

# BYO STUDIES

---

*B R I G H A M*

---

*Y O U N G*

---

*U N I V E R S I T Y*

---



Cover by Tom Pratt, Graphic Communications, BYU Press.

## Editorial Board

JAMES B. ALLEN	R. GRANT ATHAY
HAYLE BUCHANAN	MARK CANNON
BRUCE B. CLARK	RICHARD G. ELLSWORTH
R. JOHN EYRE	KENNETH W. GODFREY
F. MELVIN HAMMOND	WILLIAM CLAYTON KIMBALL
DANIEL H. LUDLOW	KAREN LYNN
TRUMAN G. MADSEN	ROBERT J. MATTHEWS
EARL E. OLSON	ERNEST L. OLSON
CHAUNCEY C. RIDDLE	CHARLES D. TATE, JR.
EDITOR	CHARLES D. TATE, JR.
ASSOCIATE EDITOR	RICHARD G. ELLSWORTH
BOOK REVIEW EDITOR	DAVID J. WHITTAKER
HISTORIANS CORNER EDITOR	JAMES B. ALLEN
UNIVERSITY EDITOR	ERNEST L. OLSON
EDITORIAL ASSISTANT	LINDA HUNTER ADAMS
EDITORIAL INTERNS	ANDREW F. EHAT
	RICHARD Y. DUERDEN

Volume 21

Winter 1981

Number 1

*Brigham Young University Studies*, 020170, is published quarterly, Winter, Spring, Summer, Fall, by Brigham Young University Press, Provo, Utah 84602. Second class postage paid, Provo, UT 84601.



This issue of *BYU Studies* replaces the Fall 1980 issue because the journal has moved to a calendar year publication schedule: Winter, 1; Spring, 2; Summer, 3; and Fall, 4. This is the first issue following Summer issue, 20:4.

# Brigham Young University Studies

*A Voice for the Community of LDS Scholars*

Volume 21

Winter 1981

Number 1

## CONTENTS

The Catholic Liturgy and the Mormon Temple MARCUS VON WELLNITZ	3
Abel, Cain, A Poem ORSON SCOTT CARD	36
The Early Baptist Career of Sidney Rigdon in Warren, Ohio HANS ROLLMANN	37
Sidney Rigdon: Post Nauvoo THOMAS J. GREGORY	51
Tent Flaps, A Poem MICHAEL RUTTER	68
The Church and Translation JOSEPH G. STRINGHAM	69
Toward a Mormon Aesthetic MERRILL BRADSHAW	91
Review Essay DAVID J. WHITTAKER	100
Authorship of the History of Joseph Smith: A Review Essay HOWARD C. SEARLE	101



## Book Reviews

DAVID J. WHITTAKER

Kendall A. Blanchard, *The Economics of Sainthood: Religious Change among the Rimrock Navajos*

LAWRENCE COATES

123

Eugene England, *Brother Brigham*

EUGENE E. CAMPBELL

125

\* \* \* \* \*

The opinions and statements expressed by contributors to *Brigham Young University Studies* are their own and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Brigham Young University, the editor, or editorial board.

Published Quarterly by  
Brigham Young University Press  
Provo, Utah 84602



ISSN 0007-0106

1979 Brigham Young University Press. All rights reserved.  
Printed in the United States of America.

1-81-51311-6M

### SUBSCRIBER NOTICE

Subscription is \$8.00 for four numbers; \$14.00 for eight numbers and \$19.00 for twelve numbers. Single numbers are \$3.00. The rate to bona fide students and missionaries is \$6.40 for four numbers. All subscriptions begin with the current issue unless subscriber requests otherwise. Send subscriptions to Brigham Young University Press Business Office, 205 UPB, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah 84602.

If you're moving, PLEASE let us know four weeks before changing your address. A Change-of-Address Postcard available at all Post Offices, sent in advance, will aid us in getting your magazine to you promptly. Your courteous compliance with this request will help us to solve a serious and costly problem.



# The Catholic Liturgy and the Mormon Temple

Marcus von Wellnitz

Most of the world's religions incorporate some form of ritual into their worship, be it merely the singing of a hymn in a meeting, the wearing of a particular attire, or kneeling at a certain time and place. The older the religion is, the more complex and numerous the ceremonies seem to be and the more they often resemble each other, indicating the probability of a common ancestral beginning in antiquity.<sup>1</sup>

It is to be expected that Christianity shares in the ritualistic aspect of religion. The oldest Christian institution, the Catholic churches of the Roman and Eastern branches, have perpetuated much ancient ceremony into our time, while the modern revival groups and the Protestant offshoots have lost, or deliberately eliminated, a great part of that ritual and have simplified their services. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, being neither Catholic nor Protestant, claims a divine restoration of ancient modes and ordinances. The LDS Church has two different types of meetings, each of which specializes in a different element of liturgy. The ordinary chapel worship service, in the morning or in the evening, relates to the simplistic forms of earlier worship with a minimum of ceremony and formality, while the temple assembly, on the other hand, reestablishes the ancient order of solemn ritual. In that latter instance, then, accepting the fact of the Restoration, there should be some resemblances and connections between the ceremonial aspects of the Latter-day Saint ordinances and the Catholic traditions and practices.<sup>2</sup>

---

Marcus von Wellnitz is teaching in Bremen, West Germany, for the University of Maryland.

<sup>1</sup>See, for example, Giorgio de Santillana and Hertha von Dechend, *Hamlet's Mill* (Boston: David R. Godine, 1977); Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1949).

<sup>2</sup>The LDS understanding is not concerned with a possible duplication and resemblance in the rituals but, instead, with the proper divine authority to validate and perform the ordinances.



Examination of the solemn liturgical customs in the Roman and the Eastern rites indicates dependence on the sacred ceremonies of the Jews and the early Christians, even though the Catholic ritual is said to have “undergone additions, deletions, and alterations, which have modified their character” over the centuries.<sup>3</sup> In most aspects, the Roman liturgy is quite comprehensible to the Latter-day Saint who has attended the temple even though Catholic writers claim that their rites are an “incomprehensible ceremony” which most of the faithful “understand . . . as little as we should a ceremony of the Buddhist religion, or a rite of some Chinese sect.”<sup>4</sup> But the fundamental components and core elements of the ancient ritual can be recognized and are often distinctly apparent, though the Catholic version has become, over almost two millennia, a combination service of many diverse sources with altered and sometimes barely noticeable ordinances of an inactive nature when compared to the model of the archetype.

The basic outline of the LDS religious services is related to a variety of factors, but it seems essentially Jewish in character. Except for the addition of the sacrament as a Christian derivation, the Sunday meetings in the chapel appear to affiliate in their basic form and purpose to the assembly in the synagogue with its prayers, singing, scriptural readings and exhortations. The temple service, however, retains its typical and ultimate objective. Mormons do not deny the dependence and association between their meetings and the Jewish rites and services, while the Catholic churches have throughout history often been somewhat hostile to the inevitable attempt to openly equate their liturgy to Jewish sources and practices.<sup>5</sup> The evidence, however, is undeniable, and modern Catholic writers and theologians now admit freely to their Hebrew origins and refer proudly to Old Testament references and antecedents incorporated into their ceremonies and doctrines. Thus it is now quite obvious that “we must expect to find within the Church of early days many relics of Judaism.”<sup>6</sup> Since “the first Christian society at Jerusalem began its existence as a group within the framework of the ancestral Jewish faith, . . . the background of early Christian worship must be sought in those two Jewish institutions of the temple and the

---

<sup>3</sup>Fernand Cabrol, *The Holy Sacrifice: A Simple Explanation of the Mass*, trans. C. M. Anthony [pseud.] (London: Burns, Oates & Washbourne Ltd., 1937), p. 2.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 1.

<sup>5</sup>See the excellent discussion by Hugh W. Nibley, “The Christian Envy of the Temple,” *When the Lights Went Out* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1970).

<sup>6</sup>Reginald M. Woolley, *The Liturgy of the Primitive Church* (Cambridge, England: The University Press, 1910), p. 26.



synagogue.”<sup>7</sup> “Christian worship drew from Judaism,”<sup>8</sup> yet the Catholic churches gave it all “a new meaning.”<sup>9</sup>

The fact that Christ and his disciples were deeply involved with the temple and the synagogue is substantiated by New Testament scriptures.<sup>10</sup> It appears obvious that the early Christians not only had their Sunday services, either in a Jewish synagogue or a member’s domicile, but also that they still retained the periodic visit to the temple and saw no conflict in the dual nature of their worship.<sup>11</sup> Later, after the destruction of the temple by Titus in 70 A.D., its place in the activities of the early Christians was not simply left vacant but was immediately replaced by a substitute service of a ritualistic and ceremonial character with a new Christian essence. Thus two meetings of different forms and purposes were simultaneously offered in the infant church. The morning service still resembled very closely the less ceremonious meeting of the synagogue and could be favorably compared to the Mormon Sunday School and even the sacrament meeting, for it consisted entirely of prayers, lessons from the scriptures, and sermons on gospel living and theology.<sup>12</sup> Sometimes it was referred to as the service of the catechumen since unbaptized believers (our modern-day investigators) were permitted to attend. Since many of the early converts were of Jewish origin, in all likelihood they felt at home at this assembly for it was a “ceremony borrowed from the services of the synagogues.”<sup>13</sup>

The more formal meeting with its accompanying ritual patterned essentially after the temple was held in the evening. It was here that the sacramental nature with its promises and obligations was ceremoniously portrayed, although it had been altered to include some new Christian elements and characteristics. The climax of the meeting became the consecration and the distribution of the eucharist with its affiliated liturgy and symbolism. Only worthy and initiated members were allowed to participate in this rite. The holy and formal distinction of the temple service was therefore transferred

---

<sup>7</sup>Ralph P. Martin, *Worship in the Early Church* (London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1964), pp. 18–19.

<sup>8</sup>Ludwig Eisenhofer and Joseph Lechner, *The Liturgy of the Roman Rite*, trans. A. J. and E. F. Peeler (New York: Herder and Herder, Inc., 1961), p. 5.

<sup>9</sup>Dom Jean de Puniet, *The Mass: Its Origin and History*, trans. the Benedictines of Stanbrook (London: Burns, Oates & Washbourne, Ltd., 1931), p. 27.

<sup>10</sup>Christ even officiated in the synagogue (see Luke 4:16; John 18:20), and all the earlier converts were very much familiar with its structure (see Acts 2:46, 3:1, 13:13–14, 17:1–2, 18:4). Christians were originally considered as a mere Jewish sect (Acts 16:13, 19:9).

<sup>11</sup>Acts 2:46.

<sup>12</sup>Justine Martyr *1 Apology* 67; Tertullian *De Animo* 9. Note the reliance on the synagogue, which began with the *Shemah Israel* and was then followed by prayers, lessons from the Law and the Prophets, and a sermon with exposition.

<sup>13</sup>Cabrol, *The Holy Sacrifice*, p. 46.



to this gathering, which then assumed the function and stature of the now-destroyed temple at Jerusalem.<sup>14</sup>

However, the division between the two meetings did not continue for long. Soon, perhaps for convenience, both services were combined and welded into one with the eucharistic portion taking precedence over the instructional part, usurping more and more time and importance until the sermons and exhortations were considerably diminished.<sup>15</sup> Yet, as long as there were adult catechumens applying for membership, some scriptural readings and theological teachings continued to be given, usually in the initial part of the service, after which the nonmembers were excused when the more solemn and ritualistic portion of the liturgy for the baptized members commenced.<sup>16</sup> There were then, in effect, two masses, the “*missa catechumenorum*” and the “*missa sacramentorum*.”<sup>17</sup> Later, when most of the people in Europe had converted to Catholic Christianity, the combination service was no longer considered necessary and it was almost completely dispensed with while the mass became the exclusive ceremonial liturgy. Interestingly, the Protestant reformers endeavored to reintroduce the sermonette and instructional element into their services. It gave the meeting once more a balance retrospective of the early Christian order. By including a lecture and not prolonging the meeting unduly, the ceremonial segment was curtailed and often moved to the beginning of the service, as is also the pattern in Mormon tradition. The eucharist, however, remains the climax and grand finale in the Catholic mass.

To rely on the institution of the temple too rigorously, however, was uncomfortable for the early church because it implied that Christianity was not original but owed its format to the Jewish heritage. On the other hand, to completely ignore the temple ritual suggested ignoring the apostolic favor it had enjoyed and indirectly admitted that something was lost or unjustifiably excluded from the earliest traditions. The most effective course to pursue was to incorporate the trimmings of the temple ritual into the mass in a different context. Following that *modus operandi*, the church retained the best of both options.<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup>See Woolley, *Liturgy of the Primitive Church*, p. 34.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., pp. 35, 38, 39. See also Justin Martyr *1 Apology* 65, 67; Tertullian *De Animo* 9; Origen *Romans* 10:33; Eisenhofer and Lechner, *Liturgy of the Roman Rite*, p. 245.

<sup>16</sup>Woolley, *Liturgy of the Primitive Church*, pp. 35ff.

<sup>17</sup>Ivo of Chartres *Epistula* 219; Woolley, *Liturgy of the Primitive Church*, pp. 33, 36.

<sup>18</sup>See, e.g., Hugh W. Nibley, “The Idea of the Temple in History,” *Millennial Star* 120 (August 1958): 230; reprinted as *What Is a Temple?* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1963).



If possible, the early church buildings were constructed in an east–west direction in the tradition of the temple at Jerusalem.<sup>19</sup> The first LDS temples were also constructed along that orientation.<sup>20</sup> Entrance into the early churches was in the west while the holy place with the altar was positioned in the eastern part, denoting that a person who entered left the region of darkness, the temporal world, and proceeded forward to the region of light where the sun arose.<sup>21</sup> In the fourth century Bishop Cyril of Jerusalem explained to his listeners the meaning of this peculiar conduct:

First of all, you entered into the ante-chamber of the baptistry, and there you stood facing the West and there you listened to instructions to stretch forth your hand and renounced Satan as if he were present. . . . I want to tell you why you stand facing the West. It is necessary since it is the region of darkness. . . . When you renounced Satan there is open the paradise of God which he placed in the East . . . and symbolically of this you turned from West to East, the region of light.<sup>22</sup>

The earliest basilicas were divided into three parts: first, the atrium or forecourt; then the church proper with the area for the congregation; and, finally, set off by a barrier, the holy place for the altar and the officiating clergy.<sup>23</sup> Thus the church became a temple, because it is a place “where the Christians . . . perform a sacrifice,” writes a modern scholar. “The Christian sanctuary, insofar as it was a temple, recalled in some way the holy of holies, in the temple of Jerusalem.”<sup>24</sup> Constantine’s churches were equated to temples,<sup>25</sup> and the early fathers understood them as such.<sup>26</sup> The Byzantine liturgy prescribes even today that the clergy quote the fifth psalm upon entering the church: “I will enter into Thy house; I will bow in Thy holy temple.”<sup>27</sup>

The Roman Catholics hesitate to actually apply the word *temple* to a church, but the early Jewish converts often referred to the church as the “House of God” (*Beth Eloheim*), or, literally translated, the

---

<sup>19</sup>Tertullian *Apologia* 10; *Adversus Valentinum* 3.

<sup>20</sup>See N. B. Lundwall, *Temples of the Most High* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1968), p. 112.

<sup>21</sup>Joseph Rykwert, *The Twentieth Century Encyclopedia of Catholicism*, vol. 120, *Church Building* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1966), p. 27; Charles Walker, *The Ritual “Reason Why”* (Oxford: A. R. Mowbray & Co., 1901), pp. 22–23.

<sup>22</sup>Cyril of Jerusalem *Catechetical Lectures* 19 [first lecture about the Ordinances]. 2, 4, 9.

<sup>23</sup>John H. Miller, *Fundamentals of the Liturgy* (Notre Dame, Ind.: Fides Publishers Association, 1959), p. 83.

<sup>24</sup>Rykwert, *Church Building*, pp. 7, 14.

<sup>25</sup>Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* 10. iv. 45.

<sup>26</sup>E.g., Ambrose *Epistula* xx, n. 2.

<sup>27</sup>Meletius M. Solovey, *The Byzantine Divine Liturgy—History and Commentary* (Washington, D. C.: Catholic University of America Press, Inc., 1970), p. 115.



“House of the gods.”<sup>28</sup> More often the church was called *Domus Dei* or *Dominicum*, or the “House of the Lord.”<sup>29</sup> The dedication of a church building was likewise observed as if it were indeed the holiest and most sacred structure. The altar and the walls were sprinkled with oil and wine, and a prayer was pronounced over all the vessels and items in the house.<sup>30</sup> It was done “to set them apart forever to the service of Almighty God, to separate them from profane use.”<sup>31</sup>

The first ritual a Catholic encounters is baptism. It is still an impressive ceremony even though most recipients currently are only infants. In the early centuries after Christ, however, it was an even more memorable and elaborate ordinance than today. The applicant was an adult and therefore ready to undergo intensive instructions before initiation into the church. Since baptisms were performed mostly at Eastertime, the candidate also attended the Paschal Vigil, a solemn ceremony to commemorate the light which proceeds out of the darkness.<sup>32</sup> The baptism itself was not administered in the church building but in a separate building or annex called the baptistry.<sup>33</sup> Many of these special structures are still in existence, for example the baptistries at Nocera, Riez, Pisa, Naples, and Florence.<sup>34</sup> Sometimes the building was octagonal in shape, symbolizing the Jewish equivalent of baptism—the act of circumcision on the eighth day—and also symbolizing that Christ rose from the dead eight days after the Jewish sabbath, now called Sunday.<sup>35</sup> Bishop Cyril of Jerusalem left a thorough account of such a ceremony at his church in the fourth century:

As soon as you entered you took off your street tunic and this was a symbol of taking off the old person and his deeds. After having stripped you were naked, also imitating Christ who was naked on the cross . . . you were naked in the sight of all men but you were not ashamed. . . .

---

<sup>28</sup>Eduard Syndicus, *The Twentieth Century Encyclopedia of Catholicism*, vol. 121, *Early Christian Art* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1962), pp. 38ff. The suffix *heim* makes *Eloheim* technically plural, though not translated plural. However, if “literally” translated, “Beth Eloheim” would read “House of the gods,” perhaps suggesting that those who enter can become gods.

<sup>29</sup>Eisenhofer and Lechner, *Liturgy of the Roman Rite*, pp. 106–107. The word *Dom* derives from *domus*; *basilica* comes from the Greek *basileus*—“king and kingdom.” Perhaps it is from this term that the Jehovah’s Witnesses call their meeting place Kingdom Hall.

<sup>30</sup>The Gallican Rite is contained in the *Missale Francorum* 56–63. Other dedications are found in the *Reginensis* 1. 88, particularly in the prayer “Deus Sanctificationimis,” also in the *Ordo Romanus* 41. 1–31 in the section “Ordo quomodo ecclesia debeat.”

<sup>31</sup>Walker, *The Ritual “Reason Why,”* p. 55.

<sup>32</sup>Arthur McCormack, *The Twentieth Century Encyclopedia of Catholicism*, vol. 50, *Christian Initiation* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1969), pp. 54–60.

<sup>33</sup>Irenee-Henri Dalmais, *The Twentieth Century Encyclopedia of Catholicism*, vol. 112, *Eastern Liturgies* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1966), p. 68; Eisenhofer and Lechner, *Liturgy of the Roman Rite*, p. 135.

<sup>34</sup>Syndicus, *Early Christian Art*, pp. 70–71.

<sup>35</sup>Ambrose *Exposito in Evangelium secundam Lucam* 5. 49; *De Abrahamo* 2. xi. 79.



After these things you were shown the way to the font and each of you was asked if you believed in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, after you confessed that you went into the water three times.<sup>36</sup>

Since the candidates appear very often to have been naked at the ceremony, different services were evidently held for men and for women.<sup>37</sup> A Catholic baptism in our day is essentially similar and equally formal in its performance. Inasmuch as the candidates are usually infants, the parents and godparents are more involved in the rite and are supplying the answers in place of the newborn during the short interview. This action signifies a strong idea of proxy performances in Catholic theology.<sup>38</sup> The first part of the service is similar to the interview prerequisite to Latter-day Saint baptism.

Priest: "What name do you give your child?"

Parents: —

Priest: "What do you ask of God's Church for —?"

Parents: "Baptism"

Priest: "You have asked to have your child baptized. In doing so you are accepting the responsibility of training him in the practice of the faith. It will be your duty as Christian parents to bring him up to keep God's commandments as Christ taught us, by loving God and our neighbor. Do you clearly understand what you are undertaking?"

Parents: "We do."

Priest (to godparents): "Are you ready to help the parents of this child in their duty as Christian parents?"

Godparents: "We do."<sup>39</sup>

Here, then, the solemnity of the occasion and the responsibility and consequences of the upcoming baptism are impressed upon the participants. After some prayer and ritual, the candidate is given another interview to ascertain his faith and understanding of church doctrine. Again the parents or godparents answer for the infant.

Priest: "Do you reject Satan?"

Parents: "I do."

Priest: "And all his works?"

Parents: "I do."

Priest: "And all his empty promises?"

Parents: "I do."

Priest: "Do you believe in God, the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth?"

Parents: "I do."

Priest: "Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was

---

<sup>36</sup>Cyril of Jerusalem *Catechetical Lectures* 20. 2, 4.

<sup>37</sup>McCormack, *Christian Initiation*, p. 63.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 70–71.

<sup>39</sup>*The Rite of Baptism* (Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 1970), pp. 3–4.



born of the Virgin Mary, was crucified, died, and was buried, rose from the dead, and is now seated at the right hand of the Father?"

Parents: "I do."

Priest: "Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting?"

Parents: "I do."<sup>40</sup>

Then the baptism is performed as a symbol of "washing and purification."<sup>41</sup> Today the font is no longer situated in the annex but in the church itself, yet never near the altar in the east but somewhere near the entrance, preferably in the western part of the building, "in the vestibule, to signify that the child is not yet fully a member of God's family."<sup>42</sup>

However, the ordinance is not completed at this point. There are two anointings with consecrated oil during the rite of baptism—first, with the oil of catechumens; second, with the oil of chrism; each received a different form of consecration on Holy Thursday. During the anointing with consecrated oil the priest declares: "God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has freed you from sin, given you a new birth by water and the Holy Spirit, and welcomed you into his holy people. He now anoints you with the chrism of salvation. As Christ was anointed Priest, Prophet, and King, so may you live always as a member of his body, sharing everlasting life." Then the ministrant anoints the child with the oil.<sup>43</sup> This ordinance was also performed anciently as evidenced again by Cyril of Jerusalem, who relates the significance and procedure as follows:

The oil is applied symbolically to your forehead and your other senses.  
. . . And you were first anointed on the forehead . . . then on your ears . . . then on the nostrils . . . afterwards on your breast.<sup>44</sup>

He proceeds to mention the symbolism in this action:

Having been worthy of this holy anointing, you are now called Christians . . . because before this ordinance you had no right to that title but you were only proceeding on your way toward becoming Christians. . . . Having then become partakers with Christ; you can now be called Christs, or anointed ones.<sup>45</sup>

---

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., pp. 9–10.

<sup>41</sup>McCormack, *Christian Initiation*, p. 32.

<sup>42</sup>Joseph E. Payne, *Together at Baptism* (Notre Dame, Ind.: Ave Maria Press, 1971), p. 15. See also the *Rituale Romanum* 2. i. 46.

<sup>43</sup>*The Rite of Baptism*, p. 11.

<sup>44</sup>Cyril of Jerusalem *Catechetical Lectures* 21. 3, 4.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., 5 and 1.



Since *Christ* (*Christos*) means anointed, Cyril suggests that we can all become little Christs by the ordinance of anointing. By this imitation the person is now also “a priest . . . and a prophet, . . . royal in nature,” as one theologian put it.<sup>46</sup> Oil is “the symbol of divine healing, the giving of strength and priestly power.”<sup>47</sup> “The body is washed so that the soul may be purified; the body is anointed so that the soul may be made holy,” wrote Tertullian.<sup>48</sup> He also associates it with the act of a ritual cleansing.<sup>49</sup> The oil is kept in special containers and is available to “cure, enlighten, pacify, and strengthen.”<sup>50</sup> A person may be anointed on thirty-six different places of the body in the Coptic rite.<sup>51</sup> Touching various parts of the infant immediately after the baptism and anointing is still a ceremony of the modern Catholic rite; the priest touches the ears and the mouth of the child with his thumb, saying: “The Lord Jesus made the deaf hear and the dumb speak. May he soon touch your ears to receive his word, and your mouth to proclaim his faith, and to praise the glory of God the Father.”<sup>52</sup> The same ordinance in the sixth century employed the following monologue:

I sign your forehead. . . . I sign your eyes so that they may see the glory of God. I sign your ears so that you may hear the voice of the Lord. I sign your nostrils so that you may breathe the fragrance of Christ. I sign your lips so that you may speak the words of life. I sign your heart so that you may believe in the Holy Trinity. I sign your shoulders so that you may bear the yoke of Christ's service. . . . In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, so that you may live forever and ever [*“Saeculum saeculorum”*].<sup>53</sup>

Finally, after the application of water and oil, the person is endowed with a new white garment since he is now considered reborn, a new being, and needs clothes. At the modern baptismal ceremony the priest presents the infant with a white dress and says: “You have become a new creation, and have clothed yourself in Christ. See in this white garment the outward sign of your Christian dignity. With

---

<sup>46</sup>Payne, *Together at Baptism*, p. 37.

<sup>47</sup>Miller, *Fundamentals of the Liturgy*, p. 208.

<sup>48</sup>Tertullian *De Resurrectione* 8. Baptism, in Catholic teaching, symbolizes the negative aspect in that it remits sins but does nothing to elevate man; it merely makes him neutral in the eyes of God by eliminating the original sin. The anointing represents the positive aspect in that it sanctifies man and gives him standing before God (see McCormack, *Christian Initiation*, p. 67).

<sup>49</sup>Tertullian *De Baptismo* 7.

<sup>50</sup>Robert Lesage, *The Twentieth Century Encyclopedia of Catholicism*, vol. 114, *Vestments and Church Furniture* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1960), p. 76.; Tertullian *De Baptismo* 7.

<sup>51</sup>Dalmaï, *Eastern Liturgies*, p. 73.

<sup>52</sup>*The Rite of Baptism*, p. 12.

<sup>53</sup>McCormack, *Christian Initiation*, p. 50; see also Louis Bouyer, *Christian Initiation* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1960); M. E. Boissard, “I renounce Satan, his pomp and his works,” cited in D. George et. al., *Baptism in the New Testament* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1964).



your family and friends to help you by word and example, bring that dignity unstained into the everlasting life of heaven.”<sup>54</sup> The dress is also referred to as the “garment of righteousness” or the “robe of light.”<sup>55</sup> Ambrose compared the garment to a veil: “After these things, you have received white garments that it may be shown that you have put aside the cloak of sin and put on the chaste veils of innocence.”<sup>56</sup> Also Cyril of Jerusalem employed the white garments in his service of initiation: “But now, after having put away your old clothes and dressed in these white ones, you must always remain clothed in white.”<sup>57</sup> The initiate had to wear these particular garments for the rest of the day, and he also received a new name after this ordinance.<sup>58</sup>

Likewise, when a person decides to join a monastery or convent, he or she leaves the former life behind and therefore symbolically sheds the old person and its clothes and receives a new vestment, indicative of the particular monastic order chosen. The ancient ceremony was quite elaborate and the recipient had to submit to a series of rites. “Certain interrogations were made and trials imposed and instructions given” before one was admitted into the priestly state.<sup>59</sup> The novice also accepts a new name, usually that of a Catholic saint, which is at times assigned while it can in other orders often be chosen by the individual. As has recently become evident again, a pope of the Roman Catholic Church also selects a new name for himself upon entering his new calling.

The Catholic baptismal ceremony is therefore an “initiation rite.”<sup>60</sup> The second Vatican Council proclaimed: “The baptized person, the regeneration and the anointing of the Holy Spirit, are consecrated as a spiritual house and a holy priesthood.”<sup>61</sup> The ordinance is even characterized as “a sealing . . . accomplished by the Holy Spirit at Baptism.”<sup>62</sup> In some of the older churches there are sometimes special “anointing rooms.”<sup>63</sup> All of this seems very familiar to the Latter-day Saint.

In the Catholic rite a further anointing is applied at the time of confirmation. Here the godparent places his hand on the right

---

<sup>54</sup>*The Rite of Baptism*, p. 11.

<sup>55</sup>Dalmaï, *Eastern Liturgies*, p. 72. It is also used as a garment in the burial of children under the age of seven because “we can be sure that they sleep in Jesus” (Walker, *The Ritual “Reason Why,”* p. 190).

<sup>56</sup>Ambrose *De Mysteriis* 7.

<sup>57</sup>Cyril of Jerusalem *Catechetical Lectures* 22. 8.

<sup>58</sup>McCormack, *Christian Initiation*, p. 65.

<sup>59</sup>Ta Vita Pachomii 7. 22.

<sup>60</sup>Eisenhofer and Lechner, *Liturgy of the Roman Rite*, p. 338.

<sup>61</sup>*Constitution of the Church* 2. 10.

<sup>62</sup>Bernard J. Cooke, *Christian Sacraments and Christian Personality* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965), pp. 27–28.

<sup>63</sup>Rykwert, *Church Building*, p. 22.



shoulder of the recipient, who is kneeling in the chapel near the altar. The bishop rests his right hand on the candidate's head while his thumb anoints the forehead of the person with oil. After the chrism he strikes the confirmant's cheek slightly.<sup>64</sup> This ritual "gives us the authority to act in the name of Christ and in the name of his Church. When we are confirmed we are authorized to do the same thing that Christ would do if he were here today."<sup>65</sup> In the Eastern church the oil is applied on the forehead, the eyes, ears, the nose, mouth, chest, the hands, and the feet, to cleanse them from sins committed through their use.<sup>66</sup> All these rites, it is taught, are "Christian sacraments of initiation,"<sup>67</sup> a "representation of a sacred reality by material signs."<sup>68</sup> After a long absence in the ritual and the theology, anointing the sick has also been revived in the Catholic Church, supplementing the extreme unction.<sup>69</sup> Here, too, the recipient has the oil applied on his eyes, ears, nose, mouth, the hands and the feet.<sup>70</sup>

Upon entering a church building, a Catholic is confronted with a reenactment of the purification rite at baptism. Anciently, a basilica included an actual font with water in the atrium-court in front of the church building itself. Here the participants in the liturgy "were wont to wash themselves before entering the church."<sup>71</sup> It is suggested that such a font was but a remnant of the old *impluvium* of a Roman villa.<sup>72</sup> Yet nearly all temples in antiquity as well as Arab mosques even today incorporate a ceremonial washbasin near their entrances.<sup>73</sup> Rather than assuming that the atrium and font in a Catholic church are modeled after a Roman house, would it not be more fitting to suggest that the villa might be patterned after the basic elements of the sacred place of ordinances, the temple?

Later, these basins became smaller and less obvious and were modified into the water stoups near the doors of Catholic churches.<sup>74</sup> Their purpose is to "purify all creatures from the evil influences of

---

<sup>64</sup>Fulton J. Sheen, *These Are the Sacraments* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1962), pp. 40-41.

<sup>65</sup>Payne, *Together at Baptism*, p. 49.

<sup>66</sup>Francis J. Connell, *The Seven Sacraments—What They Are—What They Do!* (Glen Rock, N. J.: Paulist Press, 1966), p. 59.

<sup>67</sup>Cooke, *Christian Sacraments and Christian Personality*, p. 23.

<sup>68</sup>Bernard Piault, *What Is a Sacrament?*, vol. 49, *The Twentieth Century Encyclopedia of Catholicism* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1963), p. 42. See also Clement *Stromata* 6. 15; John Chrysostom *Commentary on First Corinthians*; Justin Martyr condemned them as Satan's imitation of the real thing, *1 Apology* 66.

<sup>69</sup>Francis Nicholas Halligan, *The Ministry of the Celebration of the Sacraments: Sacraments of Reconciliation* (New York: Alba House, 1973), 2: 195ff.

<sup>70</sup>Sheen, *These Are the Sacraments*, pp. 99-101.

<sup>71</sup>Miller, *Fundamentals of the Liturgy*, p. 112. See also Paulinus of Nola *Epistulae* 32. 15.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid.

<sup>73</sup>See Exodus 30:18.

<sup>74</sup>Rykwert, *Church Building*, p. 23.



the devil and to protect them against everything which threatens their life, health, and possessions.”<sup>75</sup> They are definitely “connected with the Sunday custom of sprinkling the congregation with holy water . . . replaced on week-days by self-sprinkling.”<sup>76</sup> Thus a cleansing through water is necessary “before entering the presence of God.”<sup>77</sup> While the mass was restricted to Sundays in the first few centuries after Christ, it became subsequently a practice to provide services more than once a week and finally even daily. The synagogue meetings had been held just one time a week and the frequency of Christian worship seems to have been patterned after it. But by offering services at various times of the day, from sunrise to sunset, and at different days of the week, Christian meetings were imitating the temple ritual with its daily sacrifices.<sup>78</sup> It is also interesting to note the ancient practice of keeping men and women separated in the church just as they were kept to different locations in the temple at Jerusalem.<sup>79</sup> Women had either to stand on different sides of the aisle in the chapel or they were restricted to a balcony which overlooked the main assembly hall.<sup>80</sup> In addition, it was proper for women to conceal their heads with a veil or some kind of covering,<sup>81</sup> a custom which has largely become obsolete in the United States but which is still quite prevalent in Catholic countries of South America and Europe.

As to the presentation of man’s history and progression, very little remains in the church rituals of today, either as a drama or a recitation. However, several now obscure remnants attest that early Catholicism was acquainted with the concept as part of the church ceremony. The atrium or forecourt of the pristine basilicas is redolent of the temple court and the garden, the *refrigerium* of traditions and in literature. The atrium of a church is described as a “private courtyard . . . with a well in the middle . . . a pretty little garden with pines and cypresses, known as a ‘paradise.’”<sup>82</sup> Here, then, do we encounter the notion of the garden, the *paradiso*, an actual beautiful

---

<sup>75</sup>Lesage, *Vestments and Church Furniture*, pp. 69–71. There are three types of blessed water for different occasions (p. 69).

<sup>76</sup>Eisenhofer and Lechner, *Liturgy of the Roman Rite*, p. 136. See also the *Liber Pontificalis* 1. 172, and the *Apostolic Constitution* 8. i. 29.

<sup>77</sup>Miller, *Fundamentals of the Liturgy*, p. 307; also Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* 10. 4. 40.

<sup>78</sup>Joseph A. Jungmann, *The Mass of the Roman Rite: Its Origins and Development (Missarum Sollemnia)* (New York: Benziger Brothers, Inc., 1961), p. 175; Miller, *Fundamentals of the Liturgy*, p. 235.

<sup>79</sup>See Alfred Edersheim, *The Temple: Its Ministry and Services* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Comp., reprint 1958), p. 48.

<sup>80</sup>Rykwert, *Church Building*, p. 29.

<sup>81</sup>Wharton B. Marriott, *Vestiarum Christianum, the Origin and Gradual Development of the Dress of Holy Ministry in the Church* (London: Rivingtons, 1868), p. xxv. See also Paul’s admonitions in 1 Corinthians 11.

<sup>82</sup>Syndicus, *Early Christian Art*, p. 40.



and well-kept grove, a garden of Eden with “evergreen trees, a vine, and roses” before one enters the sacred structure of the temple which represents the holy place.<sup>83</sup>

Not everyone could step into the chapel to witness services in the primitive church. The porter, a minor order of the priesthood, formerly “stood at the door to see that only worthy and reliable persons entered.”<sup>84</sup> A last remnant of the guardians to the holy place are the statues of angels, saints, sphinxes, and even of awful-looking beasts and creatures at the entrances to the hallowed sanctuaries of medieval times. They appear to remind the person seeking admission that he has to be clean in action and thought before presenting himself to deity and participating in the sacred ordinances.

A ceremony very much suggestive of a creation setting is the old Paschal Vigil of the Catholic ritual at Eastertime. Members and catechumens alike were permitted in attendance. It was considered to have been a general instruction period before the initiation of the latter and a “commemoration” for the already initiated. This ancient “festival of creation” recounted the passover or the *rite de passage* from birth to death, from one state of life to another.<sup>85</sup> It began with the congregation in complete darkness (“*et tenebrae erat super faciem abyssi*”). The “*lux Christi*” was struck from a flint-stone; then the ceremonial Paschal candle was lighted in the gloomy dark (“*fiat lux*”) and the candle passed among the participants who lighted their own candles from it in the midst of great joy and shouts of jubilation (*jubilare et exultare*). This celebration seems to symbolize the creation out of darkness as well as the coming of Christ as a light to illuminate the world which was in darkness. Associated with this rite was the reading of the creation story, the account of the flood, and the Israelite exodus out of Egypt, as parables of the progress of man, indicating birth and rebirth, hope and despair.<sup>86</sup> The vigil is particularly remarkable since it was performed immediately prior to the initiation of the catechumens and the sacrificial liturgy at the altar in the sanctuary of the basilica.

Notably during the Renaissance, Baroque, and Rococo periods, the churches were transformed into distinctly unearthly places of glory. They became a mixture of imperial throne rooms and celestial “hall[s] of state.”<sup>87</sup> The best architects, sculptors, and painters were employed and no expense was spared to convert the church halls into

---

<sup>83</sup>Ibid., p. 47. Note also the gardens around a Latter-day Saint temple, the “temple square.”

<sup>84</sup>Connell, *The Seven Sacraments*, p. 153.

<sup>85</sup>McCormack, *Christian Initiation*, pp. 55–58.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid., pp. 58–60.

<sup>87</sup>Miller, *Fundamentals of the Liturgy*, p. 93.





Angel Guardians at Church Entrance  
Mannheim, Germany

*Photos by Author*



celestial embassies where the participants in the divine rites could feel themselves as though in heaven in the presence of the King of the World for a certain period of time before leaving again for the mortal sphere outside the building. "Nothing can be too good, too costly, too fair for the house of God."<sup>88</sup> The churches often resemble, and many indeed surpass, the grandeur and artistry of the celestial room in the older LDS temples. In our day and age, the idea of the church as a celestial court has been abandoned for a more simple and often outright drab style which symbolizes the dreariness of the world. Man has become a wanderer and sojourner in search of a heaven, and the church edifices depict the transitory nature of human life. They represent a "tent" in the pilgrimage of mankind on earth. The church is now the "*ecclesia peregrinans*."<sup>89</sup>

Even the processions to different places within the church and outside remind us of the stages of life, the continual movement to a better and progressive state of being, a "pilgrimage through this vale of misery."<sup>90</sup> Banners are carried by the group, one exhibiting a lion, the other a dragon, denoting respectively Christ and Satan, who lead us through this existence according to whom we choose.<sup>91</sup> During our earthly pilgrimage we should seek the right way, "following Christ . . . to our home of eternity."<sup>92</sup>

Apparently the Catholic churches are aware of the differing stages of the temple representations by including these references to them in the church ritual. Even the introduction of music into the liturgy has its precedence in the temple and not in the synagogue. Though the LDS temple does not utilize musical performances in its ceremony, the great shrine in Jerusalem did employ the use of instrumentals, choral singing, orchestral renditions and probably even an organ.<sup>93</sup>

Also, the ceremonial dress of the Catholic clergy during the performance of liturgical ordinances conforms very closely to the priestly vestments of temple service.<sup>94</sup> "The sacred dress was only worn by one who ministered at the altar," wrote Josephus; "he wore it on occasion of his entering the most holy place."<sup>95</sup> While other people who attended the Jewish rite at the temple also may have been

---

<sup>88</sup>Joseph A. Dunney, *The Mass* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1925), p. 348.

<sup>89</sup>Miller, *Fundamentals of the Liturgy*, pp. 93-94.

<sup>90</sup>Walker, *The Ritual "Reason Why,"* p. 99.

<sup>91</sup>Ibid., p. 101.

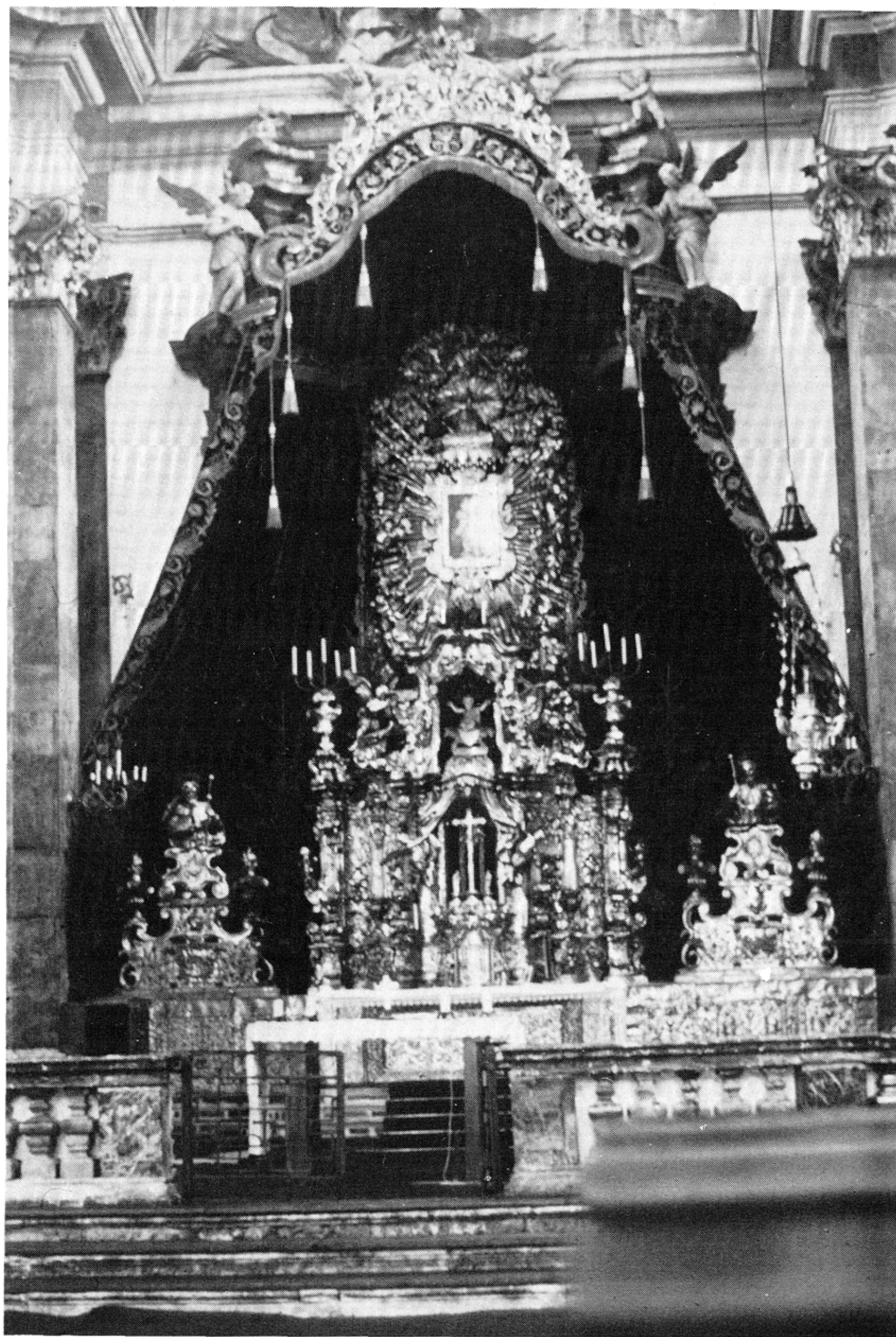
<sup>92</sup>Miller, *Fundamentals of the Liturgy*, p. 200.

<sup>93</sup>Edersheim, *The Temple*, pp. 76-81.

<sup>94</sup>Marriott, *Vestiarum Christianum*, pp. iv-v.

<sup>95</sup>Josephus *The Jewish Wars* 5. v. 7.





Altar as Reception Throne of God  
Innsbruck, Austria



arrayed in special clothes, it is only the priest and his immediate aids in the performance who are attired in the ritual habilaments. He wears the dress in proxy for the congregation before the Lord, and he also wears it because he represents God to the people in attendance. While officiating at the altar, "the priest in a sense leaves this earth and enters another world."<sup>96</sup> Since the other world, the celestial realm, was a region of purity and glory, the traditional color of the vestments has long been white. "We should conclude, without doubt, that the dress appropriate to the most solemn offices of the holy ministry, during the primitive age, was white. . . . Again and again, even in medieval writers, do we find recognition of white vestments as being the proper garb of Christian ministry."<sup>97</sup> The long white robe, the cassock, which was also worn by the choir, was used only in churches, but today it is not necessarily always white.<sup>98</sup> However, the alb is white and so is the surplice of the priest at the time of his ordination.<sup>99</sup> The pope's dress is said to "resemble those of the Roman Consuls, and the ancient diptychs represent the Pope in all the majesty of those great Roman and Byzantine dignitaries."<sup>100</sup> Eusebius addressed the bishops of Tyre: "You who are dressed in the sacred garment that reaches to the feet, adorned with the celestial crowns of glory."<sup>101</sup> Reportedly, the bishops anciently "wore mitres or priestly caps, after the model of the Jewish priests" which were modeled like a turban or a bonnet.<sup>102</sup> Jerome described the headdress of the priests: "The fourth of the vestments is a small round cap . . . much as though a sphere were to be divided through the centre, and one half thereof to be put upon the head. . . . It has no peak at the top, nor does it cover the whole head as far as the hair extends, but leaves about a third of the front part of the head uncovered. It is attached by a band onto the back of the head, so as not to be liable to fall off."<sup>103</sup>

The *beretta* worn in the second millennium of Catholicism was "a square cap, with three corners or prominences rising from its crown, and having, for the most part, a tassel depending."<sup>104</sup> The headdress of the officiant is important "when performing official acts

---

<sup>96</sup>Jungmann, *The Mass of the Roman Rite*, p. 198.

<sup>97</sup>Marriott, *Vestiarum Christianum*, pp. xxxiii–xxxiv.

<sup>98</sup>Lesage, *Vestments and Church Furniture*, pp. 97–98.

<sup>99</sup>John O'Brien, *History of the Mass and Its Ceremonies in the Eastern and Western Church* (New York: New Catholic Publication Society Co., 1885), p. 37; Connell, *The Seven Sacraments*, p. 146; see also 1 Samuel 2:18, Revelation 15:6. Christ himself was dressed in white (Luke 22:11).

<sup>100</sup>Cabrol, *The Holy Sacrifice*, pp. 78–79.

<sup>101</sup>Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* 10. 4.

<sup>102</sup>Marriott, *Vestiarum Christianum*, p. 188. For the Jewish priest, see Exodus 28:4.

<sup>103</sup>*Letter to Fabiola*, quoted in Marriott, *Vestiarum Christianum*, pp. 13–14.

<sup>104</sup>O'Brien, *History of the Mass and Its Ceremonies*, pp. 52–53.



that are mainly authoritative in nature.”<sup>105</sup> Associated with the headcovering is the cutting of the priest’s hair at ordination, the tonsure, which is also ceremonious in character.<sup>106</sup> It is also important to note that the clergy, particularly monks and nuns, are buried in their vestments.<sup>107</sup> There are other items which are part of the ritual habiliments, such as the girdle attached to the cassock and the alb. It is long “like a sash” and represents “*promptitude* in executing the commands of God, *exactness* in religious observances, and *watchfulness* in regard to our eternal salvation.”<sup>108</sup> The stole is another article which belongs to the full raiment during the liturgy. It is worn over the shoulders or around the neck by the clergy, but on different sides, depending on the degree within the priesthood. The deacon, for example, wears it “over the left shoulder and fastened on the right side,”<sup>109</sup> while the priest and bishop “wear it crossed over his breast.”<sup>110</sup> A special prayer is said while dressing with the stole: “Restore to me, O Lord! the Stole of immortality which I lost through the transgression of my first parents.”<sup>111</sup>

Most of the changing of the dress takes place in a particular room, the *sacretarium*.<sup>112</sup> Yet, the priest still removes some parts of the robes during the ceremony itself and takes other items and puts them on while he is officiating.<sup>113</sup> But not only the participants at the altar are instructed to don some special raiments. Jerome also encouraged visitors to the liturgy to wear new clothes for the occasion, though less ritualistic in character: “We, too, ought not to enter into the Holy of Holies in our everyday-garments, just such as we please, when they have become defiled from the use of ordinary life, but with a clean conscience and clean garments.”<sup>114</sup> To wear new and unsoiled apparel is quite appropriate for anyone when entering the “house of God.” However, the priest, who participates actively in the ordinances, labors under a different code and must appear in ceremonial attire because he enters the area of the altar, the sanctuary and holy place in a Catholic church.

---

<sup>105</sup>Eisenhofer and Lechner, *Liturgy of the Roman Rite*, p. 155.

<sup>106</sup>Connell, *The Seven Sacraments*, p. 147. Not only Catholic priests have their hair cut, but it was an ancient widespread custom among the Mesopotamians and Egyptians, as well as in the Far East, Southeast Asia, and India even today. Catholic priests in the United States do not have to be tonsured (p. 153).

<sup>107</sup>See, e.g., *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, ed. Charles G. Herbermann, 15 vols. (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1908), 3: 72.

<sup>108</sup>O’Brien, *History of the Mass and Its Ceremonies*, pp. 39, 42–43 (italics in the original); Martin, *Worship in the Early Church*, p. 37.

<sup>109</sup>Ibid., p. 46. A good photograph can be seen in Sheen, *These Are the Sacraments*, p. 113.

<sup>110</sup>Walker, *The Ritual “Reason Why,”* p. 42; Dunney, *The Mass*, p. 360.

<sup>111</sup>O’Brien, *History of the Mass and Its Ceremonies*, p. 47.

<sup>112</sup>Francois Amiot, *The Twentieth Century Encyclopedia of Catholicism*, vol. 110, *History of the Mass* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1958), p. 22.

<sup>113</sup>Jungmann, *Mass of the Roman Rite*, p. 199; Walker, *The Ritual “Reason Why,”* p. 169.

<sup>114</sup>Jerome *On Ezekiel* 44.



The reality of an altar in a chapel presents another suggestion that the liturgy of the mass and the associated ordinances are indeed an amalgamation of the ceremonies of places of worship and sacred ritual centers. The concept of an altar was not taken from the service in the synagogue for there was no altar there; it is an adaption from the temple in Jerusalem, or from any temple for that matter. Originally, the pagans accused early Christians of not possessing a shrine with an altar in their meeting halls; an altar had been an integral part of most ancient religions and rituals.<sup>115</sup> Could it be that the altar was therefore deliberately introduced into the church in order to give the church the appearance of a sacred sanctuary and thereby provide for Jewish and pagan converts a touch of nostalgic familiarity to facilitate their acceptance of Christianity? Earliest churches displayed only one altar, but the number of altars gradually increased in later centuries until some of the great cathedrals boasted a multiplicity of side-chapels, each with its own altar.<sup>116</sup>

Once the church had become a temple and the altar had been introduced, other related objects and practices were, of necessity, likewise taken in as a matter of course, among them incense and candles, which were standard features of the tabernacle and the holy sanctuary in Jerusalem.<sup>117</sup> Candles on the altar were evidently a copy of the menorah. Candles usually number seven in a Catholic church, but there may be as few as only one pair, the acceptable minimum for the mass.<sup>118</sup> Another adoption from an outside ritual was the veil which women were required to wear in church, notably at the altar for the wedding ceremony.<sup>119</sup> Clement taught it this way: "And this further let the woman have: let her wholly cover her head. . . . And if thus with modesty, and with a veil, she covereth her own eyes, she shall neither be mislead herself, nor shall she draw others, by the exposure of her face, into the dangerous path of sin. For this willeth the Word; seeing that it is meet for the woman that she pray with a covered head."<sup>120</sup>

With the introduction of the altar in the church, the mixture of temple and synagogue became even more complete. Yet the altar was a structure of the outside court and not of the sacred temple interior, but the affiliation of both places was soon established. The locale of the altar in the church was converted into a sanctuary, and

---

<sup>115</sup>Minucius Felix *Octavius* 32.

<sup>116</sup>For the early Church, see Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* 10. 4.

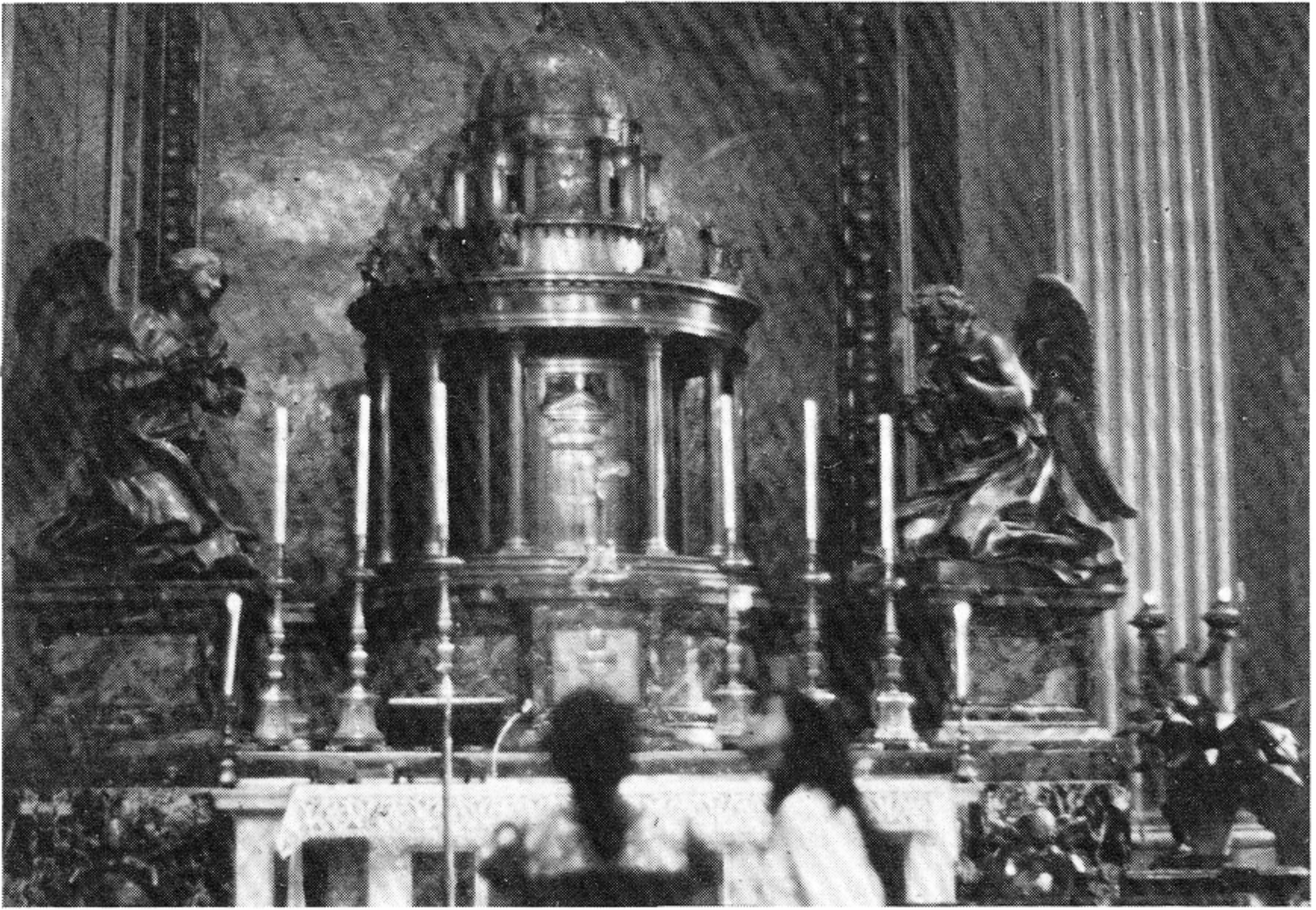
<sup>117</sup>Lesage, *Vestments and Church Furniture*, pp. 40ff., 59ff., 81ff.

<sup>118</sup>Miller, *Fundamentals of the Liturgy*, pp. 108-109.

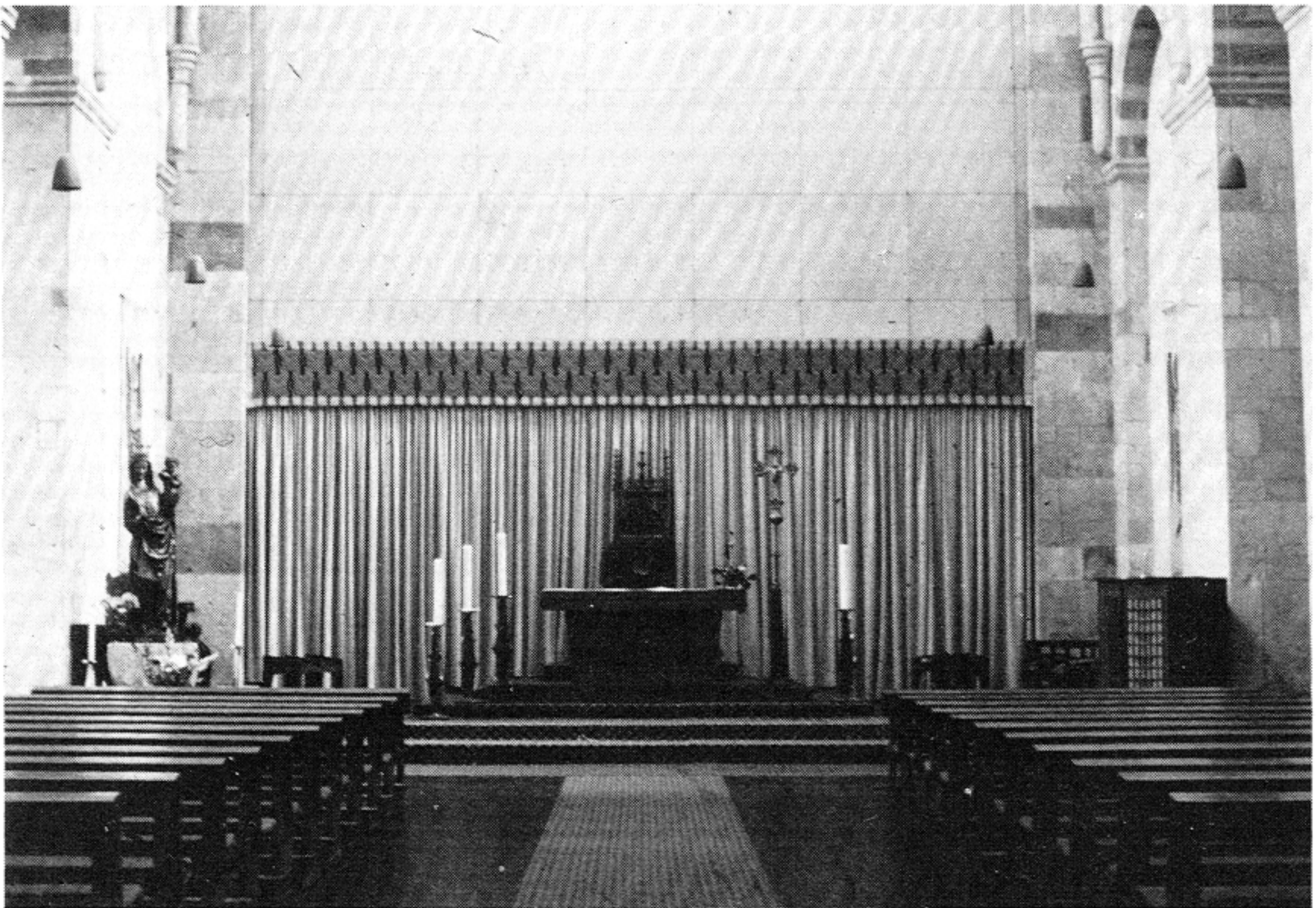
<sup>119</sup>Dalmaï, *Eastern Liturgies*, p. 116.

<sup>120</sup>Quoted in Marriott, *Vestiarium Christianum*, p. xxv.





Altar with Cherubim on Both Sides (Like the Ark of the Covenant)  
Rome, Italy



Veil behind the Altar  
Cologne, Germany



the purpose and function of the ark of the covenant in the Holy of Holies was transferred to the altar. With the real temple in Jerusalem destroyed and the Catholic church as its self-appointed successor, the site of the church altar now symbolized the most holy place, the *sanc-tum sanctorum*.<sup>121</sup> This was dramatically emphasized by Renaissance and Baroque architects who often surrounded the altar with statues of angels representing the cherubim of the Lord's presence on the ark of the covenant.<sup>122</sup> They were to protect the most sacred structure and also act as witnesses to the ordinances performed and the vows and oaths taken in their presence.<sup>123</sup>

Finally, the veil which separated the holiest and its ark from the remainder of the room was also adopted. In its Catholic version, a barrier was erected between the altar and the rest of the church where the faithful gathered to witness the liturgical rites. "The sanctuary is called the holy place (haikal)," and it is "cut off from the nave by a lattice screen."<sup>124</sup> John Chrysostom mentions veils which covered the sanctuary during the consecration of the sacramental emblems in his day, and a poem by St. Paulinus of Nola commenced with the line "Veiled are the holy altars."<sup>125</sup> In the Eastern rites of Catholicism the altar is "concealed behind a solid screen."<sup>126</sup> Sometimes it is a "curtain which hides the altar during the anaphora."<sup>127</sup> Almost all churches in the early centuries possessed a "network Partition" which separated the altar from the rest of the church, and also the side-altars were "veiled in by a screen."<sup>128</sup> In the later church the veils and screens were gradually removed or converted into a balustrade, an ornamented enclosure with a gate, called the *cancelli*.<sup>129</sup> Still, the unordained were normally not permitted to enter the altar sanctuary, and even kings and emperors were barred except for certain occasions such as their coronations.<sup>130</sup> "Early altars used to be covered with a canopy, supported by columns, and known as the ciborium. . . . From the roof of the ciborium veils of rich stuff were suspended."<sup>131</sup> Thus the altar also appears as the throne of God, the mercy seat, covered by a royal canopy as over a king's throne from which he ruled

---

<sup>121</sup>Dunney, *The Mass*, p. 129; see also Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* 10. 4.

<sup>122</sup>Exodus 25:18-19.

<sup>123</sup>John Moschus *Pratum Spirituale* 4. 10.

<sup>124</sup>Dalmaï, *Eastern Liturgies*, p. 59.

<sup>125</sup>Quoted in Dunney, *The Mass*, pp. 127-28.

<sup>126</sup>Rykwert, *Church Building*, p. 56.

<sup>127</sup>Amoit, *History of the Mass*, p. 77, fn. 2.

<sup>128</sup>O'Brien, *History of the Mass and Its Ceremonies*, frontispiece and [p. iii], explanation f.

<sup>129</sup>Walker, *The Ritual "Reason Why,"* p. 23, and Miller, *Fundamentals of the Liturgy*, pp. 110-11.

<sup>130</sup>Miller, *Fundamentals of the Liturgy*, p. 111.

<sup>131</sup>Dunney, *The Mass*, pp. 126-27.



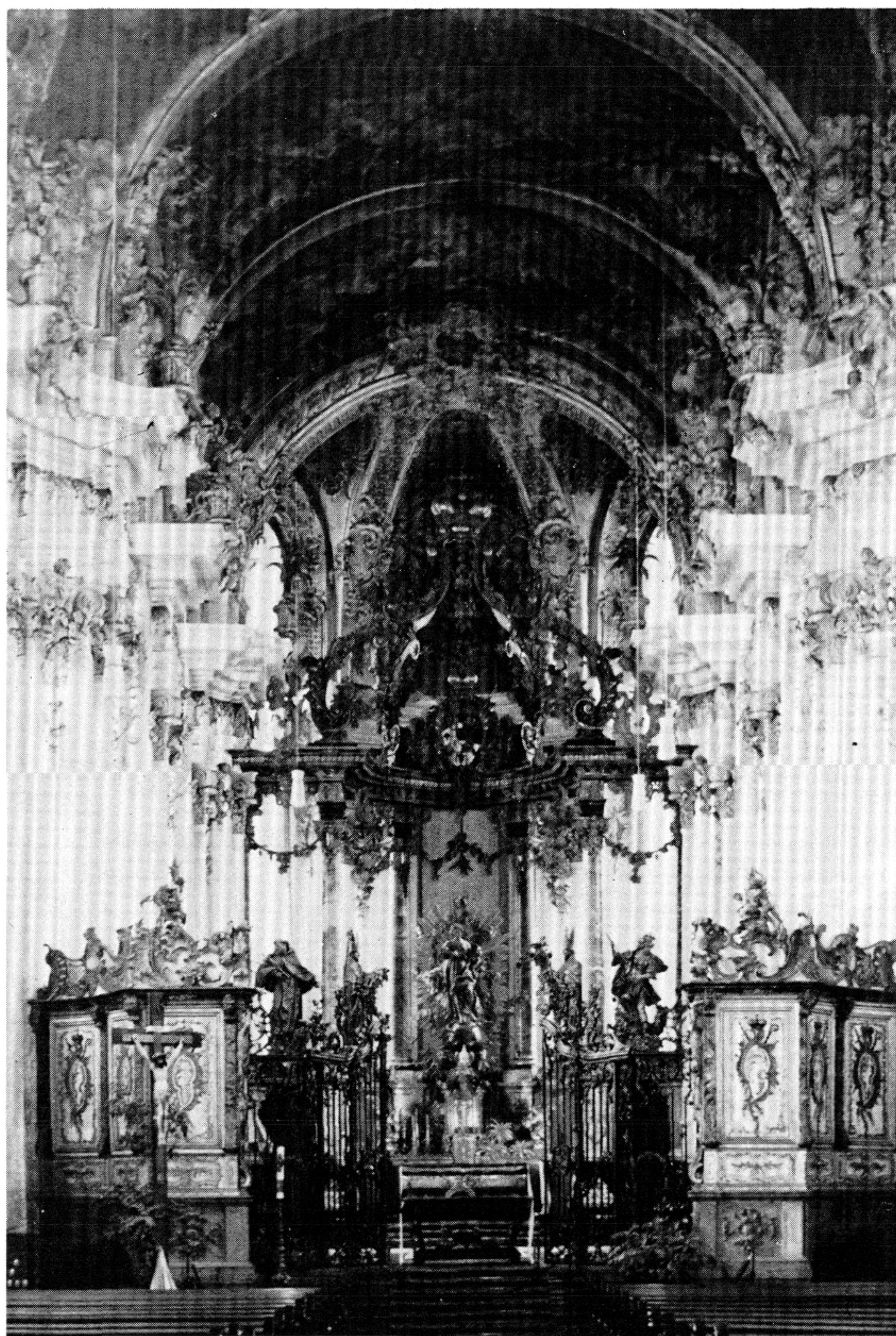


Partition between the High Altar (Holist) and the Congregation  
Marburg, Germany



Altar as the Throne of God with Canopy and Crown  
Fulda, Germany





Partition with Gate between the High Altar and the Congregation  
Trier, Germany





All-Seeing Eye over Church Entrance Watching Who Enters  
Wurzburg, Germany

his domain.<sup>132</sup> Near the altar, furthermore, stand the chairs of the presiding authorities of the ceremonies in the sanctuary.<sup>133</sup>

Some of the Renaissance and Baroque churches exhibit another interesting symbol above the altar on the ceiling. It is the all-seeing eye of God, either painted or sculptured as a real eye, often surrounded by a triangle, or less obviously represented as a circle from which rays emit, or even as a round window through which light pierces down into the sanctuary. Here then is apparently a further attempt to impress upon the participants in the ritual the notion that the Lord is ever-present and observes all things, particularly the actions and vows at the altar. Adding this symbolic ornamentation became appropriate during the Renaissance because the altar at that time was customarily erected onto the back wall of the nave, a practice which did not exist in the early centuries A.D. At that time the altar stood in such a position that the priest could face the congregation during the celebration of the liturgy.<sup>134</sup>

<sup>132</sup>Eisenhofer and Lechner, *Liturgy of the Roman Rite*, p. 123.

<sup>133</sup>Dunney, *The Mass*, p. 23.

<sup>134</sup>Jungmann, *Mass of the Roman Rite*, p. 181; Eisenhofer and Lechner, *Liturgy of the Roman Rite*, pp. 124–25. The altar has been moved away from the wall in our time by the Second Vatican Council which decreed that, if possible, the altar should be closer to the people so that they may watch the proceedings of the Mass.





All-Seeing Eye in a Triangle on Top of the Pulpit  
Düsseldorf, Germany



The Catholic mass evolved around the altar, which was the central place of worship and ritual in the church. It was literally the ark of the covenant where covenants and vows were made to God.<sup>135</sup> Prominent among these are the marriage promises, "ratified by the ring, the kiss, and the handclasp of the couple" as they "laid their joined hands on the gospel book."<sup>136</sup> However, the altar is also a replacement for the altar of sacrifice in the temple court at Jerusalem and comparable to the sacrament table in the Mormon chapel because it symbolizes the sacrifice of Christ and, at the same time, the sacrifice of the individual participant which he is willing to make for Christ.<sup>137</sup> Since the altar is placed a few steps higher than the rest of the church, it may be properly called the "'Mount' of sacrifice."<sup>138</sup> Because animal sacrifices were no longer performed in the Christian ritual, the altar became known as the place of "spiritual sacrifices."<sup>139</sup> It is the location of Christ's sacrificial death and, also, at the same time, the place of his triumphant return to life and conquest over death.<sup>140</sup> The mass, as part of the liturgy, becomes therefore another initiation,<sup>141</sup> "the re-enactment of the work of our salvation under a symbolic veil."<sup>142</sup> During the figurative sacrifice, "we place ourselves on the altar," writes a Catholic theologian, and "when we stand at the altar . . . it is our duty to transform our hearts. . . . We proclaim in symbolic fashion . . . that our whole day will be God's."<sup>143</sup>

Since the mass is indeed another initiation, the celebrants are obliged to go through a further cleansing ceremony before commencing the liturgy, as would be expected before an initiation. The priest washes his hands in a short rite known as the *lavabo*.<sup>144</sup> Anciently it was even done before reciting the prayers.<sup>145</sup> A somewhat obscure but purely recognizable mode of purification is also required by the faithful who enter the church to watch the mass and receive communion. He has already been cleansed at baptism, but since the mass represents a renewal of the initiation, he needs to wash himself again and he does so by applying some water from the basin at the entrance

---

<sup>135</sup>Eisenhofer and Lechner, *Liturgy of the Roman Rite*, p. 126.

<sup>136</sup>Dalmaï, *Eastern Liturgies*, pp. 117, 120.

<sup>137</sup>Cooke, *Christian Sacraments and Christian Personality*, p. 138.

<sup>138</sup>Walker, *The Ritual "Reason Why,"* p. 23.

<sup>139</sup>McCormack, *Christian Initiation*, pp. 117, 122ff.

<sup>140</sup>The canopy over the altar is the *ciborium*, from *kiborion* Greek and *Keber* in Hebrew, both signifying a tomb (Eisenhofer and Lechner, *Liturgy of the Roman Rite*, p. 123).

<sup>141</sup>Halligan, *Sacraments of Reconciliation*, p. v (Foreword); O'Brien, *History of the Mass and Its Ceremonies*, p. 1, from *myesis*, an initiation ordinance or *massah*, a debt or obligation. It is also referred to as a *teleion*, a ritual of perfection (p. 3).

<sup>142</sup>Miller, *Fundamentals of the Liturgy*, p. 212.

<sup>143</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 217, 219.

<sup>144</sup>O'Brien, *History of the Mass and Its Ceremonies*, pp. 178-79; Amiot, *History of the Mass*, pp. 67-68; Tertullian *De Oratione* 13; Clement *Stromata* 4. 22.

<sup>145</sup>Tertullian *De Oratione* 13.



to the church to various places on his body. Now he is pure and may enter the temple and receive the sacramental ordinances.

As previously noted, the candidate for the ritual of baptism was interviewed to determine his worthiness and preparation. Such a “*scrutinium*” was “a search deep into the soul” of the applicant.<sup>146</sup> This same sort of interview naturally becomes necessary again before one participates in the mass, which is another initiation. But at this time it is the person who needs to “interview” himself and determine his own worthiness before he attends the mass and communes at the altar. If he has committed any transgressions, the application of the sacrament of penance ideally should precede his reception of the eucharist. No one with grave sins on his conscience should go to Holy Communion without previously confessing his sins.<sup>147</sup> If he therefore feels he has any unconfessed items troubling his soul, a Catholic needs to appear before his priest and be absolved and declared worthy again to renew his vows at the altar.<sup>148</sup> He can even be excluded from communion if he is not deemed ready to share the sacrifice.<sup>149</sup> The Catholic Church, then, insists on some form of interview before participation in the ordinances in the sanctuary. “Frequency of Communion thus depend[s] on the frequency of confession.”<sup>150</sup> But, a Catholic is not necessarily required to attend the confessional interview if he is going to communion very frequently, such as daily, unless he has committed some grave sin since the last communion. However, he must submit himself to confession at least once a year.<sup>151</sup> The activity in the confession booth could be representative of a symbolic veil scene, for the candidate appears before God, who alone can forgive sins and who is represented by the priest; he meets with him in solitude for a personal examination and audience, separated only by a curtain or screen. The occasion for the meeting differs, but the ritualistic conditions are proper and familiar.

It is the priest who performs most prominently during the mass since he represents at once God and the congregation. The recent trend, however, has been to involve the people much more than hitherto. The Second Vatican Council of the early 1960s suggested a greater participation in the mass on the part of the congregation. “The Church earnestly desires that Christ’s faithful, when present at this mystery of faith, should not be there as strangers or silent spectators. . . . They should take part in the sacred action conscious of

---

<sup>146</sup>Miller, *Fundamentals of the Liturgy*, p. 440.

<sup>147</sup>Cooke, *Christian Sacraments and Christian Personality*, p. 88.

<sup>148</sup>Dalmaï, *Eastern Liturgies*, pp. 97ff.

<sup>149</sup>Halligan, *Sacraments of Reconciliation*, pp. 127ff.

<sup>150</sup>Eisenhofer and Lechner, *Liturgy of the Roman Rite*, p. 373.

<sup>151</sup>Connell, *The Seven Sacraments*, pp. 114–15.



what they are doing with devotion and full collaboration. . . . Each person present at the assembly of worshipers must do his part well. The Master of Ceremonies directs all those in the sanctuary, tactfully reminding them to fulfill their roles properly.”<sup>152</sup>

The involvement, though, is limited to some physical movements and vocal responses to the presentation by the officiant at the altar. “Sometime[s] ye sing, sometime[s] ye read, sometime[s] ye hear; sometime[s] ye sit, sometime[s] ye stand, sometime[s] ye incline, sometime[s] ye kneel,” an ancient theologian wrote.<sup>153</sup> During the instructions and most of the readings the congregation sits,<sup>154</sup> while at other times it is the ritual to stand.<sup>155</sup> “It is a universal custom to rise and remain standing in the presence of superiors, so that to pray standing is an outward sign of respect towards God.”<sup>156</sup> Kneeling is also observed; its symbolic meaning denotes humility, pleading, seeking for help and even an admission of guilt.<sup>157</sup> At a modern mass, the congregation stands at least six times during the presentation and kneels no less than three times.<sup>158</sup> It is also proper to bow one’s head, particularly when the choir sings the *Gloria Patri* or when approaching and departing from the altar.<sup>159</sup>

The vocal participation involves primarily responses and affirmations at specific stages throughout the liturgic ceremony. “They did not merely listen to the prayers of the priest in silence but ratified them by acclamations,” as has been recorded.<sup>160</sup> As in most meetings of the Christian denominations, the Catholic also responds with an “Amen” at the conclusion of a prayer,<sup>161</sup> but there are yet more responses involved which occur after other recitations by officiants. After the *Nobis Quoque Peccatoribus*, “the great act of thanksgiving comes to a close as we agree by saying ‘Amen.’”<sup>162</sup> Likewise, at the *Gloria Tibi Domine* and some other prayers an “Amen” is required

---

<sup>152</sup>James D. Walker, *Commentator's Lectionary* (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1965), Preface.

<sup>153</sup>Walker, *The Ritual “Reason Why,”* p. 83.

<sup>154</sup>Ibid. See also Luke 4:20; John 8:2; Acts 20:9; 1 Corinthians 14:30; Justin Martyr *1 Apology* 67; *Apostolic Constitution* 8. 6. 2.

<sup>155</sup>See Mark 11:25; Matthew 6:5; Luke 18:11; Psalms 134:2; 1 Kings 1:26; Justin Martyr *1 Apology* 67; *Apostolic Constitution* 8. 10. 22; Council of Nicaea *Canon* 20.

<sup>156</sup>Eisenhofer and Lechner, *Liturgy of the Roman Rite*, p. 85; Tertullian *De Oratione* 23.

<sup>157</sup>Ibid., pp. 85–86; Tertullian *De Oratione* 23; *Apostolic Constitution* 8. 6. 8; 3 Kings 8:54, 19:8; Daniel 6:10; Luke 22:41; Matthew 20:36; Acts 9:40. Prostration, done at the time of priestly ordination, shows the deepest humiliation (p. 87); see also Genesis 17:3 and Joshua 5:14.

<sup>158</sup>See Walker, *Commentator's Lectionary*, p. 2.

<sup>159</sup>Walker, *The Ritual “Reason Why,”* pp. 74–75. It is now common to genuflect when passing the altar.

<sup>160</sup>Jungmann, *The Mass of the Roman Rite*, p. 170.

<sup>161</sup>Amiot, *History of the Mass*, p. 104.

<sup>162</sup>Walker, *Commentator's Lectionary*, p. 8.



by the congregation, and following the *Dominus Vobiscum*, it is even a sentinel response when they answer with “*Et cum spiritu tuo.*”<sup>163</sup>

The priest, however, is more actively involved in the liturgy, and his actions at the altar are therefore far more pronounced and elaborate in nature. He genuflects and bows his head several times during the mass.<sup>164</sup> At certain stages he prays facing the east.<sup>165</sup> At other times, he turns toward the congregation and he looks due west. Symbolically, the priest represents the people when he turns to the east, toward God, and he represents the Lord when he faces the faithful in the church.<sup>166</sup> When several ministrants participate in the mass they, at times, “stand around the altar, even if not all can individually touch the table of the altar.”<sup>167</sup>

However, some of the most ritualistic actions of the priest are performed with his hands, often completely unnoticed by the casual observer. He touches his body, marking special parts of it by the sign of the cross and he also taps his breast repeatedly.<sup>168</sup> Most obvious are his raised hands at the *Memento*, the *Communicantes*, the *Nobis Quoque Peccatoribus*, and the *Te Igitur*.<sup>169</sup> At the *Secreta* before the consecration of the emblems, as well as for the *Oremus*, the *Prefatus*, the *Canon*, and the *Pater Noster*, he also “stands with his hands upraised . . . facing east, and originally the faithful, too, stood facing east and with arms lifted up.”<sup>170</sup> In our day it is perhaps a little unusual to address and petition the Lord in our worship services by this method, but “as a rule the ancients prayed standing and mostly with upraised hands.”<sup>171</sup> Before a “higher being” it was most important that the faithful “stood with hands uplifted and facing east . . . with eyes fixed in the direction of the rising sun.”<sup>172</sup>

Hardly visible are the different positions of the priest’s fingers during the ceremony of the eucharistic consecration, particularly when touching and elevating the host.<sup>173</sup> The host symbolized the

---

<sup>163</sup>Miller, *Fundamentals of the Liturgy*, p. 248; Dunney, *The Mass*, p. 45.

<sup>164</sup>See L. Kuenzel, *A Manual of the Ceremonies of Low Mass* (New York: Frederick Pustet Co., 1938); Pierre Journel, *The Rite of Concelebration of the Mass and of Communion under Both Species* (New York: Desclee Company, 1967), p. 192.

<sup>165</sup>Miller, *Fundamentals of the Liturgy*, p. 194.

<sup>166</sup>Walker, *The Ritual “Reason Why,”* pp. 116–17.

<sup>167</sup>Journel, *Concelebration*, p. 84.

<sup>168</sup>See Kuenzel, *Ceremonies of Low Mass*.

<sup>169</sup>Journel, *Concelebration*, pp. 116, 118.

<sup>170</sup>Jungmann, *Mass of the Roman Rite*, pp. 246–47.

<sup>171</sup>Dunney, *The Mass*, p. 17. See also Amiot, *History of the Mass*, p. 82; Exodus 17:11, 9:29; Psalms 27:2, 62:5, 133:2; Luke 24:50; Isaiah 1:15; Tertullian *De Oratione* 14; Clement 1 *Epistle to Corinthians* 29. Anchises does so in Vergil’s *Aeneid* 2. 688 when he prays to Jupiter.

<sup>172</sup>Jungmann, *Mass of the Roman Rite*, p. 172.

<sup>173</sup>Kuenzel, *Ceremonies of Low Mass*, pp. 133, 137. For a photograph see the picture of Cardinal Sheen in Henri Daniel-Rops, *This Is the Mass* (New York: Hawthorn Books, Inc., 1958), pp. 105, 109, 113, 117, 121.



Lord, and his emblems can evidently not be handled unless the fingers have assumed an extraordinarily odd pose. In the fourth century Cyril of Jerusalem discussed some of these rituals:

When approaching [the altar] therefore, do not come with your wrists extended or your fingers spread, but from your left hand as a throne for the right so as to receive a king. After having hollowed your palm, receive the body of Christ and say Amen over it. . . . Come also close to the cup of his blood but do not stretch forth your hands; instead, bow forward and say in reverence and worship Amen.<sup>174</sup>

The altar prayers in the Catholic mass are also very familiar to an LDS observer. A wide variety of subjects is included in the petitions for special consideration by the Lord. "Intercessions were offered for people, for kings, and for other needs."<sup>175</sup> Augustine mentioned the "peace of the world, the church, kings, the army, the city, the needy, the old and weary, sailors, prisoners, slaves, the sick, the dead, the weather, good crops and harvests," etc.<sup>176</sup> Since most of the items remembered pertain to worldly and physical needs, they were apparently included to display tolerance toward nonmembers who were concerned about these favors. Also, the inclusion of the emperors and the army is thought to have been done to appease the organs of state in a time when the early Christians were still heavily persecuted.<sup>177</sup> This general prayer for the church and the world, the so-called *Communis Oratio*, was offered antiphonally, so that the congregation repeated what the priest uttered.<sup>178</sup> Again, Bishop Cyril left a short instruction concerning this supplication:

We ask God for the common peace in the church, for the welfare of the world, for kings, for soldiers and for allies, for the sick and for the afflicted, and, in one word, for all those who are in need of help, we all pray and offer this ordinance. We also remember those who have died before us, the patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs.<sup>179</sup>

Cyril, then, includes in his commemoration the departed leaders of the church as well as the relatives and friends who have died. Remembrance of the dead is therefore another important aspect of the week-day mass in the Catholic faith.<sup>180</sup> During the *Memento*, the priest

---

<sup>174</sup>Cyril of Jerusalem *Catechetical Lectures* 23. 21–22.

<sup>175</sup>G. G. Willis, *Essays in Early Roman Literature* (London: S.P.C.K., 1964), pp. 5ff. See also Ambrose *De Sacramentis* 5. v. 14.

<sup>176</sup>Augustine *Sermons* 49. 8. See also 1 Timothy 2:1–2; Justin Martyr *1 Apology* 1. 17; Tertullian *Apology* 30.

<sup>177</sup>Woolley, *Liturgy of the Primitive Church*, p. 32.

<sup>178</sup>Jungmann, *Mass of the Roman Rite*, p. 305.

<sup>179</sup>Cyril of Jerusalem. *Catechetical Lectures* 23. 8–9.

<sup>180</sup>Jungmann, *Mass of the Roman Rite*, pp. 41ff.



asks a choice blessing on the departed saints and other important persons who have died.<sup>181</sup> “Formerly the names of those to be prayed for in the Liturgy were written on tablets, or parchments, which, from being folded twice, were called diptychs.”<sup>182</sup> This little booklet or scroll was often referred to in the Eastern rite as the “book of the living and the dead” since it contained the names of persons who were seriously ill and requested a special consideration during the prayer at the altar.<sup>183</sup> At first, the names were read aloud, but it seems to have taken a long time to read each individual name. Therefore, “the register of names was laid on the altar and merely a reference introduced into the Memento.”<sup>184</sup> Though this ceremony is no longer fully included in the mass, it used to be one of the last remnants of some kind of work for the dead in the Catholic ritual. The place of these prayers has perhaps been preempted by the special mass, called the Requiem, celebrated exclusively for departed relatives.

Following the apex of the liturgy, which is the consecration of the eucharist, the faithful step forward to receive the emblem.<sup>185</sup> Partaking of the sacrament itself occurs for Mormons in a chapel service; however, for Catholics, it can properly be changed to the temple sanctuary since the sacrificial altar was a function of the temple ritual in Jerusalem. The consumption of the animal flesh by the priest after the sacrifice was necessary in Judaism; the ritual had its significance in the notion of an atonement.<sup>186</sup> Even the distribution of the sacrificial emblem to the group is done in symbolic fashion in the Catholic chapel. While the more modern churches do not necessarily any longer exhibit the barrier around the altar, the older structures still do. The recipient of the eucharist kneels at the one side of the railing and the priest, who represents the Lord, stands on the other. This symbolizes, once more, God’s distributing his special grace and sanctification to his children behind the partition. It is, as a matter of fact, the only interaction between the officiant and the recipient.<sup>187</sup>

Another physical connection used to be among the ministrants in the sanctuary and among the people in the assembly. This was the highly ritual “kiss of peace” which used to occur immediately prior

---

<sup>181</sup>Amiot, *History of the Mass*, pp. 83–84, 106–108.

<sup>182</sup>Walker, *The Ritual “Reason Why,”* p. 127.

<sup>183</sup>Jungmann, *Mass of the Roman Rite*, p. 396.

<sup>184</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 399. See also Hugh W. Nibley, “The Early Christian Prayer Circle,” *Brigham Young University Studies* 19 (Fall 1978): 41–78.

<sup>185</sup>Catholics receive only the wafer at communion. The priest partakes of the wine in proxy for the congregation.

<sup>186</sup>Edersheim, *The Temple*, pp. 105ff.

<sup>187</sup>It is interesting to note the order of distribution of the eucharist during the communion. “The leader (bishop or priest) of the assembly was the first to receive” (Jungmann, *Mass of the Roman Rite*, p. 490).



to the communion with God: "The priest . . . imparts it to the deacon, the deacon to the subdeacon and the latter to the rest of the clergy. . . . [Until the eighth century] all present took part in the rite, men and women separately."<sup>188</sup> But again, the ordinance has not persisted into our time, for in the thirteenth century while the embrace continued the kiss was eliminated.<sup>189</sup> It represents the acceptance of the person as a fellow initiate and his welcome into the community.<sup>190</sup> Today, only a "slight embrace" remains and often it is not more than a handshake. However, the basic notion of a physical contact near the altar has come from antiquity as a sacred rite.

The ceremonial entry into the church and to the altar in the sanctuary is also acted out in the ritual of the opening of the Holy Door, the Porta Santa at St. Peter in Rome and other carefully selected churches.<sup>191</sup> This rite is executed only every twenty-five years and represents the entry of the children of God into the presence of the Lord. Medieval medals struck for the occasion often show Christ on one side of the portal and the pope or the people on the other.<sup>192</sup> The pope knocks three times with a golden hammer, upon which the door is opened by the masons and he may enter through it and proceed to the sanctuary. The remainder of the clergy and the people then follow after him. A prayer said by Pope Clement VIII during the rite in 1600 demonstrates clearly that the ceremony does indeed portray entry into the temple of God: "Open unto me the gates of justice, when I am entered I will praise my Lord. I will enter, O Lord, into Thy house. I will adore Thee in Thy fear in Thy temple."<sup>193</sup>

That the Lord is concealed behind some kind of barrier is borne out by many paintings and stelae from churches and cemeteries in the early centuries of Christianity. God is never completely visible but only his arm can be seen as it is stretched out from behind a veil, a curtain, a cloud, or a screen, such as in the churches of Nola, SS. Cosa e Damiano in Milan, San Apollinare in Classe, Parezo in Istria, and others.<sup>194</sup> Even though the correct interpretation may elude the modern churchgoer, it is evidently an ancient symbol of great significance and transcendent reality.

---

<sup>188</sup>Amiot, *History of the Mass*, p. 121. See also Romans 16:16; Justin Martyr *1 Apology* 65.

<sup>189</sup>Amiot, *History of the Mass*, p. 121; Jungmann, *Mass of the Roman Rite*, p. 483.

<sup>190</sup>Miller, *Fundamentals of the Liturgy*, p. 449.

<sup>191</sup>Herbert Thurston, *The Holy Year of Jubilee* (London: Sands & Co., 1900), pp. 284, 406. This door is compared to the King's Gate or the Holy Gate or even the Golden Gate in Jerusalem.

<sup>192</sup>Ibid., p. 50.

<sup>193</sup>Ibid., pp. 221, 244. For a picture of Pope Paul VI performing this ceremony in 1975, see *The Pope Speaks*, vol. 19, no. 3 (1975), p. 179.

<sup>194</sup>Syndicus, *Early Christian Art*, pp. 138-42. For a picture, see J. G. Davies, *The Early Christian Church* (New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston, 1965), illus. 10.





Representation of the Lord's Hand from behind a Cloud over Church Entrance  
Düsseldorf, Germany

Various ordinances and rituals in the Catholic liturgy, then, derive from the temple and have been adopted by the church in a new context. "Rome has not abolished the rites of the Temple, however, but simply taken them over, every particle of the ancient ordinances and imagery having been absorbed by the Christian sacraments."<sup>195</sup> For the perceptive Latter-day Saint, parallels are obvious and relationships apparent. Indeed, resemblances in form and purpose point to the probability of a common source and common origin, providing an interesting support to LDS claims of a divine restoration of certain eternal truths apparently known and practiced anciently by former-day saints.

---

<sup>195</sup>Nibley, "The Christian Envy," p. 72.



# Abel, Cain

Orson Scott Card

Corn is the soil's song, and wheat the hymn  
Of heavy fields; who wields the sickle sheaves  
The stalks in golden holds and cantileves  
In measures the plain-song and the praise-Him.

Home-come sheep cry far and dim  
To this stony altar where the shepherd grieves,  
Covered with sorrow and the fallen leaves,  
Shadowed with sorrow and the low-hung limb;

And bowed, an unshorn lamb he bleeds in grim  
Similitude of his father's son; aggrieves  
Not, nor wished to; but the scythe bereaves,  
And the strong-armed reaper, watching, envies him  
Whose hill music and silence God believes  
As sung in sheep's song and the herd its hymn.



# The Early Baptist Career of Sidney Rigdon in Warren, Ohio

Hans Rollmann

Undoubtedly one of the most enigmatic characters of early Disciple of Christ and Mormon history is Sidney Rigdon (1793–1876). He was onetime adviser and right-hand man to Joseph Smith; he lost out against Brigham Young in the succession crisis of 1844; and, after founding an obscure sect, he died forgotten in Friendship, New York. The recent interest in Mormon beginnings has once again brought into focus the leading personalities and events of the Northeast and Midwest, and some effort has been expended to elucidate the historical significance of this early Disciple-turned-Mormon pioneer of Ohio. In the following pages I do not attempt to reinterpret this religious *enfant terrible* but present new biographical information on the Disciple Rigdon, information hitherto unavailable to his biographers.<sup>1</sup> The new data, contained in the church record of the Baptist church in Warren, Ohio, cover his stay as a licensed—and later as an ordained—Baptist minister in Warren from 4 March 1820

---

Hans Rollmann is an assistant professor of New Testament, Department of Religious Studies, University of Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Dr. Rollmann has published widely in the area of nineteenth and twentieth century religious and intellectual history. Articles of his have appeared in *Journal of the History of Ideas*, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, *Religious Studies Review*, and *The Downside Review*.

<sup>1</sup>Historians of both religious groups have until now devoted little concentrated scholarly effort to the Disciple–Mormon encounter on the Western Reserve. The Disciple contribution is negligible. Only the following unpublished studies have come to my attention: Joseph Welles White, “The Influence of Sidney Rigdon upon the Theology of Mormonism” (M.A. thesis, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, 1947); Leslie Howard Payne, “A Comparative Study of Mormon and Disciple Histories” (M.A. thesis, Butler University, Indianapolis, 1960), with a good historical sketch on pp. 108–25; Agnes M. Smith, “Mormonism on the Western Reserve (1830–1840)” (Seminar paper, Western Reserve University, 1960, located at Disciples of Christ Historical Society, Nashville—hereafter cited as DCHS); Thomas Lee Scott, “Apostasy on the Western Reserve: Selected Disciples of Christ Experiences in the 1830’s” (Paper delivered at Phillips University, Enid, Okla., 1978, DCHS), sketchy, neglects sources.

An examination of local Disciple histories from the Western Reserve deposited at DCHS was disappointing in its lack of information regarding the early Disciple–Mormon interaction. The church histories of Austintown, Painesville, Mantua, Newton Falls, (New) Lisbon, Hiram, and Elyria rely mainly on Amos Sutton Hayden’s *Early History of the Disciples in the Western Reserve, Ohio* (Cincinnati: Chase and Hall, 1875). An exception to this rule is the recently published *Mentor Christian Church Sesquicentennial Scrapbook* (Mentor, Ohio: n.p., 1978) with valuable information on the early Disciple–Mormon encounter. Important, not for its sources but for its mature analysis, is the unpublished paper of Harold E. Davis, “Early Religion in Hiram” (Hiram, Ohio, 1939, DCHS). For histories of the Pittsburgh churches, see footnote 10.



to 5 January 1822.<sup>2</sup> On the basis of this information, more light can be shed upon the early career of Sidney Rigdon.

The first biographical sketch of Sidney Rigdon—ostensibly based on information provided by Elder Rigdon himself—appeared in 1843 in a series of articles entitled the “History of Joseph Smith” in the *Times and Seasons*.<sup>3</sup> Here it is stated that after receiving his preaching license from the Regular Baptists in Pennsylvania in 1819, Sidney Rigdon moved to Trumbull County, Ohio, in May of 1819. He took up residence there in July with Adamson Bentley, an ordained Baptist minister, who with Sidney Rigdon became influential in the Baptist reform movement under the leadership of Alexander Campbell. In Warren, he met Phebe Brooks, formerly of Bridgetown, Cumberland County, New Jersey, whom he married on 12 June 1820. He preached in the district until November 1821, leaving Warren in February 1822 to take charge of the First Baptist Church of Pittsburgh. These are the lean data in the *Times and Seasons* regarding Sidney Rigdon’s first ministerial occupation.

In 1899 in a series on “The Life and Labors of Sidney Rigdon” in the *Improvement Era*,<sup>4</sup> Assistant Church Historian John Jacques follows the account of the *Times and Seasons* exactly without providing additional historical information on the Warren period. So also do all subsequent historians with the exception of Rigdon’s son John Wycliffe, who lectured in the 1890s at Alfred University in upstate New York on the life of his father.<sup>5</sup> The lecture notes were

---

<sup>2</sup>Later, when the Baptist reformers under the leadership of Alexander Campbell separated from the Baptists proper, the church was called “Warren Central Christian Church.” A microfilm copy of the church record is located at DCHS and is quoted here with permission of the Society.

<sup>3</sup>*Times and Seasons* 4 (1 May 1843): 177–78.

<sup>4</sup>The early period is treated in the *Improvement Era* 3 (December 1899): 97–109.

<sup>5</sup>There is also a brief biographical sketch on Sidney Rigdon in *The History of Friendship* (Friendship, N. Y.: Friendship Sesquicentennial Corporation, 1965), pp. 53–54, which reports some interesting—yet legendary—details regarding Rigdon and his relatives in Friendship, hitherto not made available to a larger reading audience. (This history was edited by Arlene Hess, a friend of Josephine [Jessie] Rigdon, the last surviving grandchild of Sidney Rigdon.) According to *The History of Friendship*:

One of his (Rigdon’s) sons-in-law, George Robinson was the founder and first president of the First National Bank. Many stories were told about Robinson and his fear of someone or something. He was supposed to have had a bullet proof room in the bank and his house on the corner of Main and East Water Street—the Hatch house—has bars on the lower windows. There have been stories that Mr. Robinson might have bettered his financial state with the aid of purloined Mormon money and feared reprisal.

After Rigdon’s death representatives of the Mormons requested a grandson, Edward Hatch, permission to inspect papers left by Rigdon for a clue to a secret which he had said he might reveal but never did. The request was refused. Some believe that Rigdon had intended to reveal his connection with the Spaulding book. A son, John Rigdon, was asked by Mormon officials to come to Salt Lake City and write an account of his father’s connection with the Mormon religion. There is no record that he did so.

Sidney Rigdon was one of the charter members of the local Masonic Lodge.



published in 1966 by Karl Keller in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*.<sup>6</sup>

In addition to the information provided in the *Times and Seasons*, John Wycliffe Rigdon states in this short life sketch that the Baptist minister under whom Sidney Rigdon studied “theology” in Pennsylvania belonged to the Regular Baptists. He does not elaborate on his father’s stay in Warren but summarizes: “After getting his license to preach, he went to Pittsburgh and preached a short time there and then went to the town of Warren, Trumbull County, in Ohio, and remained there about two years.”<sup>7</sup> Of significance here is the report of a short preaching engagement in Pittsburgh after leaving his home church in Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, and prior to his stay in Warren. This intervening period, not mentioned by any of his biographers, fits well the church record of the Baptist church in Warren, which dates Sidney Rigdon’s arrival in Warren on 4 March 1820 and not, as the *Times and Seasons* and all subsequent historians do, in May of 1819. The entry of 4 March 1820 reads: “Bro. Sidney Rigdon presented his letter of dismissal from the Church of Christ called Providence Pa. dated Augt 4th 1819 and Bro. Jacob Smith presented his letter also from the Church of Christ called 3rd Baptist Church of Christ in Middleborough Mass.<sup>tts</sup> and were both cheerfully received, into full fellowship.”<sup>8</sup> Sidney Rigdon, being a licensed minister, may have served for a short time in Pittsburgh under the tutelage of John Davis, Obadiah Newcomb’s successor to the pastorate.<sup>9</sup> John Wycliffe Rigdon does not mention for which Baptist church Sidney Rigdon preached, but it was most likely the future First Baptist Church of Pittsburgh, the only Regular Baptist church in Pittsburgh proper. If it were the First Baptist Church of Pittsburgh, the invitation he received in 1822 to become its full-time minister may be understood better historically on the basis of this previous

---

<sup>6</sup>Karl Keller, ed., “‘I Never Knew a Time When I Did Not Know Joseph Smith’: A Son’s Record of the Life and Testimony of Sidney Rigdon,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 1 (Winter 1966): 15–42. The lecture notes of the original lecture are owned by members of the Rigdon family, with a copy located in Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah. A further copy is located in the Washington State Historical Society. A larger unpublished “Life” by John Wycliffe Rigdon, deposited in the Church Historian’s Office in Salt Lake City, provides no additional information on the Warren period.

<sup>7</sup>John Wycliffe Rigdon, Lecture Notes, p. 6; Keller, ed., “A Son’s Record of Sidney Rigdon,” p. 20.

<sup>8</sup>Church Record, Warren Central Christian Church, p. 69. It seems that A. S. Hayden, when writing his *Early History of the Disciples in the Western Reserve, Ohio*, had this record available. For he writes on p. 92: “March 4th [1820], following, Sidney Rigdon was received into membership, and licensed April 1st, to preach.”

<sup>9</sup>O. Newcomb became minister in 1818 and John Davis in 1820 (cf. Joel van Meter Stratton, *History of the First Baptist Church of Pittsburgh, Pa.* [Pittsburgh: n.p., 1910], p. 8; see also *Redstone Baptist Association Minutes* [1818], p. 3, and [1819], p. 3).



acquaintance with the congregation.<sup>10</sup> Besides the common associational affiliation of this church with Rigdon's former church (Peter's Creek), David Philips, the preacher under whom Sidney was said to have begun studying for the ministry, was co-organizer of the First Baptist Church of Pittsburgh.<sup>11</sup>

The reason for the discrepancy in dates will perhaps always remain unknown. Granted that the biographical article on Sidney

---

<sup>10</sup>At the time, there were three "Baptist" congregations in the city. Sidney Rigdon's future congregation had been formed in 1812 by the Rev. Edward Jones and six Regular Baptist families from New England. As the church became affiliated with the Redstone Baptist Association, Alexander Campbell—whose Brush Run church held the same associational membership—preached there occasionally. An independent group holding Haldane Restitutionist convictions was led by Walter Scott, who had taken the church over from his mentor George Forrester after Forrester had drowned in the Allegheny River in 1820. Since A. Campbell's acquaintance with Walter Scott in the winter of 1821–1822, the two churches exhibited fraternal relations but remained independent. Whether the churches formally united in 1824 is doubtful and cannot be firmly documented. For the history of Baptist origins in Pittsburgh see esp. James A. Trewolla, "A History of the Disciples of Christ in Pittsburgh" (B.S.T. thesis, Western Theological Seminary, Pittsburgh, 1934), pp. 7–45. See also Robert Richardson, *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell* (1897; reprint ed., Nashville: Gospel Advocate, 1956), 2: 99; cf. also 2: 42–48, and Hayden, *Early History of the Disciples*, p. 64, where, contrary to Richardson's Campbell biography (vol. 2, p. 47), the church for which Sidney Rigdon preached is described as small in size. Cf. also Stratton, *First Baptist Church of Pittsburgh*, p. 9. Dwight E. Stevenson's assumption that Sidney Rigdon did not meet Walter Scott until March of 1828 in Warren is clearly mistaken (see Dwight E. Stevenson, *Walter Scott, Voice of the Golden Oracle: A Biography* [St. Louis: Christian Board of Publication, 1946], p. 91). See also Henry K. Shaw, *Buckeye Disciples: A History of the Disciples of Christ in Ohio* (St. Louis: Christian Board of Publication, 1952), p. 44.

From 1815 to 1817 there existed in Pittsburgh also a small congregation under the leadership of Thomas Campbell, Alexander Campbell's father, who had moved to the city from Cambridge, Ohio, in the fall of 1815 in order to establish a private school. When he applied for association membership for his church in the Redstone Baptist Association in 1816, he was refused membership on doctrinal grounds. After Thomas Campbell's removal from Pittsburgh in the spring of 1817, one of his church members, the young Samuel Church, provided leadership for the congregation. In 1817 it merged with yet another congregationally autonomous group, of Haldane persuasion, under the leadership of John Tassey. Samuel Church and John Tassey now presided jointly over the amalgamated congregation. (See Trewolla's "A History of the Disciples of Christ in Pittsburgh," pp. 7–45 and the helpful map on p. 89. See also Archibald Campbell's sketch in Alexander Campbell's *Memoirs of Elder Thomas Campbell: Together with a Brief Memoir of Mrs. Jane Campbell* [Cincinnati: H. S. Bosworth, 1861], pp. 123–25.) The two modern biographies of Thomas Campbell shed no new light on the existence or fate of his Pittsburgh church (see William Herbert Hanna, *Thomas Campbell: Seceder and Christian Union Advocate* [Cincinnati: The Standard Publishing Company, 1935], pp. 1939–40, and Lester McAllister, *Thomas Campbell: Man of the Book* [St. Louis: The Bethany Press, 1954], pp. 174–80).

This is not the place to deal with the Pittsburgh church situation in detail. However, since the literature is little known, the following is a list of Disciple and Baptist literature on the First Baptist Church of Pittsburgh:

*Disciple Literature:*

Trewolla, "The History of the Christian Churches in the Pittsburgh Area"; Ray Emerson Stahl, "A History of the Central Christian Church of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania" (B.D. thesis, School of Religion, Butler University, Indianapolis, 1943); John A. Jayne, "Pittsburgh and the Disciples," *Christian Evangelist* 23 (1909): 1208; A. Chatley, "Early Reminiscences of the Christian Church in Pittsburgh," *Christian Standard* (16 October 1909), pp. 1812–15; "Some Noted Pittsburgh Pioneers," *Christian Standard* (16 October 1909), pp. 1815–16; W. H. Graham, "A Brief History of the First Christian Church Pittsburgh, P.A. (Formerly Allegheny)" (Paper, 1915, located DCHS); "Rededication Services: First Christian Church [of Pittsburgh], Sept. 26, 1943" (Newsletter, DCHS); Percy A. Davis, "Pittsburgh Church History" (Paper read before the Western Pennsylvania Christian Ministers Association, 12 February 1951, located at DCHS); "Brief History: First Christian Church," *The Service of Dedication April 5, 1964: The First Christian Church of Pittsburgh*, DCHS.

*Baptist Literature:*

J. G. Lauderbaugh, *The Seventy-Fifth Anniversary of the Fourth Avenue Baptist Church* (Pittsburgh: n.p., 1887); Joel van Meter Stratton, *History of the First Baptist Church of Pittsburgh, Pa.; Centenary of Organized Baptist Work in and about Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (1812–1912)* (Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh Baptist Association, 1913); *The First Baptist Church of Pittsburgh* (Pittsburgh: n.p., 1925); William Russell Pankey, *History of the Churches of the Pittsburgh Baptist Association* (Philadelphia: Judson Press, 1939).

<sup>11</sup>Lauderbaugh, *Fourth Avenue Baptist Church*, p. 4.



Rigdon in the *Times and Seasons*, upon which all subsequent historians have relied, was written on the basis of information provided by Elder Rigdon himself, the discrepancies might be due to an oversight on his own part. The question then arises, however, as to why the son, writing nearly fifty years later, was so accurately informed about the Baptist period of his father.

The interim ministerial service of Sidney Rigdon in Pittsburgh may have been omitted purposefully in the *Times and Seasons* article of 1843 in order to avoid playing into the hands of those who had advanced the Spaulding theory on the origin of the Book of Mormon. The theory, advanced by Dr. Philastus Hurlbut and Eber D. Howe, considered Sidney Rigdon responsible for acquainting Joseph Smith with the native American romance of Solomon Spaulding, the alleged source for the Book of Mormon.<sup>12</sup> Rigdon's late arrival in Pittsburgh—in 1822 instead of 1819—features prominently in the apologetics against the Spaulding theory.<sup>13</sup> John Wycliffe Rigdon's lecture, apparently based upon reminiscences of his father, and the

---

<sup>12</sup>For a critical discussion of the theory, see the appendices in Isaac Woodbridge Riley, *The Founder of Mormonism: A Psychological Study of Joseph Smith, Jr.* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1902), pp. 369–95, and Fawn M. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1946), pp. 419–33.

The recent attempt by Wayne L. Cowdrey, Howard A. David, and Donald R. Scales (*Who Really Wrote the Book of Mormon?* [Santa Anna: Vision House, 1977]) to prove once again the Rigdon–Spaulding connection is even to the independent historian entirely unsatisfactory. Excluding from this observation the first two self-contained appendices (“Book of Abraham,” pp. 190–96, and “Joseph Smith, Peepstone Gazer,” pp. 197–99), the “startling new discovery” relies on probability judgments regarding the identity of handwriting in an unidentified portion of the autograph version of The Book of Mormon and that of Spaulding's handwriting in topically unrelated specimens located at Oberlin College, Ohio. The thesis assuming two different works by Spaulding—that of *Manuscript Story*, acquired in 1885 by James H. Fairchild, president of Oberlin College, and *Manuscript Found*—is legitimated by the same contradictory and historically distant “testimonies” rejected by Riley and Brodie earlier. The literary impossibility of the Dartmouth graduate Spaulding's having written *Manuscript Story* does not need to be repeated in light of Riley's researches, researches entirely neglected by the authors of the recent expose. Also, the cloud of witnesses mustered in support of the Rigdon–Spaulding connection consists of sources collected at the height of anti-Mormon feelings in the second half of the nineteenth century and finds no corroboration from earlier testimony. On account of its sensational character and the lack of the most basic scientific conventions, the alleged expose hardly deserves scholarly attention. A book dealing primarily with Sidney Rigdon which does not refer a single time to the only two scholarly biographies available—those of Daryl Chase and F. Mark McKiernan—loses its scientific credibility.

The section pertaining to our topic of investigation, Rigdon's earlier career (pp. 92–94), reveals a similar neglect of primary and secondary literature. As we shall demonstrate, Sidney Rigdon was not ordained “during 1818 or 1819” as the authors claim, but between April and August of 1820. That after his dismissal in 1823 as minister of the First Baptist Church in Pittsburgh he “moved . . . [from] the Baptists to the Disciples (Campbellites)” is an incorrect assessment of the situation. Until the dissolution of the Mahoning Association in 1830, the Disciples were not a sociologically or theologically sharply profiled group. The reform views of Alexander Campbell were held by Adamson Bentley and Sidney Rigdon at least since their meeting with Campbell in 1821. Besides Bentley and Rigdon, most ministers of the Mahoning Association entertained these reform views without severing ties with the larger Baptist body until 1830. Rigdon's dismissal from Pittsburgh was not an event unrelated to the reform cause but was initiated by the opponents of Campbell in the more conservative Redstone Baptist Association, to which Rigdon's Pittsburgh church belonged.

<sup>13</sup>Riley, *The Founder of Mormonism*, p. 382; see especially *The History of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints* (Independence, Mo.: Herald House, 1967), 1: 141; Mark McKiernan, *The Voice of One Crying in the Wilderness: Sidney Rigdon, Religious Reformer, 1793–1876* (Lawrence, Kans.: Coronado Press, 1971), p. 38; and Daryl Chase, “Sidney Rigdon: Early Mormon” (M.A. thesis, University of Chicago, 1931), p. 54.



conclusions drawn from the church record in Warren, locate him in Pittsburgh in 1819, three years earlier than the anti-Spaulding writers suggest. If we assume that in order to facilitate the interim charge even previous association of Sidney with Pittsburgh is likely, especially in light of the geographical proximity of Peter's Creek to Pittsburgh, the common Redstone associational affiliation of the church with the Pittsburgh church, as well as the personal contact of Peter's Creek pastor David Philips with the Pittsburgh church, it may have been historically possible—but unlikely—that Sidney Rigdon met Solomon Spaulding (who died in 1816) or the printer in whose office Sidney was said to have read the manuscript. However, the time frame still does not establish any link with Joseph Smith, the necessary basis for the Spaulding theory. Also, the Jacob Smith of Middleborough, Massachusetts, who, according to the church record, was jointly received into membership of the Warren church with Sidney Rigdon, is unrelated to Joseph Smith. The new data advanced in the preceding pages in no way support the Spaulding theory; they do provide, however, a possible motive for Rigdon's deletion in the *Times and Seasons* biography of reference to his first Pittsburgh stay. That such deletions for polemical purposes are not uncommon is attested throughout the history of religions in general and of Christianity in particular.

However, our knowledge of Sidney Rigdon's assumed brief stay in Pittsburgh rests chiefly on an interpretation of the church record in Warren in light of his son's testimony and is far from being conclusive. Unfortunately, the early church records burned in the great conflagration of Pittsburgh in 1845 and thus cannot be consulted to settle this point.<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup>Mr. Thomas J. Gregory interprets the evidence differently in his forthcoming study on Sidney Rigdon. He assumes the chronology of the *Times and Seasons* to be correct and believes that Rigdon's move to Warren was necessitated by the resignation of Adamson Bentley, the previous minister. The amelioration of ecclesiastical affairs brought about a reinstitution of the old minister and thus shattered Rigdon's original hopes of becoming minister there. And yet, "for some reason which can only be guessed at—perhaps to study with Bentley—Rigdon decided to join the Warren Church and was accepted as a member on 4 March 1820" (pp. 4–5). This reconstruction has no verification from the sources. The church record in Warren does not evidence such a motivation on Rigdon's part. It is silent about Sidney Rigdon until his placing membership in March of 1820. Furthermore, it would be psychologically unsound to assume a cordial rapprochement of Rigdon and Bentley in March of 1820 had Rigdon previously hoped to benefit from the church strife. Besides, the time during which Adamson Bentley asked to be released from his "pastoral care" was very short, short enough to make a request of this capable independent congregation for outside ministerial help unlikely.

Despite my disagreement with Thomas J. Gregory on this issue, his forthcoming study on Sidney Rigdon is on the whole the most thorough treatment yet offered. For its employment of primary sources alone, the study will prove to become a *sine qua non* for future research on Sidney Rigdon. Thanks are due to Mr. Gregory for providing me with a copy of his research and for suggesting a few more sources for Rigdon's early life.



The early history of Sidney Rigdon emerges as follows:

In 1817 he became a member of Peter's Creek Baptist Church.<sup>15</sup> Founded in 1773, Peter's Creek Baptist Church originally belonged to the old Redstone Baptist Association<sup>16</sup> and later, in 1840, to the Pittsburgh Association, whose churches were situated "in different directions around the city, but mostly south and east."<sup>17</sup> The Reverend David Philips, Rigdon's pastor, a native of Wales and the outstanding preacher of the district, had held the longest pastorate in the church's history. Still, during his tenure as minister the former

---

<sup>15</sup>Peter's Creek Baptist Church in Library, Pennsylvania, is still in existence today. Sidney Rigdon's presence there in 1817 is attested by a fragile old sheet of paper, taken from a larger notebook, with the following notation: "A list of Members of the Peters Creek Regural [*sic*] Baptist from its organisation [*sic*] in 1773 to the present time as near as can be ascertained [*sic*] to the present time . . . 1817 Sidney Rigdon." According to the church's historian, Mrs. Vaughn P. Chapman, the list seems to have been compiled in the late 1800s from older records (personal communication of 24 May 1978). Robert Patterson, "Solomon Spaulding and the Book of Mormon," in *History of Washington County, Pennsylvania with Biographical Sketches of Many of Its Pioneers and Prominent Men*, ed. Boyd Crumrine (Philadelphia: L. H. Everts & Co, 1872), p. 431, gives 31 May 1817 as the date of Rigdon's joining Peter's Creek church. Samuel Williams, minister of the First Baptist Church of Pittsburgh from 1827 to 1856, reports the following details regarding Rigdon's conversion and stay at Peter's Creek:

Sidney Rigdon was reared on a farm about twelve miles from the city of Pittsburgh, situated near to the Peter's Creek Baptist House of worship. He professed to experience a change of heart when a young man, and proposed to join the church under the care of Elder David Philips. But there was so much miracle about his conversion, and so much parade about his profession, that the pious and discerning Pastor, entertained serious doubts at the time in regard to the genuineness of the work. He was received, however, by the church, and baptised by the Pastor, with some fears and doubts upon his mind. Very soon, Diotrephes like, he began to put himself forward and seek the preeminence, and was well nigh supplanting the tried and faithful minister who had reared, and nursed, and fed the church, for a long series of years. So thoroughly convinced was father Philips by this time, that he was not possessed of the spirit of Christ, notwithstanding his miraculous conversion, and flippant speech, that he declared his belief, "that as long as he (Sidney) should live, he would be a curse to the church of Christ!" (S. Williams, *Mormonism Exposed* [Pittsburgh: n.p., (1842?)], pp. 1-2; the title is not listed in Chad J. Flake's *A Mormon Bibliography: 1830-1930* [Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1978].)

Williams's remarks on Rigdon's character may well be anti-Mormon projections into the early life of the apostate. The intensity of anti-Mormon feeling among the Baptists is well illustrated in I. M. Allen's sketch of the Pittsburgh church in *The United States Baptist Annual Register and Almanac*, 1833 (Philadelphia: T. W. Upstick, 1833), p. 131:

His [John Davis's] successor was Mr. Sidney Rigdon, a superficial, flippant man, who for a season promised some usefulness, but, soon embracing the errors of Alexander Campbell, rent the church in pieces, until only fourteen out of ninety-six members remained on the original ground of their constitution. After prosecuting the work of destruction for two years, Mr. Rigdon was excluded from the connection. He then engaged in the business of destroying churches and propagating Campbellism in the State of Ohio, until he found the book of Mormon to be superior to the Bible for the accomplishment of his favorite object—the common-stock system. This infatuated man is now deluding the ignorant, and transporting his disciples to the New Jerusalem, where they are starving for the necessities of life.

For a historical sketch of the church, see Pankey, *Churches of the Pittsburgh Baptist Association*, pp. 3-6. A church history covering the early period, written on the occasion of the church's 125th anniversary, is reprinted in *Centenary*, pp. 146-49.

<sup>16</sup>On the origin and early history of the Redstone Baptist Association, see David Benedict, *A General History of the Baptist Denomination in America and Other Parts of the World* (Boston: By the Author, 1813), 1: 598-602.

<sup>17</sup>David Benedict, *A General History of the Baptist Denomination in America and Other Parts of the World* (New York: Lewis Colby, 1848), pp. 616-17 (entirely different edition from the one mentioned in footnote 16).



officer in Washington's army and company chief in the War of Independence opposed the Baptist reformers under the leadership of Alexander Campbell and resigned his pastorate in 1824 "by reason of the infirmities of age."<sup>18</sup> Sidney Rigdon may have started his education for the ministry under the Reverend Philips.<sup>19</sup>

In 1818 Sidney moved to North Sewickley on the Connoquenessing River, where he studied for the ministry under the Reverend Andrew Clark, at that time minister of the Providence Regular Baptist Church. Rigdon's arrival there is attested in the minutes of the Providence church with these words: "Feb the 27 1819 Church met [and] opened by Singing & prayer 1st Br Clark stands Moderator 2nd received & read a letter of Dismission Br Sidney Rigdon from the Church of Peters Creek and received him on the same."<sup>20</sup>

The Providence church belonged to the Beaver Baptist Association, which had been formed in 1810 and which was made up of Regular Baptist churches of the border area of Pennsylvania and Ohio. Andrew Clark, who served the church from 1814 to 1820, had been accepted in 1815 by the Association as an ordained minister.<sup>21</sup> He succeeded Sidney's cousin Thomas Rigdon, an influential preacher of the Association.<sup>22</sup> As there were no Baptist theological institutions on the Western Reserve, Sidney Rigdon served as ministerial apprentice with Andrew Clark, learning whatever he could from the experienced minister.

---

<sup>18</sup>Benedict, *General History* (1848), p. 617, and Lauderbaugh, *175th Anniversary of Peters Creek Baptist Church: Library, Pa (1773-1948)*, pp. 22-23. Pankey, *Churches of the Pittsburgh Baptist Association*, pp. 3-4, has David Philips serve for forty-four years, from 1780 to 1824. The illustrious, and later controversial, man had settled in Library after the War of Independence. Before that, he and his three brothers—who had come to America in 1758—had held commissions in Washington's army, had raised a company, and had been its officers. (*Centenary*, p. 100.)

<sup>19</sup>Keller, ed., "A Son's Record of Sidney Rigdon," p. 20; however, *Times and Seasons* 4 (1 May 1843): 177 does not affirm this.

<sup>20</sup>Providence Minutes, MS, p. 95.

<sup>21</sup>The enigmatic resolution regarding Clark's ministerial status reads: "Resolved that the association consider the ordination of Brother Andrew Clark valid; although contrary to the established rules of this body; but as those concerned labored under want of information, the association forebear [*sic*] to censure" (*Beaver Baptist Association Minutes* [1815], p. 4). Andrew Clark—a native of Pennsylvania—was first licensed to preach by the Unity church in 1813. One of the co-founders of this church (founded in 1808) was Thomas Rigdon (*History of the Churches of the Beaver Baptist Association: From 1809 to 1860* [Pittsburgh: W. S. Haven, 1860], pp. 10-11).

<sup>22</sup>*History of the Churches of the Beaver Baptist Association*, p. 7; "History of Providence Baptist Church," *Beaver Minutes* (1913), p. 41. Thomas Rigdon was an influential activist of the Association. He served intermittently as clerk of the Association, participated on many committees, drafted circular letters, and preached the introductory sermons for the Association meetings. Already in 1810, when the first annual meeting was held, Thomas Rigdon is listed as its clerk. At that time he was still a licensed minister of the Regular Baptist Church in New Lisbon, which requested his ordination at the same meeting in 1810 (cf. *Beaver Minutes* [1810], p. 4). He was ordained on 27 October 1810 with the assistance of Sidney Rigdon's future co-worker in Warren—Adamson Bentley—and David Philips (cf. *Beaver Minutes* [1811], p. 3). Thomas Rigdon served several churches of the Association: Providence (1813-1814), Achor (1816-1818), and Unity (1824ff.) (cf. *History of the Churches of the Beaver Baptist Association*, pp. 7, 10, 14). He is also listed as minister of the Eliza church in 1818 (*Beaver Minutes* [1818], p. 3).



Although there was little formal ministerial education at that time, the Association throughout its history searched for an adequate *modus docendi*. In 1812 the Sharon church collected money for the education of young men entering the ministry, and as early as 1813 the Association raised questions in its annual meeting regarding such education.<sup>23</sup> In 1814 the Association recommended “the friends of the Baptist cause” provide patronage and support for the education of ministers,<sup>24</sup> and in 1815 eighty dollars had been collected for destitute ministerial candidates.<sup>25</sup> In 1816 the Association took concrete measures to provide a more formal framework for educating its future ministers. Following the example of Baptists in the Eastern States, the annual meeting resolved to draft a constitution for a “Baptist Theological Society for the education of pious young men for the Gospel ministry”; and the go ahead was given for soliciting financial support from the churches for the education of young ministers.<sup>26</sup> Included on the committee to draft the constitution for the Baptist Theological Society were Thomas Rigdon and Andrew Clark. For reasons unknown to the public, this resolution was rescinded in 1817, and the rather informal theological and practical apprenticeship was retained.<sup>27</sup>

In 1819 when the Association held its annual meeting in New Lisbon, Columbiana County, Ohio, Sidney Rigdon’s name appears for the first time in its minutes.<sup>28</sup> He and John Rigdon,<sup>29</sup> another minister cousin, were invited to seats in the Association and both were part of a committee which drafted the “Circular Letter” that year. At the same meeting Andrew Clark, Adamson Bentley, and another minister were appointed to a committee which was to consider the ordination of Sidney Rigdon, provided the church applied for this ordination.<sup>30</sup> Until this time he had served only as a “licensed” minister.

The distinction between an “ordained” and a “licensed” minister was a real one on the American frontier, even though the responsibilities of the “licensed” ministers at times coincided with

---

<sup>23</sup>*Beaver Minutes* (1812), p. 5; *Beaver Minutes* (1813), pp. 3–4.

<sup>24</sup>*Beaver Minutes* (1814), p. 4.

<sup>25</sup>*Beaver Minutes* (1815), p. 4.

<sup>26</sup>*Beaver Minutes* (1816), pp. 4–6.

<sup>27</sup>*Beaver Minutes* (1817), p. 5.

<sup>28</sup>*Beaver Minutes* (1819), pp. 4–6.

<sup>29</sup>Besides Thomas Rigdon, his two brothers John and Charles were Baptist ministers in the Beaver Association (cf. Hayden, *Early History of the Disciples*, p. 92). All four men—Sidney, Thomas, John, and Charles Rigdon—had at one time been members of Peter’s Creek church. After the division of the Beaver Baptist Association, Sidney’s cousins were active in the Mohican Baptist Association. In his sketch of this association, David Benedict confuses Sidney with John Rigdon (see Benedict, *General History* [1848], p. 888).

<sup>30</sup>*Beaver Minutes* (1819), p. 6.



those of the "ordained" ones. William Warren Sweet distinguishes the two types as follows:

There were two types of Baptist preachers on the frontier, the "licensed" and the "ordained." Licensing a preacher was the first step in the making of a Baptist preacher after he had been permitted to "exercise his gifts" by vote of the church. These licensed ministers frequently served in much the same way that the "local" or "lay" preachers among the Methodists served. That is they preached more or less at large. Frequently a congregation had several of these licensed preachers in the membership and many a Baptist church on the frontier was first gathered and finally organized by these licensed preachers. Frequently "licensed" preachers were called to take regular charge of congregations, when they were generally ordained.<sup>31</sup>

In order to guard against irregular ministers' taking advantage of the frontier churches,<sup>32</sup> the Beaver Baptist Association had retained the power "to see that persons properly qualified, are ordained pastors in the churches, and to prevent them from being imposed [upon] by irregular ministers."<sup>33</sup>

However, before Sidney Rigdon was ordained, he may have left for a short interim charge in Pittsburgh.<sup>34</sup> As demonstrated previously from the church record, he arrived in Warren on 4 March 1820.<sup>35</sup> Concord, the Baptist church in Warren, had been formed on 3 September 1803.<sup>36</sup> On 19 May 1810 Adamson Bentley became its minister, and during his tenure he became the most influential preacher of the Association. He and Sidney Rigdon were further destined to become leaders in the introduction of the Baptist reform movement of Alexander Campbell in that area. After his arrival in Warren, Sidney took residence with his future brother-in-law, Adamson Bentley,<sup>37</sup> and shortly thereafter, on 1 April, Sidney preached a sermon at the church's "regular monthly meeting." At the same

---

<sup>31</sup>See William Warren Sweet, *Religion on the American Frontier: The Baptists 1783-1830* (New York: Henry Holt, 1931), p. 40. For the distinction between the two types of ministers, the "ordained" one and the "licensed" one, see chapter three, "The Frontier Baptist Preacher and the Frontier Baptist Church," pp. 36-57, especially pp. 39-41. Note also the information on p. 40, footnote 8, that "a licensed preacher could only preach, while an ordained preacher might also administer the sacraments." See also pp. 40-41, footnote 8, for the texts of a "Form of ministerial license" and a "Certificate of Ordination."

<sup>32</sup>That such imposition was a problem is attested by the occasional warning issued by the Beaver Association in its minutes, e.g., for 1817, p. 5.

<sup>33</sup>"Constitution and Rules of Decorum of the Beaver Baptist Association," *Beaver Minutes* (1815), p. 10; for the discussion of ordination cf. also the Association's answer to the query of the Bethesda church: "We believe that it is scriptural for one minister in certain cases to ordain another, when he is fully satisfied of his qualifications and have the unanimous request of the church to which he belongs" (*Beaver Minutes* [1819], pp. 4-5; cf. also *Beaver Minutes* [1820], p. 5).

<sup>34</sup>See fns. 7-11.

<sup>35</sup>See fn. 8.

<sup>36</sup>For this and the following, see Hayden, *Early History of the Disciples*, pp. 91-92.

<sup>37</sup>For biographical sketches of A. Bentley, see Hayden, *Early History of the Disciples*, pp. 102-109, and William Baxter, *Life of Elder Walter Scott: With Sketches of His Fellow Laborers, William Hayden, Adamson Bentley, John Henry, and Others* (1874; reprint ed., Nashville: Gospel Advocate, n.d.), pp. 135-39.



time, the church record attests, "Bro Rigdon requested a certificate from the Church stating his standing with us as a Member in fellowship and a lisensed [*sic*] Minister of the Gospel, which was granted."<sup>38</sup> Also on 29 April he preached to the congregation.<sup>39</sup> It appears that sometime between April and August of 1820 Sidney Rigdon must have been ordained, for when the Beaver Baptist Association held its annual meeting on 24 to 26 August in Connoquenessing it could report:

In the 29th article of last year's minutes, there was a committee appointed to set apart, by ordination, the Rev. brethren Joshua Brown and Sidney Rigdon; which committee report that they have ordained the above brethren, according to the appointment of the Association.<sup>40</sup>

Close to his ordination date, Sidney was married to Phebe Brook on 12 June 1820.<sup>41</sup>

Although Sidney Rigdon was ordained and held residence in Warren, his ministry was that of an evangelist traveling in the Western Reserve, holding evangelistic meetings and preaching for small churches which could not afford a regular minister. John Wycliffe Rigdon writes that while residing in Warren his father had no "particular charge," but rather "whenever a vacancy occurred in the country, he always filled it, and in that way acquired a reputation for being a very eloquent preacher."<sup>42</sup> In the six months after his arrival, Sidney Rigdon and Adamson Bentley baptized in Warren and vicinity "upward of ninety persons."<sup>43</sup>

Another event took place during 1820 which would eventually prove significant for the spread of the Baptist reform movement, the future Disciples or Churches of Christ. The Beaver Baptist Association was divided and the newly formed Mahoning Association would become the future seedbed for Alexander Campbell's views.<sup>44</sup> At the annual meeting of the Association in 1819, the committee appointed for dividing the Association reported:

Inasmuch as several churches have requested a division of the association, we reply that we give our free consent; and we recommend to

---

<sup>38</sup>Record, Warren Central Christian Church, p. 71.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid.

<sup>40</sup>*Beaver Minutes* (1820), p. 4. All the dates given for Rigdon's ordination by modern historians have thus to be revised or rendered more precise. Milton V. Backman considers Sidney Rigdon ordained since 1819; whereas F. Mark McKiernan, following Daryl Chase, places the ordination vaguely between 1819 and 1822 (see Milton V. Backman, "The Quest for a Restoration: The Birth of Mormonism in Ohio," *BYU Studies* 12 [Summer 1972]: 352; McKiernan, *The Voice*, p. 71; Daryl Chase, "Sidney Rigdon," pp. 12-13).

<sup>41</sup>*Times and Seasons* 4 (1 May 1843): 177.

<sup>42</sup>Rigdon, Lecture Notes, p. 6; Keller, ed., "A Son's Record of Sidney Rigdon," p. 20.

<sup>43</sup>*Beaver Minutes* (1820), p. 27.

<sup>44</sup>On the Association, its history and that of its individual churches, see *History of the Churches of the Beaver Baptist Association: From 1809 to 1860*.



divide into three parts, and for general lines we propose the state line between Ohio and Pennsylvania, and another on the Tuscarawas; and the churches wishing for division are at liberty to constitute when they think proper; and the Pennsylvania division will be considered the old association, retaining the name of "Beaver Association," and will meet at the time and place stated in the minutes, and the other divisions will make their own arrangements.<sup>45</sup>

It was further voted "that the churches in the middle division of this Association meet at the church Salem by their delegates, on Friday before the 4th Lord's day in October next, as a convention to organize those churches into an association; and that the churches in the Western division meet by their delegates for the same purpose on the Friday before the 4th Lord's day in June next, in church Eliza."<sup>46</sup> The old Beaver Association met, however, once more from 24 to 26 August 1820, at which time the report of Rigdon's ordination was communicated to the Association, and Sidney was asked with his mentor Bentley and cousin Charles to draft the "Corresponding Letter" for the year.<sup>47</sup> Four days later, on Wednesday, 30 August 1820, the "middle division" of the old Beaver Association met at Salem, where Andrew Clark was now minister, and formed the Mahoning Association, covering the counties of Trumbull, Portage, Mahoning, and some of Columbiana County and consisting of the churches of Warren, New Lisbon, Nelson, Youngstown, Salem, Randolph, Liberty, Mount Hope, Bazetta, and Braceville.<sup>48</sup> The Association adopted as its statement of faith that of the old Beaver Association.<sup>49</sup>

Change, however, came quickly when Adamson Bentley and Sidney Rigdon joined the reform camp under Alexander Campbell, who not only opposed the severe Calvinism of the Regular Baptists

---

<sup>45</sup>*Beaver Minutes* (1819), p. 6.

<sup>46</sup>*Ibid.* The other association formed was the Mohican Baptist Association. An activist in this association was Thomas Rigdon. Despite an extensive search, I was able to ascertain only the minutes for 1824–1825.

<sup>47</sup>*Beaver Minutes* (1820), p. 4. The "Corresponding Letter" served as a means of communication between the various Baptist associations. David Benedict, the American Baptist historian, describes the origin and development of this practice as follows:

The way in which our people at all distances communicated with each other as to the state of their churches and their general affairs, was by means of corresponding letters for this purpose, from one association to another. In process of time, these letters were printed in the minutes of the associations; but when I first began to attend some of the oldest bodies of this kind [early 1800s], they appointed men on the spot to write to all with which they had agreed to correspond; the letters thus formed were sent to them in manuscript. . . . The next step was to prepare one letter of a general character for all corresponding associations, some of which were in distant States, and to print it in the minutes. (David Benedict, *Fifty Years among the Baptists* [New York: Sheldon, 1860], p. 87.)

<sup>48</sup>*Minutes of the Mahoning Baptist Association* (1820), pp. 1–2; the minutes can be found as "Appendix C: Minutes of the Mahoning Baptist Association (1820–1827)," in Mary Agnes Smith, "A History of the Mahoning Baptist Association" (M.A. thesis, West Virginia University, Morgantown, 1943), pp. 1–40.

<sup>49</sup>Hayden, *Early History of the Disciples*, p. 29; the full texts of its theological statements are given as appendices A and B in Smith, "A History of the Mahoning Baptist Association."



but also advocated a more emphatic doctrine of faith, repentance, and baptism, as well as the disavowal of the normative character of the Old Testament for "New Testament churches," weekly communion, a radical rejection of all forms of polity and church life not expressly commanded in the scriptures, the weakening of a professional clergy, and a unification scheme among the churches on the basis of the "Bible only."<sup>50</sup> Adamson Bentley had been impressed when reading Campbell's debate with Walker on baptism. In the summer of 1821 when traveling through Virginia, Brothers Bentley and Rigdon visited Alexander Campbell at Buffaloe (the future Bethany, West Virginia) and after a day and a night's stay both men were won over to the reform cause.<sup>51</sup> Later, in 1823 when the opposition from within the Baptists to Campbell's reforming views had grown dangerously and threatened the expulsion of his Brush Run Church from the Redstone Association, he and the newly formed Wellsburg church joined the Mahoning Association. They were thus protected from further persecution while retaining association with the Baptists. However, the logical consequence of Campbell's theological views, to permit in church polity only those designs specifically commanded in holy writ, was self-destructive to the Association and led in 1830 to the abolition of the Mahoning Association altogether.

During his stay with Adamson Bentley, Sidney became a successful preacher, only occasionally preaching in his hometown, Warren.<sup>52</sup>

From 5 to 6 September 1821, Sidney was a member in the council of the Mahoning Baptist Association, convening that year at Palmyra, Portage County, Ohio. At the meeting, he was asked to

---

<sup>50</sup>Vehicles of Campbell's views during this time, besides his eloquent preaching, were his journal *The Christian Baptist* (1823-1830) and two well-publicized debates: one on 19 and 20 June 1820 with John Walker, a Seceder Presbyterian minister, on the topic of baptism; the other in May 1823 with the Presbyterian William L. Maccalla, at which time Sidney Rigdon served as secretary. Still the best concise treatment of Campbell's thought in its historical context is provided by Winfred Ernest Garrison in the book coauthored with Alfred T. DeGroot—*The Disciples of Christ: A History* (St. Louis: The Bethany Press, 1958). For our period, cf. pp. 162-79, 201-206. For further literature on the movement, consult the bibliographical essay in Lester G. McAllister and William E. Tucker, *Journey in Faith: A History of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)* (St. Louis: The Bethany Press, 1975), pp. 463-88. Regarding A. Campbell's differences with and ultimate separation from the Baptists, see his journals *The Christian Baptist* and *The Millennial Harbinger*. See also Benjamin Franklin and T. J. Fisher, *Debate on Some of the Distinctive Differences between the Reformers and Baptists* (Louisville: G. W. Robertson, 1858). Scholarly literature on the subject includes the following studies: Errett Gates, *The Early Relation and Separation of the Baptists and Disciples* (Chicago: Christian Century, 1904); Leo Ashby, "Influence of Alexander Campbell upon the Separation of Disciples and Baptists" (Ph.D. diss., University of Kentucky, Lexington, 1949); Thomas Elmer Pletcher, "Alexander Campbell's Controversy with the Baptists" (Ph.D. diss., University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, 1955).

<sup>51</sup>Cf. the report of the visit in A. Campbell's historical reminiscences in the *Millennial Harbinger*, 3rd ser., 5 (1848): 523; also reprinted in Richardson, *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell*, 2: 44-45.

<sup>52</sup>There is an entry in the church record of 1 September 1821, on which date Sidney Rigdon preached in Warren; but otherwise he was mainly on the circuit.



become the Association's messenger to the Grand River Association and to write the "Corresponding Letter" for the next year.<sup>53</sup>

On 2 December 1821, nearly one-and-a-half years after their marriage, Rigdon's wife Phebe was baptized. The church record of 1 December 1821 reads:

Examined Phebe Rigdon in regard to her religious exercise of mind and received her for baptism. Lordsday Dec. 2, Sister Phebe Rigdon was baptised.<sup>54</sup>

Alexander Campbell, who in 1821 still had some influence in the Redstone Association, to which the First Baptist Church of Pittsburgh belonged, perhaps helped Sidney get a pastorate at this church.<sup>55</sup> Sidney Rigdon left Warren on 5 January 1822. The church record attests Rigdon and his wife's departure with the words: "Bro. Bentley being absent Br. Rigdon was appointed moderator and Bro. B. Austin Clerk (pro tem). Br. S. Rigdon and Phebe his wife requested letters of dismission to the Baptist Church at Pittsburgh which was granted."<sup>56</sup>

---

<sup>53</sup>Smith, "A History of the Mahoning Baptist Association, Appendix C," pp. 6-7. The latter task remained unattended because of Rigdon's removal to the Pittsburgh church, which was under the jurisdiction of the Redstone Baptist Association.

<sup>54</sup>Record, Warren Central Christian Church, p. 79.

<sup>55</sup>Richardson, *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell*, 2: 46. The First Church of Pittsburgh was founded in 1812. Sidney Rigdon, who succeeded John Davis, was its fourth minister (cf. Benedict, *General History* [1848], p. 617, and the church histories listed in footnote 10).

<sup>56</sup>Record, Warren Central Christian Church, p. 79.



# Sidney Rigdon: Post Nauvoo

Thomas J. Gregory

Although Sidney Rigdon was a prominent and well-known figure in early Mormon history, his life and thought after his excommunication from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are almost completely unknown to Latter-day Saints today. For this reason, his activities during this period shall be given in brief summary. Thereafter, four aspects of Rigdon's life after his excommunication will be considered in some detail: (1) his views on Joseph and Emma Smith, (2) his supposed attempt to return to the Church's doctrine and organization as practiced in Kirtland, (3) his beliefs about and involvement with polygamy, and (4) his relationship to and feelings concerning individual apostates and factions, feelings resulting directly or indirectly from Joseph and Hyrum Smith's deaths.

## PITTSBURGH

On 8 September 1844 Sidney Rigdon was excommunicated in Nauvoo. He did not remain there; in fact, by the eleventh he reached St. Louis, and on the twelfth or thirteenth he left that city for Pittsburgh. Within a month he had persuaded the Church members there to follow him and had begun publishing a newspaper to support his claims to leadership.<sup>1</sup>

While Pittsburgh remained his stronghold through May of 1846,<sup>2</sup> many branches of the Mormon Church also felt his influence.

---

Thomas J. Gregory, a bank officer in American Fork, Utah, is a former master's candidate in history at Brigham Young University. He is preparing a larger study of Sidney Rigdon's life and work.

<sup>1</sup>Orson Hyde to "Dear Brethren," 12 September 1844, Box 39, folder 18, Brigham Young Collection, Archives Division, Historical Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; hereafter cited as Church Archives. See also *Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate* (Pittsburgh), 15 October 1844, p. 11. This paper's name was later changed to *Messenger and Advocate of the Church of Christ*, and it also moved its offices to Greencastle, Pennsylvania. Both titles are hereafter referred to as *PM&A* (*Pittsburgh Messenger and Advocate*). In addition, see *People's Organ* (St. Louis), 16 and 18 September 1844. Cited in Cecil A. Snider, "Newspaper Clippings about the Mormons in Ohio, Illinois, Missouri, etc., from Contemporary Newspapers in Various States," 7: 259-68.

<sup>2</sup>James Smith to James Strang, 16 May 1846, item 22a. The original is in the James J. Strang Manuscripts, Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut. Hereafter cited as Strang Papers. The writer had access to a microfilm copy. James Smith was at one time a member of Rigdon's Grand Council. See *PM&A*, 15 April 1846, p. 168. Manuscript quotations in this article are by permission of the respective repositories.



By early November 1844, Sidney had traveled to New York City and Boston, and to New Egypt and Woodstown, New Jersey. Returning to Pittsburgh, probably about the middle of December, he indicated that he had organized a congregation of his followers in each of those cities and that it had been the most successful mission he had ever undertaken.<sup>3</sup>

Sidney did not rest long in Pittsburgh. On 16, 18, and 20 February 1845 he spoke in the Kirtland Temple to what he estimated to be about nine hundred persons a day. The next week he again preached in Kirtland and also in Painesville to what he said were large groups. He then returned to Pittsburgh.<sup>4</sup>

With great optimism, he organized the Church of Christ there on 7 and 8 April 1845.<sup>5</sup> But the subsequent death of his daughter Eliza affected his mental stability, and he became overly visionary, confusing and even angering many members. As a result, widespread dissension developed in his church.<sup>6</sup> The church was further fragmented by a decision, made by 25 July, to move the headquarters from Pittsburgh and to require the Pittsburgh members to help pay for the new location with the proceeds from the sale of their own belongings.<sup>7</sup>

#### ANTRIM TOWNSHIP

By 15 August 1845, while looking for a new location for the church's headquarters, Sidney Rigdon, accompanied by William McLellin, found a farm in Franklin County, Pennsylvania, which he thought suitable.<sup>8</sup> Sufficient money was raised, and on 3 April 1846 Sidney's brother-in-law, Peter Boyer, paid its owner, Andrew

---

<sup>3</sup>PM&A, 15 January 1845, pp. 88–89; *The Prophet* (New York City), 16 November 1844, p. 2, and 7 December 1844, p. 2; *New York Herald*, 22 November 1844, p. 2.

<sup>4</sup>PM&A, 15 March 1845, p. 145. *The Telegraph* (Painesville, Ohio), 12 February to 5 March 1845, does not mention Rigdon's preaching. Another account of Rigdon's preaching in Kirtland, which may refer to a second visit at a later date, is found in Reuben McBride to Brigham Young, 28 July 1845, Box 18, folder 15, Brigham Young Collection, Church Archives.

<sup>5</sup>PM&A, 15 April 1845, pp. 169–72.

<sup>6</sup>John W. Rigdon, "Life Story of Sidney Rigdon," p. 184, Church Archives. There are two pages numbered "184." This is the second page thus numbered. See also John W. Rigdon, "Lecture Written by John W. Rigdon on the Early History of the Church," p. 26, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah. There are two copies; page references in this paper refer to the typescript. In addition, see Benjamin Chapman to James Strang, 24 March 1846, item 16, and James Smith to James Strang, 16 May 1846, item 22a, Strang Papers, Church Archives. See also a list in the Church Archives of revelations which Sidney Rigdon purportedly received in Pittsburgh. Eliza probably died between 26 September 1845 and 13 May 1846.

<sup>7</sup>*New York Messenger*, 20 September 1845, p. 91; PM&A, July 1846, p. 490.

<sup>8</sup>PM&A, 1 August 1845, p. 281, 15 August 1845, p. 297, March 1846, p. 464, July 1846, p. 489; William Terman to Brigham Young, 7 March 1846, Box 19, folder 4, Brigham Young Collection, Church Archives. Some of the research on the Antrim period was funded by a grant from the college council of Brigham Young University.



McLanahan, \$14,700 for approximately 390 acres in Cumberland Valley about a mile west of Greencastle.<sup>9</sup>

On 13 May Sidney Rigdon started for Antrim Township with his family and Ebenezer Robinson. Before moving to McLanahan's farm, Sidney and a few of his followers lived for a short time in Greencastle in a home on the corner of Carlisle and Madison streets. Most of his one hundred to two hundred adherents who moved to Antrim Township joined him on the farm.<sup>10</sup> Sidney evidently had plans to build extensive manufacturing facilities and a temple, but none of these were ever built—possibly due to lack of money.<sup>11</sup>

He proselyted near what is now Tomstown and interested a few individuals. He also preached in Greencastle and frequently among a communistic group of Seventh Day Baptists located at Snow Hill, but without success.<sup>12</sup> In June and July of 1846 Rigdon's newspaper had praised the kindness and hospitality of Greencastle's citizens, but by December Rigdon's feelings had apparently changed. At that time, according to William McLellin, who by then had become embittered and had left Sidney, the Rigdonites desired conflict. Sidney Rigdon himself supposedly tried to arouse opposition in Greencastle so that blood would cover the town.<sup>13</sup>

Rigdon's group commenced a six-month-long conference in the farm's barn in September of 1846. During this conference, Sidney Rigdon became emotionally overwrought and taught a number of doctrines which caused many to leave him. As a result, by mid-December only a faithful few remained. Nonetheless, the conference continued another three months. Sometime during these three months, Sidney and his remaining followers apparently knelt in the meadow back of the barn from sunset until dawn, awaiting the

---

<sup>9</sup>Deeds of Franklin County, Pennsylvania, 1784–1963, 20: 319–20. Copy on film (42408, pt. 66), at the Genealogical Society of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah. *PM&A*, June 1846, p. 478, also notes the farm had “been purchased and the deed secured.” *PM&A*, November 1845, p. 398, implies that by that date Boyer had already paid \$1,500 towards the purchase of the land. Due to other printed accounts of the purchase, a search was made in the index to “Mortgages of Franklin County, March, 1821 to February, 1846,” which showed no record of a mortgage (Genealogical Society, 42410, pt. 2).

<sup>10</sup>James Smith to James Strang, 16 May 1846, item 22a, Strang Papers, Church Archives. Isaac McCauley noted that “Elders Hyde and Heber, William E. McLellin, Zody [Leonard Soby], Grimes, and Ranger also moved to the Antrim farm” (I. H. M’Cauley, *Historical Sketch of Franklin County, Pennsylvania* [Chambersburgh, Pa.: John M. Pomeroy, 1878], p. 192). Ebenezer Robinson indicated that Samuel James, Edward B. Wingate, Joseph H. Newton, Leonard Soby, and Amos B. Tomlinson also followed Rigdon to Antrim Township (Ebenezer Robinson to J. Fraise Richard, Jr., 24 April 1886. First printed in [Chambersburgh] *Public Opinion* and cited in the *Franklin County School Annual* [Chambersburgh, Pa.: N.p., 1930], pp. 53–54. A xerox copy is at the Harold B. Lee Library, BYU. See also *Echo-Pilot* [Greencastle, Pa.], 22 September 1949, sec. 2, p. 1, col. 6).

<sup>11</sup>*St. Louis American*, 17 June 1846, p. 3; cited in Snider, “Newspaper Clippings,” p. 264. See also *Kittochitunny Historical Society Papers* 9 (Chambersburgh, Pa.: Franklin Repository Press, 1923), p. 352.

<sup>12</sup>*Kittochitunny Papers*, pp. 70 and 355; Jacob H. Stoner, *Historical Papers—Franklin County and the Cumberland Valley Pennsylvania* (Chambersburgh, Pa.: Craft Press, Inc., 1947), p. 264.

<sup>13</sup>*PM&A*, June 1846, p. 473, and July 1846, p. 486; *The Ensign of Liberty of the Church of Christ* (Kirtland, Ohio), April 1847, p. 19, and *Kittochitunny Papers*, p. 355.



advent of the Messiah.<sup>14</sup> If this account is true, the Savior's failure to appear likely caused most of Rigdon's last supporters to depart.

In January 1847, a judgment of \$2,980 was awarded Andrew McLanahan for a debt owed him by Peter Boyer. As Peter Boyer either refused to pay or had no funds, the farm—for which he had paid—was seized on 7 April 1847. On 6 August 1847 it had been sold to pay McLanahan his judgment.<sup>15</sup>

#### FRIENDSHIP, ALLEGANY CO., NEW YORK

About May, seeing that the farm would likely be sold, Sidney left Antrim Township. He moved to Jackson Hill between Friendship and Cuba, New York, to a farm belonging to George Robinson, the husband of his daughter Athalia.<sup>16</sup> While there he preached the only public sermon he apparently ever gave in the Friendship area.<sup>17</sup> In November or December of 1850, Sidney relocated at the Robinsons' home on the corner of Main and East Water streets in Friendship. Sometime before 2 June 1859, Sidney, his wife Phebe, and their daughter Phebe began living with the Rigdons' daughter Sarah and her husband, Edward Wingate, who also lived in Friendship.<sup>18</sup> Here, Sidney and his wife apparently remained until Sidney died.

For about six years after moving to New York, Sidney had no known involvement with Mormonism or any of its offshoots. Then in 1853 he wrote Lyman Wight, asking if news of a Texas goldstrike were true and indicating he might move to Texas.<sup>19</sup> As far as is now known, Lyman Wight never answered. In 1856, Sidney received a letter from a onetime Latter-day Saint who had more recently been a

---

<sup>14</sup>Peter Hess to James Strang, 14 December 1846, item 45, Strang Papers; John Rigdon, "Life Story," second p. 184; Frederick B. Blair, comp., *The Memoirs of W. W. Blair* (Lamoni, Iowa: Herald Publishing House, 1908), p. 133; Joseph H. Newton to Stephen Post, 29 August 1864, The Papers of Stephen Post, Church Archives (hereafter cited as Post Papers). The Post Papers are also on microfilm at the Harold B. Lee Library, BYU. This copy, which is the one this writer generally used, seldom gives box and folder designations, and so they are generally not given in this article. Letters in this collection are almost all arranged in chronological order and can be found by using the collection's register. When a letter is out of order or apart from the main group of letters, a box and folder location is supplied. Unless otherwise identified, all letters cited in this article are from the Post Papers. (See also *The Ensign of Liberty of the Church of Christ* [Kirtland, Ohio], April 1847, p. 19; *Kittochitunny Papers*, p. 423.)

<sup>15</sup>Deeds of Franklin County, Pennsylvania, 1784–1963, 21: 39 (Genealogical Society, 42408, pt. 66). This chronology is supported by the fact that some of Rigdon's followers were still in Antrim in mid-July 1847 hoping the farm would be redeemed (Jeremiah Hatch, Jr., to Abram Hatch, 11 July 1847, Hatch Family Papers, Church Archives).

<sup>16</sup>Jeremiah Hatch to Abram Hatch, 11 July 1847, Hatch Family Papers, Church Archives; Sidney Rigdon to Stephen Post, 23 January 1856; John Rigdon, "Lecture," p. 26, and "Life Story of Sidney Rigdon," second p. 184.

<sup>17</sup>John W. Rigdon, "Life Story of Sidney Rigdon," p. 185.

<sup>18</sup>Papers of Sidney Rigdon, Church Archives. See also Jeremiah Hatch to his nephew, 2 June 1859, Hatch Family Papers.

<sup>19</sup>Sidney Rigdon to Lyman Wight, 22 May 1853, Lyman Wight Letterbook, Archives of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, the Auditorium, Independence, Missouri; hereafter cited as RLDS Archives.



Strangite, Stephen Post. In his answer to this and Post's next letter Sidney attempted to show that he was the rightful leader of the Lord's work. Post still had doubts and wrote again. Sidney startled Post by calling him to be his spokesman, but Post accepted the call.<sup>20</sup>

Sidney quickly conceived some elaborate plans. In April 1856, he directed Stephen Post to call a conference for October at Kirtland and to issue a pamphlet setting forth Sidney's views on succession in the Church. Post did neither. Sidney then requested Post to provide the financial support to publish a treatise which Sidney had written on the future of the world. Although received by Post, this also was probably never published.<sup>21</sup>

As a result of their correspondence, Sidney Rigdon did preach sometime between 19 September and 3 December 1859 in Center-ville, Crawford County, Pennsylvania, where Stephen Post lived.<sup>22</sup> Their exchange of letters between 1856 and 1863 served to strengthen their relationship but otherwise had few concrete results. During this period, Sidney Rigdon wrote to at least four other individuals, but nothing came of that correspondence.<sup>23</sup>

Then about 1861, Joseph Newton of Sidney's Pittsburgh and Antrim Township church began a correspondence with him that lasted for the next several years.<sup>24</sup> Little resulted from their letters until sometime in 1862 when various persons approached Joseph Newton, on their own initiative, and requested baptism. He became excited and considered preaching publicly, but Sidney dissuaded him.<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless baptisms continued. By May 1863, enough persons had been baptized in Philadelphia that Sidney traveled there, remained for more than three weeks, and organized the Church of Jesus Christ of the Children of Zion. At this time, Sidney Rigdon also convinced Joseph Newton to pay for the printing of *An Appeal to the Latter-Day Saints*, which will be discussed later.<sup>26</sup>

This church remained centered in Philadelphia only a short time. In June 1864 Sidney counseled Stephen Post to move to Iowa. Then in July Sidney told his leaders they should live close together in Iowa.

---

<sup>20</sup>Sidney Rigdon to Stephen Post, 23 January, 22 February, and March 1856.

<sup>21</sup>Sidney Rigdon to "Dear Brother," written in April 1856, after the fifteenth; Sidney Rigdon to Stephen Post, 3 December 1856. An unsigned copy of this treatise is in the Post Papers.

<sup>22</sup>John Rigdon to Stephen Post, 3 December 1859, and Sidney Rigdon to Stephen Post, 19 September 1859.

<sup>23</sup>During the same time period, Sidney may also have taught at Simeon Atwood's in Erie County, Pennsylvania. Sidney Rigdon to Stephen Post, 19 September 1857, (after the 14th) November 1869.

<sup>24</sup>Joseph Newton to Stephen Post, 15 May 1863.

<sup>25</sup>Sidney Rigdon to Stephen Post, October 1862, Box 2, folder 3. This letter is filed by mistake (due to its unclear date) with letters dated October 1869.

<sup>26</sup>Joseph H. Newton to Stephen Post, 25 June 1863, and a newspaper article which appeared in the *Signal*, Post Papers.



Other members were instructed to form branches in the West about two to three hundred miles apart and to avoid settling in Missouri and Kansas.<sup>27</sup> By April 1865 both Stephen Post and Joseph Newton had located in Attica, Marion County, Iowa. This branch became and remained the largest concentration of Rigdonites until they moved near Emerson, Manitoba, Canada, in August 1875.<sup>28</sup>

For a time, Sidney Rigdon considered moving to Attica,<sup>29</sup> but he stayed in Friendship, where he guided the church by mail, and relied on his two counselors—Elders Post and Newton—to carry out his directives. This system worked fairly well until May 1868, at which time he became displeased with Newton's teachings. Sidney delayed disciplinary action, hoping Newton would decide to follow his counsel. But Newton did not; so in April 1869 Sidney wrote Stephen Post that Joseph Newton was no longer to act as a member of the First Presidency.<sup>30</sup> Joseph Newton was eventually excommunicated, as was John A. Forgeus, the president of Rigdon's Quorum of the Twelve.<sup>31</sup> Although the movement had lost its initial impetus, Sidney Rigdon kept sending letters, and a remnant held together for at least six years after his death in 1876.<sup>32</sup>

#### JOSEPH AND EMMA SMITH

Rigdon's views of Joseph and Emma help explain his attitude toward Joseph Smith III, and Joseph III's feelings toward him. Rigdon's comments also suggest that tension between Emma and himself during the Nauvoo period helped estrange Joseph and Sidney. His treatment of his relations with the Smiths also serves to illustrate the type of changes which occurred many times in Rigdon's perspective of past events and, finally, shows the extent to which Sidney felt himself persecuted.

Upon his return to Nauvoo from Pittsburgh in August 1844, Sidney taught that Joseph, though dead, still held the keys of the kingdom and that a temporary guardian needed to be called to preside over the Church in Joseph's name. Until he left Nauvoo for

---

<sup>27</sup>Sidney Rigdon to Stephen Post, 26 June 1864, and Joseph H. Newton, 19 July 1864.

<sup>28</sup>Attica was probably at its height in 1867, when about thirty members lived there. "Church Record of the Attica (Iowa) Branch of the Church of Jesus Christ of the Children of Zion," p. 1, and Journal of Stephen Post, 17 August 1875, Post Papers.

<sup>29</sup>Section 18, Copying Book A, 1 September 1864, Post Papers. In July 1869, Rigdon's followers in Attica were still expecting that he would move there (Heman C. Smith, *History of the Reorganized Church* [Independence, Mo.: N.p., 1900], 3: 538).

<sup>30</sup>Sidney Rigdon to "Brethren of the Priesthood," May 1868, and Sidney Rigdon to Stephen Post, 1 April 1869.

<sup>31</sup>Journal of Stephen Post, 1 July and 18 September 1869, Post Papers.

<sup>32</sup>"Church Record of the Attica Branch of The Church of Jesus Christ of the Children of Zion," pp. 28-30, Post Papers.



Pittsburgh, Sidney Rigdon evidently maintained publicly that Joseph had fallen as a faithful martyr.<sup>33</sup>

In St. Louis, on his way to Pittsburgh, Sidney also implied that he and Emma, Joseph's widow, shared good relations. According to Orson Hyde, Sidney commented to James Small that Emma had offered to let him have the new translation of the Bible and "other sacred things" and had said she would follow him.<sup>34</sup> Whether or not Emma did make such a statement, Rigdon's assertion that she did suggests that he then had no publicly announced bitter feelings about Emma; he evidently welcomed her help and association.<sup>35</sup>

By November, Sidney had begun openly declaring that Joseph had fallen during the Nauvoo period due to the introduction of polygamy.<sup>36</sup> Sidney may have finally been venting bitter feelings which he might have held against Joseph for moving in August 1843 to disfellowship him if certain charges proved true and for attempting in the October 1843 conference to have him removed from the First Presidency.<sup>37</sup> Or he may have been upset because he believed Joseph had desired to take his daughter Nancy as a plural wife in 1842.<sup>38</sup> Another possibility is that he felt polygamy was antithetical to his personal piety. Thus he may have attacked Joseph in order to assail polygamy; he could not logically reject practicing polygamy, unless he presented Joseph as a fallen prophet at the time it was introduced.

Rigdon's bitterness toward polygamy during the Pittsburgh and Antrim periods seems to suggest that those feelings were then the basic cause of claiming Joseph a fallen prophet. But years later, in

---

<sup>33</sup>Journal of Wilford Woodruff, 8 August 1844, Church Archives; Journal of Brigham Young, 7 August 1844, Box 47, folder 2, and 6 September 1844, p. 60, Box 46, folder 1, Brigham Young Collection, Church Archives; *The Prophet* (New York City), 7 December 1844, p. 3.

<sup>34</sup>Orson Hyde to "Dear Brethren," 12 September 1844, Box 39, folder 18, Brigham Young Collection, Church Archives.

<sup>35</sup>On 8 September 1844, William Marks said that Emma had indicated within the past week that she and Sidney Rigdon were on good terms (*Times and Seasons*, 5 [1 October 1844]: 665).

<sup>36</sup>On Joseph's being a fallen prophet see, for example, *PM&A*, 1 November 1844, pp. 2-3, 6, and 8, and 1 February 1845, pp. 105 and 107. For statements by Sidney and his followers that Joseph introduced polygamy, see pp. 60-61 and fn. 59 of this article.

<sup>37</sup>"Journal History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," 13 August 1843, Church Archives; a microfilm copy is in the Harold B. Lee Library, BYU. *Times & Seasons*, 4 (15 September 1843): 329-30.

<sup>38</sup>Although their versions differ in important ways, John C. Bennett, John Rigdon, and Orson Hyde all indicated that Nancy told her father that Joseph Smith had asked her to be his wife. From Joseph's account of his meeting with Rigdon's family, it appears that Sidney believed his daughter and was angry at the Prophet. (John C. Bennett, *The History of the Saints, or, A Expose of Joe Smith and Mormonism* [Boston: Leland and Whiting, 1842], p. 245; John Rigdon's affidavit cited in Joseph F. Smith, Jr., *Blood Atonement and the Origin of Plural Marriage* [Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1905], pp. 83-84; Orson Hyde, *Speech of Orson Hyde delivered before the High Priests Quorum, In Nauvoo, April 27th, 1845* [Liverpool: James and Woodburn, 1845], p. 28. See also Joseph Smith, Jr., *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 7 vols. [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1969], 5: 46 [hereafter cited as HC].) John Rigdon said that the difficulties between Sidney and Joseph concerning Nancy were settled. But John probably softened the truth in order to make his father appear as good as possible (John Rigdon, "Life Story of Sidney Rigdon," p. 177).



correspondence with Stephen Post and in a printed pamphlet, Sidney Rigdon emphasized Joseph's supposed defamation of his and his family's character.<sup>39</sup>

During the Pittsburgh and Antrim periods, Sidney's publicly stated feelings toward Emma changed, and by June 1846, he was sharply criticizing her as well as Joseph.<sup>40</sup> Eleven years later, Sidney was calling Emma "a perfect she devil."<sup>41</sup> In 1864 he accused her of being the person who led Joseph to slander him, labeling this as the major cause of his excommunication.<sup>42</sup>

#### SUPPOSED RETURN TO KIRTLAND'S DOCTRINE AND ORGANIZATION

After Sidney Rigdon was excommunicated, he had opportunity of renouncing any doctrine or organizational innovation which he felt had corrupted the Church. He had a chance, if he so desired, to return to the Church's doctrine and organizations as he had known them during the Kirtland period. In fact, he stated his intention to do so,<sup>43</sup> but in actuality he did not. Sidney did reject polygamy and the expanded role of the Twelve, but he accepted a number of major innovations introduced in Nauvoo and, in fact, added a number of his own.<sup>44</sup>

In Nauvoo, Sidney had taught baptism for the dead<sup>45</sup> and had received a further part of his endowment.<sup>46</sup> He definitely continued to teach baptism for the dead and probably also taught what he understood of the endowment.<sup>47</sup> In his correspondence with Stephen Post, Sidney never mentioned the endowment nor did he comment directly on baptism for the dead, but he did indicate on one occasion that if the members of the LDS Church did not repent that they and their dead would "perish together." Sidney also frequently stated that a major part of his own mission was to prepare the way for

---

<sup>39</sup>Sidney Rigdon to Stephen Post, 25 January 1864, Box 5, folder 8. An undated copy of this letter is found in Section 4, Copying Book A, between October 1863 and 19 June 1864, Post Papers. See also Joseph H. Newton, William Richards, and William Stanley, *An Appeal to the Latter-Day Saints* (Philadelphia: N.p. 1863), p. 48, Post Papers.

<sup>40</sup>*PM&A*, June 1846, p. 475.

<sup>41</sup>Sidney Rigdon to Stephen Post, 6 March 1857.

<sup>42</sup>Sidney Rigdon to Stephen Post, 25 January 1864. See fn. 39.

<sup>43</sup>*PM&A*, 1 November 1844, p. 16.

<sup>44</sup>There are no known evaluations by Sidney Rigdon of his comments on his Nauvoo views or on his post-Nauvoo views concerning (1) the nature of the Godhead, (2) a plurality of gods, and (3) adoption by sealing. Josiah Ells, who was with Sidney in both Pittsburgh and Antrim, indicated that while in Antrim he once heard Sidney lecture on the "embodying of the Holy Ghost." Unfortunately, I have been unable thus far to find a copy of the *PM&A* extra in which it was published (*The True LDS Herald*, 15 January 1864, p. 23).

<sup>45</sup>*Times and Seasons*, 2 (15 April 1841): 387.

<sup>46</sup>*Times and Seasons*, 5 (2 September 1844): 638; *HC*, 7: 238; Hyde, *Speech*, p. 8; *The Prophet* (New York City), 16 November 1844, p. 2, col. 2.

<sup>47</sup>*PM&A*, 1 May 1845, p. 186; James Smith to James Strang, 16 May 1846, item 22a, Strang Papers. By May, Smith had left Rigdon to follow Strang.



Elijah's coming.<sup>48</sup> During the Pittsburgh period, Sidney also ordained many as prophets, priests, and kings.<sup>49</sup> Over twenty years later, he had Joseph Newton bestow on Stephen Post the same honor.<sup>50</sup>

Also while in Nauvoo, Sidney had become a Mason. There is no known evidence which indicates whether or not he participated in Masonry while in Pennsylvania, but upon moving to New York he again became involved. On 18 June 1851, Allegany (Masonic) Lodge Number 225 received a charter. Among the charter members were Sidney Rigdon and three of his sons-in-law—George W. Robinson, Jeremiah Hatch, and E. B. Wingate.<sup>51</sup> Sidney's son, John W. Rigdon, noted that his father was a "very dedicated Mason and was a regular attendant [*sic*] at the Masonic Lodge." In addition, John maintained that Sidney was "frequently called upon to speak at public occasions of the order" and when he died was given a Masonic burial.<sup>52</sup>

Although Sidney maintained some of the doctrine as well as some of the organization as practiced in Nauvoo, he introduced a number of organizational changes into his churches. In Pittsburgh and Antrim, his church had a council of seventy-three which was next in authority to the First Presidency.<sup>53</sup> While this structural alteration was not found in his second church, Sidney did introduce a new relationship between the members of the First Presidency. Instead of designating Stephen Post and Joseph Newton as first and second counselors with one subordinate to the other, he assigned them separate responsibilities. In addition, both men were each to have

---

<sup>48</sup>Sidney Rigdon to Stephen Post, 23 January 1856.

<sup>49</sup>*PM&A*, 15 April 1845, p. 168; Journal of George Albert Smith, 3 September 1844, p. 84, Church Archives; *The Prophet* (New York City), 7 December 1844, p. 3; John A. Forgeus to Stephen Post, 2 May 1869, Post Collection.

<sup>50</sup>Journal of Stephen Post, 8 March 1868, Post Papers. See also, Joseph H. Newton to Stephen Post, 17 January 1865, and Section 20 (dated between 13 December 1864 and 16 October 1865), Copying Book A, Post Papers.

<sup>51</sup>"The History of Friendship," p. 59. Copy located in Arlene Hess, "Collected Materials Relative to Sidney Rigdon and His Descendants and Other Subjects Used in Preparation for the History of Friendship, New York," Harold B. Lee Library, BYU.

<sup>52</sup>John W. Rigdon, "Life Story of Sidney Rigdon," pp. 185, 199.

<sup>53</sup>*PM&A*, 15 April 1845, pp. 168–69, 173. Prior to Sidney Rigdon's excommunication, he and Samuel James, later one of his counselors in Pittsburgh, were both members of the Council of Fifty. They both became members of the Council on 19 March 1844 but were dropped from the Council on 4 February 1845 (D. Michael Quinn, "The Council of Fifty and Its Members, 1844 to 1945," *Brigham Young University Studies* 20 [Winter 1980]: 194–95). Wilford Woodruff stated Sidney "attended some of the councils that president Smith held with the Twelve and others," and one of Rigdon's followers made mention of "the fifty" (*The Prophet* [New York City], 19 October 1844, p. 3, and *PM&A*, 1 November 1844, p. 10, col. 2; see also *HC*, 6: 267). Rigdon's acquaintance with the Council of Fifty may have been why he introduced a council of seventy-three into his Pittsburgh church.



two counselors.<sup>54</sup> Another change which Sidney made was the introduction of female priesthood holders and quorums—prophetesses, elders, priestesses, teachers, and deaconesses—who were to warn and/or bless any member of the church.<sup>55</sup>

Rigdon's second church differed in a number of other ways from the Kirtland church. First, it was not called the Church of Christ, but the Church of Jesus Christ of the Children of Zion.<sup>56</sup> Eventually, citing a scripture indicating God would give his followers a new name, Sidney instructed his flock to take upon themselves the name "Mennonite."<sup>57</sup> Sidney had earlier introduced a further doctrinal innovation when he declared that because "of an ancient covenant [*sic*] obtained by Melchisedec" that Melchizedek's descendants were to receive the gospel before the Lamanites did.<sup>58</sup>

Although he spoke of returning to the doctrines and organization of the Kirtland period, after his excommunication Sidney Rigdon accepted many of the doctrines first taught in Nauvoo and introduced many new doctrines into his theology.

## POLYGAMY

Through his newspaper Sidney attacked the practice of polygamy at Nauvoo, which he and his followers indicated Joseph had introduced.<sup>59</sup> Sidney found it hard to believe that there were those who could "invent and propogate doctrines so ruinous to society, so debasing and demoralising as the doctrine of man having a plurality of wives."<sup>60</sup> Later he added, "Did the Lord ever tell any people that sleeping with their neighbor's wives and daughters had any thing to

---

<sup>54</sup>Section 14, Copying Book A, September 1864, Post Papers.

<sup>55</sup>Section 15, Copying Book A, October 1864, Post Papers; "Church record of the Attica Branch of the Church of Jesus Christ of the Children of Zion," pp. 10–11; Sidney Rigdon to Sarah Newton, 1 June 1868; Sidney Rigdon to the "presidency," January 1869; Sidney Rigdon to the "Children of Zion," 18 January 1869. Among others, Phebe, Sidney's wife, was ordained a prophetess (see Section 17, Copying Book A, October 1864).

<sup>56</sup>Joseph H. Newton to Stephen Post, 25 June 1863, and a newspaper article which appeared in the *Signal*, Post Papers.

<sup>57</sup>Journal of Stephen Post, 19 September 1875, Post Papers.

<sup>58</sup>Sidney Rigdon to Stephen Post, 23 January 1856.

<sup>59</sup>The following are among the comments which Rigdon's followers and William Law made as to when polygamy was introduced. Samuel Bennett: "How did he [Joseph Smith] transgress the law of God? I answer, he taught the doctrine that a man could have ten wives" (1 November 1844, p. 11, col. 1). "We found that he [Joseph Smith] was teaching the unholy spiritual wife doctrine secretly and denying it openly" (2 December 1844, p. 39, col. 1). "He [William Law] settled the question forever on the public mind, in relation to the spiritual wife system, and the abominations concerning it. As Joseph Smith and others had attempted to get him into it" (15 March 1845, p. 145, col. 2). William Small: "It is not long since a difficulty existed between myself and the church in this city, in consequence of the 'spiritual wife' system or doctrine; it originated between Hyrum Smith and myself; I had become acquainted with one of his 'spiritual wives' in St. Louis who informed me of the fact herself, that she was married to Hyrum. I mentioned this at one time in Nauvoo which soon reached Hyrum's ears, and made him feel rather unpleasant towards me" (1 January 1845, p. 70).

<sup>60</sup>*PM&A*, 15 October 1844, p. 13.



do with preparing the way of the Savior's coming[?]'”<sup>61</sup> Sidney felt that the introduction of polygamy “led to the deaths of the Smiths, and that if that system had not been introduced they might have been living men today.”<sup>62</sup>

Although bitterly against polygamy while in Pittsburgh, Sidney Rigdon evidently taught it or something similar for a time in Antrim. Ebenezer Robinson, who had been Rigdon's first counselor in Pittsburgh and Antrim, wrote in 1886 that Sidney Rigdon had not practiced polygamy in Antrim,<sup>63</sup> but the weight of testimony seems to be that he at least taught it as a doctrine. Peter Hess, a Strangite, in a letter written 14 December 1846, claimed that a follower of Sidney Rigdon from Antrim Township reported that during a conference which had begun in the latter part of September, and which was held in the farm's barn, “that Mr. Rigdon had introduced a System of Wifery or the Battle Axe System or free or common intercourse with the women.”<sup>64</sup>

Under the date of 18 April 1859 the “Journal History” indicates that Harvey Whitlock, who became a Rigdonite in 1845 and remained with Sidney until at least June 1846,<sup>65</sup> testified that the Rigdonites had engaged in an “arrangement for temporary swapping wives.” In commenting on Stephen Post's refusal to discuss polygamy, Isaac Sheen stated that “Sidney is undoubtedly aware that if his elders ‘discuss the doctrine of polygamy,’ they will be put in remembrance of the detestable, adulterous system which he established in Pennsylvania about eighteen years ago.”<sup>66</sup>

If Sidney did indeed practice or preach polygamy for a time, it suggests that in his earlier vehement harangues against polygamy that either he was only seeking a way to attack Joseph and the Church in Nauvoo and was not really against it, or that the practice of polygamy was a temporary aberration in his beliefs caused by his being subject to extreme emotional pressure. Because he was so forceful in his earlier criticism of polygamy, because he was evidently under a tremendous strain as indicated by his previously mentioned attempt to arouse opposition in Greencastle, and because he had a tendency

---

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., 15 February 1845, pp. 113, 114.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., June 1846, p. 475.

<sup>63</sup>Ebenezer Robinson to J. Fraise, Jr., 24 April 1886. First printed in (Chambersburgh, Pa.) *Public Opinion* and cited in the *Franklin County School Annual*, pp. 53–54.

<sup>64</sup>Peter Hess to James Strang, 14 December 1846, Strang Papers, item 45.

<sup>65</sup>*PM&A*, 15 July 1845, pp. 267–68, and June 1846, p. 466.

<sup>66</sup>*The True LDS Herald*, 15 January 1864, p. 16. As Josiah Ells stated in the above article, Rigdon had instructed Post not to discuss polygamy (Sidney Rigdon to Stephen Post, 26 September 1863, Box 5, folder 7). Two other references to Rigdon's practicing polygamy, at least one of which refers to a time after his excommunication, are found in Joseph F. Smith, *Blood Atonement*, pp. 16 and 49.



to become highly emotional, the second alternative seems more likely to this writer.

#### RELATIONS WITH OTHER FACTIONS AND INDIVIDUAL APOSTATES

Rigdon's views of and relationship with those who had dissented from the Church previous to Joseph's death, and with factions which arose directly or indirectly from his death, offer a number of insights into the man. First, Sidney Rigdon consistently maintained that he was Joseph's rightful successor. He therefore never joined a group led by any other individual. Although a large part of his consistency in this matter can be attributed to his inordinate pride, it does reflect to some degree a fixed conviction. Also, his active involvement in perpetrating his beliefs demonstrates his personal conviction of the Restoration and the centrality of religious involvement to his life.

#### *George Hinkle*

Besides the Latter-day Saints,<sup>67</sup> the first major group centered in Nauvoo with which Sidney Rigdon had contact was that of George Hinkle. On 5 February 1845, Sidney responded to a letter that Mr. Hinkle, a former Mormon, had sent him on 8 January in which Hinkle had proposed to combine his followers with Rigdon's. Sidney felt such a course to be of "vast importance." He replied that if Mr. Hinkle continued to desire to join the Rigdonites he should attend the April conference in Pittsburgh. Sidney closed his letter to the man who in 1838 had been responsible for his delivery to a group of intensely anti-Mormon Missourians by telling George Hinkle to "be assured" of his "most abiding friendship."<sup>68</sup> George Hinkle decided to unite with Sidney Rigdon and in April was baptized. He subsequently strove with good success to bring his own previous followers under Rigdon's banner. He was not awarded a position in Sidney Rigdon's First Presidency for his efforts but did become a member of Rigdon's Grand Council. He remained with Sidney until almost the end of the Antrim period, at which time he moved to Illinois where he attempted to organize another following.<sup>69</sup>

---

<sup>67</sup>Due to space limitations, and as Sidney Rigdon's correspondence with Brigham Young will be treated by Ron Esplin, research historian for the Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for Church History at Brigham Young University, at a later date, Sidney Rigdon's contact with the LDS Church is not considered any further here.

<sup>68</sup>HC, 3: 196-99; *The Ensign* (Buffalo, Iowa Territory), April 1845, pp. 158-59.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid., and May 1845, p. 175; *PM&A*, 15 April 1845, p. 168; *The Ensign of Liberty of the Church of Christ* (Kirtland, Ohio), May 1848, p. 90, and December 1847, p. 35; George Hinkle died in the fall of 1862 and, as far as this writer now knows, had no connection with Sidney Rigdon's second church (*True LDS Herald*, 1 February 1877, p. 47).



## John C. Bennett

After Joseph's death, John C. Bennett initially supported Sidney Rigdon's claim to leadership by sending one of Rigdon's supporters a revelation which he claimed Joseph had received in Nauvoo on 7 April 1841 and had entrusted to him. According to Bennett, Joseph had wanted it published after his death. Part of the purported revelation said that either Hyrum Smith or Sidney Rigdon would survive Joseph and that the survivor would be the "Imperial Prince to all Israel and over all authorities and Ecclesiastical powers." The revelation continued:

Behold the great day of apostasy is at hand, and after the kingdom shall be set up there shall be great wickedness, such as never was before; and my people will reject their prophet [Sidney Rigdon] and refuse council, and they will set up strange gods, and follow rulers that will usurp authority for filthy lucre's sake. And the apostasy shall be great, and they shall be ruled by twelve horns pushing them to destruction.

Sometime before 10 May 1845, Sidney's newspaper published this revelation in an extra edition.<sup>70</sup> While its publication suggests that it was used to help strengthen Sidney's position, it is mentioned only once in his preserved letters to Stephen Post.

But for some reason, John C. Bennett did not personally ally himself with Sidney Rigdon although he was approached to do so. In a letter he wrote from Cincinnati 28 March 1846, to James Strang, Bennett indicated that he had that day received a letter from Rigdon's first counselor, Ebenezer Robinson, and George Hinkle of Rigdon's Grand Council. This letter supposedly requested him to attend what appears to be the April 1846 conference. But in his letter to James Strang, Bennett stated: "I shall unite with you [Strang] or with none. There is nothing attractive to me under any other leader than yourself."<sup>71</sup> While not desiring to follow Sidney Rigdon, Bennett referred to him as his "Friend" later in the letter. Although Bennett did not associate himself with Sidney and, in fact, joined with Strang, Sidney Rigdon voiced no animosity toward John C.

---

<sup>70</sup>*The Prophet* (New York City), 10 May 1845, pp. 1-2; Sidney Rigdon to Stephen Post, 20 December 1856. Neither the text of this revelation nor any comment on it appears in any of the regular issues of the *PM&A*, but *The Prophet* claimed it was copied from an extra. On 1 February 1866, Post noted in his journal that he talked to Ebenezer Robinson, who said he had printed the revelation in Pittsburgh and confirmed that Rigdon had no knowledge of the revelation until after he was rejected at Nauvoo. A handwritten copy is also in the Post Papers. Stephen Post evidently showed this purported revelation to his brother Warren, a Strangite, who copied it into his journal ("Personal History of Warren Post," pp. 75-78, RLDS Archives. Microfilm copies of the Warren Post diary are at the Church Archives and the Harold B. Lee Library, BYU.

<sup>71</sup>Papers of Martin Wilford Poulson, Box 11, folder 3, Harold B. Lee Library, BYU.



Bennett, an occurrence which is unusual in light of Rigdon's relations with those who failed to join with or support him.<sup>72</sup>

### *James Strang*

James Strang also interacted with Sidney Rigdon. By late October 1844 James Strang was concerned about the strength of Rigdon's appeal.<sup>73</sup> At what was probably a later date, he wrote to Sidney; but Sidney did not answer, as Strang desired that Sidney assume a subordinate position as one of his counselors.<sup>74</sup> Sidney also treated Strang's call for missionaries lightly, feeling that if these missionaries preached for a thousand years the world would be no nearer the rest of God.<sup>75</sup>

In April 1846, a Strangite conference at Voree voted to delay final action on Sidney Rigdon until the October conference. In the interim, George Adams was to visit Sidney. He reported in the October conference that while he had traveled to Greencastle to talk with Sidney he had not seen him and did not consider further effort worthwhile. John C. Bennett, calling himself a "warm personal friend" of Sidney, then suggested that Strang seek revelation on Sidney's standing. Strang did so, and as a result Sidney Rigdon was replaced by George Adams as counselor in the First Presidency. Supposedly, Sidney was dropped because he continued to rebel against the Lord and receive revelation from the devil.<sup>76</sup> More likely it was that Sidney had already lost most of his following and Strang's organization had already attracted most of them;<sup>77</sup> therefore, there was no practical need to have Sidney associate with them.

While Strang's newspapers contain numerous references of Sidney and his followers, only one will be mentioned here. On 11 December 1846, Stephen Post, later Rigdon's counselor, but then a Strangite, wrote that he felt "much respect" for Sidney Rigdon. But he added that "Sidney Rigdon died in the estimation of Joseph, as a councillor, in 1843," although through Hyrum's pleadings Sidney had been retained.<sup>78</sup>

---

<sup>72</sup>*PM&A*, 15 October 1846, p. 367; James J. Strang, "Chronicles of Voree," p. 111, Church Archives; Sidney Rigdon to Stephen Post, March 1867.

<sup>73</sup>Journal History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 25 October 1844.

<sup>74</sup>James Strang to James Smith, 22 April 1846, item 22, Strang Papers; James J. Strang, "Chronicles of Voree," pp. 37-38, Church Archives.

<sup>75</sup>James Smith to James Strang, 16 May 1846, item 22a, Strang Papers.

<sup>76</sup>James J. Strang, "Chronicles of Voree," pp. 62, 111, and 117-18, Church Archives.

<sup>77</sup>Letters to James Strang, 15 April, 23 and 24 March 1846, from Hazen Aldrich, James W. Pugh, and Benjamin Chapman respectively, items 214, 20, 16, Strang Papers; Juanita Brooks, ed., *On the Mormon Frontier: The Diary of Hosea Stout, 1844-1848* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1964), p. 154; *Voree Herald*, September 1846, p. 5.

<sup>78</sup>*Zion's Reveille*, 18 February 1847, p. 24.



## RLDS

Sidney Rigdon's involvement with the Reorganization began almost simultaneously with the establishment of his second church in 1863. When Sidney organized his church in Philadelphia he also published a seventy-two page pamphlet entitled *An Appeal to the Latter-day Saints* which attacked the claims of Joseph Smith III and strongly accused his parents of slander.<sup>79</sup>

In a letter dated 10 September 1863, Sidney Rigdon commanded Stephen Post to go to Pittsburgh, where some followers of Sidney were yet living, and to use this pamphlet in proselyting. He did so. As a result, an RLDS, Josiah Ells, a former Rigdonite in Pittsburgh and Antrim, decided to answer Rigdon's pamphlet.<sup>80</sup> His reply was published in two parts in the 15 January and 1 February 1864 issues of the *True LDS Herald*. It attempted to demonstrate, by a lengthy analysis of Rigdon's doctrinal arguments and his past behavior, the falsity of Rigdon's claim he was the Lord's chosen leader.<sup>81</sup>

After talking with Ells on 10 November, Stephen Post also decided to write a letter. He, therefore, spent the next three days writing a letter to Joseph III. His effort was published between 31 January and 12 March 1864 in a pamphlet entitled *Zion's Messenger* which defended Rigdon's right to be a leader of the Lord's work.<sup>82</sup>

In his previously mentioned letter of 10 September 1863, Sidney Rigdon also told Post that he was required to see Joseph III and "to warn him of the judgments of God" which awaited him unless he ceased "his abominations before the Lord." In February of 1865, Stephen Post wrote Joseph III and invited him to correspond. As Joseph III evidently did not reply, Post visited him in Nauvoo on 17 December 1865. Post told Joseph III that he "called on him by request of one who had been a friend of his fathers and had suffered with him also for this work." Joseph answered that "he did not wish to hear any call himself a friend of his father who slandered him and alluded to the appeal which he said he supposed Sidney endorsed." As Joseph III had company, they "did not have a lengthy conversation." On the twenty-first, Stephen Post again spoke with Joseph III but left no record of what they discussed. On the twenty-third, Post preached in Nauvoo. He was followed by Joseph III, who attempted

---

<sup>79</sup>Joseph Newton to Stephen Post, 25 June 1863, and *An Appeal to the Latter-day Saints*, pp. 47-48, Post Papers.

<sup>80</sup>Journal of Stephen Post, 11-13 November 1863, and 31 January and 12 March 1864, Post Papers; Stephen Post and William Hamilton, *Zion's Messenger* (Erie, Pa: Sterett and Gara, 1864), pp. 1-8 (this copy is incomplete, only eight pages being preserved; a complete copy is in RLDS Archives). As with the *Appeal*, Sidney avoided having his name attached to its writing (Sidney Rigdon to Stephen Post, 25 November 1863).

<sup>81</sup>*True LDS Herald*, 15 January and 1 February 1864, pp. 17-31, 33-39.

<sup>82</sup>Stephen Post to Joseph Smith III, 11 November 1863.



to show the reason Rigdon's claim was rejected by the Twelve, the legality of Rigdon's excommunication trial, and the fact that Sidney had been a spokesman only to the people near Perrysburg and not for Joseph Smith.<sup>83</sup> This was Post's last recorded contact with Joseph III until August 1879, but he had numerous encounters with other RLDS members during the next year and sporadically thereafter.<sup>84</sup>

That such interaction should occur was almost inevitable because of the timing of the organization of Sidney's second church and his subsequent instructions for his faithful to gather to Iowa, where probably the greatest number of RLDS were then located. In addition, until March 1866, Stephen Post had been instructed to go only to believers in the Book of Mormon.<sup>85</sup> As he was not to go to Utah, this, of course, meant that most of his efforts would be concentrated on RLDS members.

Sidney evidently had no personal contact with young Joseph's followers, but he did receive a number of letters from them. Among those who wrote was H. P. Brown, who in July of 1860 inquired how Sidney felt about young Joseph's being President of the Church. Sidney did not answer.<sup>86</sup> Then in September of 1864, Samuel Wilcox wrote Sidney, telling him to follow young Joseph.<sup>87</sup> A few years later, in September of 1867, William W. Blair sent Sidney some proof sheets of the first edition of Joseph Smith's inspired revision of the Bible.<sup>88</sup>

Sidney's organization enjoyed a fairly successful period from 1864 through 1867. But weakened by internal dissent and unable to mount a major proselyting effort,<sup>89</sup> it gradually gave way before the efforts of the Reorganized LDS Church. In 1867, for example, two RLDS, William W. Blair and Ebenezer Robinson, arrived in Philadelphia, where Sidney's church had begun, and found a branch of his supporters there, many of whom had lost "confidence" in his guidance. After Ebenezer Robinson, who had been one of Sidney's counselors in Pittsburgh and Antrim, sharply criticized some of

---

<sup>83</sup>Stephen Post to Joseph Smith III, 19 February 1865, Box 5, folder 8; Journal of Stephen Post, 17, 21, and 23 December 1865; Stephen Post to James Post, 20 and 25 December 1865.

<sup>84</sup>Journal of Stephen Post, 2 and 5 February; 11 and 25 March; 1, 8, and 19 April 1866; 30 June 1867; April 1868; 5 June 1870; Joseph Smith III to Stephen Post, 6 August 1869, Joseph Smith III Letterbook, pp. 304-306, RLDS Archives.

<sup>85</sup>Joseph Newton to Stephen Post, 2 March 1866, and Sidney Rigdon to Stephen Post, 26 September 1863.

<sup>86</sup>Sidney Rigdon to Stephen Post, 17 July 1860.

<sup>87</sup>Samuel Wilcox to Sidney Rigdon, 14 September 1863.

<sup>88</sup>Blair, comp., *The Memoirs of W. W. Blair*, p. 135.

<sup>89</sup>See Journal of Stephen Post, 1864-1867, Post Papers; "Personal History of Warren Post" (Stephen's brother), pp. 36, 64, 70 and 72, RLDS Archives.



his past behavior, he and Elder Blair baptized ten of this group, although some still followed Sidney Rigdon.<sup>90</sup> Then in April and May 1868, William Blair wrote four articles for the *Herald* attacking Sidney Rigdon.<sup>91</sup>

The Rigdonite movement continued to decline and by Sidney Rigdon's death in Friendship, New York, in 1876, was very weak, lasting only about another decade.

---

<sup>90</sup>Ebenezer Robinson became a member of the RLDS Church on 28 April 1863 (Blair, comp., *The Memoirs of W. W. Blair*, pp. 83 and 132-33).

<sup>91</sup>*True LDS Herald*, 15 April and 15 May 1868, pp. 100-102, 113-17, 129-32, 145-47.



# Tent Flaps

Michael Rutter

A wind tugged at the flaps of my tent; night long  
I've heard the lyric  
Before as other battles came, with dawn, and went;  
The frozen earth's floor  
Stained with soldier's blood, having been rent  
The earth is sapped with jagged wounds,  
For death loomed,  
Bringing vision  
Of cool winds on mountain lakes  
And flowing fields of dry-land wheat  
Near a childhood home  
On the Salt River, Starr Valley;  
Then, the Ghent Wind,  
The frozen body, face up, pale,  
And a jammed rifle  
Told of nations sinning  
And not caring for their sin—  
The carrion flower;  
The wind's power  
Tugged at the flaps of my tent,  
And morning was dashed by cannon fire.

---

Michael Rutter, a poet from American Fork, Utah, is a master's candidate in English at Brigham Young University.



# The Church and Translation

Joseph G. Stringham

For it shall come to pass in that day, that every man shall hear the fulness of the gospel in his own tongue, and in his own language, through those who are ordained unto this power.

(D&C 90:11)

This verse is usually considered a missionary scripture, but it has an additional meaning for those of us who work in the Translation Division<sup>1</sup> of the Church. We feel that we are as important in fulfilling this scripture as are those who carry the books we translate. Though we are not ordained to our callings, we are charged to translate the scriptures and manuals of the Church for its members throughout the world. It sobers us to see the influence of translations on those who read them and to realize the difficulty of touching people's lives without them. The translation of scriptures and other materials plays an increasingly important role in an expanding Church.

## WHERE WE HAVE BEEN

The history of translation in the Church began more than two years before the Church was organized. Joseph Smith received the gold plates from Moroni in September 1827 and as early as December of that year had begun to translate some of the characters that were on them.<sup>2</sup>

Joseph was a seer. He had the Urim and Thummim, which, among other things, was an aid to translation—a dramatic and valuable aid. For a short while, translation seemed to be a function of only the prophet's calling. This proved untrue. A prophet is the first to receive revelation for the whole Church, but the fact that receiving

---

Joseph G. Stringham is the manager of Evaluation, Training, and Adaptation of the Translation Division of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

<sup>1</sup>Translation is presently organized as a division of the Materials Management Department under the Presiding Bishopric.

<sup>2</sup>See Joseph Smith—History 2:62.



some revelation involves translation is really only incidental to a prophet's duties.

The work of translation soon fell to others. The first translation of the Book of Mormon from English was made in 1851 into Danish. Peter O. Hansen, a Dane, began translating the Book of Mormon while living in Nauvoo. In 1849, he was called on a mission to Denmark, where he finished his translation two years later and had it printed.<sup>3</sup> The German, French, Welsh, and Italian translations were published in 1852; the Hawaiian, in 1855.

Methods and places of translation did not change much for over a hundred years. Translation remained a mission-level responsibility. Local mission leaders would call a native member to translate the Book of Mormon. Often in the midst of the project the translator was asked to translate tracts and bits of other scriptures to meet immediate needs. The translator would be given a copy of the English scripture and the admonition "always work with the Spirit." This was sound advice, but it was also an apology for the fact that there was nothing more to give translators in the way of support. They were mostly on their own.

The first full-time translator for the Church was Eduardo Balderas. In 1939, Antoine R. Ivins wrote a letter to Brother Balderas in El Paso, Texas, asking him to come to Salt Lake City to translate Church materials into Spanish, saying "that the matter of translations had been discussed by the Missionary Committee and that they felt that the time had come to do translating work for the Spanish-speaking missions instead of each mission doing their own translating and taking up, in most instances, the time of their best missionaries."<sup>4</sup>

At the end of the Second World War, other translators came to Salt Lake City to translate into the various European languages. These translators functioned as a part of the Missionary Department from 1946 to 1960. When Alvin R. Dyer was called to preside over the European Mission of the Church in 1960, he took the responsibility for this translation back to Europe with him and set up an office there. The translators in Salt Lake City were disbanded, except for a small group that continued in Spanish.

Substantial organizational changes started in 1965 when the Translation Services Department was organized with its headquarters in Salt Lake City and offices in the language areas. The responsibility

---

<sup>3</sup>Orson Brinke West, *Den Danske Missions Historie* [a history of the Danish Mission] (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1965), p. 30.

<sup>4</sup>Oral History Program, "Eduardo Balderas," LDS Church Historical Department, p. 38.



for translation previously held by the separate missions now came under one coordinating head. Under this central organization, the number of published translations increased sharply. The department published a monthly magazine in sixteen languages, giving uniform, timely, high-quality messages to the Saints in over thirty-seven countries. A system of scheduling and tracking translations was also started. This system soon became so efficient that the translations of Church programs abroad, once phased one or two years behind the English, are now published simultaneously with them.

The last decade has seen more changes in the way translations are done than were seen in the previous one hundred years; the next decade promises to bring even greater changes. Though we have solved many seemingly overwhelming problems, many yet remain as our challenges for the 1980s.

#### TRANSLATION, A STEWARDSHIP FOR MEANING

One of the biggest challenges the Translation Division continually faces is teaching Church members what translation is. The concept people have of translation is influenced by several popular notions about language. Many members of the Church view language as a necessary and temporary evil—something to be endured until perfect communication takes place entirely through pure Spirit or in a single “pure” language. This notion surfaces in the trite observation that if each translator were given a Urim and Thummim the word would go forth in purity, free from the taint of individual interpretation. A second, and probably more prevalent notion, is that the term *word-for-word* is synonymous with “faithful” in reference to exactness in translation, a “a word-for-word” translation being the only “good” translation.

The only people who do not seem to be at all certain about what a perfect translation is are those doing translations. The situation is similar to the different ways poor people and rich people view money. The poor have a definite advantage because they are certain money would solve all of their problems; the rich, however, know better. It is the same with translation. The Translation Division has no comforting delusion that there is such a thing as a perfect translation. All translations create error and distortion. All translations are interpretations—what the translator *thinks* the author said. Miguel de Cervantes was right when he commented over four hundred years ago: “Translating from one language to another is like looking at the back side of a Flemish Tapestry where, although the figures are



distinguishable, there are still so many ends and threads that the beauty and exactness of the work is obscured.”<sup>5</sup>

Although a stewardship from God, language is a tool of some precision and works best in the hands of great writers who have made the effort to master it. However, error is inseparably tied to translation because of the medium—human language—which is imperfect in all its uses. Once we accept the limitations of language, we can see how important the role of the Spirit is in helping us understand the written word of God.

On the other extreme, there is a great temptation to think that if we translate the words, the Spirit will provide all the meaning. This also is not so. There is more to the stewardship of language than just words. In addition to the words and the Spirit, the meaning is conveyed by such things as intonation, rhetorical figures, syntax, imagery, rhythm, discourse patterns, logic, and pauses. All these are part of man’s language. We doubt that God will provide all the meaning of a translation through the Spirit that man should have provided through his skilled use of language. The Spirit will compensate for the limitations of human language, but not usually for the translator’s neglect. The Holy Ghost is not a substitute for effort. Saint Augustine said it thus: “Without God, we cannot. Without us, God will not.”<sup>6</sup> This concept applies to translation as much as to any other work in the Church.

To say that “word-for-word” translation is synonymous with “faithful” or “good” translation shows another weakness: a small part of every text consists of idioms, phrases where the meaning of the whole is greater than the sum of the individual words. In English, if you “skate on thin ice,” you might end up “in hot water,” but the whole thing may actually take place at room temperature. In such cases a “faithful” translation follows the meaning and not the words. So, too, there are “discourse idioms,” situations where sentences and phrases group together to take on new meaning beyond that which they convey individually. President Kimball concluded a filmstrip with this strong reiteration: “Home life, home teaching, parental guidance, father in leadership—that’s the panacea for all of the ailments, a cure for all of the diseases, a remedy for all of the problems.”<sup>7</sup> In some cultures, people would react to a literal translation of this by saying, “Good film. Too bad, though, that the Prophet

---

<sup>5</sup>Miguel de Cervantes, *Don Quixote de la Mancha*, part II, chap. 62.

<sup>6</sup>Quoted by the Reverend Leslie D. Weatherhead, in *Reader’s Digest* (March 1962), p. 94.

<sup>7</sup>*The Family and the Home* (filmstrip VVOF133A), Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1975.



fumbled around trying to find the right words at the end.” Repetitions and other such word groupings acquire extra meaning through conventions that change from language to language. Translating sentences in the same order as they are found in the source language does not always produce the response in a translation audience that the author intended. A translator cannot always be faithful to the form, that is to the words, phrases, and sentences, and at the same time be faithful to the author and the audience.

Though it is a paradox of translation that a translator must often distort words and order to preserve meaning, we should not think that preserving meaning is completely possible either. We can define meaning as information interpreted by a human mind. Ideally, the translator should concern himself not with what he thinks the information means, but with giving the reader straight information. But information cannot be separated from personal meaning. Words do not only contain information, they contain meaning; human language does not exist apart from human minds. The antiseptic definitions in a dictionary are only an incomplete skeleton of usage and are subject to human fleshing out. Oliver Wendell Holmes said:

A word is not a crystal, transparent and unchanged; it is the skin of a living thought, and may vary greatly in color and content according to the circumstances and the time in which it is used.<sup>8</sup>

#### IN THE TRANSLATOR'S SHOES

Now, hopefully, the reader feels less secure about what translation is than he did before he started this article. Translation is not neat. It is not entirely an art; neither is it exactly a science. It is an ordered set of well-defined principles—with a lot of exceptions. Applicability varies for all these principles, except one—effort. Good translation is always the result of effort. It is produced by people who have developed their language skills into a precision tool, and the only security there is against unnecessary distortion is to use such skilled people as translators.

A translator is not just a typist or a clerk who performs mechanical operations on a typewriter with a strange keyboard. The translator must be moved by the same spirit as the author and must be at least equally gifted in the use of his own language as the author was in his. He is also a writer. The translator continually makes value judgments, weighing the interests of the author, the interests of the

---

<sup>8</sup>Oliver Wendell Holmes, cited in *Reader's Digest*, August 1969, p. 21.



audience, and the interests of the group or person requesting the translation. Suppose an author wrote the following paragraph on the early Christian Church (though not a real quote, this paragraph points up several problems that do surface in real materials):

How converted were the Gentiles? They gave up wealth, associations, reputations, and even their lives. No one has ever tabulated how many corpses in the catacombs had asses in their mouths, but the number of those martyred was very great indeed.

Put yourself in the shoes of the translator; study that text until you are reasonably sure you understand the meaning. That is harder than it looks. Maybe you should concentrate on information instead. The separate words seem clear in themselves, so you decide to do a "faithful" translation, to go word-for-word and leave the meaning up to the reader. The result might be that the Chinese members will read about corpses with donkeys in their mouths, so, too, the Tongans and the Brazilians. The Chinese and Portuguese translators may further interpret the ambiguous English to mean one donkey per corpse; the Tongan translator, with the text already straining his sense of the ridiculous, may interpret it to mean that there are several donkeys in the mouth of each corpse. Things deteriorate quickly.

Let us go back and start over.

Before a translator can translate this or any sentence, paragraph, or work, he has to know what it means. When a translator cannot understand the meaning of a text, those reading his translation will not be able to understand it either. If he translates literally (word-for-word) when he does not know the meaning, he only perpetuates and amplifies his ignorance.

Now, what *does* the text mean? The word *asses* is the plural of *as*, a small Roman coin. It was the custom among those who believed in the Greco-Roman gods to place a small coin under the tongue of a dead person because on his journey to Hades the deceased would have to cross the river Styx and would therefore have to pay the toll that the ferryman, Charon, charged everyone to cross. Hence the coin. Being buried with a coin in one's mouth was a pagan custom incongruous in the catacombs, a place of Christian burial. Such a combination of facts might indicate that the families of some converts had second thoughts about what awaited them on the other side. The author then contrasts this attitude with that of a martyr.

So, now that we know the meaning, how do we translate it? We must first determine as best we can what kind of an audience the author was writing to. Here he seems to be talking to an exclusive



audience within a larger audience. It is not unusual for an author to scatter “caviar” to a select few within a larger audience he may be addressing and make the others reach. We could translate it as is and make the translation audience reach, too. Or, we could insert a footnote with the full explanation and thus broadcast the meaning to everybody. Would we serve the author’s intentions with such a footnote? No, we would not. But what about the audience? If the author wants only the elite one percent in Samoa to know what he means, have we done well by translating the passage as is into Samoan, where we can safely say that absolutely no one will understand what he means? Again, no. We would be serving neither the author’s nor the audience’s interests.

So far, we have talked about putting all or none of the omitted meaning in; there are many other solutions. We could replace the detail with the intended thrust.

No one ever tabulated how many early Christian converts secretly had doubts about their new religion, but . . .

We could also insert words or phrases that are more general so more people would understand.

No one ever tabulated how many Christians buried in the catacombs had coins in their mouths, but . . .

or

No one ever tabulated how many early Christians were buried in pagan fashion, with coins in their mouths, their families having had doubts about their new religion, but . . .

or

No one ever tabulated how many early Christians were buried in pagan fashion, with coins in their mouths, their families having had doubts about their new religion, but . . .

As all these are possible solutions, the translator needs to judge how far his audience can reach. With work, he can approximate the author’s apparent intent of teasing his audience.

There is another possible version:

There is no way to tell how many early Christians disavowed their religion under persecution, but we have a good measurement of how many were martyred, and that number is very great indeed.

Isn’t it beautiful? It is clearer than the original. It is a more precise thought. There is one problem, however; it is a different thought, not a translation of the same thought. The author in no way links



persecution to the first half of the contrast he suggests. No matter how good this version is, a translator does not need to distort the text this far to make the idea understandable; if he does, then his lack of exactness neutralizes his usefulness as a translator. He has lost his respect for the author and is rewriting him, something that should not be done without permission. A good translation says with the least possible distortion what the author said so the audience will understand it. This example of the corpse in the catacombs is certainly not typical of all the materials we translate, but it does illustrate several problems at once.

What, then, is the best solution to the problems in the example? There isn't one best solution. There are many more variables involved than we have considered. Varied cultures, the originator's expectations, the immediate context—the translator will need to weigh all these things to arrive at his final judgment.

Part of the translator's job is to stay abreast of current usages in both his languages. He must be familiar with dozens of different jargons such as law, computers, public relations, genealogy, art, printing, building construction, finance, and social work. Demands are made on him to translate specialized words that native speakers of any language would be hard put to decipher. For example:

Some wood polishes may affect oystering especially where surfaces are thirsty.<sup>9</sup>

Jagged metal can get in an open zerk fitting, creating unnecessary wear on the motor.<sup>10</sup>

Layering the information in a release lets the press have parts they can blurb or use for captioning.<sup>11</sup>

The Christiansen collection is a valuable addition to Mormoniana.<sup>12</sup>

Set security net prior to deplaning of principal, select routes with least foot traffic and post progress with walkie-talkie.<sup>13</sup>

A translator distinguishes himself by his versatility and his experience, and becoming an expert translator may take ten or more years. Clearly, a good translator is a valuable investment for the Church and is harder to replace than many other employees. But

---

<sup>9</sup>Draft copy of *Manual for Meetinghouse Maintenance* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1974).

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>Correspondence of LDS Church Public Communications Department.

<sup>12</sup>Correspondence of Relief Society.

<sup>13</sup>Correspondence of LDS Church Security Department.



many translators move on to better-paying positions inside and outside Church employment. We have a real need to replace experienced translators and, therefore, to accelerate novice translators to greater proficiency sooner.

We feel that training is an important key; much of what is instinctive in a seasoned translator can be isolated, classified, and taught to others, reducing the number of years it takes them to become highly proficient. Job applicants and all translators take a rigorous test to determine their strong and weak points with language. Supervisors recommend specific training for individuals and evaluate their work regularly through a standard worldwide rating system. Translators receive training in such basic skills as using library facilities, formatting letters, and building vocabulary, as well as in such advanced skills as translating similes and metaphors. Advanced training starts out with very basic examples and builds up to such brainbusters as:

a saucy little dirt road skipping off into the hills in search of adventure  
(Mrs. W. N. Hargraves)

fragrant foreclosia clambering all over the mortgage (Frank Sullivan)

Perhaps the most important thing to teach a translator is a belief that nothing is untranslatable, that most of what frustrates him will yield to time, experience, knowledge, and effort. Languages do not differ so much in what they can say, as in how they can say the same things.

#### THE COMPLEXITY OF THE SYSTEM

Many people are not aware of the scope of Church translation. Currently we translate the full Church program into eighteen languages. In each language, there are normally 14,000 to 18,000 pages assigned each year for translation. In another fifty-nine languages, we translate selected materials, up to 1,000 pages a year in each one. In addition to scheduled materials, there are about 19,000 pages of correspondence translated each year. Altogether the Church Translation Division translates well over a third of a million pages each year. At any one time, there may be over 3,500 different projects in process, employing 260 full- and part-time translators. It takes eight full-time employees in a separate division just to process and track these projects through production. Each translation goes through eighteen production stages, ten of which are within the translation phase of production. The system is complicated.



To see how this all works, let us follow a project through the process. The assignment goes first to an adaptor. Adaptors are trained to detect possible translation problems before they reach the translator. Originators often send us manuals to translate without having considered their full impact upon other cultures. When a manual for meetinghouse custodians is to be translated into Tahitian, the adaptor deletes the section on how to remove snow from the church parking lot. With approval of the originators, the adaptor may rewrite a text on home storage for the Chinese, as such storage is considered hoarding by the Taiwan government and is illegal. The adaptor must be able to sense that a powerful statement like “stay home with your family one night a week” can have an opposite effect in Samoa from what was intended. Because in Samoa all seven nights are spent with the family, some readers might actually start looking for outside activities to do six nights a week. The adaptor would change the sense slightly to “stay home and have a family activity *at least* one night a week.”

The adaptor is also looking for variations in Church procedures and programs. In a manual routinely assigned for translation into all languages where there are stakes, a chapter explaining how to manage a stake welfare farm may need to be deleted for an area where such projects do not exist. The adaptor usually works closely with the originators to solve such problems.

The adaptor also looks for passages that may be linguistically difficult for translators. This quote from a speech by Elder Bruce R. McConkie is typical: “The greatest blessings attending Church service flow to the individual and his family.”<sup>14</sup> Even seasoned translators may mistake this to mean “attending church services will bring blessings to an individual and to his family,” which is not what Elder McConkie meant. The adaptor frequently writes marginal notes explaining such subtleties to the translators.

An adaptor does all the research documentation on a text so that sixteen individual translators will not have to duplicate that effort. The result is greater speed and accuracy in all the translations. After it has been adapted, the text is photocopied, mailed to the language areas, and assigned to translators.

We have already considered some of the value judgments a translator must make, but he has many other things to worry about as well. Keeping things consistent is one worry. For each language

---

<sup>14</sup>Bruce R. McConkie, “Only an Elder,” address to Regional Representatives, given 3 October 1974, *Ensign*, June 1975, p. 67.



there is a word list containing all the current terminology of the Church. There are thousands of terms which have a set translation, and the translator must be familiar with all of them. New terms must also always be spotted, defined, and added to the list so all translators will use them consistently.

We are a church of quote-users. A typical manual may contain 150 quotations from thirty different sources, making up sixteen percent of the whole text. Many quotes are repeated from year to year in various manuals. Every quote used in any Church item translated and published in the last ten years has been entered in a master index. Suppose we encounter a quote from a talk by Wilford Woodruff given 19 October 1896, at the Weber Stake Conference. By looking in the index, the translator can find whether the whole quote has been previously translated. He has a reference to unit, chapter, and section, and he can go to the translation library, find the quote, and copy the standard translation of it for the manual he is translating. We thus ensure that all materials are consistent in their translation. Keeping such an index seems expensive and tedious, but the alternative would be ten times as expensive. We would be retranslating work done in previous years, work which amounts to eleven percent of our yearly volume. From this standpoint, then, the index is extremely economical.

Time is a problem. Translations take time, but sometimes we receive a manual that needed to have been translated by yesterday because someone forgot to plan for the time it would take to translate it. Regardless of our best efforts, a translation is just about as good as the planning of those who request it. A translation hot off the forge cools into something quite different and takes a lot of tempering. The Translation Department is usually disappointed with the quality of crash translations, and so are the originators. Such products of crisis management have been reduced to a minimum in the last few years.

A finished translation is read by two separate reviewers as a check on its accuracy and its readability. It is then retyped and proofread. The translation supervisor gives it his final check and then sends it to be typeset. That, briefly, is how the system works. Our translations are the product of close teamwork. There is no room in the system for loners, prima donnas, or people who are afraid to ask questions. The specialization developed in the late 1960s and becoming perfected today has improved the quality of Church translations more than any other single factor. Further progress in the 1980s will consist of refining the present system.



## THE FUTURE FOR TRANSLATED SCRIPTURES

Scriptures are special, requiring precision and consistency beyond that normally provided for other materials. This can be illustrated by a problem we had a few years ago. In some curriculum materials which we were asked to translate, a lesson dealt entirely with the meaning of the word *type*, as in Alma 33:19, "Behold, he was spoken of by Moses; yea, and behold a type was raised up in the wilderness, that whosoever would look upon it might live." The word *type* in this case means "an example or *model* that *bodes* of a person or event at a later time." The lesson passed briefly over the "model" aspect of *type* and then stressed the "of things to come" connotation. However, that connotation was not there in some of the translations; the "model" meaning was there in every one, but the rest of the meaning was not. The lesson almost failed because the translated scriptures did not support it.

The shortcomings of existing scripture translations are apparent—the quality varies with the gospel scholarship of those who did the translation. Overall, each translation is about as good as another, but a small percentage of individual passages go one way in one language, and a different way in another. Generally, those scripture translators who knew a little Hebrew or Greek had an easier time of it. Before 1975, because translators did not record their problems and document their decisions for other translators to learn from, whatever concerted study and reasoning they had employed to render a particular meaning was lost. It was clear from the translations that those translators with the best resources did the best jobs. About the only resources the translators were provided on occasion were concordances.

The 1970s brought great improvement in the lot of the scripture translators. Early in the decade, we began work on a special concordance of every major word in the four standard works. Each occurrence of a word was identified according to its meaning or sense and each word heading had the multiple senses listed below it. For example, the word *run* can have a number of different senses. You can *run* a race, *run* an engine, *run* a risk, *run* a business, *run* a temperature, *run* an experiment, and, in an election year, *run* for office. To translate all of these phrases into another language, we could not reasonably expect one word in that language to accommodate all the senses of the one English word, *run*. Yet, some people still assume that for consistency in the scriptures every occurrence of a major English word should be translated everywhere by the same word in



another language. This would produce distortion and misunderstanding, and would place an unnecessary task upon the Spirit to clear things up.

Just such a problem is apparent in the way translators have understood *receive* incorrectly in Doctrine and Covenants 76:74, where it refers to those relegated to the terrestrial kingdom as being those “who *received not* a testimony of Jesus in the flesh, but who afterwards *received* it.”<sup>15</sup> In some versions it was translated “who didn’t *hear* a testimony of Jesus in the flesh, but who afterwards *heard* it.” If those who died without hearing the gospel are consigned to the terrestrial kingdom, why would we do temple work (celestial ordinances) for them?

The problem with the meaning of the word is clarified by this passage from Mark 15:23: “And they gave him to drink wine mingled with myrrh: but he received it not.” *Receive not* in all its occurrences in the four scriptures meant “to refuse.” The scripture in question presupposes that whoever *received not* a testimony of Jesus must have had a chance to hear it in the flesh and for that reason was relegated to the terrestrial kingdom. The infinitive *to receive* by itself has two senses, “to be offered” and “to accept,” and therefore needs to be translated two different ways according to the meaning. But when *to receive* is followed by *not*, it should be translated only as “to refuse.” A concordance listing separate senses is a valuable tool in correcting real inconsistency and avoiding overdone or artificial consistency.

In the last half of the decade, we began documenting decisions that affected the meaning of a translation. Any time a translator has a question about a scripture, he can fill out a form explaining his problem and send the form to us. At headquarters, we maintain a whole departmental section of the office with the responsibility of researching and answering scriptural problems. So often, in conferences or official statements, present and past prophets have already clarified the meanings of scriptures. We simply gather the information and put it in a form the translators can use. In addition, we use people with strong backgrounds in Hebrew, Greek, Ancient Egyptian, linguistics, Church history, and Bible studies to provide additional information. All materials we release to the translators have been approved by the Church Correlation Department for accuracy.

Suppose, for example, a translator has a question on Joseph F. Smith’s Vision of the Redemption of the Dead and writes to us:

---

<sup>15</sup>*Italics added.*



The phrase in verse 44, “never again to be destroyed nor given to other people” seems to say that the gospel (the kingdom of God) will at some future time not be preached to other people. We’ve checked our Bible translation of Daniel 2:44 and it doesn’t help; what does it mean?

Our researchers have already scanned all of President Joseph F. Smith’s published talks and found seven other occurrences of this and similar wording. From these other contexts, the meaning President Smith intended seems clear. We write back and say:

The idea that at some time in the future the gospel will be withheld from other people is not the correct interpretation of this scripture. It means “never again to be taken from the earth and have to be re-restored through other individuals.”

Today the translator has a staff of researchers to help him. He has access to indexes, dictionaries, commentaries, consultants, and one more aid that will eventually be more useful than all the others—an exegesis, a detailed explanation of the meaning in a text. We anticipate a point at which individual correspondence on every scripture translation problem will become impractical, and with every new translation we see recurring a core of problems that all translators have had before and will always have. Peripheral to these are many more repeated problems that most, but not all, translators have struggled with, others that have bothered some translators, and lastly, a group of problems unique to each new translation.

There was a time when we were dealing mostly with languages closely related to English. Those were the easy days! The exotic languages we are working in now have grammars and vocabularies that require information which is sometimes missing. A translator into Cakchiquel, an Indian language of Guatemala, needs to know whether the brother of Jared was his younger or older brother. In Cakchiquel, there is no general term for brother, only two separate ones. Arabic marks all nouns as singular, dual, or plural and needs to have distinguished all plurals that refer to just two things. Samoan and Guarani (Paraguay) have two pronouns for *we*, one that includes the listener and one that excludes him; the translator must determine this reference for all the occurrences of *we* in the scriptures. Aymara (Bolivia) has a very rich vocabulary of verbs denoting manual actions. To translate the English verb “to carry,” an Aymara speaker must choose from several different specific verbs. He can say “to carry in the hand,” “to carry in the arms,” “to carry over the shoulder,” “to carry on the back,” “to carry in tandem,” but not just “to carry.” If Nephi was carried away in the Spirit, in Aymara, that would be . . .



An exegesis, or scripture translation guide, would be a compilation of information on all recurring problems and would be published for use by all those translating the scriptures. Such a guide would eliminate a great deal of correspondence and duplicated effort. Writing for a response on each problem slows a translator and may discourage him from communicating on all but the most serious problems. Of course, an exegesis would never be able to solve all the problems, nor even to tell him all the meaning found in the scriptures, but it would tell him some important points that he must be aware of. Although the creation of an exegesis will not illuminate the mysteries, it will show very clearly what is not a mystery. From research, we know that many scriptural passages which are unclear are not that way because God created the lack of clarity intentionally. Rather, there are three main reasons for murky passages:

1. *Poor translations.* The “church of the firstborn” in Hebrews 12:23 has *firstborn* as a plural in the original Greek, referring to the favored status of the members. In the King James Bible, the English is ambiguous. The word *firstborn* in English can be either singular or plural. In the Doctrine and Covenants, the “church of the Firstborn” is used nine times with *Firstborn* being singular, a title of Christ. The translator may reason that the English D&C text is in error because someone misinterpreting the English Bible capitalized *firstborn*. Also, *firstborn* in Hebrews 12:23 was translated as plural in his language, so he translates it in the D&C as a plural, “improving” on the English. Most such changes to a text come from the best of intentions.

2. *Language change.* When Joseph Smith began his history “Owing to the many reports which have been put in circulation by evil-disposed and designing persons,” he was referring to “rumors,” a primary meaning of the word *report* 150 years ago.<sup>16</sup> Likewise 1 Nephi 10:22 seems a little odd to us today: “And the Holy Ghost giveth authority that I should speak these things, and deny them not.” Why should “speak” and “deny” be his only alternatives? Again, 150 years ago *deny* was a synonym for *withhold* and usage permitted deleting the indirect object: “deny them not [to you].”<sup>17</sup>

3. *Loss of meanings originally understood by both the author and his audience.* In 2 Nephi 27:28 we read: “Yet a very little while and Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field; and the fruitful field shall be esteemed as a forest.” One published commentary says this

---

<sup>16</sup>Joseph Smith—History 2:1. Noah Webster, “Report,” definition no. 2, *An American Dictionary of the English Language* (New Haven, Conn.: Hezekiah Howe, 1828).

<sup>17</sup>Webster, *An American Dictionary*, “Deny,” definitions nos. 2 and 3.



denotes a time when all will be fertile and productive.<sup>18</sup> However, *Lebanon* is a culturally loaded word used anciently as a synonym for *forest* because of the cedar forests of Lebanon. If we substitute the word *forest* for *Lebanon*, we have the same type of construction as we find in “the rough places made smooth and smooth places broken up” or “the last shall be first and the first shall be last.” Such constructions connote change (often cataclysmic), juxtaposition, and contrast—a far cry from the pastoral interpretation in the commentary. Many such place names in our language are culturally loaded in this way: Mecca (centrality), Siberia (exile), and Timbuktu (remoteness). How would their meanings go over in translations three thousand years from now?

While directing research into the meaning of scriptures would probably be more appropriate for others with ecclesiastical authority, we seem to be involved by default. But the reason for our involvement with meaning is logical: practically no one has to look at a scriptural text in as much critical detail as does a translator. We are involved because we have the need. With the current research on scriptural aids, there is a real possibility of reaching a major goal: uniform scripture translations in all languages within the next two decades.

#### THE NEED FOR ORDERLY EXPANSION

As of January 1981, the Church is working in seventy-seven languages. The Book of Mormon has been published in forty-one languages of which thirty-seven editions are currently available. These thirty-seven translated editions have a potential audience of fifty-three percent of the world’s population, and when the Book of Mormon is published in all seventy-seven languages, we will be able to reach sixty-three percent of the world’s population. These statistics seem to be quite admirable; our goal—to see the fulfillment of the Lord’s prophecy that every man will hear the gospel “in his own tongue and in his own language”—seems only a few years away. But in reality it is more distant than we realize.

What we have done is the easy part. We started with English, which serves nine percent of the world’s population itself. Mandarin, another language we have translated into, accounts for another twelve percent. But each subsequent language we begin working in takes a smaller bite out of the percentage than the one before. We will

---

<sup>18</sup>See George Reynolds and Janne M. Sjodahl, *Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1955), 1: 400.



soon run out of “major” languages; most languages we add now will serve only a fraction of a percent of the remaining world population. Experts estimate the number of world languages at around 5,000,<sup>19</sup> of which 2,000 are written in some form. If we were able to translate into ten times the number of languages we currently do, choosing only those serving the most speakers, the 770 languages would still reach only ninety-three percent of the world’s population. At the rate we dealt with the first forty-one languages, it would take us well over a thousand years to do that.

The problem becomes even greater when we look at the money costs involved in going beyond the language barrier. Printing a translation of the Book of Mormon costs many thousands of dollars and ties up many more thousands. To print and stock the Book of Mormon in five thousand languages at current costs would take over \$150 million. Because warehousing costs alone would run into millions of dollars each year, we cannot afford to produce materials that do not have immediate use.

But working toward immediate use, we then face the problem of how fast we can produce a translation of the Book of Mormon when it is needed. It currently takes a minimum of five years to translate and publish a translation of scripture.

All these problems have demanded our attention in the last ten years. In 1979, we began an accelerated program adding up to fifteen new languages each year. If we stay with this program, by 1995 we will be able to translate into 220 languages, which will reach eighty-seven percent of the world’s population.

In each of these new languages that we consider, the Church is just emerging as a social force, so we have called these “emerging” languages, as opposed to the “established” languages of areas where the Church generally has stakes operating. The materials assigned for translation in the emerging languages have been assigned priorities and are divided into two main phases. In phase I, we translate the missionary discussions and flipchart, the tract containing Joseph Smith’s testimony, the Gospel Principles manual, three organizational guidebooks, simplified reports, and the Book of Mormon selections. Materials in phase II include developing area children’s, women’s and priesthood manuals, a selection of tracts, recommends and certificates, the full Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price. After these two phases are completed, ecclesiastical leaders may request the translation of

---

<sup>19</sup>In *Ethnologue* (Wycliffe Bible Translators, Inc., 1978), the number of languages is 5,103.



hardbound books, seminary and institute courses, a monthly magazine, and yearly manuals for all the auxiliary and priesthood functions.

The emerging language program takes advantage of two important facts: (1) Of the total publication cost of a scripture only one-third is paid out for the translation; the other two-thirds goes for the cost of printing. (2) Of the total time (five or more years) spent in publishing a volume of scripture, four-fifths is used in translation and only one-fifth in printing. The translation phase of production consumes little money but lots of time. Within a few years, when the phase I program outpaces the immediate proselyting needs of the Missionary Department, there will be fewer translations printed. Instead they will be stored on typeset masters, ready for printing when the Missionary Department requests them. In this way, we will save the cost of printing until it is justified, and missionaries in a new language area can have the Book of Mormon to use in only a few months instead of five years.

Only a third of the Book of Mormon is published in the Selections. A full Book of Mormon is published later, when the language progresses to phase II and there is enough acceptance to warrant it.

The translators for emerging languages are mostly part-time employees. Only when a language has developed past phase II is an office with full-time translators set up. These translators exhibit as much sacrifice and dedication as did the translators of a hundred years ago. They have been moved upon by the Holy Ghost to give up, in full or in part, medical practices, teaching careers, and lucrative opportunities, to devote four or more years to becoming translators. They are housewives, lawyers, nurses, poets, professors, dentists, farmers, printers, students, engineers—most are members, but many are friends of the Church; one of our best translators is a Catholic priest. Some have been converted in the course of doing the work.

The involvement of nonmembers in the translation of LDS scriptures has been a reality from the outset. In 1850, Peter O. Hansen enlisted the aid of his former schoolteacher, a Miss Mathisen, to make a thorough review of his translation of the Danish Book of Mormon.<sup>20</sup> If we had waited in every case until we had qualified members, our translations would have been published decades after their current dates. This again points up the acute need for scripture guides to explain nuances and interpretations peculiar to the LDS Church.

---

<sup>20</sup>West, *Den Danske Missions Historie*, p. 30.



Perhaps nothing could more dramatically convey the momentum of translation in the 1970s than to list the languages the Church has been involved in translating since 1851.

**TABLE 1**  
**Publication of Translated Editions of the Book of Mormon**

<i>Language</i>	<i>Place</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Notes</i>
English	Palmyra, New York	1830	
English	New York, New York	1869	Deseret Alphabet Out of Print
English	Louisville, Kentucky	1939	Braille Edition
Danish	Copenhagen, Denmark	1851	
German	Hamburg, Germany	1852	
French	Paris, France	1852	
Italian	London, England	1852	Retranslated 1963
Welsh	Merthyr Tydfil, Wales	1852	Out of Print
Hawaiian	San Francisco, California	1855	Out of Print
Swedish	Copenhagen, Denmark	1878	
Spanish	Salt Lake City, Utah	1886	
Maori	Auckland, New Zealand	1889	
Dutch	Amsterdam, Holland	1890	
Samoan	Salt Lake City, Utah	1903	
Tahitian	Salt Lake City, Utah	1904	
Turkish	New York, New York	1906	Armenian Letters Out of Print
Japanese	Tokyo, Japan	1909	
Czech	Prague, Czechoslovakia	1933	Out of Print, Retranslation in Progress
Armenian	Los Angeles, California	1937	Out of Print
Portuguese	Sao Paulo, Brazil	1939	
Tongan	Salt Lake City, Utah	1946	
Norwegian	Oslo, Norway	1950	
Finnish	Helsinki, Finland	1954	
Rarotongan (Pacific)	Salt Lake City, Utah	1965	
Chinese	Hong Kong, China	1965	
Korean	Seoul, Korea	1967	
Afrikaans	Johannesburg, So. Africa	1972	
Thai	Bangkok, Thailand	1976	
Indonesian	Djakarta, Indonesia	1977	
Aymara (Bolivia)	Salt Lake City, Utah	1977	Selections
Cakchiquel (Guatemala)	Salt Lake City, Utah	1978	Selections
Croatian	Cakovek, Yugoslavia	1979	
Quechua (Peru)	Salt Lake City, Utah	1979	Selections
Greek	Salt Lake City, Utah	1979	Selections
Hungarian	Salt Lake City, Utah	1979	Selections
Kekchi (Guatemala)	Salt Lake City, Utah	1979	Selections
Quiche (Guatemala)	Salt Lake City, Utah	1979	Selections
Bulgarian	Salt Lake City, Utah	1980	Selections
Navajo	Salt Lake City, Utah	1980	Selections



**TABLE 1—*Continued***  
**Publication of Translated Editions of the Book of Mormon**

<i>Language</i>	<i>Place</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Notes</i>
Quichua (Ecuador)	Salt Lake City, Utah	1980	Selections
Arabic	Salt Lake City, Utah	1980	Selections
Czech	Salt Lake City, Utah	1980	Selections
Vietnamese	Salt Lake City, Utah	1980	Selections
Fijian	Salt Lake City, Utah	1980	
Hindi			In Preparation
Russian			In Preparation
Catalan			In Preparation
Polish			Selections
			in Preparation
Icelandic			In Preparation
Rumanian			Selections
			in Preparation
Hebrew			Selections
			in Preparation
Tamil (India)			Selections
			in Preparation
Sinhala (Sri Lanka)			Selections
			in Preparation
Guarani (Paraguay)			Selections
			in Preparation
Maya (Mexico)			Selections
			in Preparation
Persian			Selections
			in Preparation
Mam (Guatemala)			Selections
			in Preparation
Marshallese (Pacific)			Selections
			in Preparation
Cuna (Panama)			Selections
			in Preparation
Malagasy			Selections
			in Preparation
Niuean (Pacific)			Selections
			in Preparation
Bislama (Pacific)			Selections
			in Preparation
Tzotzil (Mexico)			Selections
			in Preparation
Efik (Nigeria)			Selections
			in Preparation
Kisii (Kenya)			Selections
			in Preparation
Xhosa (So. Africa)			Selections
			in Preparation
Sotho South (So. Africa)			Selections
			in Preparation
Shona (So. Africa)			Selections
			in Preparation



If this list seems impressive, remember: The Bible Societies throughout the world have published the full Bible in over 600 languages, and some portions, such as the Gospel of Mark, in an additional 1,000. We are still relative newcomers to the field of scripture translation.

#### THE HUMAN FACTOR

Each of the languages we work in has a story. Without telling at least one of them, our larger story of the whole of Church translation would not be complete. No one story is typical, but one does stand out, mainly because the language is not yet on our list. That language is Pangasinan; the translator is Maximo Z. Parayno, Sr.

Brother Parayno was a native of Pangasinan Province on the Island of Luzon in the Philippines. He joined the Church in 1968 at an age when most people are reluctant to change their traditions. Shortly after his baptism, he fell into a diabetic coma and his family felt he was going to die. Instead, he miraculously recovered. Feeling he was living an extension of his allotted life, he determined to do the most he could with it; he began translating the Book of Mormon into his own language. He was not well schooled and was certainly less qualified than many other members. He seemed to be following the same pattern as have many hundreds of foreign members whose naive eagerness quickly fades after a taste of the real and arduous work involved in translation, but he was different. Months turned into years and still he stayed with it.

In 1974, he and his wife were allowed to come to the United States to live with their daughter in San Francisco. His daughter, not a member of the Church, recalls frequently seeing him sitting in front of his typewriter translating. He was racing death. When she asked him why he had started such a difficult task, he told her that God had planted in him the overwhelming desire and, weak though he was, God supplied him with the strength to accomplish what He willed him to do.<sup>21</sup>

In October of 1976, Brother Parayno finished his translation. His health then deteriorated rapidly, and on 7 January 1977, he died. His whole family felt that somehow his life was prolonged by the one who gave it, prolonged for the purpose of doing the work he was ordained to do.<sup>22</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup>Aurora Moyrong to the Presiding Bishopric, 22 April 1977, on file with Manuscript Translations of the Book of Mormon, Pangasinan, Church Archives.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.



His daughter proofread the whole translation and mailed it to Church headquarters in May of 1977. In a letter to the Presiding Bishopric, she expressed her joy in completing the work of her father. He never saw his translation published, nor has anyone else. It is still a translation before its time. One day Philippinos may be reading the Book of Mormon in each of their regional languages. In one such translation, woven tightly with the fabric of that book, will be the thread of Brother Parayno's sacrifice.

We have not yet reached the point in the Translation Division where we are doing all that is humanly possible to make good translations. Probably we will never reach it, since new knowledge and technology keep making more things possible. Still, we do have one of the most advanced translation systems in the world, in scope, in philosophy, in efficiency, in technology, and in personnel.

The past history of Church translation clearly shows the inadequacy of uncoordinated individual effort. At present, machines are doing wonders for translation in cutting costs, saving time, and eliminating wasted effort; but human decisions will always be at the root of quality. The future success of our translation efforts ultimately rests in bringing to bear the expertise of many professional people in support of the translator to extend the degree of consistency, clarity of meaning, and doctrinal accuracy far beyond the capabilities of any one person.



# Toward a Mormon Aesthetic

Merrill Bradshaw

It seems almost unbelievable that after all these years of the development of Mormon thought we still have no genuine Mormon aesthetic theory. Most Mormon thinkers have either avoided the subject or simply adopted one or another of the theories proposed by the thinkers of the world. If, as we proclaim, Mormons have a distinctive view of man and his reason for being in the world, then it seems almost inevitable that this view of man, this set of reasons would give rise to some new insights about our sense of beauty, of our purposes in the arts, of our relations with our artists. It would be easiest if somewhere in the scriptures the Lord had revealed our aesthetics, but this has not been done. There seem to be few artists who are eager to have that done, fearing the authoritarian imposition of some aesthetic principle that might hamstring their work. In the absence of such revelation, we must look to our artists and philosophers to develop such a theory. But it must get beyond the level of mere personal opinion, secondhand philosophy, or utilitarian contingencies; and it must relate in both root and branch to solid, undeniably Mormon philosophy.

I hasten to add that I cannot claim any competency as a philosopher. This is truly a field for the trained philosopher. Of my qualifications I can only say that I have been active in the arts for many years and I have a gnawing impatience to see our aesthetic develop. To lend my weight to the accomplishment of this task I will present four ideas that appear to me to have far-reaching implications for a Mormon Aesthetic, leaving the formal development of such a theory to those whose training and abilities have prepared them for the task.

---

Merrill Bradshaw is a professor of music at Brigham Young University, specializing in composition and theory. This article is a paper that was presented at "A Mosaic of Mormon Culture," a sesquicentennial symposium at Brigham Young University, 2-3 October 1980.



## IDEA NUMBER ONE: THE CONCEPT OF BEAUTY

Picture in your mind, if you will, a vision of the soul of man, having lived with the gods before his entry into earth life, having experienced the joy of life with God, and having come to earth with little memory of what took place in that premortal realm. Picture further that the soul of man longs for the joy experienced there and has a hunger to return to live with God, even though he may not recognize the source of that hunger. As the soul encounters various situations and events in this life, he is reminded of the ultimate beauties of his pre-earth experiences. These reminders are the basis of our sense of beauty.

This is not a scenario invented by a Latter-day Saint, but rather the synopsis of a myth Plato ascribes to Socrates in his dialogue with Phaedrus. As a Mormon, with a background of mostly guarded response to Greek philosophers, I have been amazed at how comfortable that idea feels. Its parallels with the Mormon cosmology are so startling that one almost asks if Plato were some sort of prototype Mormon several centuries ahead of his time. As I have examined our Mormon understanding and experience in relation to the Phaedrus myth, however, I have come to recognize that it gives but a glimpse of the soul of man and his potential for recognizing and understanding beauty. Nevertheless, the approach suggested by Plato has been useful in my finding the way to my own views of the subject.

For Mormons, the premortal state is much more than Plato's approach to Ultimate Reality. Ultimate Reality is not an abstract entity that is devoid of relationship to the senses. As he considers the eternal (both pre- and post-mortal), the Mormon longs for a situation where the senses are extended, perfected, and intensified so that experience can produce a fulness of joy. The joy that was experienced in the premortal state, that we experience now in our mortality, and that we will experience in life after earth is not an abstract contemplation, but an all-encompassing, sense-thrilling, "even unto the consuming of my flesh" (1 Nephi 17:48) experience that is beyond our mortal mind to grasp in its entirety. In its ultimate sense it can take place only when our bodies are resurrected and perfected. What we experience here in mortality is really a foretaste, an incomplete pre-experience of the perfection that is to come. It is intimately bound to our objective of eternal exaltation with a perfect being whose love, understanding, and wisdom are all directed toward providing his children with a fulness of joy. What we hunger for in this life is thus not merely a return to an abstract situation where we were once



treated to a blissful experience, but most importantly a return with dignity, glory, and exaltation to the intensity of a real existence with God in a condition where we will enjoy all of our human attributes raised to the perfect level of their divine prototypes.

Mormons, then, are not mistrusters of the senses. They do not despise sensuous experience except as it may mislead the spirit of man to do things so shortsighted that they make his return to God impossible. Mormons envision the perfection of the senses as an eternal objective to strive for, not as an earthly delusion that we must avoid. The resurrection will not remove sensuous experience from us but rather enable us to experience it in an eternal dimension of intensity, completeness, and purity.

We learned of the whole plan while yet there in God's presence before coming to earth. The presentation of the plan was so compelling and exciting that we shouted for joy. We were happy to be allowed the privilege of mortal experience as a preparation for the still fuller experience to come. As we left that realm to come here into the flesh, our spirits brought with them some half-hidden memories of the nature of the celestial. These memories are mostly dormant within us, but from time to time we encounter things, people, situations, and experiences which awaken them within us. We are not always aware of their eternal significance nor their celestial source, but nevertheless we relate to them warmly because in their organization, their aspect, or the perfection implied by their inner relationships they remind us of what we already knew before we came here and will know again more perfectly after we leave earth. When this happens to us, we experience beauty.

The notion of the celestial as the model toward which our perception strives should not be taken in too narrow a sense, however: the Mormon concept of what is eternal, celestial, or spiritual extends far beyond the bounds of the typical Sunday School class discussion or the simplistic moralizing that is often thought of when people mention religion. It extends to include not only those things normally thought of as sacred, but also more mundane things which take on spiritual significance when viewed in an eternal perspective. Thus this concept of beauty is not limited to the pious, the self-righteous, or the sacred. In fact, some of the most beautiful experiences we have occur when things previously seen as profane or unworthy of our attention are viewed in the light of the celestial models they have come from or may become. The reminder of celestial value may come from less than celestial objects and even from the contrast of decidedly noncelestial experiences.



For this reason shallow ideas of beauty that are repugnant to some of us often need only be untwisted or extended to make clear their celestial roots. It is not because we consider the human body ugly that many distrust the use of the nude in art. What repels us is the possibility that its divine beauty may be twisted into lust and entice someone into improper thoughts and actions. The ultimate perfection of the body is what is longed for in the resurrection where all of us hope that the imperfections, real or imagined, of our faces, shapes, or functions will be adjusted to be in line with their celestial models.

Beauty thus perceived in its relation to the celestial is a great gift of the Spirit. When we observe something and relate it to the heavenly because it fills a spiritual hunger, we are enticed to come to Christ. Beauty, properly conceived and realized, draws us heavenward and thus, ultimately at least, inspires us to become ready to receive the ultimate joy of God's presence.

The relationship between that presence and the joy that we hunger for is made a little clearer in some of the recorded instances where it has been experienced. One of those instances was the dedication of Solomon's Temple. The chronicler reports that everyone had prepared both spiritually and temporally for the occasion. When the hundreds of musicians reached the climax of the music and all were united in praising God, the "bright cloud" of the presence of the Lord entered the temple and filled the house. The priests were so intensely moved by the experience that they couldn't even stand to minister. (2 Chronicles 5:11-14.) Have not many of us had similar experiences with the arts when the beauty was so overpowering that it caused tears, a tingling up and down the spine, deep introspection, and feelings of swelling and warmth in the breast? What this suggests is that the ultimate experience of beauty is so closely related to joy that we have difficulty distinguishing the difference. When we experience joy it is beautiful; when we experience beauty it brings us joy. This joy is the object of all art and the portrayal of it is art's reason for existing. It may be man's reason, too: "man is that he might have joy!" (see 2 Nephi 2:25).

#### IDEA NUMBER TWO: THE CREATIVE PROCESS

I have given some preliminary views of the creative process in other writings and at other times. Suffice it to say here that I have described it as more a process of discovery than of invention, of embodying within the notes of my art form a spiritual gesture that is born deep within my soul. I have even suggested that the source of



this gesture might be in a pre-existent “existence” for the piece of art being created. How else do we explain that certain feeling that something is not yet right about a piece even though it is theoretically correct? How else to explain that feeling of being “at home” when a piece is finally finished? How else to explain those flashes of insight that suddenly appear “out of nowhere,” as it were, and point the way to a completion of a work, a way that defies theory, logic, organic growth, and yet is completely and absolutely right?

There are some parallels between the artist’s embodiment of the spiritual gesture and the way a human spirit is embodied when it comes to earth. We know from the report of the Brother of Jared that the spirit, even before birth, looks like its temporal embodiment (Ether 3:6–20). This suggests that the body, as it grows, does so in response to the attributes of the spirit that it is embodying. Otherwise, the body would grow up resembling not so much the spirit that lives within it as whatever the accidental combinations of genes and chromosomes might cause. We know that there are some cases where the body is less perfect than the spirit it embodies, but we view these imperfections as temporary earthly inconveniences that will be corrected when the spirit and body are united inseparably to receive a fulness of joy.

I have to mention another part of the creative process. When one finally reaches the “right” solution to a piece, there is a type of pleasure in the feeling that goes with the solution that I can only describe as a “celestial kiss.” There is a sensuous pleasure in the rightness of a piece of art, yet it is not carnally sensuous for it does not distract the senses to their own pleasure. It is spiritually sensuous in that it attracts the spirit to the delectation offered by the celestial and its potential. The pleasure is real, inward, and overpowering. It is the genuine reward that comes at the end of the creative process and is more important to the artist than applause, money, or commendation.

What I am leading to here is speculative, of course, but has been very helpful and stimulating in trying to fathom what happens when we try to create. If pieces of art do, in fact, have a pre-existence in the world from which we came, and if the creator–artist is in fact discovering what he already knew there, then some of the experiences we have when creating make good sense. Dennis Griffin has said, “There is a place inside that seems to know what it is that needs to be expressed.”<sup>1</sup> This “place” does not generate ideas nor extend them

---

<sup>1</sup>Dennis Griffin, assistant professor of music, Utah State University, Logan, Utah, in “The Creative Process,” an unpublished MS in the possession of the author, p. 1.



nor bring them from theoretical possibilities into clear reality. Rather, it says "yes" or "no" to what the artist has concocted. Many of the artists with whom I am acquainted have mentioned this type of experience at one time or another. What seems to happen when we create follows a scenario that goes something like this: The artist, having left the previous existence where he knew gods, people, plans, and possibilities for this life, begins working to create a piece of art. In the process he encounters something that strikes "home," as it were, and he feels an intimation of something he has already known beginning to take shape. As he labors with his intellect, intuitions, and technique, he comes up with many alternatives and partial embodiments of the spirit he has encountered. Each of these in turn is referred to this "place" inside of him that "knows what the piece is" and the spirit, when properly moved responds with confirmation when the right alternative is worked out. When enough of these alternatives have been accepted and integrated into a work that is unified, precise, and whole, it matches the spirit that gave it birth and the artist receives that celestial "kiss" of joy from his work.

Thus the work of creating resembles groping through the veil to gain a sense of what is on the other side of it. What we know, however—and this should never be forgotten—is that what is on the other side is more nearly perfect than any earthly embodiment can possibly be. What is of the earth is temporary, imperfect, and dull by comparison. Still when we do our art well, our temporary, imperfect creation can take on a deep significance for us because it calls to our memories the half-remembered eternal things that are at the core of all earthly things.

### IDEA NUMBER THREE: ART AND SUBJECT MATTER

I am not going to discuss the old problem of whether the value of a work of art is determined by its subject matter. Rather, I would like to mention some aspects of the relationship between subject matter, the nature of creativity, and the art that is thus produced. On the surface of things it seems obvious that some subjects are more stimulating to creativity than others, at least to each individual artist. How often does an artist reject a certain subject because he esteems it too insignificant to be worth his effort? How often does another subject engage his whole energy and attention? Why does one subject do this when another will not? While some of the answer may be found in the values system of the individual artist, does it not come even



more from the nature of the relationship between the subject matter and the spirit to be embodied? This may also explain why a subject rejected on one occasion may be used very effectively on another.

We do not choose to embody in our art that which we consider to have no value. In the act of choosing a subject the artist says, "This has value that justifies my effort." But when the artist is trying to embody a spiritual gesture, the relationship between the gesture and the subject will justify the effort and the choice. The subject matter of art is the celestial, and for Mormons, at least, that gives it ultimate value. Thus art demands a level of dedication and effort not less consuming than that of reaching the celestial level in any other endeavor. Even when the surface of a work of art contains subjects that may seem trivial or unworthy at first glance, the central celestial gesture of the piece may place those things in an eternal perspective that gives them significance beyond their superficial character.

This brings up a problem frequently encountered in Mormon art: Can the Mormon artist deal with such delicate subjects as adultery, illicit love, Satan worship, demonic possession, etc.? And can a Mormon audience tolerate such things? Too often the answer is simplistic: "These things are 'dirty' and if you even think about them you pollute your mind!" Too often in artistic efforts they are dealt with in the same simplistic way and the whole experience remains "dirty." But it appears to me that if these things are dealt with in their relationship to the celestial and in their effects upon our achieving the bright goals we all cherish it would be possible for the Mormon artist to lift his audience to spiritual levels where the contemplation of such subjects would strengthen against their being overcome by these evils.

In light of what has been said above, one of the differences between art and entertainment becomes clear. Entertainment's primary concern is the pleasure of the audience. Art, in contrast, seems to concentrate upon the central values of the human experience. Although it is obvious that there are many gradations of value between these two extremes, it must also be clear that there are few pure examples of either end of the spectrum. The artist gets his satisfaction from the "celestial kiss" that accompanies his achievement of the embodiment of the spiritual gesture in his place. The entertainer finds his satisfaction in the pleasure and acclaim of his audience. Here, also, the pure example is rare, and most artists and entertainers get satisfaction from a mixture of sources. It thus appears most artists have a bit of entertainer in them and most entertainers relate to the artists' motivations, too.



What it comes to at its center is still this: The subject of art is the celestial. The celestial provides the spiritual gestures; it inspires our best efforts; it rewards them with spiritual satisfactions. If we settle for anything less, we are bound to have disappointments.

#### IDEA NUMBER FOUR: THE ARTIST AND HIS AUDIENCE

Of all the effects of the lack of a Mormon Aesthetic, the most dangerous is the widening gulf between the artist and his audience. To some extent, this is traceable to the widening of the gulf in Western society in general. But to find the gulf so wide in a society where so many values are shared on such a profound level is indeed distressing.

It is the function of an aesthetic theory, whether explicitly stated and followed by both artist and audience or tacitly agreed upon because universally felt, to prevent such a gulf from occurring. The gulf is really a communications gap, for neither artist nor audience desires the gulf and many members of each side do not understand the other. If the beautiful is really rooted in the celestial, and if the artist is indeed trying to embody spiritual things from the heavenly realms, and if the audience is truly seeking celestial life and glory, there should be little friction between artist and audience in our society. But it is obvious to even the most casual observer that this relationship often falls far short of the ideal.

Too often the artist is caught up in the secular necessities of existence and must create for reasons other than the embodiment of the spiritual in his art. Too often his technique is not adequate to deal with the potentials that exist or with the possibilities that are revealed to him as he gropes through the veil. Too often the "place inside" must settle for "the best I can do at this time" when it would be delighted to have the perfection of the celestial model. Too often the celestial ideal is not even sought and through weakness or laziness or lack of preparation (which is laziness over an extended period of time) its vitality is lost.

Too often the member of the audience is caught up in his own prejudices and expectations for the things he already knows. Too often he is not willing to open up his heart to the products of his brother's creativity. Too often he misunderstands what the artist is offering him and takes it in the wrong spirit and thus is not edified. The goal of the member of the audience should be the "bright cloud" and the overpowering experience of the feeling of celestial



value. Prejudice, narrowness, ineptitude, lack of experience, and bad spirit all keep him from that experience.

The old idea that in the arts we are entitled to "like what we like" is so completely foreign to any kind of effective communication that it should be forbidden with the same fierceness we use on tobacco. It is a product of the same spirit that seduces us to take offense at something said by the Brethren, to go fishing on Sunday, to read a pornographic magazine. It makes it impossible for the artist to reach his audience; it makes it impossible for the person who adopts it to be edified by anything, for his loyalty to his stiffened prejudices prevents any light from penetrating his black attitude.

How then does a Mormon reach his potential as a member of an audience? This potential is reached by seeking to receive the celestial gesture in whatever form or guise it may be presented to him. This means he must not simply allow the piece of art to be in his presence as he nods in assent. He must take it to his spirit and try it on for "celestial size," seeing if it will produce the same "celestial kiss" that the artist felt when he was embodying the spirit in it. He must see beyond the surface to find that central celestial essence of the work. When he finds it, he will see that "he that speaketh and he that listeneth" can really be "edified together" (see D&C 50:22).

The artist and the member of his audience are really not opponents in a battle. Rather, they are travelers along a road to eternal life, both striving toward glory. They have common experiences, common objectives, common understandings of life and its goals and processes, and a spirit that they share from a higher source. The art that they share along that road should be a delight to both of them, a lift towards the goals they share, a foretaste of the joy toward which they both aspire. A Mormon Aesthetic should help both of them to understand this.



# Review Essay

David J. Whittaker  
Book Review Editor

This issue of *BYU Studies* inaugurates what we hope will become an annual feature of the Book Review section—an article-length review essay. We think that it is appropriate that we occasionally devote to a special topic or problem an article-length review essay that goes beyond regular reviews. Such an essay can serve a variety of functions. It can introduce us more completely and critically to a problem or issue in the academic literature. It can survey a genre of scholarly literature, providing both analysis and evaluation of the major and pivotal works on a given topic. Or it can combine these approaches and further suggest what could or should be done.

It is fitting that our first Review Essay should address not only an aspect of the life of the founder of Mormonism, but also a topic of contemporary concern—how much is the *History of the Church* the journal of the President of the Church? The status and continued use of the *History of the Church* makes it essential that all those who use it be fully aware of its origins and development. While much remains to be done, Howard Searle provides us with a good overview of what we now know about the compilation of the *History*—what it is and what it is not. The several tables show graphically who wrote what and thus add to his presentation. He is well qualified to address this topic, as he recently completed his Ph.D. in history at U.C.L.A. by writing a dissertation on the history of historical writing in the Church before the Civil War, a study which is in the process of being prepared for publication.



# Authorship of the History of Joseph Smith: A Review Essay

Howard C. Searle

**NELSON, LELAND R.**, comp. *The Journal of Joseph: The Personal Diary of a Modern Prophet by Joseph Smith, Jr.* Provo, Utah: Council Press, 1979. iii + 255 pp. \$8.95.

Reviewed by Howard C. Searle, Church Educational System college curriculum writer and instructor, Salt Lake Institute of Religion, adjacent to the University of Utah.

Leland Nelson has compiled an interesting narrative of first-person passages from the *History of the Church* in an attempt to expand the familiar "Joseph Smith Story" into an entire volume. In doing this he has included a great deal of material that was not authored by Joseph Smith at all. In spite of this fact, he claims on the dust cover and in the introduction that "this book is exactly what the title says it is—the personal journal or diary of Joseph Smith Junior." Although he makes assertion that the book contains "Joseph's own personal account of his feelings, revelations, persecutions . . . and day-to-day happenings," and that it "assembles together into one handy volume the great majority of Joseph's personal journal entries," the *Journal of Joseph* is not taken directly from Joseph Smith's diaries but from material written by scribes and the Church Historians for the Church annals. Mr. Nelson admits that "Joseph dictated most of his journal entries to scribes," but the implications of this practice are totally ignored in the identification and description of the book's contents.

Although Mr. Nelson has put together an engrossing—and apparently popular—first-person narrative of excerpts from the early Church annals, what is in the book has been grossly misrepresented in newspaper ads, radio spot commercials, and the introduction to the book. The compiler has (I hope unknowingly) become the promulgator of many misconceptions about the *History of the Church* that have been rather common among Latter-day Saints since about the turn of the century. In perpetuating some of these inaccurate and



misleading notions, Mr. Nelson is in the good company of many devoted speakers, teachers, and writers throughout the Church; but this does not excuse his failure to determine the exact origin, authorship, and nature of the material he has published as "Joseph's writings." Even a cursory examination of Dean C. Jessee's articles in *BYU Studies* 11 (Summer 1971): 439-73 and the *Journal of Mormon History* 3 (1976): 23-46 could have saved the compiler from making misleading claims about the contents of his publication.

Anyone familiar with the methodology involved in the compilation of the *History of the Church* will recognize that one of its main problems is the confused and misleading authorship. To quote reliably from this source, one should first answer two questions: (1) Who wrote the original source? and (2) How has it been edited for publication? Had Mr. Nelson pursued these questions, he would have immediately discovered that many of the first-person passages which he has quoted in Joseph's personal writings are neither the Prophet's personal writings nor even his dictations.

Although the responsibility for preserving and compiling the early history of the Church was officially delegated to the Church Recorder and Historian, Joseph Smith was the prime motivator behind the work. He called able men to the project, exhorted them in their duties regularly, and tried to compile his own personal history for inclusion in the Church annals. But in spite of the Prophet's strong desire to produce an appropriate history, he was handicapped from the very beginning by certain unfortunate circumstances and personal limitations that forced him to struggle against rather formidable odds for more than a decade before leaving the unfinished history to his successors.

One of the main liabilities that hampered the Prophet in his efforts to compile a history was his lack of formal education and writing skills.<sup>1</sup> In an early autobiography he lamented that he had been "deprived of the benefit of an education" and "was merely instructed in reading, writing and the ground rules of arithmetic."<sup>2</sup> Even into his adult life, he often apologized for his literary deficiencies. In writing to his wife in 1832, he asked her to excuse "my inability in conveying my ideas in writing" and in 1839 he wrote to her jokingly: "If you feel as I do you don't care for the imperfection of

---

<sup>1</sup>*Journal of Discourses* (Liverpool: Latter Day Saints' Book Depot, 1877), 18: 118, 210; Orson Pratt, *Remarkable Visions* (New York: J. W. Harrison, 1841), p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Joseph Smith Letterbook, 1832-1835, p. 1, Library-Archives of the Historical Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah; hereafter cited as Church Archives.



my writing, for my part a word of consolation from any source is cordially received.’’<sup>3</sup> The Prophet worked to overcome his literary shortcomings throughout his life as circumstances would permit, often occupying himself in reciting English and German lessons and in studying Hebrew.<sup>4</sup>

The grammatical, vocabulary, and orthographic deficiencies of Joseph Smith were the cause of much editing, revising, and rewriting in nearly all of his published works.<sup>5</sup> Cognizant that he needed help in his writing, the Prophet called men with writing experience and skill to aid him in the various literary projects of the Church. Over twenty-four scribes and ghostwriters are known to have assisted him during the fifteen years from 1829 to 1844—the period of his “writing” (see Table 1). In the division of stewardships in the kingdom, the Prophet believed it was entirely appropriate that the bulk of the recordkeeping and writing be turned over to others. An entry in his history for 1 March 1843 states: “On returning to my office after dinner, I spoke the following proverb: For a man to be great, he must not dwell on small things, though he may enjoy them; this shows that a Prophet cannot well be his own scribe, but must have someone write for him.”<sup>6</sup> In harmony with this philosophy of delegation, the Prophet observed in 1839, when James Mulholland was working with him on his history, “I was dictating history, I say dictating, for I seldom use the pen myself. I always dictate all my communications, but employ a scribe to write them.”<sup>7</sup> In the last months of his life he was reported as observing: “For the last three years I have a record of all my proceedings, for I have kept several good, faithful, and efficient clerks in constant employ: they have accompanied me everywhere, and carefully kept my history, and they have written down what I have done, where I have been and what I have said.”<sup>8</sup>

Retaining competent scribes was no easy task in the unsettled and often hazardous conditions of the early Church. Of more than a score of scribes who worked for the Prophet, nine left the Church

---

<sup>3</sup>Joseph Smith to Emma Smith, 6 June 1832 and 21 March 1839, Church Archives.

<sup>4</sup>Joseph Smith, Jr., *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2nd ed. rev., 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1932–1951), 2: 318, 355–56; 3: 26; 5: 292. Hereafter cited as HC.

<sup>5</sup>Richard P. Howard, *Restoration Scriptures: A Study of Their Textural Development* (Independence, Mo.: Herald Publishing Co., 1969), pp. 40–41; Jerald and Sandra Tanner, 3,913 *Changes in the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Modern Microfilm Co., n.d.); Robert J. Woodford, “The Historical Development of the Doctrine and Covenants” (Ph.D. diss., Brigham Young University, 1974); Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *Changes in the Pearl of Great Price* (Salt Lake City: Modern Microfilm Co., n.d.).

<sup>6</sup>HC, 5: 298.

<sup>7</sup>HC, 4: 1.

<sup>8</sup>HC, 6: 409.



**TABLE 1**  
**Major Scribes Assisting Joseph Smith from 1829 to 1844**

Name	Beginning Date	Ending Date	Comment
Martin Harris	1829	1831	Excommunicated in 1837; returned in 1870.
Oliver Cowdery	1829	1838	Excommunicated in 1838; returned in 1848.
John Whitmer	1829	1838	Excommunicated in 1838.
Sidney Rigdon	1830	1838	Excommunicated in 1844.
W. W. Phelps	1831[?]	1844	Excommunicated in 1839; returned in 1841.
Frederick G. Williams	1832	1839	Excommunicated in 1839; returned in 1840.
Parley P. Pratt	1832	[?]	Killed in Arkansas in 1857 while on a mission.
Orson Hyde	1833	1836	Died an Apostle in Utah in 1878.
Sylvester Smith	1834	1836	Later called as one of the First Presidents of the Seventy.
Warren Parrish	1835	1837	Apostatized in 1838.
Warren A. Cowdery	1836	1836	Left the Church in 1838 at the same time as his brother, Oliver.
George W. Robinson	1837	1840	Released in 1840 and later left the Church.
James Mulholland	1838	1839	Died in 1839 while serving as a scribe.
Robert B. Thompson	1839	1841	Died during his service as a scribe in 1841.
Howard Coray	1840	1841[?]	Taught school in Nauvoo and Utah; died in Utah in 1908.
James Sloan	1840	1843	Died a faithful member in Utah.
Willard Richards	1841	1844	Died while Church Historian in Utah in 1854.
William Clayton	1842	1844	Died in Utah in 1879 after an active life in the Church.
Thomas Bullock	1843[?]	1844	Employed as a clerk most of his life; died in Utah in 1885.

Sources: Dean C. Jessee, "The Writing of Joseph Smith's History," *BYU Studies* 11 (Summer 1971): 439-73, especially pp. 441, 463; Andrew Jenson, *L.D.S. Biographical Encyclopedia*, 4 vols. (Salt Lake City: Published by author, 1901-1936).



(some keeping their work), several suffered extended debilitating illnesses, and three terminated their services in death (see Table 1).

To what extent are the sources, rough drafts, and manuscripts of the *History of the Church* the personal writing of Joseph Smith? As early as 1832 the Prophet established the precedent of keeping a personal diary and a letterbook, but only a few pages of these early sources are in his handwriting. Joseph began his earliest extant diary on 29 November 1832 with the caption on page 1: "Joseph Smith Jr's. Book for Record. Bought on 29th of November 1832 for the purpose to keep a minute account of all things that come under my observation."<sup>9</sup> A few additional entries are in Joseph Smith's handwriting, but most of this diary is in the handwriting of scribes. At the same time the Prophet commenced keeping this diary, he converted an earlier journal, which contained his earliest—partly holographic—account of the First Vision, into a letterbook, into which were copied his correspondence and a few other important Church documents.<sup>10</sup> The diary and letterbook set a pattern for recordkeeping which Joseph Smith followed the rest of his life. A second diary, started by the Prophet in 1835, also contains a few holographic entries; but all of his subsequent diaries are in the handwriting of scribes. There are only thirty-five holographic pages in Joseph Smith's diaries, representing only two percent of the content of his eight separate diaries.<sup>11</sup> His letterbooks contain about ten pages of his own handwriting, and there is some holographic material in the "Kirtland Revelation Book" and the book of "The Law of the Lord." Except for these few pages, all the sources and manuscripts connected with the compilation of the *History of the Church* are in the handwriting of scribes (see Table 2).

Of the same genre as the Prophet's diaries is the "Scriptory Book of Joseph Smith, Jr." which was written by George W. Robinson in 1837–1838, all in the third person. When this source was used in compiling the *History of the Church*, it was transposed into a first-person narrative of the Prophet. It is obviously a mistake to identify such sources as the Prophet's personal dictation or writing.

If Joseph Smith did not personally write most of the material in his diaries and the manuscripts of his history, how much of it did he dictate? It is clear from the Prophet's diaries, as well as the journals of the scribes, that he often dictated to his assistants, but it is equally clear that the scribes and clerks often composed and recorded information on their own. Many diary entries by the scribes were only

---

<sup>9</sup>Joseph Smith Diary, 27 November 1832 to 5 December 1834, Church Archives.

<sup>10</sup>Joseph Smith Letterbook, 1832–1835, Church Archives.

<sup>11</sup>Jeffrey O. Johnson, *Register of the Joseph Smith Collection in the Church Archives* (Salt Lake City: LDS Church Historical Department, 1973), p. 12.



TABLE 2  
Major Church History Sources Recorded by Scribes

Church History Source	Pages	Dates Kept	Scribes Writing the Source
Kirtland Revelation	120	1831-1834	Oliver Cowdery Frederick G. Williams Orson Hyde others; corrections by Joseph Smith
Book of Commandments Law and Covenants	63	n.d.	Orson Hyde, others
The Articles and Covenants of the Church of Christ	124	n.d.	John Whitmer William W. Phelps
Kirtland Council Minutes	265	1832-1837	Frederick G. Williams Orson Hyde Warren A. Cowdery George W. Robinson others
Joseph Smith Diary	105	1832-1834	Joseph Smith Oliver Cowdery Sidney Rigdon Frederick G. Williams Parley P. Pratt
Joseph Smith Letterbook (1829-1835)	93	1832-1835	Joseph Smith Orson Hyde Frederick G. Williams Oliver Cowdery John Whitmer
Patriarchal Blessings	9vols.	1834-1846	Oliver Cowdery Orson Hyde William W. Phelps Sylvester Smith Warren A. Cowdery George W. Robinson James Mulholland Robert B. Thompson Howard Coray James Sloan Thomas Bullock others

Sources: Church Archives; Jessee, "Joseph Smith's History," p. 463; Johnson, *Register of the Joseph Smith Collection*.



TABLE 2—Continued

Church History Source	Pages	Dates	Scribes Writing the Source
Joseph Smith Diary	193	1835–1836	Joseph Smith Oliver Cowdery Warren Parrish Sylvester Smith Warren A. Cowdery
Church History	143	1835–1836	Frederick G. Williams Warren Parrish Warren A. Cowdery
Joseph Smith Letterbook (1829–1843)	245	1837–1843	James Mulholland Robert B. Thompson Howard Coray Willard Richards William Clayton, others
Scriptory Book of Joseph Smith, Jr.*	37	1837–1838	George W. Robinson
History of the Kirtland Camp**	62	1838	Elias Smith
Far West Record (1830–1844)***	181	1838–1844	Oliver Cowdery John Whitmer W. W. Phelps John Corrill Orson Hyde Harvey Whitlock Sidney Gilbert William E. McLellan Frederick G. Williams Orson Pratt Thomas Marsh Peter Dustin Elias Higbee Harvey Green Nathan West Ebenezer Robinson Hosea Stout Joseph M. Cole

\*This book was later used for Patriarchal Blessings, vol. 9.

\*\*Although incorporated into the *History of the Church* by Willard Richards and B. H. Roberts, the original manuscript cannot be located. Pages indicated are in the published history.

\*\*\*Although the title page of the Far West Record is dated 6 April 1838, it covers a chronological period extending back to 9 June 1830. The only existing manuscript copy is in the handwriting of a later scribe who copied the minutes and notes of the earlier clerks into a bound journal.



TABLE 2—*Continued*

Church History Source	Pages	Dates Kept	Scribes Writing the Sources
Joseph Smith Diary	11	1838–1839	James Mulholland
Joseph Smith Diary	15	1839	James Mulholland
Nauvoo High Council Minutes	67	1839–1840	Henry G. Sherwood Hosea Stout Randolf Alexander Robert B. Thompson
Nauvoo Municipal Court Docket	102	1841–1845	James Sloan Willard Richards Thomas Bullock
Nauvoo City Council Proceedings	241	1841–1845	James Sloan Willard Richards Thomas Bullock
Joseph Smith Diary	281	1842–1843	Willard Richards
The Law of the Lord****	315	1842–1845[?]	Joseph Smith Willard Richards Thomas Bullock[?]
Nauvoo Relief Society Minutes	128	1842–1844	Eliza R. Snow
Joseph Smith Diary	309	1843	Willard Richards
Joseph Smith Diary	280	1843–1844	Willard Richards
Joseph Smith History	280	1844	Willard Richards Thomas Bullock

\*\*\*\*This source was used by Willard Richards in compiling the *History of the Church* and by B. H. Roberts in editing the *History* from 1902 to 1912. Thomas Bullock Memorandum Book, 30 January 1845, Church Archives; HC, 5: 420–21.



brief, incomplete notes—some in the third person—that had to be deciphered and filled out by the later compilers of the Church annals. Much of this editing was done after the original writers and the Prophet were dead. Such material would hardly qualify as verbatim dictation.

At the time James Mulholland commenced writing “The History of Joseph Smith,” he was also keeping the Prophet’s diary. He recorded for June 1839: “Monday 10th began to study and prepare to dictate history—Tuesday commenced to dictate and I to write history Wednesday Thursday Friday so employed.”<sup>12</sup> It is clear from this diary, as well as from Mulholland’s own journal, that this early part of the history was dictated;<sup>13</sup> but did this process continue throughout the compilation of the history? If the experience of Howard Coray, who worked on the history in 1840–1841, was similar to that of other writers, it is apparent that the scribes did much more than passively take dictation; they took an active role in the actual composition of the history. Howard Coray was assigned with Edwin D. Woolley to “write up the Church History,” and the two men moved into Joseph Smith’s new office in the upper story of his store. According to Brother Coray, they proceeded as follows:

Bro. Woolley and myself, were busily engaged in compiling the church history. The Prophet was to furnish all the materials; and our business, was not only to combine, and arrange in cronological [*sic*] order, but to spread out or amplify not a little, in as good historical style as may be.<sup>14</sup>

It was Edwin Woolley’s responsibility to organize the material and prepare a rough draft, which was then submitted to Howard Coray for correction and refinement. Brother Coray soon discovered that Brother Woolley “knew nothing whatever of grammar,” but he concluded that he would make the best “of a bad job” and work with Brother Woolley in rewriting his material. But when Edwin Woolley saw how much of his writing had to be corrected, thrown out, or redone, he became discouraged and quit; and Brother Coray had to find a new partner.<sup>15</sup> He succeeded in obtaining the services of a Dr. Miller, who worked with him until they had “used up all the historical matter” which the Prophet had given them.<sup>16</sup> Howard Coray further observed: “And, as peculiar [*sic*] circumstances

---

<sup>12</sup>Joseph Smith Diary, 10–14 June 1839, Church Archives. This diary entry was changed to a first-person account of Joseph Smith in the published history (*HC*, 3: 375–77).

<sup>13</sup>James Mulholland Journal, 10–14 June 1839, Church Archives.

<sup>14</sup>Howard Coray Autobiography, Church Archives; also Dean Jessee, *BYU Studies* 17 (Spring 1977): 346.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*



**TABLE 3**  
**Scribes Writing the Manuscript History of Joseph Smith**

Name	MS Book	MS Pages	<i>History of the Church</i> Vol. Pages
James Mulholland	A – 1	1–59	1 1–117
Robert B. Thompson	A – 1	60–75	1 118–25
W. W. Phelps	A – 1	75–130	1 124–95
Willard Richards	A – 1	131–33† Note A Note B Note C	1 6–10 Omitted 6 9–10
W. W. Phelps	A – 1	135–57	1 195–222
Willard Richards	A – 1	158–553	1 222–493
			2 1–160
	B – 1	553–812	2 161–529
			3 1–56
Thomas Bullock	B – 1	812–49	3 56–466
	C – 1	850–1361	4 1–610
	D – 1	1362–1486	5 1–291
Leo Hawkins	D – 1	1486–1547	5 292–384
Robert L. Campbell	D – 1	1547–1636	5 384–556
	E – 1	1637–2028	6 1–349
Jonathan Grimshaw	F – 1	1–150	6 349–548
Leo Hawkins	F – 1	151–89	6 548–631
	F – 1	190–204	7 1–31
	F – 1	228–304	7 129–243

Sources: Jessee, "Joseph Smith's History," p. 441; *HC*, 7 vols.; Manuscript History of the Church, Church Archives.

†Notes A, B, and C were added by Willard Richards in 1842 and are not in chronological order. They were not included in the earliest publication of the *History* in the *Times and Seasons* in April 1842 and may have been written too late to be included. Notes B and C were added in B. H. Roberts's edited version of the *History* in the early 1900s, but Note A, which relates to Joseph Smith's early boyhood, does not fit smoothly into the chronological structure, which was, perhaps, the reason for its omission by B. H. Roberts.



prevented his giving attention to his part of the business we of necessity discontinued our labors.”<sup>17</sup>

Because of numerous setbacks and difficulties at Nauvoo, progress on the history was very slow until the appointment of Willard Richards as the Prophet’s “private Sect. and Historian” on 21 December 1842.<sup>18</sup> At this time the history had been written only to 1 November 1831. Dr. Richards’s handwriting begins on page 158 of Book A-1 in the manuscript, which is page 222 of volume 1 of the *History of the Church* (see tables 3 and 4).

At the same time he started writing the manuscript of the “History of Joseph Smith,” Willard Richards also assumed the responsibility for keeping President Smith’s diary—a project which he continued right up to the time of the Prophet’s martyrdom. Dr. Richards boarded with the Prophet for several weeks in 1841 and later shared President Smith’s upstairs office in the brick store at Nauvoo. He undoubtedly obtained much information for the diaries and manuscript history directly from the Prophet, but he frequently recorded this material in his own words—usually in abbreviated notes. As the official Church Recorder and Historian, Willard Richards also worked independently in recording the minutes of meetings, longhand abridgments of sermons, descriptions of events, correspondence, and many other items for later inclusion in the manuscript history. No one in the Church at this time had mastered shorthand sufficiently to take down sermons, conversations, and other statements word for word, so most of the material Dr. Richards recorded was in the form of abridged and often abbreviated notes that had to be deciphered and filled out for inclusion in the manuscript history. Unfortunately, Dr. Richards did not live to complete the emendation and amplification of his own notes, and the task was left to his successors in the Church Historian’s Office.

At the time of the Martyrdom, Willard Richards had completed the manuscript history to page 812 in Book B-1. Book A-1 was terminated on page 553, to leave room for addenda, and the pagination was continued consecutively through volumes B-1 to E-1 (see Table 3). At this point Dr. Richards had completed the history to 5 August 1838, but it had been published in the *Times and Seasons* only up to the events of 7 January 1832 (see tables 4 and 5). In terms of pages in the original manuscript history, only thirty-five percent had been written up to the time of the Prophet’s death, and none of this was in his own handwriting.

---

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>Willard Richards Journal, 21 December 1842, Church Archives.



**TABLE 4**  
**Time Schedule for Writing the Manuscript History of Joseph Smith**

Persons Compiling and Copying the History	Pages Written in MS	Time Period Covered in MS	When Written
Compilation of the History before Joseph Smith's Death on 27 June 1844			
Joseph Smith James Mulholland	A-1, 1-59	23 Dec. 1805 to 26 Sept. 1830	11 June to 27 Oct. 1839
Joseph Smith Robert B. Thompson Howard Coray	A-1, 60-75	26 Sept. to late Oct. 1830	3 Oct. 1840 to 27 Aug. 1841
Joseph Smith W. W. Phelps	A-1, 75-157	Oct. 1830 to 1 Nov. 1831	1841-1842
Joseph Smith Willard Richards	A-1, 158- B-1, 812	1 Nov. 1831 to 5 Aug. 1838	21 Dec. 1842 to 2 Mar. 1844
Compilation of the History after Joseph Smith's Death on 27 June 1844			
Willard Richards Thomas Bullock	B-1, 812- D-1, 1486	6 Aug. 1838 to 1 Mar. 1843	15 June 1845 to 1 Dec. 1853
George A. Smith Wilford Woodruff Thomas Bullock Leo Hawkins Robert Campbell Jonathan Grimshaw	D-1, 1486- F-1, 304	1 Mar. 1843 to 8 Aug. 1844	18 April 1854 to 30 Jan. 1857

Sources: Manuscript History of the Church, James Mulholland Journal, Willard Richards Journal, Historian's Office Journal, George A. Smith Journal, Wilford Woodruff Journal, Howard Coray Autobiography—all the foregoing are located in the Church Archives; Jessee, "Joseph Smith's History," p. 441.



**TABLE 5**  
**Publication of Joseph Smith's History**

Where Published	Volume and Number	Publication Dates	Period of History Covered
<b>Earliest Publication at Nauvoo</b>			
<i>Times and Seasons</i>	3, no. 10 to 5, no. 9	15 March 1842 to 1 May 1844	23 Dec. 1805 to 7 Jan. 1832
<b>Early Republication in England from the <i>Times and Seasons</i></b>			
<i>Millennial Star</i>	3, no. 2 to 5, no. 12	June 1842 to May 1845	23 Dec. 1805 to 3 Nov. 1831§
<b>Publication after Joseph Smith's Death at Nauvoo</b>			
<i>Times and Seasons</i>	5, no. 13 to 6, no. 23	15 July 1844 to 15 Feb. 1846	8 Jan. 1832 to 11 Aug. 1834
<b>Publication after the Exodus to Salt Lake City</b>			
<i>Deseret News</i>	2, no. 1 to 7, no. 46	15 Nov. 1851 to 20 Jan. 1858	11 Aug. 1834 to 8 Aug. 1844
<b>Republication in England from the <i>Times and Seasons</i> and <i>Deseret News</i></b>			
<i>Millennial Star</i>	14, no. 8§§ to 25, no. 18	15 April 1852 to 2 May 1863	4 Nov. 1831 to 8 Aug. 1844

§The *Times and Seasons*, vol. 5, no. 9 (1 May 1844), pp. 512–14, contained the last installment of the “History” published during Joseph Smith’s lifetime; but this was omitted from the *Millennial Star* in the republication of the “History” in 1845. It was included later when the series was resumed in the *Star*, vol. 14, no. 8 (15 April 1852), pp. 113–17.

§§When the “History of Joseph Smith” was resumed in the *Star* in 1852, many of the Saints in England were recent converts to the Church who did not have the seven- to ten-year-old editions of the *Star* with the earlier segments of the “History.” To remedy this situation, Franklin D. Richards, editor of the *Millennial Star*, published an eighty-eight page supplement to volume 14 in 1852 containing all of the earlier, scarce installments.



As Willard Richards and his chief assistant, Thomas Bullock, commenced the posthumous writing of the "History of Joseph Smith," a rough draft was prepared that is still well preserved in the Church Archives. If Coray's experience was typical, preliminary drafts were used in compiling the history prior to this time, but if this were the case, none of them has survived, nor is there any specific reference to such drafts or outlines by the scribes who wrote the final polished manuscripts. The surviving rough draft is written on loose foolscap, and the pagination periodically starts over again (see Table 6). The rough draft begins with 6 August 1838 and is in the handwriting of Willard Richards. This preliminary draft made it possible for him to leave most of the tedious writing and copying to Thomas Bullock. Dr. Richards inserted cross-references to materials from various sources that were to be copied into the completed history and also made many corrections and additions right in the rough draft. Thomas Bullock started copying the history into the manuscript history journal for the same date that Dr. Richards started writing the rough draft—6 August 1838 (see Table 4). Later the rough draft switches abruptly to the handwriting of Thomas Bullock (see Table 6), and it appears he was composing the history at this point, but the journals of Elders Richards and Bullock explain the actual procedure: Dr. Richards suffered an extended illness during the winter of 1845–46, and, in his anxiety to continue the history, called Thomas Bullock to his home, got out of his sickbed, sat in a chair, and dictated the history for Elder Bullock to record in the rough draft.<sup>19</sup>

Although Willard Richards had proceeded with the history after the Prophet's death, he continued the first-person narrative that characterized the Prophet's early dictation. He was apparently instructed by the Prophet in Carthage Jail to continue "the plan of compiling the history" which was "commenced by himself."<sup>20</sup> Having been called as the Prophet's "private Sect. and Historian," Elder Richards apparently felt that he had the necessary investiture of authority to permit him to write for, and as if he were, the Prophet Joseph Smith. Throughout the compilation of the history, Elder Richards, as well as the later writers, stuck devotedly to the first-person style commenced by the Prophet. The notes of Elder Richards and other scribes in the Prophet's diaries were filled out in accordance with this format, but this was not the only material that was modified for amalgamation into the first-person narrative of the history. Some of the other sources utilized in its compilation were later summarized

---

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 3 January 1846; Historian's Office Journal, 3–12 January 1846, Church Archives.

<sup>20</sup>George A. Smith to Wilford Woodruff, 21 April 1856, Church Archives.



**TABLE 6**  
**Rough Draft of the History of Joseph Smith**

Written by	Pages	Historical Period Covered
Willard Richards	1-77	6 Aug. 1838 to 30 Dec. 1839
Willard Richards	1-19	1 Jan. 1840 to 30 Dec. 1840
Willard Richards	1-23	1 Jan. 1841 to 30 Dec. 1841
Willard Richards	1-19	1 Jan. 1842 to 30 June 1842
Willard Richards	1-24	1 July 1842 to 31 Dec. 1842
Willard Richards	1-13	1 Jan. 1843 to 29 Jan. 1843
Thomas Bullock	13-26	30 Jan. 1843 to 3 Mar. 1843
Thomas Bullock	1-89	1 Mar. 1843 to 29 Dec. 1843
Jonathan Grimshaw	1-5	1 Jan. 1844 to 27 Jan. 1844
Thomas Bullock‡ Jonathan Grimshaw Leo Hawkins Robert C. Campbell	7-72	1 Feb. 1844 to 21 June 1844
Thomas Bullock Jonathan Grimshaw Leo Hawkins Robert L. Campbell	1-76	22 June 1844 to 28 June 1844
Robert L. Campbell	1-18	22 June 1844 to 8 Aug. 1844

Sources: Rough draft Manuscript History of the Church, Church Archives. Dean C. Jessee, senior historical associate, Joseph Fielding Smith Institute of Church History, Brigham Young University, assisted in identifying the handwriting of the different scribes.

‡Although Thomas Bullock was George A. Smith's chief clerk, the other clerks who worked in the Historian's Office sometimes wrote in the rough draft.



by George A. Smith, who succeeded Willard Richards as Church Historian in 1854:

The plan of compiling the history of Joseph Smith from the journals kept by his clerks, Willard Richards, William Clayton, Wilford Woodruff, and Thomas Bullock, was commenced by himself, extracting items of necessary information in regard to general and particular movements from the Times and Seasons, Millennial Star, Wasp, Neighbor, and other publication, extracts from City Councils, Municipal Courts, and Mayor's Dockets, and Legion Records, which were all kept under his direction; also the movement of the Church as found in Conference Minutes, High Council records, and the records of the several quorums, together with letters and copies preserved on file; also noted remarkable occurrences throughout the world, and compiled them under date of transaction, according to the above plan which he while in prison just previous to his murder requested Elder Willard Richards to continue.<sup>21</sup>

Comparison of these sources with the *History of the Church* reveals that passages from many of them were converted into first-person accounts of Joseph Smith, and although such passages appear to be the direct discourse or writing of the Prophet, they are really the compositions of others.

Did Joseph Smith have an opportunity to review carefully all the history written for him by his scribes? Both circumstantial and documentary evidence suggest that the Prophet did not have the opportunity to review and revise very much of the history. On 1 April 1845, Brigham Young commenced the practice of reviewing the history for publication. His history states:

Tuesday, April 1, 1845.—I commenced revising the History of Joseph Smith at Brother Richards' office: Elder Heber C. Kimball and George A. Smith were with me. President Joseph Smith had corrected forty-two pages before his massacre. It afforded us great satisfaction to hear Brother Richards read the history of the infancy of the church. Adjourned at eleven p.m. having read one hundred and forty pages in Book 'A'.<sup>22</sup>

This beginning of Brigham Young's "revising the history" is also corroborated by a note at the top of page 42 of the manuscript: "1845 April 1—Commenced reading."<sup>23</sup> Page 42 is in the handwriting of James Mulholland, the first scribe of the manuscript, and deals with events connected with the Church's first conference on 1 June 1830.<sup>24</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>HC, 7: 389. Willard Richards, Thomas Bullock, and George A. Smith all refer to this day's activities in their journal entries for 1 April 1845.

<sup>23</sup>Manuscript History of the Church, A-1, p. 42, Church Archives.

<sup>24</sup>This part of the manuscript is now HC, 1: 85-86.

Brigham Young's statement that "Joseph Smith had corrected forty-two pages before his massacre" would suggest that the Prophet entrusted a great deal of the work on his history to his scribes and the Church historians and that at the time of his death he was hundreds of pages behind in reviewing the manuscript. Although the history was "revised" by President Young "almost without any alteration," Brigham continued the practice of allowing clerks to write in the first person for Joseph until it was finished in 1857.<sup>25</sup>

Elders Richards and Bullock completed the history to page 1485 in Book D-1 before "sorting and packing books for the journey west," on 20 January 1846.<sup>26</sup> It was not until 1 December 1853 that Willard Richards got back to the task of compiling the history in Utah. Thomas Bullock describes the Doctor's effort in a marginal note in the manuscript: "Decb. 1, 1853 Willard Richards wrote one line of history, being sick at the time—and was never able to do any more."<sup>27</sup> This last line of history written by Elder Richards brought the historical narrative to 1 March 1843; the history beyond that date was compiled by his successor George A. Smith, the cousin of the Prophet. Willard Richards died on 11 March 1854; George A. Smith was sustained as the new Church Historian at general conference on 7 April 1854 and commenced compiling the history on 18 April 1854.<sup>28</sup>

George A. Smith continued Willard Richards's practice of preparing a rough draft. As he explained the process: "Thomas Bullock acted with me as Chief Clerk. . . . His pen wrote the principal part of the rough manuscript from my dictation."<sup>29</sup> Jonathan Grimshaw, Leo Hawkins, and Robert L. Campbell, who were all clerks in the Historian's Office, also assisted in writing the "rough manuscript" (see Table 6). George A. Smith's handwriting cannot be identified in any of the manuscripts compiled under his direction.

George A. deeply regretted that Willard Richards had not been able to complete the "History of Joseph Smith."<sup>30</sup> In the following letter, he explained some of the difficulties encountered in trying to complete the history:

It seems as though all the contrivances that the devil could invent had been brought to bear from the day of Joseph and Hyrum's death to prevent their history being compiled. I have six clerks engaged in the

---

<sup>25</sup>George A. Smith to Wilford Woodruff, 21 April 1856, Church Archives.

<sup>26</sup>Historian's Office Journal, 20 January 1846, Church Archives.

<sup>27</sup>Manuscript History of the Church, D-1, p. 1486, Church Archives.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, marginal note.

<sup>29</sup>George A. Smith to Wilford Woodruff, 21 April 1856, Church Archives.

<sup>30</sup>*Deseret News*, 19 October 1854, p. 2.



office and it keeps my brain in a perfect whirl to keep track of them or they of me and not get the cart before the horse. Many records are nearly obliterated by time damp and dirt. Others lost. Some half worked into mouse nests, and many important events were never written except in the hearts of those who were concerned. Joseph said it would be impossible for any man ever to write his history. I am doing the best I can toward it and feel the Spirit of it as much as I ever did to preach [S]o do the clerks in the office.<sup>31</sup>

In March of 1856 George A. wrote that the history of Joseph was “difficult to collate” and that it was “a long, tedious and difficult task, as his papers, many of them have been badly kept, and seriously damaged during our migratory movements since his death.”<sup>32</sup> A month later he wrote Wilford Woodruff:

The severe application of thought to the principle of the History, the exercise of memory etc, have caused me to suffer much from a nervous headache or inflammation of the brain, and my application of mind being in exercise both day and night, deprived me of a great portion of necessary sleep.<sup>33</sup>

George A. encountered special problems in trying to reconstruct the notes of Willard Richards in the Prophet’s diaries. Many entries were only brief notes—sometimes difficult to read—which required considerable amplification to complete the meaning in an acceptable writing style. In all this reconstruction George A. maintained the first-person narrative that characterized the history.

Willard Richards had died before he had had the opportunity of reconstructing any of the sermons of Joseph Smith from his own notes. One difficult phase of George A. Smith’s work was to prepare these sermons for inclusion in the manuscript history. “[Jonathan] Grimshaw sorted and filed the papers,” George A. reported, “and carefully amalgamated the principle part of the discourses of President Smith and others from the various reports . . . , and put them in shape to be filled up by me.”<sup>34</sup> He further explained:

I have filled up all the reports of sermons by Prest. Joseph Smith and others from minutes or sketches taken at the time in longhand by Dr. Willard Richards, Wilford Woodruff, Thomas Bullock, William Clayton, Miss Eliza R. Snow & c., which was an immense labor, requiring the deepest thought and the closest application, as there were mostly only two or three words (about half written) to a sentence. The greatest care has been taken to convey the ideas in the prophet’s style as near as possible, and in no case has the sentiment been varied that I

---

<sup>31</sup>Church Historian’s Office Letterbook, 1854–1861, pp. 106–07, Church Archives.

<sup>32</sup>George A. Smith to Cyrus Wheelock, March 1855, Church Archives.

<sup>33</sup>George A. Smith to Wilford Woodruff, 21 April 1856, Church Archives.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid.

know of, as I heard most of his discourses myself, was on the most intimate terms with him, have attained a most vivid recollection of his teachings, and was well acquainted with his principles and motives.<sup>35</sup>

Joseph Smith was not known to speak from a prepared text, and inasmuch as no one was able to take down his sermons completely in shorthand, there are no verbatim records of his discourses extant.

Wilford Woodruff was called as Assistant Church Historian in 1856, and although he contributed information from his journals and collected other materials for the history, his handwriting does not appear in the rough or completed manuscripts (see tables 3 and 6).

Up to the end of the nineteenth century, the only place the “History of Joseph Smith” could be found was in the early periodicals of the Church, where it had been published in serial form from 1842 to 1863. The diaries of Joseph Smith had provided the basic skeletal outline for the “History of Joseph Smith,” which comprises the first six volumes (A–F) of the Manuscript History of the Church. Following several aborted attempts to compile and publish a history of the Church, the “History of Joseph Smith” had been started on 11 June 1839 and completed by 30 January 1857. Almost twenty years in the process of compilation and publication, the history was produced by a series of scribes, clerks, and Church historians, who labored sporadically on the project during a very difficult period of persecution, pioneer travel and western colonization (see Table 3). The history was first published serially in the *Times and Seasons* and the *Deseret News* from 1842 to 1858, and it was reprinted in the *Millennial Star* from 1842 to 1863 (see Table 5). Not only were these installments scattered inconveniently through more than two decades of periodicals, but the publications themselves were virtually unobtainable.

After the deaths of the original compilers of the history, there was a tendency in the Church to forget or ignore the methodology of the early scribes and Church historians who wrote it and to attribute all of the first-person material in the history to Joseph Smith himself. Orson Pratt, Church Historian from 1874 to 1881, was well acquainted with the men who worked on the history and was familiar with their procedures. When a Church member wrote to him to inquire about a rather obvious error in the history, he frankly admitted:

The discrepancy in the history to which you refer may have occurred through the ignorance or carelessness of the historian or transcriber. It is true that history reads as though the Prophet himself was writing: but

---

<sup>35</sup>Ibid.



the Prophet was a slow and awkward writer; and many events recorded were written by his scribes who undoubtedly trusted too much to their memories, and the items probably were not sufficiently scanned by Bro. Joseph, before they got into print.<sup>36</sup>

Whether by ignorance or design, Elder Pratt's successors in the Historian's Office apparently said nothing about the methodology involved in compiling the early history of the Church, and by the end of the nineteenth century it was frequently assumed that all the history had been written or dictated by the Prophet.

By the turn of the century the project of publishing the entire history in accessible book form was undertaken by George Q. Cannon, a member of the First Presidency. In an unpublished preface, he asserted that the history "was written by the Prophet himself or under his own direction during his lifetime." He further explained: "While it is in a sense personal and autobiographical, it nevertheless constitutes the true history of the Church and its happenings, stated in his language, up to within a very few days of his martyrdom."<sup>37</sup> In less than fifty years from the time the history was completed, the methods involved in its compilation were either obscured or ignored to the point that it was commonly assumed the history was the personal writing or dictation of the Prophet. In spite of several recent articles on the subject, nothing has significantly modified this belief as far as the general Church membership is concerned.

The *History of the Church* in its present form was edited by B. H. Roberts, who was assigned the project on 23 May 1901, about six weeks after the death of George Q. Cannon.<sup>38</sup> The first six volumes, containing the "History of Joseph Smith" were published from 1902 to 1912, and although Elder Roberts made significant contributions to the history through his editing, he also created many problems. His most serious shortcoming was that he did not come to grips with the question of the history's authorship nor the methodology associated with its original compilation. He not only perpetuated the myth that the entire narrative was the Prophet's own writing or words,<sup>39</sup> but he also made additions and deletions right in the text, without any annotation, as if these too were the product of the Prophet's own mind.<sup>40</sup> In doing this, he corrupted the text as he tried to correct it and actually widened the gap between the real

---

<sup>36</sup>Orson Pratt to John Christensen, 11 March 1876, Church Archives.

<sup>37</sup>George Q. Cannon, Unfinished preface to a history of the Church, c.1901, Church Archives.

<sup>38</sup>Robert H. Malan, *B. H. Roberts, a Biography* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1966), p. 92.

<sup>39</sup>B. H. Roberts, ed., *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1902), 1: title page.

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*, 1: iv.



Joseph Smith and what was being published as his personal writing. If Joseph Smith's declaration that "no man knows my history," were true in his own lifetime, it was even more true after Roberts's revisions, for the Prophet's actual personality, character, and style were further obscured by an often misleading editorial screen.

B. H. Roberts should have gone back to the original sources to ascertain the actual origin and authorship of the materials being edited; misleading transpositions of the other men's words into first-person statements of Joseph Smith should have been at least identified and in some cases corrected; Roberts's own modifications should have been identified or confined to the footnotes, so his work could be distinguished from that of the former compilers; variant passages in the manuscripts should have been noted and evaluated; and the whole editorial process explained and annotated more clearly. Elder Roberts's editorial work is at best incomplete and at worst misleading.

However, if the "History of Joseph Smith" fails to measure up to modern-day standards for historical writing and editing, it only reflects the shortcomings of other mid-nineteenth century historical works in the United States, and its compilers and editors should not be judged too harshly. The accepted standards of modern historians and writers as they relate to plagiarism, ghostwriting, documentation, use of quotation marks, and respect for the integrity of original sources are comparatively recent developments not widely implemented even among professional historians until almost fifty years after the compilation of the "History of Joseph Smith," and such critical standards were not reflected in the works of nonprofessional historians until some time after B. H. Roberts did his editing.<sup>41</sup>

Despite its deficiencies, the *History of the Church* is an excellent collection of sources on Joseph Smith and early Mormonism. Although the authorship of these sources is often confused and deceptive, the history was nearly always written by eyewitnesses, and it is commendably accurate and reliable in its factual content. When George A. Smith and Wilford Woodruff bore testimony "that the History of Joseph Smith is true, and is one of the most authentic histories ever written," they were certainly correct as far as the recording of events and details is concerned.<sup>42</sup>

---

<sup>41</sup>Matthew A. Fitzsimmons, *The Development of Historiography* (Harrisburg, Pa.: The Stackpole Co., 1954), pp. 197-224, 399-400. Allen Nevins, *The Gateway to History* (New York: D. C. Heath and Co., 1938), pp. 121-22, 129-32, 142-44, 146-47, 153-54, 161-62.

<sup>42</sup>HC, 7: 242-43.



As a narrative and witness of the Latter-day restoration, the "History of Joseph Smith" has contributed significantly to the faith and understanding of its readers since the time it made its first appearance in the Church's periodicals over a century ago. The great value of this enduring work should justify a painstaking and forthright re-editing, which would identify the history's authors and sources and would prevent the publication and popularity of such misleading books as the *Journal of Joseph*.

Most of the original sources used in the compilation of the history are in an excellent state of preservation in the Church Archives, and it is still possible to identify the authors and original content of many of the primary sources. There is often a discernible difference in style between a Joseph Smith holograph, his dictated compositions, and the writing of the scribes;<sup>43</sup> but, as in the case of most ghostwriting, it is very difficult to determine in a definitive or comprehensive way just what was contributed by Joseph Smith and what was the input of his scribes. Handwriting analysis, historical circumstantial evidence, comparisons of style, identification of original sources, and such new techniques as computer "wordprints" are all promising tools for the further identification of documents that reflect the Prophet's personal thought, vocabulary, style, and personality. It could be argued that the history is reliable regardless of its authorship, but this in no way justifies representing quotations from its contents as the personal compositions of the Prophet, when they are actually the work of other men.

---

<sup>43</sup>Dean C. Jessee, "The Reliability of Joseph Smith's History," *Journal of Mormon History* 3 (1976): 37.

## Book Reviews

**BLANCHARD, KENDALL A.** *The Economics of Sainthood: Religious Change among the Rimrock Navajos.* Cranbury, N. J.: Fairleigh Dickinson, 1976. 240 pp. \$16.50. Also, Associated University Presses, Inc., 1977. 240 pp. \$6.50.

Reviewed by Lawrence Coates, professor of history at Ricks College, Rexburg, Idaho.

Kendall A. Blanchard deserves praise for attempting, as too few have done, a serious study of the effects of Christian ideals on the traditional Indian economy.

Rejecting Max Weber's classic thesis that Protestantism provided the ethical underpinning for capitalism, Blanchard adapted S. N. Eisenstadt's ideas in "The Protestant-Ethic Thesis in an Analytical and Comparative Framework" from *The Protestant-Ethic and Modernization* in creating his own two-dimensional model relating theology, ethics, and economics. One dimension compares the economic behavior of Navajos who still practice their traditional religion with the economic behavior of Mormon and Nazarene Navajo converts. The other dimension compares the degree of church activity of these Navajo Christians with the degree of their active acceptance of their religions' ethics.

Using this model, Blanchard concludes that Nazarene and Mormon Navajos make more money, have better jobs, have more education and technical training, and consequently are more successful, from the white viewpoint, than those Navajos who follow their traditional religious ways. His research reveals, however, that the Navajo converts fail to internalize Nazarene and Mormon values, so Weber's Protestant-ethic thesis cannot explain why they succeed economically. It is not the religious ideology, but the institutional activities of the two churches that causes the economic change, says Blanchard, as the converts accept not theological values, but practical benefits like better education, employment, and standard of living.

Despite the ideas put forward by his study, Blanchard's book has some weaknesses. First, though he describes the ethnological characteristics of traditional Navajo economy, he fails to show the



flow of production and distribution of its goods and services, so the reader never gets a clear picture of how the traditional economy works in practice and, without that clear picture, cannot visualize the comparison between the traditional economy and the market economy functioning in Rimrock. Blanchard promises but never provides a micro economic model showing the flow of goods and services for both economies in Rimrock.

A second flaw is the author's apparent lack of understanding of the economic and religious ideas and practices of Latter-day Saints during the nineteenth century. His discussion of them suggests he is unaware of such economic movements as the United Order, cooperatives, and communitarian experiments among Mormons in the Southwest—all of which he could have found covered in studies such as Leonard J. Arrington's standard, *The Great Basin Kingdom*, or in Arrington, Feramorz Y. Fox, and Dean L. May's *Building the Kingdom of God: Community and Cooperation among the Mormons*. Blanchard also limited his study of the Mormons and the Indians to one source, David Kay Flake's Master's thesis, "A History of Mormon Missionary Work with the Hopi, Navajo, and Zuni Indians." Several other studies have been done on this topic and many primary sources which he failed to consult are open to scholarly research in the LDS Church Historical Department.

Third, *Economics of Sainthood* could make a greater contribution if it were written in a more appealing style. Some chapters are laced with jargon that has meaning only to anthropologists. For instance, wade through this, from the introduction (p. 36): "Eisenstadt's transformative-capacities concept can be more productive if it is understood in terms of two subcomponents that I have labeled *theological-ethical capacities* and *institutional capacities*. Inherent in the first subdivision are the theoretical aspects of the traditional Protestant-ethic problem"—not pleasure reading.

Finally, until corroborative studies are done, we must wonder about the study's accuracy, since Blanchard's sample was only thirty-four families (233 people): seventeen families were traditional Navajos, only four were Mormon, and thirteen were Nazarene. Even minor inaccuracies among such a small sample could drastically alter the conclusions.

Even with these weaknesses, *Economics of Sainthood* is a valuable focus on the interaction between religion and economic change; we hope it will encourage other studies. Moreover, it will be interesting to see if time and other research substantiate or contradict Blanchard's prediction, an outgrowth of assumptions inherited from

Weber, regarding the future of the Mormons and the Nazarenes: "The Nazarene and Mormon programs will become increasingly less significant. Once they have lost their economic function, and this appears imminent, missionary efforts in the area will die, appealing to only a handful of those remaining 'misfits' and 'malcontents' " (pp. 226-27).

**ENGLAND, EUGENE.** *Brother Brigham*. Salt Lake City, Bookcraft Inc., 1980. 247 pp. \$5.95.

Reviewed by Eugene E. Campbell, professor emeritus of history, Brigham Young University.

"Too many books about Brigham Young have been written without love or faith" (p. vii) is the assertion of the author of this latest volume on some aspects of the life of the great Mormon leader. Dr. England's justification for adding another title to the extensive list of books about Brigham Young is that he is viewing the Mormon leader through the eyes of faith and love, but with more objectivity than earlier works by family members who used a similar approach. Professor England has also had access to "numerous unpublished diaries and letters by Brigham Young's contemporaries which give important details and assessments from those who knew him best" (p. vii), as well as the aid of research historian Ronald Esplin, who has been classifying and cataloguing the Brigham Young papers and documents in the Historical Division of the LDS Church for several years (pp. vii-viii).

The result is, in the words of the author, "a small volume of rather personal essays that can only begin to touch the dimensions of such a large life (p. viii)." Two of the dimensions he has chosen to omit are Brigham Young's dealings with the Indians and his "staggering achievements as a good husband to sixteen plural wives and an excellent father to forty-six children" (p. viii). (Since Brigham had twenty-seven wives and fifty-six children, one wonders if Dr. England has purposely omitted the other wives and children or if he is



suggesting that he was a good husband and father only to the ones enumerated. However, in the case of the children he may have counted only those who survived childhood, and it is true that only sixteen of the wives had children.)

The omission of these two rather controversial aspects of Brigham Young's career, especially his role in the promotion and practice of plural marriage, which the author feels is "too important and difficult to try to include here" (p. viii) is a key to the nature of the book. It is a very positive view of the most admirable characteristics of the pioneer leader, with very little criticism.

Episodes and aspects of Brigham Young's life included in the essays are Young Brigham, Brigham in England, Brigham and Joseph, Brigham as Moses both in Crossing Iowa and into the Desert, Brigham's Gospel Kingdom, and Brigham as President of the Church. Also included is a center section of photographs showing how the Mormon leader appeared at various stages in his life. Chapter notes and an index make up the last twenty-five pages of the book, and, as usual, Bookcraft has done an admirable job of printing and binding.

The volume is filled with quotes, primarily from the *History of the Church*, *Journal of Discourses*, and the "Manuscript History of Brigham Young," plus personal letters, Brigham Young Papers, and Dr. Leonard Arrington's publications. These quotes are often followed by the author's interpretation and justification of the Mormon leader's words.

Professor England is aware of much of the current scholarship that is revising many questionable concepts in LDS Church history, but there are mistakes. He accepts without question the exaggerated numbers of Mormons driven out of Missouri (12,000) (p. 32) and the Eliza R. Snow story of nine babies being born in the snow and rain one night at Sugar Creek (p. 109). He describes Miles Goodyear as an Englishman (p. 137) (Miles Goodyear was born in Connecticut but had an Englishman as a partner). He also accepts the "outer cordon" concept fostered by Hunter, Neff, and others that Brigham Young "had ringed the kingdom with colonies at strategic points of entry" (p. 162) even though this concept has been seriously challenged if not disproven by this reviewer. But these minor errors fade into insignificance when the major problem of the book is considered—namely, the one-sided, noncritical view of almost every issue and event. He accepts, apparently without question, the rationalization that the "central purpose" of the Zion's Camp march was to test the loyalty of the participants (p. 25). He also cites as a



fulfillment of Joseph Smith's prophecy the terrible cholera that afflicted many in the camp and caused the death of eighteen of the volunteers, ostensibly for fault-finding, although the Prophet's chief antagonist, Sylvester Smith, was not afflicted with the disease (p. 24). Heber C. Kimball's assertion that "the Lord fought in our defense" as an explanation for one of their enemies being "killed by lightning and another had his hand torn off by his horse" is accepted by Dr. England without comment (p. 24).

President Young is portrayed as a man with acknowledged faults, the most serious being his lack of control of "this unruly member, my tongue" (p. 141). But despite his use of strong rhetoric, threatening the seizure of property and even the decapitation of uncooperative Saints, the people knew that President Young was engaging in hyperbole and continued to follow his advice. In Dr. England's words:

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 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 whom, on *continuing evidence*, both of his enjoyment of the gifts of the spirit and of his practical success, they trusted was indeed God's spokesman. [Pp. 156-57]

He was constantly in touch with God and always concerned with building not only a Zion, but a "Zion people" by "planning in terms of the divine potential of every human being in this earthly school" (p. 156).

An interesting example of Brigham Young's interpretation of events is cited in the call of the Mormon Battalion. He recognized that it "provided an opportunity which did indeed benefit the Saints . . . and moved effectively to reverse the fear and resentment of his people against the government" (p. 128). He asserted that it was important to raise the five hundred man "requisition" because he was convinced that it was one more test "provided by the Lord to *try* the Saints as well as help protect them." He later believed it was Senator Thomas Benton of Missouri who conceived of this plot and "damned President Polk for his tyranny in drafting out 500 men to form a Battalion, in order that women and children might perish on the Prairies" (p. 126). No attempt is made by the author to reconcile the conflicting opinions nor to try to ascertain President Polk's motives in calling the Battalion nor Senator Benton's role in the affair.



Despite the historical shortcomings and apologetic interpretations, the author's essays present a considerable amount of new material on Brigham Young as revealed in his letters and sermons. Dr. England is a skilled writer and presents his point of view in an interesting manner. It is written for Latter-day Saints, and it seems likely that most will enjoy his choice of subjects as well as his interpretations, for they are presented by a believer to believers with both love and faith.

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY STUDIES is a voice for the community of Latter-day Saint scholars. Contributions dealing with LDS thought, history, theology, and related subjects will receive first priority.

BYU STUDIES is a serious venture into the study of the correlation of revealed and discovered truth. Dedicated to the conviction that the spiritual and the intellectual are complementary avenues of knowledge, BYU STUDIES welcomes articles from all fields of learning. They should be written for the informed nonspecialist rather than the specialized reader in the technical language of the field. Creative work—poetry, short fiction, drama—is also welcomed.

Except for unusual cases, contributions should not exceed 4,000 words (approximately 15 double-spaced, typewritten pages). Manuscripts should conform to the University of Chicago Press *Manual of Style*, and footnotes should be placed on a separate page at the end of the article.

Each author will receive twenty offprints and three copies of the number in which his contribution appears.

Send manuscripts to Brigham Young University, Dr. Charles D. Tate, Jr., Editor, Brigham Young University Studies, A283 JKBA, Provo, Utah 84602.

*Brigham Young University Studies* is being listed in *Current Contents:*  
*Behavioral, Social, and Management Sciences*  
and in *Arts and Humanities*  
*Citation Index*.