Mormon was translated, the Saints were informed that there was no such thing as endless punishment, that endless punishment was merely God's punishment, since endless is his name.<sup>76</sup> This is a position close to that of the Universalists who had long before rejected Calvinistic determinism.<sup>77</sup> Thus in 1830 the Mormon view of man and salvation was moving toward Arminianism.<sup>78</sup> This liberalization of Mormon thought was critical for the development of later doctrines such as man's potential divinity. Within two years after leaving New York the Prophet had

<sup>72</sup>Helaman 12:4, 7.

<sup>73</sup>2 Nephi 10:24.

<sup>74</sup>Alma 32:27. Alma exhorts the unbelievers "if ye will awake and arouse your faculties, even . . . exercise a particle of faith, yea, even if ye can no more than desire to believe, let this desire work in you. . . ."

<sup>75</sup>1 Nephi 15:33. The concept of the three degrees of glory was but a logical result of the belief in salvation by works, since as the Mormons argued, men obviously did not produce good works on any kind of equal basis. The revelation on the three degrees of glory, Section 76 of the *Doctrine and Covenants*, came in February 1832, in Ohio, not in Illinois as DePillis seems to imply. See *Dialogue*, Vol. 1, p. 87, for some erroneous estimates as to when certain doctrines were taught.

<sup>76</sup>*Book of Commandments*, p. 40. This revelation came in March 1830.

<sup>77</sup>See "Argument Against the Doctrine of Endless Punishment," in Woodbury M. Fernald, *Universalism Against Partialism* (Boston, 1840), pp. 2-81, 199, 201. Notice also the argument of a Universalist missionary that if men are to be judged by their works they cannot receive a similar salvation in S. R. Smith, *Historical Sketches and Incidents, Illustrative of the Establishment and Progress of Universalism in the State of New York* (Buffalo, 1843), pp. 67-68.

<sup>78</sup>I would thus agree with Thomas F. O'Dea that the general tone of the Book of Mormon is Arminian but believe he fails to note remnants of Calvinism that remain. See O'Dea, *The Mormons*, pp. 28-29, and compare Hill, "Christian Primitivism," pp. 103-104.

taken the next step by teaching that the essential intelligence in man was not created but was coexistent with God.<sup>79</sup>

DePillis argues that Mormonism took form in the West since one hundred revelations in the *Doctrine and Covenants* came after 1830. But the Prophet did not leave New York until the end of January 1831<sup>80</sup> by which time forty of a total of one hundred thirty-three revelations had been received.<sup>81</sup> Many of these were of basic importance in launching the new Church, including such topics as the coming forth of the Book of Mormon,<sup>82</sup> the impending millennium, the gathering, the calling of the twelve apostles and other officers, church organization and government, requirements for church membership, missionary work, and the advisability of moving west to establish Zion.<sup>83</sup>

The doctrine of the gathering, one of Mormonism's "most influential,"<sup>84</sup> was revealed in New York, while that of the kingdom of God had begun to take form. The Lord declared in October that "even so will I gather mine elect from the four quarters of the earth,"<sup>85</sup> and in January 1831 he said,

And this shall be my covenant with you, ye shall have it [a land flowing with milk and honey] for the land of your inheritance, and for the inheritance of your children forever, while the earth shall stand, and ye shall possess it again in eternity, no more to pass away:

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<sup>79</sup>*Doctrine and Covenants*, Sec. 93, vs. 29 (1921). This revelation came in May 1833. It may be that the changing view of man had some effect upon the Mormon doctrine of Deity which seems also to have been undergoing some alteration in the mid-1830's. See Hill, "Christian Primitivism," pp. 103-104, 153-155.

<sup>80</sup>*DHC*, Vol. 1, p. 145.

<sup>81</sup>*Doctrine and Covenants* (1921).

<sup>82</sup>DePillis in *Dialogue*, Vol. 1, pp. 78-80, underestimates the importance of the Book of Mormon to the early converts by ignoring the primitive gospel themes within it. See Hill, "Christian Primitivism," pp. 100-108, for exposition of these. Notice further how some of the most important leaders like Parley P. Pratt, Brigham Young and other members of his family, and Orson Spencer considered this scripture decisive in effecting their conversions. Parley Pratt said that the volume was "the principal means, in the hands of God, of directing the entire course of my future life." See Pratt, *Autobiography*, p. 37; "The History of Brigham Young," *Millennial Star*, Vol. 25 (June 6, 1863), pp. 360-361; *Journal of Discourses. Reports of Addresses by Brigham Young and Others* (Liverpool and London, 1856), Vol. 4, p. 77; and Orson Spencer, *Letters Exhibiting the Most Prominent Doctrines of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City, 1889), p. 11.

<sup>83</sup>*Book of Commandments*, pp. 4-17, 19-39, 45-55, 60-68, 71-75, 80-84.

<sup>84</sup>William Mulder, "Mormonism's 'Gathering': An American Doctrine with a Difference," *Church History*, Vol. 23 (September, 1954), pp. 248-264.

<sup>85</sup>*Book of Commandments*, p. 73.

There the Saints would be governed by the law of the Lord:

But verily I say unto you, that in time ye shall have no king nor ruler, for I will be your King and watch over you.

Wherefore, hear my voice and follow me, and you shall be a free people, and ye shall have no laws but my laws, when I come, for I am your Lawgiver, and what can stay my hand.<sup>86</sup>

At the same time the Lord made it known that he would establish consecration as the law of the kingdom.<sup>87</sup> It was not spelled out until they reached Ohio,<sup>88</sup> but the Saints were prepared with the warning that then "all these things shall be gathered unto the bosom of the church."<sup>89</sup> There is evidence which suggests that the law was actually introduced in New York, for those who were financially able were required at this time to share with the poor. A resident of Waterloo indicated that

two of the most responsible Mormonites . . . demurred to the divine command . . . requiring them to sell their property and put into the common fund. . . . A requisition of *twelve* hundred dollars, in cash, it is said was made upon these gentlemen . . . the Lord having need of it.<sup>90</sup>

An editor of the *Lockport Balance* in Niagara County noted that the Saints who passed through on the way west had to convert their property to common stock.<sup>91</sup>

It may have been Sidney Rigdon, who had already quarreled with Alexander Campbell on the necessity of introducing a community of goods into the Campbellite church,<sup>92</sup> who encouraged the Prophet to launch a similar experiment among the Mormons when he visited him in New York in December 1830. The first revelation on the subject did not come until

<sup>86</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 82-83.

<sup>87</sup>Joseph Smith told Martin Harris in February 1831, "we have received the laws of the kingdom since we came here." "The Journal History of the Church," (February 22, 1831), Church Historian's Office, Salt Lake City, Utah.

<sup>88</sup>*Book of Commandments*, pp. 89-96.

<sup>89</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 84.

<sup>90</sup>*Palmyra Reflector*, March 9, 1831, p. 116. Compare Leonard Arrington, "Early Mormon Communitarianism: The Law of Consecration and Stewardship," *Western Humanities Review*, Vol. 7 (Autumn, 1953), p. 349, n. 26.

<sup>91</sup>See *Philadelphia Album*, June 18, 1831, p. 198, which reproduces a piece from the *Lockport Balance*.

<sup>92</sup>Hayden, *Early History of the Disciples*, pp. 208, 298-299. Compare also Mark F. McKiernan, "The Voice in the Wilderness: Sidney Rigdon, Religious Reformer 1793-1876," pp. 37-38. This unpublished manuscript is in the possession of J. Leonard Arrington and based upon McKiernan's Ph.D. dissertation finished at the University of Kansas.



January, after Rigdon and Smith had been together for a few weeks.<sup>93</sup> There is some chance Smith had previously heard of Rigdon's communitarian "family" from the missionaries he had sent to Ohio in late October.<sup>94</sup> But what evidence there is makes it unlikely that Rigdon had any decisive influence on the Prophet in this regard. Rather it is more likely that Rigdon had been more fully converted to Mormonism by a passage in the Book of Mormon which indicated that the Nephites, following Christ's American visit, introduced a sharing of property.<sup>95</sup> In Fourth Nephi it was recorded that they

had all things common among them; therefore there were not rich and poor, bond and free, but they were all made free, and partakers of the heavenly gift.<sup>96</sup>

That Rigdon did not simply convert Joseph Smith to his communitarian program is made clear by the fact that when the Prophet reached Ohio, Rigdon's "family" was broken up, and the Law of Consecration, which put more stress on individual initiative, was introduced.<sup>97</sup> It is interesting, and perhaps significant, that in Vermont prior to the Prophet's birth his uncle, Jason Mack, had "gathered together some thirty families on a tract of land which he had purchased for the purpose of assisting poor persons to the means of sustaining themselves." Jason planned a work program for this group and helped them to market what they produced.<sup>98</sup> Perhaps this enterprise had some religious significance, for Jason himself was a faith healer who practiced his art at least up to 1835.<sup>99</sup> Thus it is not inconceivable that Joseph Smith's interest in communitarianism

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<sup>93</sup>Hayden says that Rigdon went to New York about three weeks after his conversion, which came in late November. Hayden, *Early History of the Disciples*, p. 213.

<sup>94</sup>None of the letters, if any, are now extant. It seems likely, however, as Leonard Arrington has reminded me, that men as literate as Parley P. Pratt and Oliver Cowdery would have reported back to Joseph Smith. Pratt indicates the time of his and the others' departure from New York. See his *Autobiography*, p. 47.

<sup>95</sup>John Rigdon, Sidney's son, notes how carefully Rigdon studied the Book of Mormon before accepting it. Since communitarianism was a major issue for him at this time, he could hardly have overlooked 4 Nephi. See "Lecture Written by John M. Ridgon on the Early History of the Mormon Church," p. [7], typewritten manuscript at the Brigham Young University library.

<sup>96</sup>4 Nephi vs. 3. See also vs. 25-26.

<sup>97</sup>There are many resources one could cite, but see McKiernan, "Voice in the Wilderness," pp. 83-86.

<sup>98</sup>L. M. Smith, *History of Joseph Smith*, pp. 40-41.

<sup>99</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 41-42.

may have started in New England. But it seems beyond question that it had emerged in New York before Rigdon's coming. Amos Hayden indicated such was the case, for he wrote that when the elders made their first converts in Ohio among the members of Rigdon's family they were preaching "new doctrines of having 'all things in common,' and of restoring miracles to the world." Hayden said that the seventeen members of the family, all baptized before Rigdon, greeted the doctrines with a "ready welcome."<sup>100</sup>

According to Sidney Rigdon, while the Saints were still in New York meeting in a log house twenty feet square,

we began to talk about the kingdom of God as if we had the whole world at our command, we talked with great confidence, and talked big things . . . we talked about the people coming as doves to the windows, that all nations should flock into it; that they should come bending to the standard of Jesus. . . . When God sets up a system of salvation, he sets up a system of government . . . that shall rule over temporal and spiritual affairs.<sup>101</sup>

Rigdon's recollections are given support by the fact that shortly after leaving New York Martin Harris warned that the Saints would soon have dominion over the earth.

Within four years there will not be one wicked person left in the United States; . . . the righteous will be gathered to Zion, . . . and there will be no President over these United States, after that time.

I do hereby assert and declare that in four years from the date thereof every sectarian and religious denomination in the United States will be broken down, and every Christian shall be gathered unto the Mormonites, and the rest of the human race shall perish.<sup>102</sup>

Nancy Towles, who visited the Mormons in Ohio in September 1831, only a few months after they fled from the East, reported that they believed that they would "increase, and tread down all their enemies, and bruise them beneath their feet."<sup>103</sup> And Eber D. Howe noted that the Saints planned an

<sup>100</sup>Hayden, *Early History of the Disciples*, p. 211.

<sup>101</sup>*The Prophet*, June 8, 1844, p. 2. This Mormon newspaper was published in New York City.

<sup>102</sup>E. D. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled* (Painesville, 1834), p. 14.

<sup>103</sup>Nancy Towles, "History of Mormonism," *Vicissitudes Illustrated* (Portsmouth, N.H., 1833), p. 153.

empire for themselves that would begin at Kirtland and reach all the way to the Pacific Ocean.<sup>104</sup>

Before their departure the Mormons admonished the inhabitants of New York to beware of the impending judgments of God, and warned that only those who would gather to the promised land would be saved when the dreadful day of the Lord should come.<sup>105</sup> It was this sense of destiny, and the foreboding sense of impending disaster for the rest of the nation, that preoccupied much of the Mormon mind not only in these years but in Ohio, Missouri, and Illinois.<sup>106</sup> But such pronouncements angered the non-Mormons who viewed the Saints as fanatics who warranted either their scorn or their abuse.<sup>107</sup> Long before they left the state they were forced to endure maltreatment, persecution, and some mobbing,<sup>108</sup> which only convinced them that indeed they were the chosen people suffering once more the barbs and malevolence of the wicked.<sup>109</sup>

As the persecution mounted the Saints reacted by becoming more secretive and more exclusive. They began to hold secret meetings, and according to Rigdon, kept some of their boldest plans of the kingdom to themselves.<sup>110</sup> Yet they felt that they must warn the people of the proximity of the Lord's coming and the judgments soon to fall on the wicked. Lucy Mack Smith reflected the forebodings of the Saints in a letter

<sup>104</sup>Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled*, pp. 110, 145.

<sup>105</sup>Sidney Rigdon was particularly active in this regard. See *Palmyra Reflector*, February 1, 1831, p. 95, and April 19, 1830, p. 130.

<sup>106</sup>Hill, "Christian Primitivism," pp. 70, 74-76, 107-108, 120, 183, 226-227, 281, 299-300.

<sup>107</sup>*Palmyra Reflector*, February 1, 1831, p. 95, and April 19, 1830, p. 130.

<sup>108</sup>See the *Palmyra Reflector* between 1830 and February 1831 for many examples of bitter criticism. See also the *Evangelical Magazine and Gospel Advocate*, Vol. 2 (April 9, 1831), and *DHC*, Vol. 6, p. 393, for evidence of persecution.

<sup>109</sup>See *DHC*, Vol. 1, pp. 9, 18, 43-44, 59, 84-94, 97-98.

<sup>110</sup>See Rigdon's recollections in *The Prophet*, June 8, 1844, p. 2, and notice Joseph Smith's comment that Oliver Cowdery gave the first *public* discourse in April 1830, *DHC*, Vol. 1, p. 81. Compare "The Book of John Whitmer," p. 6, where Whitmer indicates that unbelievers were excluded from the meetings. See the *Book of Commandments*, pp. 95, 110, where the mysteries were to be kept secret and the Saints were not to go in debt to the Gentiles unless commanded. Notice particularly that those who were guilty of robbery were to be delivered up to the law of God, not to the law of the land. See p. 102. In the 1835 edition of the *Doctrine and Covenants* the Saints were told that they were to honor the law of the land which is constitutional, which supports "that principle of freedom, in maintaining rights and privileges," but so far as the laws of men should go "whatsoever is more or less than these cometh of evil. I the Lord God maketh you free: therefore ye are free indeed." See pp. 216-217.

which she wrote in January to her brother, Solomon Mack, and his family. She warned that it would not be long before the Lord would "make His appearance on the earth with the hosts of heaven" and that he would then "take vengeance on the wicked and they that know not God." She said that a searching of the Old Testament prophecies had revealed that the Lord would again set his hand to recover his chosen people, and that the work had already commenced with the publishing of the Book of Mormon. This scripture had opened the eyes of the elect so that at last they might see the unfolding events in their true perspective. She now realized that

the eyes of the whole world are blinded; that the churches have all become corrupted, yea every church upon the face of the earth; that the Gospel is nowhere to be preached.

The reason for this apostasy among the churches is that their adherents

are all lifted up in the pride of their hearts and think more of adorning their fine sanctuaries than they do of the poor and needy. The priests are going about preaching for money, and teaching false doctrine and leading men down to destruction by crying peace, peace, when the Lord hath not spoken it.

Mother Smith urged her brother's family to ask themselves whether the "wisdom of men" is sufficient under the circumstances. Fortunately, the Lord had not left his children unto themselves but had reestablished his Church as in the days of the apostles, and many were being added to it daily. In ancient times it was promised that signs would follow those who believed, but such had not been so since then because none have taught the true doctrine of Christ. At last the Lord has made a new covenant with his Saints, and they that know him will gather in the West and await his coming.<sup>111</sup>

It was these prophetic expectations which motivated the Saints to build their kingdom in the West and to shun the Gentiles, who were apostate "Babylon."<sup>112</sup> These primitive gospel ideals were acquired in New England, nurtured in

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<sup>111</sup>Lucy's letter, written at Waterloo, New York, January 6, 1831, was published in Ben E. Rich, *Scrapbook of Mormon Literature*, I (Chicago, n.d.), pp. 543-545.

<sup>112</sup>See Orson Pratt's use of the term to apply to the old-line churches, *Messenger and Advocate*, Vol. 1 (March, 1835), p. 89.

New York, and elaborated upon in Ohio and Illinois, and needed neither Campbellite nor frontier influences to make them definitive. When the missionaries met with instant success in Ohio and brought new members into the Church by the hundreds, it was not due to any doctrinal innovations but to the same primitive gospel message which they had been preaching in New York.<sup>113</sup> The Mormon stress upon new revelation, miracles, and millennium attracted the Ohio novitiates, and their conversion was made sure by the fact that the new gospel seemed to be consistent with the Bible.<sup>114</sup> To maintain that there was nothing characteristically Mormon in the message at this time is untenable. Even as late as 1838 the missionaries had not altered the message substantially,<sup>115</sup> and when innovations did come at home the missionaries often avoided broadcasting them.<sup>116</sup> Most of what DePillis considers

<sup>113</sup>See Fielding, "Mormon Church in Kirtland," p. 34, Corrill, *A Brief History*, pp. 8, 10, 14, and Lucy Mack Smith's letter cited in Rich, *Scrapbook of Mormon Literature*, p. 545. Lucy notes that within a few weeks in Ohio three hundred converts came into the Church. This sensational growth, continuing in 1830 and 1831, is acknowledged by E. D. Howe in the *Painesville Telegraph*, February 15, 1831, p. 3.

<sup>114</sup>See Corrill, *A Brief History*, pp. 8-14.

<sup>115</sup>Notice that the message taken to England in 1837 by Heber C. Kimball and Orson Hyde was a prophetic one, and it brought converts into the Church by the thousands. See Kimball's account of his work and his message, "President Heber C. Kimball's Journal," *Seventh Book of the Faith Promoting Series* (Salt Lake City, 1882), pp. 10, 12, 18-19, 21-23, 31-32, 34, 43-44. Many conversions and baptisms were almost immediate, hence there was no time to elaborate on doctrine. The earliest pamphlets by those opposed to Mormonism's spread in England criticized their claims to authority, the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith's reputation, and the Mormon war in Missouri, but not doctrinal mysteries. See Richard Livesey, *An Exposure of Mormonism, Being a Statement of Facts Relating to the Self-Styled "Latter Day Saints"* (Preston, England, 1838), and *The Imposture Unmasked; or a Complete Exposure of the Mormon Fraud*, 2nd ed. (Isle of Man, 1841). For an idea of how heavily the Mormons relied on primitivism at home as well as abroad see Pratt, *Autobiography*, pp. 81-82, 85, 89, 140-156, 168. As late as 1845 and 1846 there was still a strong primitive gospel emphasis in the missionary periodical, the *Millennial Star*. See Vol. 6, pp. 15, 30-36, 45-46, 62, 65-70, 105-106, 113-119, 140-142, 167-168, and Vol. 7, pp. 25-26, 60-61, 67-69. Much of Vol. 7 deals with the exodus from Nauvoo.

<sup>116</sup>Thus Sarah Scott, who later became a Strangite following Joseph Smith's death, told her parents frankly that since they lived in the East and not in Nauvoo they actually knew "little concerning the Church." Sarah insisted that despite what might be said the Mormons were teaching a plurality of Gods and of living wives. The elders, she indicated, were "positively instructed to deny these things." Hyrum Smith clearly stated the Church policy when he told the elders of China Creek that "an elder has no business to undertake to preach mysteries in any part of the world," and went on to inform them that they should "preach faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, repentance and baptism for the remission of sins; the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost: teaching the necessity of strict obedience unto these principles; reasoning out the scriptures." Such doctrines as "the making of gods" and that "a man *having a certain priesthood*, may have

“the higher and more complex doctrines of Mormonism,”<sup>117</sup> were either introduced prior to Nauvoo or else taught only to a comparative few.<sup>118</sup> Only the doctrine of baptism for the dead was openly preached in England, a doctrine which could be defended by citing the New Testament.<sup>119</sup> There is no evidence that these doctrinal innovations were indispensable to the rapid spread of Mormonism and they cannot be considered determinative of its early success.

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as many wives as he pleases” were not to be taught, and anyone who did might lose his license. Compare Sarah Scott’s observations in Mulder and Mortensen, *Among the Mormons*, pp. 130, 143-144, and Hyrum Smith’s in the *Times and Seasons*, Vol. 5 (March 15, 1844), p. 474. Notice also that Joseph Smith in his Wentworth letter made no mention of any new doctrines. Neither did Orson Pratt in his listing of Mormon principles. See the Wentworth Letter in *DHC*, Vol. 4, pp. 535-541, and O. Pratt, *Interesting Account of Several Remarkable Visions* (New York, 1841), pp. 5-32.

<sup>117</sup>*Dialogue*, Vol. 1, p. 87.

<sup>118</sup>The vision of the three degrees of glory came in Kirtland in February 1832, and the most significant ramifications of the kingdom of God had been worked out by 1838. The millennial emphasis began in New York, while the idea of many Gods was certainly developing by 1835. The concept of the “immortality of matter” was formed in Nauvoo by 1843, but the Mormon leaders had been reading Thomas Dick’s *Philosophy of a Future State* (Brookfield, Mass., 1830) which suggested such ideas in the middle 1830’s. Plural marriage was not taught to most of the Saints until 1846. On the early kingdom see Hill, “Christian Primitivism,” pp. 72-79, 184-227, and *Messenger and Advocate*, Vol. 3 (November, 1836), p. 423 for evidence of Mormon awareness of Thomas Dick’s ideas. The “Reminiscences of Mrs. F. D. Richards,” San Francisco, 1880, p. 19, provides evidence that knowledge of polygamy was not widespread among the Saints until they fled from Illinois. This recollection by Mrs. Richards is in the Bancroft Library, Berkeley, California.

<sup>119</sup>See “Baptism for the Dead,” *Millennial Star*, Vol. 3 (August, 1842), pp. 54-57.