

# BYU STUDIES









Brigham  
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University  
Studies



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# Discipleship and Scholarship

Neal A. Maxwell

I have come to thank and to offer a few words of encouragement and guidance to scholars, whose work collectively has been used, is being used, and hopefully always will be used to protect and to build up the Kingdom.

Do not underestimate the importance of what you do as articulators. In praising C.S. Lewis, Austin Farrer wrote:

Though argument does not create conviction, lack of it destroys belief. What seems to be proved may not be embraced; but what no one shows that ability to defend is quickly abandoned. Rational argument does not create belief, but it maintains a climate in which belief may flourish.<sup>1</sup>

I am thankful to those who help to provide the needed “climate.”

Several notable examples could be cited. It may be too soon to know all the implications of much scholarly research that has been reported in recent years, but it will likely illustrate, again, something basic about the Prophet Joseph. The Prophet Joseph, a very good though not perfect man, will be vindicated in this statement about his own mission: “I never told you I was perfect, but there is no error in the revelations which I have taught.”<sup>2</sup>

In this same illustrative connection, you will remember the Lucy Mack Smith description of the Prophet’s experience as a lad with an infected leg. Amputation was considered. His story of “doctors” went unbelieved by some. In the Manuscript History, Joseph’s “doctors” were named along with references to a “council of surgeons.”<sup>3</sup> Being so attended to, medically, seemed so unlikely in rural New England. Only a few years ago, however, Dr. LeRoy S. Wirthlin researched this very interesting episode, which shows

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Elder Neal A. Maxwell is a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This article is a revision of portions of the talk he gave at the annual banquet of the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies on the Brigham Young University campus, September 27, 1991.

some micromanaging by the Lord. The medical doctor in final attendance, it turns out, was Dr. Nathan Smith, founder of the Dartmouth Medical School. He brought two doctors and several medical students with him to attend to young Joseph, who resisted amputation and pain-deadening alcohol. It turns out that Dr. Nathan Smith was highly qualified, and he was using a very advanced technique. Thus “the only man in America who could save [Joseph’s] leg was just five miles away.”<sup>4</sup> Happily, for young Joseph, Dr. Smith’s plans to leave the area had been delayed by a typhoid epidemic. Joseph Smith could scarcely have led the long march of Zion’s Camp years later without this dramatic medical help.

Joseph will go on being vindicated by further disclosures in all the essential things associated with his prophetic mission. Many of you, both now and in the future, will be part of that on-rolling vindication through your own articulation about the Restoration.

In so doing, you may also help another special group who need a particular strengthening. Lewis’ mentor in absentia, George MacDonald, noted how “it is often incapacity for defending the faith they love which turns men into persecutors.”<sup>5</sup> Happily, defenders beget defenders. Unhappily, dissenters beget dissenters, and doubters beget doubters. Some of the latter may be able to be helped.

I share the next thoughts with you simply because they are especially on my mind.

One of the striking dimensions of the restored gospel is the *democracy* of demands. Yet, it seeks to build an *aristocracy* of saints. Certain standards and requirements are laid upon all disciples. The member who is an automobile mechanic does not likely have all the skills of a scholar, and not likely you his. But both of you are under the same spiritual obligations to keep the same commandments and the same covenants. Furthermore, the mechanic is under the same obligation to develop the attributes of patience and meekness as are you.

Frankly, the world holds to no such democratic view. If one is a superb scholar in a narrow discipline, such is considered enough. One so gifted can then be as bohemian in behavior as one likes. But it is not so in the Kingdom, is it?

Of course, we all enjoy certain of the fruits of the labors of secular geniuses who may be visibly or significantly flawed in some respects. Nor would we desire to detract from their important contributions. A just God will surely credit them. However, God will excuse neither them nor us from keeping his commandments,



including the requirement given to us by him and his Son to become more like them (Matt. 5:48; 3 Ne. 12:48; 27:27).

Recently, my wife took a friend to hear a presentation by a Latter-day Saint of outstanding talent. The friend, who has born considerable grief and disappointment in her life, truly appreciated the presentation. Then she said simply, "I hope he is as good a person as he seems." It is a shame, isn't it, that such reserve even needs to be felt. But we "have learned by sad experience" that our spiritual applause is sometimes given to the undeserving. I hasten to add, from all I know of the foregoing case, the applause is fully justified.

Whatever our particular fields of scholarship, the real test is individual discipleship, not scholarship. But how good it is when these two can company together, blending meekness with brightness and articulateness with righteousness. Such outcomes only occur, however, when there is commitment bordering on consecration. Therefore, a word about consecration is appropriate.

You will recall the episode in the fifth chapter of the book of Acts about how Ananias and Sapphira "kept back part" of the monetary proceeds from their possessions (Acts 5:3). We usually tend to think of consecration in terms of property and money. Indeed, such was clearly involved in the foregoing episode. But there are so many ways of keeping back part and so many things we can withhold a portion of besides property. All things really ought to be put on the altar.

This holding back may occur even after one's having given a great deal, as likely had Ananias and Sapphira. Having done much, we may mistakenly think that surely it is all right to hold back a remaining part. Obviously, there can be no total submissiveness when this occurs.

Lately, when considering the atonement of Jesus Christ, I have been helped by a particular scripture. It is about how consecrated and sanctified Jesus allowed his will to be "swallowed up" in the will of the Father:

Yea, even so he shall be led, crucified, and slain, the flesh becoming subject even unto death, the will of the Son being swallowed up in the will of the Father. (Mosiah 15:7)

While pondering that very concept, I came across this unsurprisingly parallel quote from Brigham Young, upon whom the Book of Mormon had made such a deep impression:

When the will, passions, and feelings of a person are perfectly submissive to God and his requirements, that person is sanctified. It is for my will to be swallowed up in the will of God, that will lead me into all good, and crown me ultimately with immortality and eternal lives.<sup>6</sup>

There are so many ways in which one can hold back a portion. For instance, one might be giving as to money and also serving as to time and yet hold back a significant portion of himself or herself. One might share many talents but retain a pet grievance, thereby keeping it from resolution.

Scholars might hold back differently than would a businessman or a politician. A few hold back a portion of themselves merely to please a particular gallery of peers. Another might hold back a spiritual insight from which many could profit, simply wishing to have his or her “ownership” established. Some hold back by not appearing overly committed to the Kingdom, lest they incur the disapproval of particular peers who might disdain such consecration. In various ways, some give of themselves, even extensively, but not fully and unreservedly.

While these patterns are a clear form of selfishness, I am inclined to think that holding back can also reflect a mistaken understanding regarding our individuality. Some presume we will lose our identity if we are totally “swallowed up.” Of course, our individuality is actually enhanced by submissiveness and by righteousness. It is sin that grinds us down to sameness—to a monotonous, single plane.

In any case, there is no lasting place in the Kingdom for unanchored and unconsecrated brilliance. Fortunately, those of you whom I know are both committed and contributive. In any case, ready or not, you serve as mentors and models for the rising generation of Latter-day Saint scholars and students. Let them learn, among many other things, submissiveness and consecration from the eloquence of your examples.

God bless you!



## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Austin Farrer, "Grete Clerk," in Jocelyn Gibb, comp., *Light on C.S. Lewis* (New York: Harcourt and Brace, 1965), 26.

<sup>2</sup> Joseph Fielding Smith, comp., *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1972), 368.

<sup>3</sup> LeRoy S. Wirthlin, "Joseph Smith's Boyhood Operation: An 1813 Surgical Success," *BYU Studies* 21 (1981): 148.

<sup>4</sup> LeRoy S. Wirthlin, "Joseph Smith's Surgeon," *Ensign* 8 (March 1978): 59.

<sup>5</sup> George MacDonald, *Anthology* (New York: Macmillan, 1941), 121.

<sup>6</sup> Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (Liverpool: F. D. Richards, 1855), 2:123 (April 17, 1853).

# Sunday's Impression

*(Columbus in chains  
on a caravel bound for Spain in 1500)*

Cochineal skies deepen to dark purple  
just after sunset

Icarus quivers in molten clay and sand  
on Cuba's shores

The sea rolls mazarin  
with a frost of emerald

A flash of place  
beyond the sun's extinction

Crescent of sea, arc of space  
where west squires east  
and shapes share secrets  
of golden arms  
burnished madonnas  
mother-of-pearl

—Robert M. Hogge



# The Dream Is Ours to Fulfill

Bruce C. Hafen

Alma once described Zarahemla in a way that also describes Brigham Young University: “We are thus highly favored, for we have these glad tidings [the gospel] declared unto us in all parts of our vineyard” (Alma 13:23). That blessing would not be possible for us at BYU or for us as LDS people if it were not for so many who live lives of conscientious devotion to the Lord, to his Church, to his truth, and to the well being of this community. We don’t begin to have the problems other large institutions have with drugs, violence, sexual harassment, dishonesty, and other threats that are often encountered in the world. Yet our high expectations make it doubly tragic when one of us does disappoint our community interests.

Our aspirations include a commitment to the equal worth of every person, male and female, regardless of one’s station in life. To that end, men should go out of their way to listen to women, and women to men, to see things through each other’s eyes. No one should be more sensitive to the individual concerns and perceptions of others than those who approach their stewardship “by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned, by kindness, and pure knowledge” (D&C 121:41–42). Regarding mutual support and cooperation between staff and faculty, it impresses me that BYU has not followed the recent pattern of other universities, whose costs in support areas have risen faster than their academic costs. As I consider all the good people who labor together in the Lord’s vineyard, I think of Karl G. Maeser’s words: “Labor with the hand is as honorable as labor with the head, but labor with the heart, when the heart is pure and true, is the noblest labor” of all.<sup>1</sup>

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Bruce C. Hafen is Provost of Brigham Young University. This essay is the main part of a speech delivered at the University Conference of Brigham Young University, 1992, and circulated in the pamphlet *Addresses Delivered at the 1992 Annual University Conference* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University, September 1992). It has been edited here for distribution to a wider audience.

This semester at BYU we will begin some long-term academic planning. In this process, we hope to develop a more coherent idea of what we are doing at the University. We envision both centralized and decentralized efforts, which the corporate types call “top down” and “bottom up.” I prefer a horizontal image, like building the transcontinental railroad, where the administration and the specific units work together toward a coordinated meeting point.

Our first step will be a dialogue within each department and college under the direction of deans and chairs about the purpose of BYU. As Paul Pixton has said, the people who are happiest about being at BYU are those who learn why BYU exists.<sup>2</sup> Each faculty group will then review the current state of its disciplines, its academic majors, and begin preparing our upcoming accreditation self-study. We have tried to outline a conceptual framework for this process during the last three years, as reflected in our past fall conference talks and in some college meetings. In summary, BYU’s central mission begins with Richard Bushman’s attitude: “I am a believer. I believe in God and Christ and want to know them. My relations with scholarship and scholars have to begin there.”<sup>3</sup> And our relations with student activities, support services, and all else we do must also begin there.

The first theme flowing from this vision is that we nurture *authentic* religion. I will return to some thoughts on that subject as my primary topic today. Second, we offer as many spiritually and academically mature students as possible the richest possible learning experience. Third, we support faculty and academic programs that develop our emerging role as a major, national university, positioned in that fruitful middle ground between the comprehensive colleges and the graduate research universities. Fourth, we seek a campus work environment full of professional competence, harmony, and personal nurturing.

Against this background, let us consider the integration of our religious and professional aspirations. When our very able committee on academic long-range planning met last fall, one person suggested that we begin by reading the teachings of the prophets about the University. Another suggested that we come to our next meeting in an attitude of fasting and prayer. In that very personal kind of mood, each group member expressed his or her impressions after reading these foundation documents. To my surprise, every person around that table expressed a variation on a single theme:



we have been too reticent about the place of religion in academic life at BYU. In Marilyn Arnold's words,

The committee could not help wondering why, given the Board's makeup and concerns and the religious devotion of nearly all members of the campus community, this matter had not been widely and vigorously discussed before. Perhaps BYU is just now reaching the maturity that allows it to move, in its quest for academic legitimacy, beyond defensiveness and imitation of established institutions. Of course, we must not relax our efforts at academic excellence, but it is time for us also to become more fully the institution envisioned by the prophets.<sup>4</sup>

The Jewish author Chaim Potok once distinguished between sacred and secular thought systems. The scholar in a sacred system "assumes there is a design and purpose to nature," because God's spirit "hovers over all creation," giving divine origins to the premises of the sacred system. Thus, even the most sophisticated scholar in a sacred system faithfully transmits "inherited old and acceptable new scholarship" while respecting the established "boundaries of the system" according to a "predetermined choreography." By contrast, the scholar in a secular system always probes and challenges the system's boundaries, believing that all premises originate with human beings, the exclusive focus of secular systems. In secular systems, "it is man who gives, and man who takes away."<sup>5</sup>

Today Potok sees "a boiling cauldron of colliding ideas and world views" that makes cultural confrontation between sacred and secular systems unavoidable. He suggests four possible responses for the religious person who faces such confrontation. First—the lockdown approach: one can simply dodge the conflict by erecting impenetrable barriers between the sacred and the secular and then remaining in just one system. Second—compartmentalization: one creates separate categories of thought that coexist in a "tenuous peace." Third—take down all walls and allow complete fusion in which the sacred and secular cultures freely feed each other, perhaps leading to a "radically new seminal culture." And fourth—ambiguity: take down most if not all walls and accept a multitude of questions without intending to resolve them.<sup>6</sup>

BYU's history, purposes, and its very nature reflect from every angle what Potok calls a sacred system of thought. How then do Latter-day Saint scholars at BYU and elsewhere handle the natural confrontations between the sacred and our deep commitment to being part of serious university pursuits? We reject the lockdown

approach that would shut our eyes to life's conflicts and realities. We are in—even though not of—the world. Yet we also cannot accept the total fusion model. Although the gospel embraces all truth, we must give priority to the truths that lead us to Christ, and we cannot allow our most sacred premises to be altered or even minimized by secularist assumptions. At the same time, we are too open to be rigid compartmentalists. So how do we view the ambiguity and uncertainty that remain? We don't fear ambiguity's questions, partly because, as John Tanner has said, we approach our questions from an attitude of faith.<sup>7</sup>

The Restoration actually provides a fifth alternative for integrating sacred and secular thought systems—the model of eternal perspective. The restored gospel of Jesus Christ is the most comprehensive explanation of life and of the cosmos available to humankind. This idea is illustrated by Terry Warner's essay on Alma's teachings to Korihor. Terry wrote that the main difference between Alma's map of the universe and Korihor's map is that Alma's map is broader. If Alma's map is represented by a ten-by-ten-foot square, Korihor's map is a four-by-four-foot square within Alma's larger square. Alma doesn't have the answer to every question, but he does see and accept the same scientific evidence that Korihor does. Beyond that, he also recognizes evidence of personal meaning and spiritual reality that Korihor's map by definition excludes.<sup>8</sup> As William James said, "The agnostic [expression] 'thou shalt not believe without coercive, sensible evidence' is simply an expression of a private, personal appetite for evidence of a certain peculiar kind."<sup>9</sup> Not that these limits are all bad: we really don't want science or the government to tell us the ultimate meaning of our lives—we make those choices personally, based on evidence available outside the limited scientific sphere. Thus we can integrate a secular map into the broader sacred map, but our sacred system cannot be made to fit within the smaller secular map.

Similarly, Parker Palmer, who recently conducted a valuable seminar for BYU faculty, believes that Western culture's vision of learning suffers from "one-eyed education," teaching the mind but not the heart.<sup>10</sup> "There is an illness in our culture [arising] from our rigid separation of the visible world from the powers that undergird and animate it . . . . That separation [diminishes] life, capping off its sources of healing, hope, and wholeness."<sup>11</sup> He urges us to teach with "wholesight," a complete vision of the world in which mind and



heart unite, as Robert Frost has said, “as my two eyes make one in sight.”<sup>12</sup> And “the mind’s vision excludes the heart, but the heart’s vision can include the mind.”<sup>13</sup> The aim of wholesighted education, anchored in a heart that guides the mind, is wholeness. In Alan Keele’s words, “great theology and great scholarship are not only compatible but are mutually and limitlessly illuminating.”<sup>14</sup> Yet, because Alma’s vision is the broader one, the gospel should influence our view of our disciplines more than our disciplines influence our view of the gospel.

Many thoughtful LDS people have enjoyed Chaim Potok’s novels, often because they identify with the conflicts Potok’s characters face between sacred and secular systems. The gospel teaches us to take education seriously, but it also teaches us to put the kingdom of God first in our lives. I am acquainted with the spiritual and intellectual biographies of many in this BYU audience and in the LDS community beyond, and I would like to know them all. Each of us, like characters in a Potok story, could recount our personal confrontations between sacred and secular systems of thought. My struggles were typical. I yearned to know if religious literalism is compatible with a fully breathing, stretching life of the mind. I found that the best resolution of the faith versus reason dilemmas, better than any book or argument of abstract reasoning, is the example of faithful and competent teachers in my own discipline—one of whom was Dallin Oaks—who have answered my questions with their lives. For a generation of LDS scientists, that role model was Henry Eyring. For many LDS doctors, it is Russell Nelson. To know teachers such as these is to be set free from the burden—sometimes the agony—of wondering whether serious religious belief and serious professional or academic commitments can fill the same heart at the same time.

One of BYU’s highest purposes is to help its students—and to help Church members everywhere—confront such questions in ways that strengthen both their minds and their hearts, that they may be fully engaged as productive citizens of both society and the kingdom of God. President David O. McKay once told the BYU faculty that this is “primarily a religious institution, established for the sole purpose of associating with the facts of science, art, literature, and philosophy the truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ.”<sup>15</sup> In this vision of BYU, students of the highest potential in every discipline may model their lives after teachers here who are the



Henry Eyrings and Russell Nelsons in their fields. That is far less likely at state institutions, even with an LDS Institute of Religion, because—obviously with some important exceptions—the teachers there tend to be oriented primarily to *either* a sacred *or* a secular system. Thus, the best way to teach young people who are struggling to find the place of a sacred system in a profane world is to offer them not just theories, but teachers and classmates who have found their own wholesightedness. This opportunity is BYU's unique gift to the youth of Zion.

Spiritual lives really are at stake in resolving the root questions of faith versus reason. For that reason, the risk of confusing our students on these issues is the ugly mirror image of our unique capacity for good, as searing and destructive as our positive potential is magnificent. A valued BYU colleague who is a gifted teacher and an inspired researcher of impeccable academic achievement recently told me that increasing numbers of his students are “falling into his foxhole” seeking help for their wounded religious faith. I asked why he thought there would be more spiritual casualties now—is the world more wicked? Do brighter students see more dilemmas? He said some of the deepest wounds are inflicted when a thoughtful student senses, even through subtle hints, that an LDS teacher whom the student respects is cynical about the Church. That kind of wound can cut to the quick, because it implies to students that the fundamental integration of faith and reason doesn't work, as if in some objective sense it *can't* work. An LDS student would never draw that conclusion from the cynicism of an agnostic or atheistic professor in a state university, because the student will assume that such a teacher has long been seeing with only one eye. But when someone whom the student believes has spent years looking through both eyes implies that the view is darker with the sacred eye open, the message can be devastating.

Especially perverse is the teacher who conveys cynicism about the Church as evidence of his commitment to liberal education. That stance can put out both eyes at once, because it may offend believing Church members to the point that they attack liberal education as the cause of cynicism. But liberal education is an essential part of the wholesightedness we seek. Indeed, my own liberal education helps me know that cynicism is as intellectually indefensible as dogmatism. In my own student days, the BYU students who troubled me most were the shallow, religious

dogmatists. Now I am just as troubled by the shallow, irreligious cynics who delight in poking fun at “Molly Mormon.” The only thing that has changed is the direction of the thoughtless posturing; the superficiality has stayed the same. Neither group has both eyes open. Why would any of us believe we serve the cause of serious education if our primary goal is nothing more than teaching students to “think otherwise” through simplistic posturing and anti-authoritarianism? As Ted Marchese has said, “Beware the cynic as well as the huckster.”<sup>16</sup>

Still, one faculty member has urged that we encourage students and each other to engage in public criticism of the Church, because the “courage” involved in saying unsettling things will demonstrate that BYU’s commitment to liberal education is “indeed working.” This argument mistakenly assumes that secular systems are broader than sacred systems. Moreover, there is no connection at all between a superior education and such criticism. Both the educated and the uneducated may be troubled by some Church issue. But whether one expresses those troubles publicly is a function of personal judgment more than it is an expression of integrity or educational depth. It is also a function of how one understands revealed teachings about publicly challenging those we sustain as prophets. Some defend their public criticism on religious grounds, claiming they must protect the Church from its misguided leaders. The irony in that attitude can’t help but convey cynicism about the divine influence in a Church based on prophetic leadership. Conscientious private communication may ultimately be of real help to the Church and its leaders, but public expression by those professing to have both eyes open may simply spray another burst of spiritual shrapnel through the ranks of trusting and vulnerable students.

Of course, the premises of our sacred system—and, obviously, the premises of sound liberal education—make spiritual and intellectual freedom absolutely crucial for the development of wholesighted education. You can lead a child to a book, but you can’t make the child read it—much less understand it. In my opinion, Satan’s plan to save us without agency could not have worked. Without free inquiry and voluntary action, no understanding, no real testimony, and no personal growth is possible. For example, after Aaron taught him the gospel, the converted Lamanite king wanted his people to embrace the gospel as he had. But instead of imposing his new convictions on his subjects, as did Constantine in



the apostate era of early Christianity, the king simply asked that the missionaries be allowed to preach freely. As a result, the Lamanites who “were converted unto the Lord, never did fall away” (Alma 23:6). This commission did not mean, however, that freedom among the people of Aaron and Alma was unlimited. Korihor was initially free to preach his anti-Christian views, because there was “no law against a man’s belief” in Zarahemla (Alma 30:11). But when his expression moved from pursuing his own beliefs to the point of “destroy[ing] the children of God” (Alma 30:42), he exceeded the limits of the sacred system.

I know that some BYU students and other members of the Church are too trusting, too reliant on authority figures, and they expect the Holy Ghost to do their thinking for them. We must rouse them from their dogmatic slumbers, teaching them to love the Lord with all their heart, might, *mind*, and strength. They need education that liberates them from ignorance and superstition, developing the tough-minded independence on which self-reliant people and democratic societies utterly depend. Thus Alma counseled his people to “stand fast in this liberty wherewith ye have been made free,” to “trust no man to be a king over you,” and to “trust no one to be your teacher” (Mosiah 23:13–14). In other words, of course Hamlet’s Ophelia should not expect someone else to “tell her what she should think.”<sup>17</sup> And beyond doing her own intellectual homework, Ophelia must also, as did Alma, “fast and pray many days that I might know these things of myself” (Alma 5:46).

But Alma’s more complete thought was, “trust no man to be your teacher, *except he be a man of God*” (Mosiah 23:14, emphasis added). It is just as important that Ophelia trust the man or woman of God as it is that she not trust authority figures in general. The advantage of having a liberal education in a free society is that no one will tell us what to do. But the disadvantage is that no one will tell us what to do. The rich young ruler who approached the Savior wanted desperately to know what he should do to inherit eternal life: “Master, what good thing shall I do?” (Matt. 19:16). There are at least two very different meanings to that word, “Master.” One is the master of a slave. Another is a teacher in a master-apprentice relationship. The young man approached Christ as an apprentice who fervently *needed* his master’s guidance. As Michael Polanyi wrote, “To learn by example is to submit to authority. You follow your master because you trust his manner of



doing things. . . . [The] hidden rules [of his art] can be assimilated only [if the apprentice] surrenders himself to that extent uncritically to [imitating the master].”<sup>18</sup>

But how can Ophelia know what teacher, what master in the best sense, she should trust? The scriptural standard is, trust no one to be your teacher except a man or woman of God. Alma “consecrated . . . all their teachers,” and “none were consecrated except they were just men [who] did watch over their people, and did nourish them with . . . righteousness” (Mosiah 23:17–18). What an aspiration for all the consecrated people who work at BYU, we who, in and out of the classrooms, teach some of the purest and brightest young men and women in all the world. They fulfill their dreams by coming to this oasis of learning in a spiritually parched world, yearning to ask the young ruler’s question: what shall I do? And they come believing that the faculty and staff here will tell them what to do—not only to learn to think for themselves, but what to do to inherit eternal life. Wholesighted teaching, with both eyes open. We move them from dogmatism through healthy skepticism toward a balanced maturity that can tolerate ambiguity without losing the capacity for deep commitment. By example as well as precept, we teach how to ask good—even searching—questions, how to trust, how to know of ourselves. This university’s vitality is a continuing witness for the proposition that within the broad gospel framework, robust faith and healthy skepticism are not mutually exclusive. The chosen, consecrated men and women of God who teach and work here live lives that make that clear.

The ultimate purpose of our integrated teaching model is to teach our students how to live. As Parker Palmer put it, “Truth is an approach to living, not just an approach to knowing.”<sup>19</sup> Or as we have recently described the purpose of the BYU Jerusalem Center, our purpose is not only to orient our students to a holy land, but to orient them to the holy life. How can we do that? Each teacher, faculty or staff, must find his or her own way, and some settings are more natural than others for making connections that help students see how secular interests fit within the larger sacred sphere.

Of course we can’t pursue excessive digressions that waste precious time in classrooms, offices, and work places. But many students, such as Amy Baird Miner, tell us that BYU students hunger for “life talks” as well as “grade talks” from their teachers. Joseph K. Nicholes used to love “teaching moments,” those unexpected



openings when a teacher, a head resident, a job supervisor, or a leader in a student ward senses an opportunity to step back from the subject at hand and open up the bigger picture of life. For example, one student will always remember how a BYU teacher talked soberly about life's larger purposes after witnessing a serious accident on the way to class. I know a BYU professor who concluded a rigorous course on logic by telling his students that now they know the rules of logical analysis. But if they build their testimonies on these rules alone, rather than upon the spirit of God, they are built upon the sand.

Our university courses are not Sunday School classes, but our fears about that legitimate concern can inhibit some of us more than they should. As President Kimball once said, "Every [BYU teacher should] keep his subject matter bathed in the light of the restored gospel."<sup>20</sup> We must be cautious about both sentimental emotionalism at one extreme and stale academic neutrality on the other. And of course we should teach students to respect rigorous standards of evidence, but let us not neglect all "anecdotal" evidence. Every personal testimony is in a sense anecdotal, but testimonies of personal experience are among the most powerful forms of data.

Another risk of integrating sacred and secular systems, especially in scholarly work, is that integrationists sometimes devalue in some lopsided way either the religious or the professional dimension. I have learned first hand about this problem through the process of writing and publishing articles on family law in scholarly journals. In all of that work, my reasoning has implicitly proceeded from the teachings of the scriptures about marriage and family life. But my interaction with skeptical reviewers and demanding editors quickly taught me that I should avoid the ineffective approaches of shrill pro-family writers who have no idea what it means to observe rigorous research methodologies and to master the available literature. One could give several examples of meaningful scholarly integration; I know of none better than the work of BYU's Allen Bergin, whose work on the place of religious values in psychotherapy recently earned the distinguished service award from the American Psychological Association. He has learned to let his work proceed on a small, empirically-based scale that reveals its own conclusions, rather than trumpeting in advance a "moral framework" that implies a preconceived dogmatism. His research speaks for itself when he uses Alma's large map rather than Korihor's small one.

Following Allen's example in selected disciplines, we should, as Clayne Pope has urged, "work within our disciplines with the additional light of the gospel to inform and direct our work."<sup>21</sup> Our audience for this integrated scholarship is not just BYU or the Church, but also the entire scholarly world—if our work is rigorous enough to satisfy the highest professional standards. Adapting a phrase from James Burtchaell, we can contribute to society in unique and greatly-needed ways when our integration is skillful enough to critique the academy from the standpoint of religion, rather than only critiquing religion from the standpoint of the academy.<sup>22</sup>

A faculty group in one of our academic areas would like to bring Parker Palmer back to the campus to share further his ideas on the spiritual dimensions of teaching. Having read Professor Palmer's work, I applaud that interest. It is reassuring to see someone of another faith validate our interest in religious and professional integration. But faculty on our own campus are already doing the nation's finest teaching of that kind—they just haven't written about their work as much as Palmer has, and our reward system should encourage them. It isn't enough just to ask that BYU personnel avoid damaging students' religious faith in the ways described by our new academic freedom statement. When we go beyond that minimal threshold to ask whether someone has contributed enough in citizenship, teaching, and scholarship to warrant continuing faculty status or other special recognition, we look for extensive fulfillment of BYU's aspirations, not merely the absence of serious harm. The University's new policy on advancement and continuing status describes this approach.

It also matters how job applicants see these issues. I well remember interviewing two well-trained applicants for the same position one day. When I asked how each one felt about the Church influence here, one said, "Oh, the Church is no problem for me—I've learned not to let it get to me." The other said, "The Church and the gospel are my whole life. That is why coming to work at BYU is my lifelong dream."<sup>23</sup> The vast attitudinal difference between these people was, and should be, a major factor in deciding whom to hire. We aren't looking for people who merely tolerate our environment or who will try not to harm it; we seek believing, thoughtful people for whom this is the freest intellectual and spiritual environment in the world.



Let us consider, finally, the conditions on which our work at BYU may enjoy full access to the revealed truth and prophetic guidance that are the source of our sacred system's life and breath. One of Parker Palmer's favorite stories is about Abba Felix, an early Christian "desert teacher." In this story, "some brothers . . . went to see Abba Felix and they begged him to say a word to them. But the old man kept silence. After they had asked for a long time he said . . . 'There are no more words nowadays. . . . Since [the brothers now] ask without doing that which they hear, God has withdrawn the grace of the word from the old men and they do not find anything to say, since there are no longer any who carry their words out.' Hearing this, the brothers groaned, saying, 'Pray for us, Abba.'"<sup>24</sup> Felix's point, says Palmer, is that "truth is evoked from the teacher by the obedience of those who listen and learn, and when that quality is lacking in students, the teacher's words are taken away."<sup>25</sup> Felix's students had only been curious. They desired not the words of life—they wanted words that created an illusion of life, while letting them avoid the responsibility of living according to truth.

This was the same condition on which Ammon taught King Lamoni: "Wilt thou hearken unto my words, if I tell thee by what power I do these things?" (Alma 18:22). Likewise, we must "hearken unto the words" of our all-comprehending system if we are to learn its truths and see all else in its bright light. The highest liberal arts tradition teaches a similar concept: *hubris*. For the ancient Greeks, no sin was greater than the intellectual pride by which the learned thought themselves wiser than divine sources.

For us, obedience to divine sources first requires that we live a gospel-worthy lifestyle. Further, because ours is a sacred system premised on divinely ordered leadership, each of us must nourish a humble willingness to follow prophetic counsel. The statement by the First Presidency and the Twelve a year ago counseling against *any* participation in certain kinds of symposia was most unusual, yet very deliberate.<sup>26</sup> Because the statement is for all Church members, it is not primarily a BYU matter—but it clearly speaks to BYU people. It is written in nondirective, nonpunitive terms, but its expectations are clear to those with both eyes open.

Some Church members and leaders have wondered in recent years if BYU's increasing academic stature would develop at the expense of basic Church loyalties. I don't believe that has happened,

and I don't believe it will at today's BYU. I believe with all my heart in Jeffrey Holland's "consuming vision that we [can] be a truly great university [that is] absolutely faithful to the gospel of Jesus Christ."<sup>27</sup> But that proposition will constantly be tested, and how we are perceived on an issue as elementary as "follow the Brethren" means more than we might imagine. Tip O'Neill used to say that you find out who your friends are not by seeing who's with you when they agree with you, but who's with you when they think you might be wrong. And the religious core of a sacred system just might ask its followers to trust the religious imperative even when it does not square with their own opinions.

The BYU dream will forever elude us if, as Abba Felix said, "God withdraws the grace of his words from the elders because the young people no longer carry out the teachings of the elders."<sup>28</sup> And even though I believe our collective religious commitment is stronger now than ever before, if a few among us create enough reason for doubt about the rest of us, that can erode our support among Church members and Church leaders enough to mortally wound our ability to pursue freely the dream of a great university in Zion. Somehow we must sense how much is at stake in how we deal with this issue. "Pray for us, Abba,"<sup>29</sup> because the dream really is ours to fulfill.

Almost exactly one hundred years ago, when the Church already had several stake academies, including Brigham Young Academy in Provo, the First Presidency released James E. Talmage from heading LDS College in Salt Lake City and assigned him to create the plans for what Talmage's biographer called "a genuine Church university."<sup>30</sup> Talmage was stirred to the core at "the prospect of founding an institution that would merit recognition by the established centers of learning throughout the nation and the world. It was a dream he had cherished for many years."<sup>31</sup> The proposed name was Young University.

Think of it: just months after the Manifesto of 1890 had been issued, the Church barely rescued from the jaws of utter destruction, Utah not yet a state, already a network of Church academies in place, and those Saints in their poverty wanted to create "a genuine university." This early plan was shattered by the Panic of 1893, but the dream lived on. In the 1920s and 1930s, the Church withdrew from higher education, creating a system of LDS Institutes of Religion and offering to state governments all of its academies but our very own



Brigham Young Academy, which the First Presidency determined to keep in order to develop one genuine university.<sup>32</sup> The dream was still alive.

Sixty years later, the Lord's Church of the twenty-first century is expanding miraculously all across the globe. Never again will we see a Church-wide network of colleges or academies, but there is still one "genuine Church university" that has demonstrated its capacity to bless and be worthy of all the Saints, every person who pays a dollar of tithing. Some voices in today's winds claim that BYU will never achieve intellectual respectability as long as it is controlled by the Church. But in the twenty-one years since I joined the BYU faculty, I have watched the faculty, the staff, and the students of this University take an astonishing leap in the quality of their teaching, learning, and scholarship. I can bear firsthand witness that BYU's recent emergence onto the national and international stage is winning, in many circles, the honest and deserved admiration of a society desperate for educational leadership because of that society's moral decay and intellectual confusion. And this leadership role is being thrust upon the University not *in spite* of its lifeline to the Church, but precisely *because* of it.

I pay tribute to the thousands of women and men in the BYU community who match and exceed their rich professional achievements with lives of uncompromising faithfulness to the gospel, "offer[ing] in sacrifice all that [they have] for the truth's sake, not even withholding [their] lives,"<sup>33</sup> because they seek to know the mind and do the will of God.

The dream has become a consuming vision: "a truly great university [that is] absolutely faithful to the gospel of Jesus Christ."<sup>34</sup> Its name is Brigham Young University. Pray for us, Abba, for the dream is ours to fulfill. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Reinhard Maeser, *Karl G. Maeser: A Biography by His Son* (Provo: Brigham Young University, 1928), 78.

<sup>2</sup> Paul Pixton, "History Department Memo," Memorandum to Brigham Young University Department of History, April 1992. Memorandum in author's possession.

<sup>3</sup> Richard Bushman, Brigham Young University Commencement Address, August 1991, transcript copy, Brigham Young University Publications.

<sup>4</sup> Marilyn Arnold, Bob Daines, and Dennis Thomson, "Summary of the Discussion of the Religious Mission of Brigham Young University," November 25, 1991. Memorandum in author's possession.

<sup>5</sup> Chaim Potok, "Scholars Real and Imaginary in Culture Confrontation" (Paper presented to the Utah Academy of Sciences, Arts, and Letters, Third Annual Tanner Academy Lecture, Utah State University, Logan, May 19, 1989).

<sup>6</sup> Potok, "Scholars."

<sup>7</sup> John S. Tanner, "One Step Enough" (Devotional Address, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, June 1992).

<sup>8</sup> C. Terry Warner, "An Open Letter to Students: On Having Faith and Thinking for Yourself," *The New Era* 1 (November 1971): 16–20.

<sup>9</sup> William James, *Essays on Faith and Morals*, ed. and comp. Ralph Barton Perry (Cleveland: Meridian Book, World Publishing, 1967), 25.

<sup>10</sup> Parker J. Palmer, *To Know as We Are Known: A Spirituality of Education* (San Francisco: Harper, 1983), 11.

<sup>11</sup> Palmer, *To Know as We Are Known*, 10.

<sup>12</sup> Robert Frost, "Two Tramps in Mud Time," as cited in Palmer, *To Know as We Are Known*, ix.

<sup>13</sup> Palmer, *To Know as We Are Known*, xii.

<sup>14</sup> Alan F. Keele, "All Truth Circumscribed in One Great Whole," *Student Review*, June 24, 1992, 4.

<sup>15</sup> David O. McKay, "The Church University," *Messenger* 11 (October 1937): 3.

<sup>16</sup> Ted Marchese, "Regional Accreditation (II)," *Change* (March/April 1992): 4.

<sup>17</sup> William Shakespeare, "Hamlet," as cited in Thomas G. Plummer, "Diagnosing and Treating the Ophelia Syndrome" (Paper presented to Delta Phi Alpha, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, April 5, 1990).

<sup>18</sup> Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1962), 53.

<sup>19</sup> Palmer, *To Know as We Are Known*, 65.

<sup>20</sup> Spencer W. Kimball, "Education for Eternity" (Lecture given at the Annual Preschool Faculty and Staff meeting, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, September 12, 1967).

<sup>21</sup> Clayne Pope to author, August 1992.

<sup>22</sup> James Burtchaell, "The Decline and Fall of the Christian College," *First Things: A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life* 13 (April/May 1991): 17.

<sup>23</sup> Personal interviews conducted during author's tenure as provost of Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, 1988–92.

<sup>24</sup> Palmer, *To Know as We Are Known*, 41.

<sup>25</sup> Palmer, *To Know as We Are Known*, 43.

<sup>26</sup> Statement, *Church News*, August 31, 1991, 3.

<sup>27</sup> Jeffrey R. Holland, Spring Commencement Address, 1991, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

<sup>28</sup> Palmer, *To Know as We Are Known*, 45.

<sup>29</sup> Palmer, *To Know as We Are Known*, 45.

<sup>30</sup> John R. Talmage, *The Talmage Story: Life of James E. Talmage—Educator, Scientist, Apostle* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1972), 108.

<sup>31</sup> Talmage, *The Talmage Story*, 108.

<sup>32</sup> Harold B. Lee, "Special Committee Report," Church Board of Education, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, 1964.

<sup>33</sup> Lectures on Faith 6:7, in *The Lectures on Faith in Historical Perspective*, ed. Larry E. Dahl and Charles D. Tate, Jr. (Provo: Religious Studies Center, 1990), 93.

<sup>34</sup> See note 27.



# Fall

Last fall I dreamt of that  
first autumn, in Eden,  
of fig leaves dropping off  
into the Euphrates  
and fruit wrinkling in the grass.  
There, in the field,  
a lone ox shuddered  
beside the serpent's track  
while crows rattled in the air.  
And I heard your voice walking  
in the cold of the day  
like a dark woodwind  
singing to itself  
as if to say,  
Let there be light, but just enough.  
Let the dry land appear, then disappear.  
Let the man and the woman talk  
of seeds and stems,  
of planting and ripening,  
words that disallow forgetting.

—Michael Hicks

# The Chimerical Desert

John Bennion

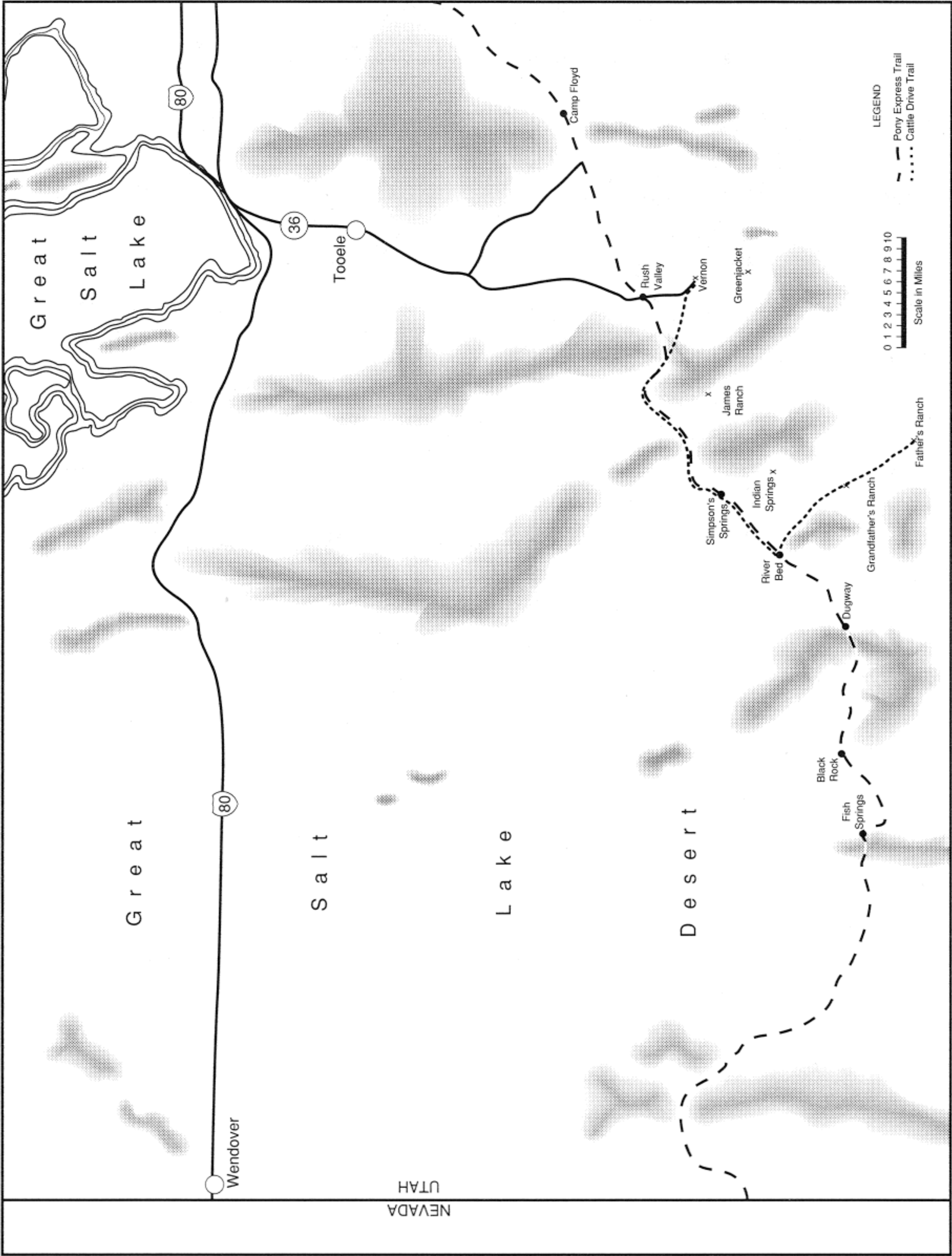
The Sheeprock Mountains curve in the shape of a knife across the south end of Rush Valley, settled by my people and others in the 1860s. Blackrock Mountain is the butt of the handle; the Tintic Peaks, the top of the hilt; Main Canyon, the blade point. Inside the curve is Vernon, a Mormon community with willows, cottonwoods, and Lombardy poplars growing along ditches; a brick and adobe schoolhouse; and in my youth, a white wooden church with hardwood floors and folding benches. Beyond the mountains and westward along the Pony Express trail lies deep desert, known in pioneer times as Paiute Hell. Frank C. Robertson describes this country in "Through Paiute Hell": "From Lookout Pass you look out over forbidding deserts of mountains and flats. . . . It is hot as the hinges of hell in summer, cold as the polar regions in winter. In winter, blizzards block the roads; in summer, cloudbursts wash them out."<sup>1</sup> Since the beginning of this century the male Bennions have left hearth and wife to conduct an affair with that desolate country. As they followed their sheep, cattle, and horses into the desert, spending more and more time away from churches and town gatherings, they seem to have also drifted from conventional religion and culture. They carried their faith into the wilderness and their doubt back to town; their wandering is my heritage.

Twice a year since before I was born my father drove his cow herd westward to winter range at Thanksgiving time, back again at Easter—a four-day trip each way. As a child, I walked or rode behind the cattle, which each fall scattered through the cedars on Lookout Pass if they were hungry for dry grass or lined out on the gravel road across the prairie when the lead cows remembered the alfalfa fields on my father's Riverbed ranch, forty miles by road west of our home in Vernon. On our way out, the flat was covered with yellow and

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Western Utah Desert, showing the route of the Bennion family cattle drive and the locations of some of the Bennion family ranches

red barbed cheat grass, squat shadscale brush, pear cactus, dried tumbleweed, thorny greasewood, and the thick green fingers of halogetan. Seven-foot sunflowers crowded the barrow pits. Once when we turned the herd south toward Simpson Springs, we found the Army Reserve on maneuvers with their big guns established on the foot hills, shooting over our heads into Dugway Proving Grounds. From Simpson—a former cavalry, Pony Express, and Wells Fargo station—we could see the white line of road which led down to the dried river bed. Below us lay white alkali flats and ancient mountains, looking like dinosaurs half sunk in mire. Farther out stood the blue-gray bulk of Table Mountain, marked with levels by Lake Bonneville's unsteady retreat. At the marker for the Riverbed Pony Express Station, we'd turn south for ten miles. Finally the herd would flood into my father's fields, which stretched across the dry river bottom, at one time the last link between northern and southern sections of the ancient lake.

On our way, the herd passed through or near eight of my grandfather Glynn's former ranches—Greenjacket, Hill Springs, the Sharp place, the dry farm near Black Rock, the Faust Ranch, the James Ranch on the far side of Lookout Pass, Indian Springs, and finally Riverbed—each of which he took up in turn and then lost because of disastrous weather or unfounded trust in bankers and partners. After each loss he moved on, motivated by the mirage of a blossoming desert.

This obsession in my family with exploring westward into the desert for unsettled but fertile land began with the first Bennions in Utah. The Salt Lake City land owned by John and Samuel, brothers who emmigrated from Wales, was absorbed by Brigham Young when he discovered that grazing land wouldn't regenerate itself as it had in the East and in England. He sent the brothers west across the Jordan River to ranch, an act which violated his treaty with the Utes. After the Bennion sheep and cattle quickly used up the grazing there, my great-great-grandfather, my namesake, explored and claimed land at the north and south ends of Rush Valley, which was relative wilderness. In a letter to his first wife's parents in Wales he writes:

About one year ago I with a few others took a few days journey in a South West direction beyond the settlements in search of better grasing [*sic*] country soon after I moved my sheep cattle & horses out there, I am now well satisfied that it was a move in the right direction, our



live stock wintered well, by getting their own living, I now have a flock of 1150 sheep about 70 of cattle and about 20 head of horses.<sup>2</sup>

While his first wife remained at the Jordan ranch, managing the livestock and home weaving business there, his second and third wives helped establish operations at Mountain Home, located at the mouth of an aspen-filled canyon at the extreme southern end of Rush Valley. The foundation of their old place is now choked with sagebrush and cedars, but my ancestor John, thinking that the water there would help make his fortune, regularly walked a hundred-mile circuit between his wives and homesteads. His herds grew until the heavy grass around Vernon was depleted, and then he moved his herds near Castle Dale. He drove himself and his family, using wives and children as a colonizing and laboring force, all in the service of his desire to build a spiritual and economic empire.

For causes of his ambition I look not only to Brigham Young's fervor, which made the colonizing instinct into a religion, but also to the class system in Wales. In John's youth, he was accused of poaching on manor lands; he escaped shame and perhaps worse by running away to Liverpool, where he joined the LDS Church. A few decades later in Deseret he was a successful and propertied patriarch, and his lust for land was passed from parent to child down to the fifth generation, my own.

Although my great-great-grandmother Esther Ann colonized with John in Rush Valley and in the Muddy Mission near Panaca, Nevada, her ambition was directed more toward writing and reading well than toward acquiring more land. As an indentured servant in England, she practiced reading the newspapers plastered to the walls of the outhouse. When her master discovered why she was taking so long, he turned the papers upside down, but that only made her reading more challenging. Even in the harsh poverty of the Muddy Mission, she tried to improve her writing and reading. In a letter to George Calder, who married into the Bennion clan, she writes,

It is gratifying to me to have the privilege of corresponding with you, George. Your style or mode of writing is so superior that I hope to be able to learn something from it. I do not expect to ever make a good writer but I wish you would keep one of my letters and if we are not all changed from mortal to immortal compare them five years from now and see if I have profited by corresponding with you.<sup>3</sup>



She taught herself well enough that in 1893 she was chosen as one of Utah's three outstanding poets whose work was sent to the Chicago World's Fair. More important to me is that by reading to her children and encouraging them, she instilled a love of writing and literature that has lasted to my generation.

Because of her influence, when her son Israel wandered in the mountains around Vernon or in the western desert with the cattle and sheep herds, he carried a Bible in one saddlebag and a volume of Shakespeare in the other. Perhaps this turning toward the cultivation of self tempered his ambition for wealth. Whatever the cause, instead of breeding vast herds, Israel strove to create Zion—a utopian Mormon village named Benmore. He developed land south of Vernon and invited new immigrants to join him, predicting that if they shared according to the righteous principles of the United Order that God would bless them by increasing yearly precipitation, which would consequently affect the flow of the streams. A severe drought drove them from their hovels and destroyed their faith in his prophecy, and they complained that Israel had misled them with his foolish visions. Their complaints caused the authorities in Tooele to remove Israel as the Vernon Ward's representative on the high council. "I have been released from the councils of the mighty," he told his wife Jeannette, a native of Vernon, a gentle, genteel, and devout woman. After the collapse of his dream, she remained with him six miles from Vernon in the relative isolation of their Greenjacket ranch near Benmore, which is now a town of crumbling foundations and skeletal orchards. Like John Bennion's success, Israel's failure was not simply economic; he felt it as a loss of religious and social status.

Although my grandfather Glynn was even more a wanderer, his visions were similar to those of his father, his grandfather, and every other American pioneer who has looked westward for wealth. His specific dream was that he would prove that alfalfa and beef could grow in the most arid country in Utah. His herds of cattle would be larger than his grandfather's, his property holdings more extensive. As a consequence, he believed, he would grow in the eyes of his Salt Lake relatives who were important in the Church.

One of his pioneering experiments in making the desert blossom was homesteading the cedared foothills and dry valleys below Indian Springs, which he claimed with three of his sons. My father, Colin, who had the same dream of the west desert,



describes the move in his autobiography, penned sometime in the late 1980s:

June 21st, 1934—my father, my brothers Owen and George, and I set out on an adventure. We rented a truck and loaded it with \$12 worth of groceries, lumber and fixtures for a cabin, seeds and fruit tree starts, and bedding.

We left Salt Lake City in the morning. We traveled over Lookout Pass, Government Wash, Simpson Springs, and finally arrived at our destination—a hollow six miles south of Simpson. We got there at 12:00 midnight, having gone 110 miles. . . .

We planted a garden before we did anything else. . . . Then we built our cabin. My dad wasn't anything special as a builder, but I thought he was great. The thing I remember best was that he made a latch-string. He said—When you are away, you leave the latch-string out—which means, "Everybody is welcome to this house."

Then we started to work on our ditch. Shovels and rakes, work that bent backs and gave us aches. When we got the water down, we dragged a harrow, meant for a horse, by 3 boy and one manpower, after we had planted the 10-acre field in alfalfa. Four days later the little cotyledon came up—then the true leaves. We knew we could grow it. Clean the ditch—fix it where the wild horses came off the hill and trampled rocks into the water—find better places where the water could run—bring down the Coyote water and clean the spring—and above all—spread the life-giving water on the orchard, garden, and field.

1934 was the driest year in Utah history. I just remember one rain all summer. I hated the place. I hated the dry earth. At one time we started getting what we called the stomy-gurges—we'd wake up with a rotten taste in our mouths, then barf for one hour. Dad finally figured it was the water from the ditch, which was running over old sheep bedding grounds.

He started carrying two buckets of water every morning from Coyote junction—a mile away. I never really appreciated his efforts for many years.

He had planned for this ranch for two years. The year before we came out, he had surveyed the ditch and spring at Indian, and had brought out two bronco work horses and, in April, plowed the ten acres we planted. Then in June we all came out. . . .

In August my father walked across the mountain, bringing back the same bronco team, a wagon, and a plow and a few staples to eat. He introduced me to the one-man plow. An acre a day. Thirty acres were put under cultivation and planted. More irrigation, more ditch work, more concern for the growing alfalfa. Many people search for the wonder crop of the west. Search no more. It is alfalfa.<sup>4</sup>

This discovery, that a water-intensive crop like alfalfa would grow in the desert, opened land for cultivation which previously supported



only antelope and jack rabbits. My father and grandfather felt like Columbus did when he sighted what he thought was the Orient. After their first harvest, instead of arid wilderness, my father and his father saw a green alfalfa Eden; in their minds romance and economy mingled, strong as testimony.

Once at Riverbed my father and I labored to shore up a low ditch. We dug clay that stuck to our shovels and boots but not to the ditch bank. With the venom only an adolescent can produce, I asked my father what possessed him to waste his life on that barren land. He dropped his hands to his sides and wept, partly from disappointment that I would ask such a thick-headed question, partly from the emotion he felt toward the farm. He told me that the soil had the right composition for protein-rich alfalfa and that the underground water was wealth. Agriculture was the foundation for prosperity in any country. We were engaged in an essential endeavor, one ordained by God. Love of the desert, for my people, has been economics, social status, religion, and romance intermingled.

In addition to the Indian Springs homestead, my grandfather worked the James Ranch, fifteen or twenty miles closer to Vernon. He lost that place after the harsh winter of 1948–49. As the snow deepened the cattle climbed onto the carcasses of the first dead; in spring he found pyramids of frozen beef. Soon afterward he discovered that water lay just below the surface of the dry river valley west of Indian Springs, and he believed that even better alfalfa crops could be grown there. In 1951, because the number of homesteads he could claim was limited by law, he had each of his children and most of their spouses file for him; together they took three and a half sections of desert land.

In a 1962 article in the *Salt Lake Tribune*, my grandfather Glynn praises the Homestead Act, which provided the way for people with average income to realize the dream of getting and holding land. “No rich investor could secure great tracts of land and operate with tenants or hirelings like European lords,”<sup>5</sup> he said to the reporter. Ironically, becoming powerful through gaining property was probably his primary motive. As John Bennion’s grandson, he imbibed his thirst for land and animals with the air he breathed and the water he drank, and in the article, he translates the vision into modern terms:

Pioneer spirit for homesteading, adventure, hard work and realizing one’s dreams, regardless of age, was once an important part



of our American life. People of today just cannot be convinced that there are thousands of acres of unappropriated land in the great valleys of the West Desert, potentially rich and productive with ample underground water for irrigation.

These lands are going to waste because homesteading is generally considered to be for poor people and then only of necessity. . . . [To] make a success of a homestead nowadays requires money, credit, courage, a quality of imagination that can make a mirage actually become a garden of Eden.<sup>6</sup>

Riverbed was his last farm, the pinnacle of his efforts to make the desert blossom. After talking to my grandfather, the reporter was converted to the vision and returned to Salt Lake to describe Riverbed as Utopia. The article reads,

Rounding the last mountain point, the valley before me was unbelievable—a rich green spectacle, with rows of bailed [*sic*] hay stretching into the distance, green fields of alfalfa, corrals of fine fat livestock, a yard of modern well-kept farm machinery, and ditches flowing with clear water.<sup>7</sup>

As with his father and grandfather, the motivation for Glynn's drive westward was more than simple economics. His wife had grown up in Salt Lake, a Cannon, and earlier in his life my grandfather had tried city life. When he first began work as a journalist and historian, writing for the *Salt Lake Tribune*, the *Improvement Era*, and the Church Historian's Office, the growth he evidenced pleased my grandmother. In a letter to my father on his mission, she writes:

Your father has just completed a very excellent article on Brigham Young and Jim Bridger. . . . It really is very, very fine. He is all the time gaining in ability to see, to analyse and to express with conviction the wonderful things he finds in the files of the Historian's Office. I feel too that he has gained this winter a new view of Brigham Young's work which will be helpful to him, to us and to others who read his findings.<sup>8</sup>

Perhaps her desire was that he grow to be an important man in the Church, such as his grandfather John, his father Israel, and his brothers were. But she was sensitive enough to see that there was a quality in him which allowed him to escape both the good and evil of such ambition. She writes, "Your father is not like many men who like to exercise their authority. But he has all the qualities of a leader of the first rank and, if each of us follows his quiet, unassuming leadership we will have much happiness together."<sup>9</sup> Unfortunately for her, he finally became unable to bear living in the city, primarily

because the money paid for writing was not enough to support his family. The men who married the other Cannon sisters—his brother Howard and his brothers-in-law Dave Howell and Ira Sharp—were all becoming millionaires. My uncle, Robert Bennion, has described to me his father's discouragement: "Dad wanted to make it big and being a writer and a flunky to the [Church] Historian was not buying groceries for his family."<sup>10</sup>

My grandfather wanted to build a desert empire and return to Salt Lake City a man of status, but he also left because he had trouble writing the kind of history his superiors demanded. Church Historian Joseph Fielding Smith believed our history is solely for the purpose of building faith, of necessity positive—my grandfather disagreed. When he uncovered uncomfortable information, he was asked to ignore it. He was disturbed mostly by the accounts of Church leaders who used their power to take advantage of impoverished immigrants. Once he found that some especially compromising pages had been cut from a diary; he held the Church Historian responsible. With authority pushing in this manner and with the desert pulling, my grandfather soon returned to the country of his childhood.

As Glynn's dreams took him farther and farther west, to Indian Springs and Riverbed, away from the moist air, the trees, people, and conveniences my grandmother knew, she didn't follow him. In another letter to my father, she writes that Grandpa (Israel) Bennion had his eightieth birthday: "Your father was of course at the ranch, where he has been for nearly 5 weeks. The children too had all gone out Saturday afternoon. I stayed in because of the extreme heat and dust. No rain for nearly a month."<sup>11</sup>

When I was a child, my grandmother lived at Greenjacket near Vernon, but my grandfather's trips away became lengthier and finally she moved back to Salt Lake, where dust didn't aggravate her hay fever and where she could more easily further her career as a painter of pictorial maps. According to her son Robert, she hoped that her work would help her husband: "The maps were to make a pile of money for Dad so he could get his pipeline built, or get whatever he wanted so he could be a cattle baron, so that he could be comfortable in the courts of the genteels (or should I say, gentiles?)"<sup>12</sup> But as has happened with other sons of pioneers who spend their days riding outside the boundaries of town and home, the longer he lived in the desert, the rougher his habits became. He



washed himself and his dishes less and swore more, becoming less and less accommodating to polite conditions and communal religion. For much of their marriage, my grandparents were separate, she a daughter of the city, one of the faithful, he a son of the desert, a doubter after learning history that disturbed his belief.

Following her death, he recorded his anguish of soul concerning the conditions that separated them:

The dreadful agony is over. For her there is now the rest and peace and joyous reunions of Beulah Land. For me there is self-recrimination and regret—and an overpowering aloneness I've never before experienced.

I should have tried harder to make a living in her natural environment, the city. But I wasn't trained for it, hated it, couldn't cope with it. I wanted to be hauling wheat to the railroad with a four-horse outfit, or working cows in the aspens and chokecherries. There just isn't anything like the thrill of seeing a stretch of barren land become a beautiful green field.

And all the while I was far away pursuing one chimerical venture after another, she was always near. At Indian Springs or some other outlandish place if I got to worrying about things at night and couldn't sleep I'd get up and walk over to Six Mile and back, occasionally scaring myself wide awake by hearing myself talking to her.

But now if I speak to her, she doesn't hear me anymore. So I've been re-reading her letters. She was a most faithful letter writer. To me they are the sweetest love letters a man ever got. Not just because they are tender and kind. She never gave up scolding, arguing, cajoling, pleading, trying her darndest to convince me that some of the worrisome items I encountered during the six years I spent in the Church Historians Office were not important.<sup>13</sup>

But she had been unable to restore him to a conventional faith, the respect of his city relatives, or her own companionship.

Like my grandfather, my father was influenced by opposing desires: he wanted the status and friendship offered by conventional community as well as the freedom and economic opportunity of the desert. He writes in his autobiography:

My boyhood was a mixed experience—Cannon city associations in Salt Lake; Bennion ranch days near Vernon. I worked for Grandfather Cannon doing lawn and shade tree work in Forest Dale. From him I gained a love of trees. I worked with the Bennions in the summers, learning the business of vegetable gardens, range cattle, horses, and haying. I also absorbed a love for the desert and mountain ranges that is so deep a part of me. Wild animals, insects, reptiles, and birds are so much a part of my being that I guess I can accept the words of Kipling's *Jungle Book*: "We be brothers, thee and I."<sup>14</sup>

Like his father he experimented unsuccessfully with living in the city. He tried school at the University of Utah, where he was unhappy and lonely. He served a mission in Texas and then returned to Fort Worth for Air Force navigation school. His assignment was with the 397th Bombardment Squadron, which was sent to Panama, quite a contrast to his own dry country. "We patrolled for German and Jap submarines and shipping,"<sup>15</sup> he wrote. "I loved the swimming and fishing, and hunting in the bush."<sup>16</sup> On his return, he tried the University of Utah again and law school in Chicago, neither of which satisfied him. Finally he found his place studying range management in the forestry school at Utah State, where he met my mother, a city woman like my grandmother. Summers he returned to Greenjacket and the west desert, building a cowherd of his own in the country of his youth. "Times change," he writes, "but not the desert":<sup>17</sup>

I enjoyed the farm work there [in Riverbed] and also I thought the setting of mountains and desert were beautiful. One of the sights I loved best was when summer thunderstorms came . . . as a grey curtain in a diagonal across the south end of Keg Mountain, across our land, and head for Bennion Canyon in the Vernon Mountains. Then the blessed rain would soak our Greenjacket ranch.<sup>18</sup>

He enjoyed the scenery, but again, as it was for his fathers, the core of his admiration was for the productive forces of the desert—moisture in the form of rain or well water, alfalfa roots and leaves, land made arable.

This back and forth movement between two worlds had a liberalizing and a confusing effect on my father, as it did on my grandfather. He had a fierce devotion to both city and country family; his motto was "*Viva la raza*," meaning his Sharp, Cannon, Morris, and especially his Bennion relations. He worked hard for the community in Vernon as mayor, as Boy Scout and Explorer leader for a decade or more, and as teacher of countless classes in the Church. He understood community and the necessity of hierarchy, but at the same time he had an extreme sensitivity to individual independence; he was one of the most tolerant people I have known.

In Panama, during the war, he made himself perfect his high school Spanish by moving back and forth between the soldiers and the natives. He told me that once he was on a bus where some soldiers sat behind an upper-class Panamanian man and woman. The soldiers were berating the couple but were so ignorant of Spanish that they couldn't imagine anyone else being fluent in two



languages. My father watched the faces of the Panamanians, feeling with them their anger and shame.

As I grew up, he was like a bridge between the Mexican-Americans and the Anglos, the actives and the apostates in Vernon; he tried to be friends with everyone. In addition, another kind of tolerance—desert feminism—was forced on him by biological fact. I was the first and only son, followed by five daughters, so my sisters had to learn to work on the ranch. They taught my father through their competence. In notes for his remarks at my sister Susan's missionary farewell, he writes:

My girls had to help me on the farm and the cattle range. They trailed cows twice a year out to Riverbed, slept on the ground, and ate dirt behind the herd.

They drove tractors, did [castrated and earmarked] the calves at branding, walked miles in the snow—and still managed to look feminine.<sup>19</sup>

But as it did for my grandfather, the desert in my father's soul had its down side. When he was a child, he lay in the next room as his parents argued about the Church; he grew up with fragmented belief. He once quoted the Mormon author Paul Bailey, saying that his faith was like Joseph's coat, tattered and blood stained, but still his. "I know that at the last day," my father said, "my Savior will raise me up." For him and for me, faith and doubt are not opposites. My father swallowed whole the tension between my grandfather and the more respectable Salt Lake relations, whom my father also loved. His personality became a paradoxical mixture as he inherited my grandmother's desire for belief and my grandfather's impulse to criticize. In postmodern terms he was marginalized, inhabiting the region between community and desert. This confusion, when coupled with a biological propensity for depression and his inability to talk freely about his feelings, helped turn his experimental drinking as a teenager in Salt Lake into alcoholism. Until I was eleven or twelve, his drinking was invisible; I soon learned that when he was more gregarious, more sentimentally affectionate, cheerful, and open than usual, he had lubricated himself with the cooking sherry stashed under bales of hay or in the hollow roof of the chicken coop. Perhaps his confusion about his own emotions, his body, his people, and his religion was salved in some way by his habit. I now think of his alcoholism as a symptom of that deeper despair.



Once when my father, my grandfather, and I returned from Riverbed, my grandfather, quite senile, rambled on about Brigham Young serving alcoholic beverages to guests in the Lion House. We were on the east slope of Lookout Pass, traveling down toward the lights of Vernon, and my father slammed so hard on the brakes that the truck, loaded with hay, slid to a stop. He chastised Grandpa for talking to me, an unformed adolescent, about such matters. Then he took me behind the truck and told me that his father had lost his testimony because of research in the Church Historian's Office. I think my father's anger was due to a desire to protect me from the confusion he had felt most of his life. But if anything, my intelligent, hybrid ancestry had prepared me to ingest such facts without indigestion of the spirit.

Like my father, I am a product of both community and desert. Dozens of times a year we crossed Lookout Pass traveling to the desert, returning again. The desert is always white in my memory; either the sun shimmered off the alkali plain or bitter snow blew in drifts. We labored to start the ancient diesel engine that ran the water pump, counted the seconds between drips of oil that lubricated the spinning shaft, chopped ice, and fed cattle during the winter; cleaned ditches in the spring; irrigated and hauled hay during the summer. After a day or week in the desert, we drove the forty miles back over Lookout Pass to Vernon, toward the regular lines of Lombardy poplars and giant cottonwoods. The willows and Siberian elms seemed to breathe moisture as we dropped into town, unbelievably sweet after the drought of the desert. Sunday mornings we sat on wooden benches, with either the breath of the coal furnace on our faces or with the windows open to the heavy perfume of Russian olives, while speakers wove their words. In that white, wooden church house, I began to feel the lift and movement of the spirit.

In town my sisters and I were under another civilizing influence—that of my mother, who probably more than any other person has taught me the adaptability necessary for moving between worlds. Because of her, despite any confusion of doubt and faith, gregariousness and independence, I've been able to hold my skin together. Like my grandmother, my mother was a city woman, but she remained with my moody and driven father all of his life. Of their courtship, my father writes in his autobiography:



In my senior year I met and fell in love with Sergene Benson, daughter of Serge and Elizabeth Benson, who at that time were living in Silver Springs, Md. The summer before we were engaged I sent Sergene an Indian arrowhead and rattles from a snake. I'm sure her mother was outraged, upset, and mystified; but it must have meant more to her daughter, because the next summer we were married in the Logan Temple.<sup>20</sup>

She lived with him at Greenjacket and in Vernon, overcoming isolation by turning to books, making friends with the Bennions and Vernonites, fiercely managing the limited resources that farming and teaching give a family, and urging us toward the finer things of the world. She has a practical respect for the benefits of property but hasn't been blinded by the romance of my male ancestors. While my grandmother returned to the city, my mother's resilience and flexibility have allowed her to remain in the relative desert of Vernon, even after my father's death.

So what is my inheritance? I am also afflicted in my blood with the illusion of wealth in a blossoming desert. I long to regain the small herd of angus cattle I once had and to stand in my own alfalfa field as the mist of irrigation sprinklers surrounds me. I want to build a house at Greenjacket and live there, competent, self-sufficient, unperturbed by my own wealth, the moral opposite of urban businessmen. But I also love weaving words with people, both writing for publication and talking with a class as we unravel some text, and there is no college at Greenjacket. So I live as a suburbanite, a teacher at what some call the Lord's university. I have inherited both my grandfather's distrust of ill-used power and my grandmother's love of matters of the spirit. Like my grandfather, I'm uncomfortable in a culture which holds both agency and authority as absolute values. I feel beset by ironies—such as the idea that there can be an apolitical and benevolent hierarchy of power, an honest history which accommodates its truth to the ends of public relations, equal but different roles for men and women, a universal Utah church—and by such notions as faith which grows without challenge or stretching, of sexless procreation, or of scholarship which never uncovers anything uncomfortable. But, because of my grandmother, I claim membership in the culture that I question, grasping this opportunity to serve God's children. Because of her, I know that my stillborn daughter is safe; because of my grandfather, I still curse God for taking her from me.

Viewed from the perspective of either desert rats or urban church members, my life is an inconstancy—a movement between desert and town, doubt and faith—a pluralism received from my people. And I want both John’s practical industry and Esther Ann’s hunger for the cultivation of the inner state through writing and reading, both Israel’s vision and Jeannette’s gentleness, my grandfather’s integrity and critical vision, my grandmother’s faith and imagination, my father’s sensitivity and tolerance, my mother’s adaptability and culture. The voice that speaks from this complexity will be inconsistent, fragmented, and will explode upward through the surface of conventionality, through the tendency of many to imagine that all good people are as singlemindedly pious as they are. It will be marked by what my father calls a “wry, dry, peculiarly *Bennion* sense of humor.” Bennions, he writes, “all tend to be a bit salty and earthy in our jokes and teasing; *shocking* to some more delicate souls.”<sup>21</sup>

Once my grandfather, senile and bewildered, sat among sophisticated city folk at a Bennion reunion. My aunt, his daughter-in-law, played something from Mozart or Beethoven on the piano. Afterward, when everyone clapped politely, he half stood on his ruined legs and shouted “Bravo, bravo.” Many looked at him, disapproving. I only hope I can add my raucous voice to his.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Frank C. Robertson, “Through Paiute Hell,” in *Hoofbeats of Destiny: The Story of the Pony Express*, ed. Robert West Howard (New York: New American Library, 1960), 99.

<sup>2</sup> Ruth Winder Rogers, *Bennion Family History*, vol. 4 (Bennion Family Association, 1990), 136.

<sup>3</sup> Rogers, *Bennion Family History*, 47.

<sup>4</sup> Colin Bennion, “The Family of Colin and Sergene Bennion of Vernon, Utah,” n.d., n.p. This unpublished collection of writings has page numbers in only certain sections of the manuscript. Further citations of this work may or may not include page numbers. This collection and all personal papers and letters are in possession of Barbara Wilson.

<sup>5</sup> *Salt Lake Tribune*, September 23, 1962, 7.

<sup>6</sup> *Salt Lake Tribune*, September 23, 1962, 6.

<sup>7</sup> *Salt Lake Tribune*, September 23, 1962, 6.

<sup>8</sup> Lucile Cannon Bennion to Glynn Colin Bennion, March 21, 1940.

<sup>9</sup> Lucile Cannon Bennion to Glynn Colin Bennion, March 21, 1940.

<sup>10</sup> Robert Bennion, personal conversation with author, January 1992.



- <sup>11</sup> Lucile Cannon Bennion to Glynn Colin Bennion, June 5, 1940.
- <sup>12</sup> Robert Bennion, personal conversation with author, January 1992.
- <sup>13</sup> Glynn Bennion to Bill Hunter, March 24, 1966.
- <sup>14</sup> Bennion, "The Family of Colin and Sergene Bennion," 2, 3.
- <sup>15</sup> Bennion, "The Family of Colin and Sergene Bennion," 3.
- <sup>16</sup> Bennion, "The Family of Colin and Sergene Bennion," 3.
- <sup>17</sup> Bennion, "The Family of Colin and Sergene Bennion," n.p.
- <sup>18</sup> Bennion, "The Family of Colin and Sergene Bennion," 5.
- <sup>19</sup> Personal notes of Colin Bennion in possession of Barbara Wilson, n.d., n.p.
- <sup>20</sup> Bennion, "The Family of Colin and Sergene Bennion," 4.
- <sup>21</sup> Personal notes of Colin Bennion, n.d., n.p.

# White Silk, Winter Wedding, 1947

*“the substance of things hoped for,  
the evidence of things not seen”*

— Hebrews 1:11

The dress was white; its silk a gift  
wrapped in brown paper from her quiet bridegroom,  
then hand-sewn by her mother and her aunts as they sat  
in a house in Antwerp, their heads bent low over stitches  
invisible in the long afternoon light,  
stitching as they spoke to her of marriage.  
The belled sleeves, the skirt, the bodice blossomed  
like light through the prism of their talk.

But she had forgotten every word as she stood  
waiting behind her veil; knew nothing but the sleek  
whisk of silk against her arm, the faint  
sweet scent from wreaths of orange blossom.  
And so she stood waiting, until the unseen  
organist sent silver chords swooping.  
Then, drawing one last breath  
before this leap into nothing,  
she stepped forward.

The man at the end of the aisle turned  
and watched her descend, smooth and steady down the long  
carpet, watched her hover on her father's arm.  
He would never tell her when he closed his eyes  
he saw the Belgian night,



the pale eyes of an American pilot,  
who paused at the border between occupied  
Belgium and free France: *What can I give you—  
cigarettes? chocolate? I have money . . .*

“No,” he had said, “nothing, it is nothing.”  
Only at the last would he accept, and then  
only the pilot’s parachute.  
And she never knew, not for years.  
Not until she stood, small again  
and cold, in a funeral home,  
in a new land; and an unfamiliar veteran,  
come to pay his last respects, told her  
what her husband had not:  
that the silk of her dress had drifted  
from a shot-out aeroplane into the underground.  
That a man, blind in the night, had jumped,  
trusting himself to its fabric.

Suddenly chill at the altar, she only knew  
she needed every shade of faith  
to marry in winter, in a war-smitten city,  
dressed in the billows of a silken gown.

—MaryJan Gay Munger

## Mother, Dying

*I have not lost you; I know where you are.  
Gowned in silk and steel gray,  
patchworks of grass and flowers,  
frost and mud. I can visit you.*

Every three hours for 15 minutes,  
I can visit you. Monitor green lines and tubes.  
Behind your mask, the gasping, gracious hostess,  
you welcome all who come to smile to you and cry to me.

You cry to me, squeeze my hand,  
Hello, Don't leave, Keep singing.  
I exhaust my repertoire:  
I can't stand here any more tonight.  
You wait for morning.

I wait for morning. It won't be long now;  
Your only consciousness is breathing,  
only breathing, only trying to breathe.  
Numbers fall; green lines slowly tumble flat:  
flat as nothing, flat as gone.  
All the crying before was only practice.

*Still, I have not lost you; I know where you are.  
After you drowned in yourself, you woke,  
took one deep, sweet, easy breath  
and looked upward.*

—Lisa Bolin Hawkins



## Disclaimer

Death old friend,  
We've met before.  
I see no hostility  
in that dour face.  
Your bony beckoning hand  
Signs to me a brotherhood.

But I'll remain a while,  
If you'll allow—  
For roads and tasks  
And words not written down.  
I need not have them all,  
But some are dear.

Gladly then I'll go with you  
And feel the cool enfolding  
Of your robes, your gentle dark  
And your soft anodyne for pain.

—John Sterling Harris

# Elisha and the Children: The Question of Accepting Prophetic Succession

Fred E. Woods

The account of Elisha's curse of the forty-two young people and their seemingly unjustified fatal end when attacked by two bears has puzzled Latter-day Saints as well as other students of the Bible. An enlightening solution to this unusual incident, as I argue here, also leads to a clearer view of an important underlying issue: the acceptance or nonacceptance of divinely approved succession among prophetic personalities, in this case Elisha's succession to the prophet Elijah.

Most scholars who have analyzed the problematic passage in which Elisha is called "baldy" or "baldheaded" (*qērēah*) by a group of youths agree that this word should be translated literally (2 Kings 2:23–24). But the issue does not end here. Philological and contextual evidence suggests that the word *qērēah* is being used figuratively to denote a person who is a usurper of authority. In this light, the question of how *qērēah* is to be interpreted on a figurative level should be approached systematically, beginning with an analysis of the Hebrew text that underlies translations of 2 Kings 2:23–24 (see my rendition below). My analysis is designed first to identify the ambiguities and other interpretive problems inherent in this passage. Next, it is important to discuss both the setting of 2 Kings, chapter 2, and the chiasmic structure of 2 Kings, chapters 1–2, with special attention to the hairy mantle and to the focal point of the chiasmus, which is the ascension of Elijah, the final act involving his priesthood authority. Moreover, the striking parallels between the Elisha and Korah narratives require examination.

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Finally, I will summarize the various strands of evidence and offer a few observations on the meaning of this account.

A representative translation of 2 Kings 2:23–24 reads as follows:

23. And he [Elisha] went up from there to Bethel, and as he was going up on the road, some young men<sup>1</sup> went out from the city and mocked him and said to him, “Go up *qērēah*! Go up *qērēah*!”

24. And he [Elisha] turned around and looked at them and cursed them in the name of Yahweh. And then two female bears went out from the forest and tore open forty-two of the youths.

These two verses raise several issues. Besides the issues of who these young men were and from what city they and Elisha came, the major problem of this passage is the word *qērēah*. The traditional understanding—that it refers to Elisha’s baldness—creates a long-recognized theological problem: Why would a prophet of God pronounce a fatal curse simply for being called baldheaded by a group of youths? Further, how could God comply with the prophet’s curse?<sup>2</sup> Several solutions have been offered; even so, a deeper study into the origin and significance of the word *qērēah* and the passage in which it is embedded is warranted.<sup>3</sup>

### The “Young Men”

The first problematic phrase in this passage has always been translated literally to mean little children or small boys (*nē‘ārîm qēṭannîm*).<sup>4</sup> If the passage is taken at face value, what age would these youths have been? Other passages using *na‘ar qatan* (the singular of *nē‘ārîm qēṭannîm*) give no hint concerning the intended age. However, a clue appears when Joseph is called a *na‘ar* at age seventeen (Gen. 37:2). He is referred to again as a *na‘ar* at least two years later when he interprets pharaoh’s dream (Gen. 41:12).<sup>5</sup> Some clarification is also provided when the writer of the Elisha account selects the plural word “children” (*yēlādîm*) in the verse following the passage in question (2 Kings 2:24), rather than again choosing to use the words *nē‘ārîm qēṭannîm*. In Kings, the word *yēlādîm* (children) is attested two other times.<sup>6</sup> Both of these refer to the young men who were serving as advisors to Rehoboam and had grown up with him (1 Kings 12:8, 10). In any case, the term *nē‘ārîm qēṭannîm* is imprecise with regard to exact age. But on the basis of the context, I suggest that the age of the youths designated by these combined words would probably fall slightly under twenty years.



Taken in their plain sense, these words mean *small* youths. But a literal interpretation may not be the only valid one.

Rashi, a noted medieval Jewish sage, speculates that *nē'ārîm qēṭannîm* in 2 Kings 2:23 may be interpreted figuratively because of an earlier incident. He draws from the tractate Sota in the *Babylonian Talmud* to suggest that these *nē'ārîm qēṭannîm* were angry about the water miracle that Elisha had recently performed in Jericho (2 Kings 2:18–22). Elisha had earlier been approached by men of that city, who commented on the favorable location of Jericho but complained of the bad water (2 Kings 2:19). In response, Elisha asked for a flask full of salt; then he threw the salt into the bitter water and healed its bitterness (2 Kings 2:20–22).<sup>7</sup> Rashi explains that these youths had found employment carrying good water into the city for the inhabitants of Jericho.<sup>8</sup> With the miraculous healing of the bitter water, they were out of a job. Rashi also holds that these water carriers were specifically called *nē'ārîm* in 2 Kings 2:23 in order to symbolize that they were shaken from the commandments, as the Hebrew verbal root *n-ʿ-r* (“to be shaken”) suggests. In a related vein, the well-known sage Radaq speculates in typical rabbinic fashion that these young men were called *nē'ārîm qēṭannîm* because, as the wise sages said, the youths were not only shaken from the commandments, but were also of little faith, as the Hebrew root *q-ṭ-n* (“little, small”) implies.

The Hebrew text of 2 Kings 2:23 states that these youths “went out of the city” (*yāṣē'û min bā'îr*). From what city did they depart? The answer is not as obvious as most might think. Both ancient and modern interpreters state that these youths came out of Bethel. However, a careful reading of the text indicates that the city was not Bethel, but Jericho. As Elisha was going up the road *to* Bethel *from* Jericho after healing Jericho's water, some young men went out of the city to mock him. The text states that “he turned around behind him” (*wayipen 'ah<sup>a</sup>rayw*) to address these mockers (2 Kings 2:24). Since Bethel was still ahead of Elisha and Jericho behind him and because he had to turn around to address the mocking youths, most logically the young men had followed Elisha out of Jericho. In this regard, Rashi's connection between the healed-water and baldhead stories suggests to me an important interpretive direction.

A relevant matter concerns whether these young people (*nē'ārîm*) were a part of any of the preceding stories about Elijah and Elisha. Because the term *nē'ārîm* is attested in those earlier passages,



one must entertain this possibility. Another group, for example, the “sons of the prophets” (*benê-hannebîîm*) from Bethel, called Elijah master (2 Kings 2:3). These sons of the prophets in fact had their residence in Jericho (2 Kings 2:5, 15), and in 2 Kings 2:15 we are told that they accepted Elisha’s leadership. Elsewhere (e.g., in 2 Kings 5), we learn further that the prophets had *nē’ārîm* serving them. It could be that those *nē’ārîm* were laborers or servants who associated with the sons of the prophets still in Jericho. It is also possible to view the *nē’ārîm* as guards or soldiers, which is another meaning for this term (see, for example, 2 Sam. 18:5, 12; 1 Chron. 12:29), confirming that they were probably not mere children. Perhaps they refused to accept Elisha as the prophetic successor to Elijah, accusing him of usurping authority, for they appear to be in conflict with the sons of the prophets who show their allegiance to Elisha by bowing to him and declaring, “The spirit of Elijah does rest upon Elisha” (2 Kings 2:15). Whatever the case, it is evident that the location of the *nē’ārîm* in Jericho—the locale of the prophets and their assistants and the home of persons with deep loyalty to Elijah—is an important ingredient in the account. Events would certainly not have transpired as they did within a town inhabited by sons of the prophets.

### **The Epithet “Baldy” or “Baldhead”**

Another matter needing clarification is the meaning of the term “baldhead” (*qērēah*) which these youths hurl at Elisha. The Hebrew root *q-r-ḥ* is occasionally associated with ice and frost, but most often refers to baldness, as in the case of *qērēah* here.<sup>9</sup> Various translations of the key sentence in 2 Kings 2:23–24 read something like “Go up, baldhead,” or “Go up, baldy.” Perhaps there is more to the mocking of the young men, however, than just saying that Elisha was bald. What was it in their taunt that provoked Elisha’s curse?

Natural baldness is not viewed in the Old Testament as a condition of uncleanness. In fact, Leviticus 13:40 states, “And the man whose hair is fallen off his head, he is bald; yet he is clean.” The deliberate shaving of any or all of the head was forbidden by Israelite law (Lev. 19:27; 21:5; Deut. 14:1). However, the prophets did use shaving in a figurative way as a term of impending doom and bondage (Isa. 22:12; Jer. 47:5; 48:37). The only instances in which deliberate shaving of all of the hair of the body is approved occurs

in the ritual cleansing of a leper (Lev. 14:8) and the purification of Levites (Num. 8:7–19). The shaving of the head is approved only in connection with a Nazarite vow. Initially, Nazarites would vow that razors would not come upon their heads (Num. 6:5). But when they concluded their vows, they were to shave their heads and make an offering of their hair in the sacrificial fire (Num. 6:18).<sup>10</sup>

In contrast to the plain meaning of the text, Rashi and Radaq—unlike most modern scholars—did not take the word *qērēah* to mean that Elisha was physically baldheaded. Rather they suggested that the youths called Elisha *qērēah* because he had “made bald” or destroyed their livelihood as water carriers for the inhabitants of Jericho.<sup>11</sup> However, this view is not supported by concrete evidence and should therefore be treated as unsubstantiated speculation. What seems more likely is that the youths were calling Elisha *qērēah* to suggest that he was a usurper of prophetic authority, as I shall now demonstrate.

### Literary Structure of 2 Kings 1–2 and Its Significance

2 Kings 1–2 contains the only detailed biblical account of prophetic succession. These chapters also form a chiasmic structure, climaxed by the ascension of Elijah in 2 Kings 2:11. T. R. Hobbs has provided a general outline of this structure,<sup>12</sup> which has been adapted in the following diagram:

- A Severe test of authority; destruction of men (1:9–15)
- B Request for diseased item to be healed (1:1–8, 16–18)
- C The sons of the prophets admit departure of Elijah (2:2–6)
- D The sons of the prophets are witnesses (2:7)
- E Dividing of river Jordan with mantle/coat (2:8)
- F Symbol of succession: spirit/mantle (2:9)
- G Witnessing of the event by Elisha (2:10)
- H The ascension of Elijah (2:11)
- G' Witnessing of the event by Elisha (2:12)
- F' Symbol of succession: spirit/mantle (2:13)
- E' Dividing of river Jordan with mantle/coat (2:14)
- D' The sons of the prophets are witnesses (2:15)
- C' The sons of the prophets admit departure of Elijah (2:16–18)
- B' Request for diseased item to be healed (2:19–22)
- A' Severe test of authority; destruction of men (2:23–24)



Hobbs notes that this chiasm contains the only physical description of prophets attested in the entire Old Testament. In 2 Kings 1:8 the characteristic feature of Elijah is that he is a “hairy man” (*ba‘al šē‘ār*). At the opposite end of this structure is the description of Elisha as a *qērēah* (2 Kings 2:23). Hobbs interprets these descriptions to mean that Elijah was a hairy man and Elisha was bald. However, Hobbs mentions nothing more about this intriguing set of features.

In contrast, Montgomery explains that scholars have two interpretations for the words *ba‘al šē‘ār*. One translates them as “a hairy man,” the other as “a man with a hairy garment.”<sup>13</sup> This latter interpretation seems more correct when the word *šē‘ār* (“hairy”) is associated with the word “mantle” (*‘adderet*),<sup>14</sup> which plays a central role in this account of prophetic succession. The word *‘adderet* may be translated as either mantle, garment, or glory. In 1 Kings 19:16, Elijah is told by the Lord to anoint Elisha to take his place as prophet. When Elijah found Elisha plowing with twelve teams of oxen, he threw his mantle (*‘adderet*) upon Elisha as a symbolic gesture to designate that he would soon succeed Elijah as prophet.<sup>15</sup> Zechariah describes the prophetic mantle in more detail (Zech. 13:4). His record states that in a future day false prophets will no longer wear the “hairy mantle” (*‘adderet šē‘ār*) to deceive.<sup>16</sup> The combination of these two words lends strong support to the interpretation in 2 Kings 1:8 that Elijah was a man with a hairy mantle or garment rather than being just a hairy man.<sup>17</sup>

The New Testament also lends support to this understanding. In Matthew 3:4, John the Baptist is described as wearing a mantle or garment (Greek, *endyma*) made of camel’s hair.<sup>18</sup> He also wore a leather girdle about his loins. This description is virtually identical to that of Elijah’s apparel in 2 Kings 1:8. Later in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus warned the people to “beware of false prophets which come to you in sheep’s clothing [*endymasin*], but inwardly are ravening wolves” (Matt. 7:15), a possible allusion to the wearing of a hairy garment of skins that implies that such a person comes with authority.

In 2 Kings 2, the mantle of Elijah becomes crucial to the succession story. Elijah parted the River Jordan with his *‘adderet* (2 Kings 2:8). After Elijah and Elisha had crossed the River Jordan on dry ground, Elijah asked Elisha what he could do for Elisha before departing. Elisha asked for a double portion of Elijah’s spirit (2 Kings 2:9).<sup>19</sup> Although Elijah acknowledged this request as



difficult, he told Elisha that his desire would be granted, provided that Elisha saw him ascend into heaven (2 Kings 2:10). When Elijah ascended into heaven, Elisha saw the ascent and cried, “My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and its horsemen” (2 Kings 2:11–12).<sup>20</sup> After rending his own garments, Elisha picked up the prophetic garment of Elijah (*‘adderet*); he too smote the waters of the Jordan and asked, “Where is the Lord God of Elijah?” (2 Kings 2:12–14). In parallel to 2 Kings 2:8, the waters again parted in 2 Kings 2:14, and Elisha walked back across the bed of the River Jordan on dry ground.<sup>21</sup> Here the hairy garment of Elijah is clearly the symbol of prophetic authority, which now had passed to Elisha. Both men used this object to part the River Jordan as evidence that the power of Jehovah was invested in their appointment. One walked into Israel to lead her, and the other went out.<sup>22</sup> The sons of the prophets were witnesses to this transition of power and saw that the spirit of the Lord that had once rested upon Elijah now rested upon his successor Elisha (2 Kings 2:15). As the chiastic correspondence in 2 Kings 2:7–8 implies, these witnesses would also have seen Elisha wearing the hairy mantle of Elijah, representing the internal power with which Elisha had been imbued.<sup>23</sup>

### Korah and Elisha

I began this examination of the structure in 2 Kings 1–2 with a discussion of the term for hair (*śē‘ār*). The latter end of the chiasm deals with the young men calling Elisha a baldhead (*qērēah*). I submit that these mocking youths called Elisha *qērēah* because they refused to acknowledge the legitimacy of the hairy garment that Elisha now wore as a symbol of prophetic authority. In a relevant vein, it is important to observe that if the vowels are dropped from this word we are left with the Hebrew root *q-r-h*. This root is also the basis for the name of a Levite rebel named *Qora* (Korah),<sup>24</sup> who was the cousin of Moses and Aaron (Num. 16:1; Ex. 6:18). Korah’s reputation for trying to usurp priestly authority was infamous among the Israelites (Num. 16:40). The citation of Korah’s antics in the New Testament underscores the prominence of this narrative as an illustration of rebellion against divine authority (Jude 1:11). This point invites us again to ask, were the youths simply calling Elisha baldy because he had no hair on his head? Or were they insinuating that he was without legitimate right to the prophetic mantle and was thus spiritually bald or unclothed?<sup>25</sup> Could it also be that they were



alluding to Korah, the Levite rebel, suggesting that Elisha was a usurper of authority, as Korah had sought to be?

Further suggestive parallels emerge in connection with the theme of authority when one compares the terminology and the punishments that are mentioned in the Korah and Elisha narratives. These similarities lend greater credibility to the idea that the word *qērēah* on the lips of the young men may, in fact, have had reference to the infamous rebel Korah. 2 Kings 2:23 reads, “And he [Elisha] went up” (*waya’al*), then “and as he was going up” (*w<sup>e</sup>hû’ ōleh*).<sup>26</sup> In this same verse, the term for “go up” (*’alēh*) is used twice when the youths cry out, “Go up, baldhead! Go up, baldhead!” (*’alēh qērēah! ’alēh qērēah!*). This taunt seems to point back to 2 Kings 2:11, in which Elijah went up into heaven. The mocking youths may be saying or implying, “Go ahead, try to ascend to heaven as Elijah did, you usurper of authority!”<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, Korah and his rebels esteemed themselves to be as holy as Moses and Aaron and believed themselves to be on the same level of authority as their leaders (Num. 16:3).<sup>28</sup> They accused Moses and Aaron of exalting themselves above the congregation. The youths in the passage of 2 Kings 2:23 seem to be accusing Elisha of like motives when in fact they are the guilty ones.

The punishments pronounced upon both Korah’s group and the youths are remarkably similar when examined in light of verbal terminology. Two punishments fell upon Korah and his rebels. The text declares, “And the ground tore open [from *b-q-*] beneath them” (*wattibbāqa’ hā’<sup>a</sup>dāmāh ’asher taḥ<sup>e</sup>tēhem*) (Num. 16:31). The next verse states, “The earth opened her mouth and swallowed them, and their households, and all the men who were with Korah, and their property” (Num. 16:32). Others were consumed by fire: “And a fire went out (*yāṣ<sup>e</sup>’ā*)<sup>29</sup> from the Lord and consumed [them]” (Num. 16:35). These two punishments add significance to the narrative of the punishment of the forty-two mocking youths in 2 Kings 2:24,<sup>30</sup> for the two punishment verbs in the Korah story reappear in the Elisha pericope. After the youths said, “Go up *qērēah*! Go up *qērēah*!” Elisha turned, looked at them, and cursed them in the name of the Lord (2 Kings 2:23–24). The punishment that followed is described thus: “And two female bears went out from the forest and tore open [from *b-q-*] forty-two youths of them” (2 Kings 2:24). The root of the Hebrew word for “went out” is *y-ṣ-*. In 2 Kings 2:24, the bears “went out,” just as the fire “went out” against some of the rebels



(Num. 16:35). The Hebrew verb “tear open” (*b-q-‘*) also appears in both stories. According to 2 Kings 2:24, the bears “tore open” the youths; in Numbers 16:31, the earth “tore open” under the feet of some of Korah’s fellow rebels, and they were swallowed.

## Conclusion

The thematic and terminological evidence suggests that the mocking youths in the Elisha story were not simply calling him a baldheaded man when they called him *qērēaḥ*. Rather, they were speaking to Elisha figuratively. Whether they were refusing specifically to acknowledge the transmitted authority of the prophetic hairy mantle that he had received from Elijah or whether they were intimating that he was like Korah, the rebel in the wilderness, or both,<sup>31</sup> is not entirely clear. Certainly they were not simply teasing Elisha by calling him “baldy,” as some interpreters have suggested. Instead, they were accusing him of being a usurper of authority, an act that warranted serious consequences for speaking evil against the Lord’s prophet. As a result, they incurred the vengeance of God who had previously warned, “And if you walk contrary to me, . . . I will send wild beasts among you, which shall rob you of your children” (Lev. 26:21–22).<sup>32</sup>

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The Hebrew word for young men is *nē‘arîm*, which may also be translated as boys, lads, youths, servants, or soldiers; see Francis D. Brown, Samuel R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951), 654–55 (hereafter cited as *BDB*).

<sup>2</sup> Other incidents are also difficult for readers to understand. For instance, one thinks of the man stoned for gathering sticks on the Sabbath (Num. 15:32–36), the results of Achan’s disobedience (Josh. 7), and the fate of Jephthah’s daughter (Judg. 11:30–40).

<sup>3</sup> See R. G. Messner’s study of 2 Kings 2:23–25 for a summation of the objectionable explanations to this passage: “Elisha and the Bears,” *Grace Theological Journal* 3 (1962): 12–24.

<sup>4</sup> These words are combined in the plural only once in the entire Hebrew Bible, in this passage (2 Kings 2:23). These same two words appear together in the singular five times in the Hebrew Bible as *na‘ar qatan*. Three of these references come from Kings. In 1 Kings 3:7, Solomon refers to himself by this term when he succeeds his father on the throne and feels inadequate to govern his people. Hadad the Edomite is also referred to as a *na‘ar qatan* of the king’s seed, as well as an



enemy to Solomon (1 Kings 11:14–17). The third reference in Kings comes from the story of Naaman; after dipping himself in the Jordan river, his leprous skin becomes like that of a *na'ar qatan* (2 Kings 5:14).

<sup>5</sup> For a complete discussion of the word *na'ar*, see the article “*Na'ar*” by H. F. Fuhs in *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, and others, 6 vols. (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1986), 5:507–18.

<sup>6</sup> For an exhaustive discussion of the usage of the word *yeled* (“child, youth”) and its various forms, see the article “*Yeled*” by J. Schreiner in *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament*, 3:633–39; English trans., *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, and others (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1990), 6:76–81.

<sup>7</sup> Whereas Moses had cast a tree into the bitter waters of Marah to heal them (Ex. 15:23–25), Elisha cast in the preserving element of salt. Although the element that Elisha cast into the water was different, the Jericho waters were also healed. The result of Elisha’s act may be viewed as evidence that Elisha had indeed received the prophetic authority.

<sup>8</sup> If Rashi’s interpretation is correct, then these *ne'arim* were not simply youths or young men, but young servants.

<sup>9</sup> The root *q-r-h* is used only as a verb meaning to make bald (*BDB*, 901). For all references to verbal usage of *q-r-h*, see Lev. 21:5; Deut. 14:1; Jer. 16:6; Ezek. 27:31; 29:18; Micah 1:16. The noun in our passage is derived from this verbal root.

<sup>10</sup> For a more detailed discussion on the issue of baldness, see W. L. Reed’s treatment of this topic in *BDB* 1:343–44; see also the summary on baldness in the article “Sickness and Disease,” *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David N. Freedman, and others, 6 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 6:11.

<sup>11</sup> See Radaq, *Commentary on Kings*, *Miqra'ot Gedolot* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Eshkol, 1976); Rashi, *Commentary on Kings*, *Miqra'ot Gedolot* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Eshkol, 1976).

<sup>12</sup> T. Raymond Hobbs, “2 Kings 1 and 2: Their Unity and Purpose,” *Studies in Religion* 13 (1984): 332.

<sup>13</sup> James A. Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Kings*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1951), 350.

<sup>14</sup> It is possible to understand that the term *'adderet* refers to an outer cloak that is worn on the outside of one’s clothing. But I judge that here the text is talking of the hairy garment of authority. Compare D. M. Stec, who suggests that the mantle hidden by Achan in Joshua 7:21 may have been a “mantle of sheepskin or wool,” which can be associated with Elijah’s mantle of authority; see “The Mantle Hidden by Achan,” *Vetus Testamentum* 41 (1991): 356–59.

<sup>15</sup> The fact that there were twelve teams of oxen may suggest another symbolic feature in this story. Perhaps the twelve teams of oxen with which Elisha was plowing were thought by the writer of the book of Kings to represent the twelve tribes of Israel whom Elisha would soon lead as a prophet.

<sup>16</sup> The Hebrew verbal root *b-g-d* means “to act or deal treacherously.” The noun formed from this root is *begeḏ*, which is translated most often as garment or covering. However, it also means “treachery,” as evidenced by Isaiah 24:16 and Jeremiah 12:1 (*BDB*, 93–94). Note that the Septuagint states that the false prophets *will* wear a “garment of hair” as part of their deception (Zech. 13:4), emphasizing even more the symbolic significance of the garment.

<sup>17</sup> When the first son of Isaac and Rebekah was born, he was described as looking like an *'adderet šē'ār*, “a hairy mantle” (Gen. 25:25). Perhaps this account was written in a deliberately figurative way to suggest that, on the outside, it appeared as if Esau was to have the birthright, signified by this hairy mantle. However, Rebekah secretly knew better. She had been told earlier by divine means



that the older would serve the younger (Gen. 25:23). Therefore she helped the younger Jacob obtain the authority of the birthright by dressing him in Esau's clothing and putting a goat's skin on his neck and hands so that he would appear to Isaac as Esau (Gen. 27:15–16). Isaac followed through in giving Jacob the blessing of the firstborn when he felt the hairy covering on Jacob's hands and apparently believed that it was Esau. It is also intriguing to observe that Esau was later referred to as an *'iš šē'ār*, "a hairy man," contrasted with Jacob, who was described as an *'iš ḥālāq*, "a smooth man," or perhaps "a bald man" (Gen. 27:11). Perhaps in the Jacob and Esau narrative there is more behind the issue of their hair than scholars have noticed.

<sup>18</sup> Having a lot of hair seems to have been a sign of a consecrated person, as evidenced by the Nazarite vow to abstain from cutting one's hair. The prophet Samuel was a Nazarite (1 Sam. 1:11). John the Baptist also appears to have lived something of a Nazarite's life (see Luke 1:15). The question naturally arises whether Elijah or Elisha ever made a Nazarite vow.

<sup>19</sup> Some may interpret this doubling to mean that Elisha performed greater and more miracles than did Elijah. A better explanation would be that Elisha was probably alluding to the prerogative of the firstborn in which he is entitled to a double portion of the inheritance (Deut. 21:17). Perhaps Elisha was asking Elijah for one portion of the spirit for himself and one portion of the spirit in order to guide the people. I interpret the spirit that later rests on Elisha as the spirit of the Lord. This contradicts Ze'ev Weisman's interpretation. He views this imparting of spirit as the literal spirit of Elijah; see "The Personal Spirit as Imparting Authority," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 93 (1984): 225–34.

<sup>20</sup> It is interesting to note that this exact phrase is used by Joash, king of Israel, when Elisha departed from him at Elisha's death (2 Kings 13:14). This reoccurrence lends further credence to the idea that the editor of the book of Kings is trying to tie together the prophetic characteristics of Elijah and Elisha.

<sup>21</sup> It is difficult to read this narrative without comparing the transitions of authority from Moses to Joshua and from Aaron to Eleazar (Num. 20) to the succession of prophetic authority from Elijah to Elisha. Moses parted the Red Sea (Ex. 14) and healed the waters of Marah (Ex. 15:23–25). Elisha also parted the Jordan river and healed the bitter water of Jericho (2 Kings 2:14–22). Joshua and Elisha parted the river Jordan and both walked across the river bed on dry ground (compare Josh. 3 with 2 Kings 2). Further examples could be multiplied.

<sup>22</sup> It is intriguing to note that Elijah, after parting the water with his garment, crossed over the River Jordan into the Transjordan area with Elisha. He left Elisha standing on the bank, then disappeared, much as his prototype Moses did. See Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 4.8.48–49 (§§ 320–31) and 9.2.2 (§ 28), for a late, detailed discussion of the disappearance of these two prophets. Elisha, on the other hand, crossed from the Transjordanian side back to the west side of the Jordan in the way that Joshua did shortly after he assumed the leadership of Israel from Moses.

<sup>23</sup> As mentioned, the word *'adderet* can be translated as either mantle, garment, or glory. In this instance we can see both meanings of this word, literal as well as figurative. Elisha literally was now wearing the garment of Elijah. In a symbolic way he was also clothed in, or glorified by, the spiritual mantle of his new prophetic calling. It is also interesting to note that the Hebrew verbal root *l-b-š* means to put on a garment or to be clothed. It is used specifically to refer to being clothed with the spirit in Judges 6:34, 1 Chronicles 12:18, and 2 Chronicles 24:20 (*BDB*, 527–28).

<sup>24</sup> I have scoured the literature and, to my knowledge, no one else has made a connection between our passage and the Korah account.

<sup>25</sup> J. Glenn Gray, *I and II Kings: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970), 48, suggests that this reference could not possibly refer to natural baldness.



His argument is based on the dubious idea that the oriental traveler would never expose his head while on his journey.

<sup>26</sup>In a parallel passage, two squadrons of soldiers “went up” to see Elijah and were destroyed by fire (2 Kings 1:9–14). This parallel further reinforces the point that the young men who confronted Elisha may have been soldiers.

<sup>27</sup>This same root ‘-l-b (“to go up, ascend”) is employed five times in the Korah story (Num. 16).

<sup>28</sup>Perhaps this attitude stemmed from their general misunderstanding of the words of Moses in the wilderness of Sinai. As Jehovah’s representative, Moses had said to Israel, “You are a kingdom of priests and an holy nation” (Ex. 19:6). Korah and his followers may have assumed that they were just as holy as Moses and Aaron and therefore should have received the office of priest, which appears to be the central issue in the Korah story. (See Numbers 16:9–10, where Moses tells the Levites that they have been given much and still seek the office of priest.)

<sup>29</sup>According to passages such as 1 Samuel 11:1, the Hebrew verb “to go out” can be linked with military ventures whose purpose is to punish others. The aspect of punishment is clearly an integral part of the accounts of the fire and the bears.

<sup>30</sup>Is this term to be taken literally or figuratively? The fact that the number is forty-two and not forty, as often appears, seems to add realism to the story (Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Kings*, 356). It is also of interest to note that in this same book Jehu is said to have slain forty-two of the brothers of Ahaziah who appear to be Baal worshippers (2 Kings 10:13–14). Perhaps a later editor reasoned that the young men servants in 2 Kings 2:24 were also Baal worshippers and thus explicitly mentioned the number forty-two.

<sup>31</sup>For a discussion of wordplays in the Old Testament, see Alfred Guillaume, “Paronomasia in the Old Testament,” *Journal of Semitic Studies* 9 (1964): 282–90; and Edward L. Greenstein, “Wordplays, Hebrew,” in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 6:968–71.

<sup>32</sup>For further information, see generally P. Budd, “The Rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram,” *2 Kings*, Word Biblical Commentary, ed. J. D. W. Watts (Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1984), 5:179–91; Robert P. Carroll, “The Elijah-Elisha Sagas: Some Remarks on Prophetic Succession in Ancient Israel,” *Vetus Testamentum* 19 (1969): 400–15; George W. Coats, *Rebellion in the Wilderness* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1968); Mordechai Cogan and Hayim Tadmor, *II Kings*, Anchor Bible (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1988); Avraham Even-Shoshan, *A New Concordance of the Bible* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Kiryet, 1981); G.B. Gray, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Numbers*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1976); T. Raymond Hobbs, “The Ascension of Elijah,” *2 Kings*, Word Biblical Commentary, ed. J. D. W. Watts (Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1985), 13:13–28; Ibn Ezra, *Commentary on Numbers*, Miqra’ot Gedolot (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Eschol, 1976); Carl Keil, *The Book of Kings*, trans. James Martin (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976); Jack Lundbom, “Elijah’s Chariot Ride,” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 24 (1973): 39–50; Jacob Milgrom and Y. Avishur, eds., *Encyclopedic World of the Bible*, s.v. “Numbers” (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Revivim, 1985); James A. Montgomery, “Ascetic Strains in Early Judaism,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 51 (1932): 183–213; Martin Noth, *Numbers: A Commentary*, Old Testament Library, ed. George E. Wright, and others (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1968); W. L. Reed, “Baldness,” *Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. George A. Buttrick, and others (Nashville: Abingdon, 1982), 1:343–44; Alexander Rofé, “The Classification of the Prophets,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 89 (1970): 427–40.



# Introducing *Mormon Americana*

David J. Whittaker

In 1987 a special session of the annual meeting of the Pacific Coast Branch of the American Historical Association met at the Henry E. Huntington Library in San Marino, California. This session provided a forum for several archivists to survey and assess the manuscripts and rare-book collections in their respective repositories relating to Mormonism. Following these meetings, the four individuals who had presented papers agreed to submit them for publication in *BYU Studies*, and the editors of *BYU Studies* invited other librarians and archivists to submit similar essays on their Mormon collections. The offer was accepted, and the original four essays expanded to twenty-one, giving broad coverage to almost all the major repositories holding Mormon materials in the United States. In addition to such repositories as Yale, Harvard, Princeton, the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Bancroft, and Huntington, all the major libraries in Utah are represented by essays that survey their Mormon holdings. There are also essays on folklore and photoarchive collections throughout the country.

Such a project gradually took on a life of its own. Having grown far beyond the original session, it expanded even beyond the size appropriate for a single issue of *BYU Studies*. Therefore, the decision was made to publish the whole collection of essays as the first volume in a monograph series to be issued by *BYU Studies*. Entitled *Mormon Americana: A Guide to Collections in the United States*, it will be available in 1993.

In this issue of *BYU Studies* appear two of the essays that will be included in *Mormon Americana*. Both essays were presented at the Huntington Library session. The first, by George Miles, examines the Mormon material at the Beinecke Library at Yale

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University; the second, by Peter Blodgett, surveys the Mormon collections at the Henry E. Huntington Library. As a demonstration of the value of the materials found in non-Utah repositories, this issue's Historians' Corner includes a Brigham Young letter located at the Beinecke Library. Two additional essays from *Mormon Americana* will appear in the next issue of *Studies*, prior to the release of the whole collection.

We feel confident that *Mormon Americana* will make an important contribution to Mormon studies and that people with varied interests will enjoy reading these informative articles. General readers will discover in these essays many interesting episodes in the history of Mormon historiography, including how, why, and under whose auspices the main archival collections of LDS materials have been assembled. Academic researchers will undoubtedly become aware of many additional sources of significant information and will learn how and where to gain access to these collections. We invite all who are interested to place an advance order for *Mormon Americana* with *BYU Studies*. (For further information, see *Study and Faith*, the newsletter inserted in this issue.)

# Mormon Americana at Yale

George Miles

Yale's interest in Mormon Americana began in 1942 when William Robertson Coe presented the university with his personal collection of Western Americana. Between 1942 and 1949, Coe gave the Sterling Memorial Library over seven thousand items concerning the exploration, settlement, and development of the American West. Among the books, pamphlets, broadsides, manuscripts, and art in Coe's collection were more than nine hundred pieces concerning the early history of the Latter-day Saints. Since 1949 the Yale Collection of Western Americana, using endowment funds provided by Coe and other generous benefactors, has built an extensive collection documenting the origins and growth of Mormonism in the nineteenth century.

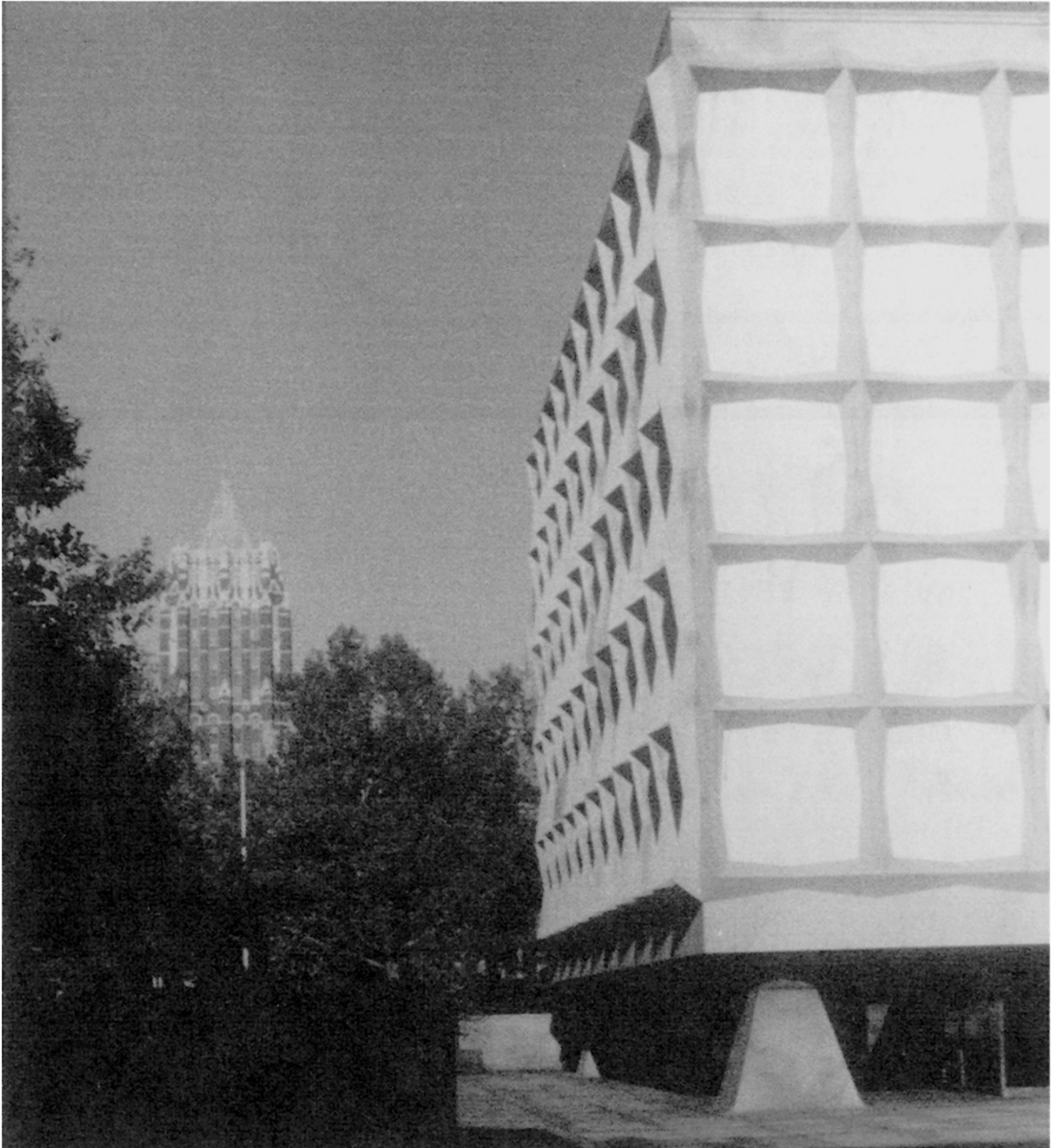
Yale's collection of Mormon Americana has grown rapidly since Coe's gift, but a discussion of his collection as a means of introducing Yale's seems appropriate for several reasons. Its creation represents a major chapter in the history of America's social and cultural response to Mormonism; that Coe and other collectors of his generation who were not members of the LDS Church found the documents and papers of early Mormonism interesting is, in itself, significant. Second, the recent profusion of forgeries and facsimile reproductions not only in Mormon Americana but also Texana and Early Americana, demonstrates the value of establishing the provenance of rare documents, even well-known ones. Finally, although Coe imposed no restrictions on Yale's future acquisitions of Mormon Americana, the composition of his collection has exerted important influences on them.

Coe began to collect Western Americana after his purchase in 1910 of William "Buffalo Bill" Cody's Wyoming ranch. From the early 1920s through the 1930s, he relied heavily upon the assistance of

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The Beinecke Library at Yale University. The Yale Law School appears in the distance. (Courtesy of David J. Whittaker)



noted New York City antiquarian bookman Edward Eberstadt to build his collection. The origins of Western communities and institutions, the first exploration of an area, its initial settlement, and its earliest imprints intrigued Coe. He had less interest in tracking the development of frontier regions and none in documenting the post-frontier era. Consequently, his Mormon collection focused almost exclusively on the years between 1830 and 1870, from Joseph Smith's organization of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints through the "Utah War" and its aftermath.

Coe's collection is especially distinguished in its coverage of Mormon history before the Saints' immigration to Utah. The collection contains first and later editions of major doctrinal works including the Book of Commandments (Independence, Mo., 1833), and the Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of Latter-Day Saints (Kirtland, Ohio, 1835) as well as numerous editions of the Book of Mormon. Also well represented are pro- and anti-Mormon polemical writings, including Alexander Campbell's *Delusions: An Analysis of the Book of Mormon* (Boston, 1832), Charles Thompson's *Evidences in Proof of the Book of Mormon* (Batavia, 1841), and Oliver Cowdery's *Letters on the Origin of the Book of Mormon* (Liverpool, 1844).

Mormon efforts to establish a settlement in Missouri and the resistance Mormons encountered are thoroughly documented. William S. West's *A Few Interesting Facts Respecting the Rise and Pretensions of the Mormons* (Warren, 1837), Parley P. Pratt's *A Voice of Warning and Instruction* (New York, 1837; Nauvoo, 1844), John Greene's *Expulsion of the Mormons from the State of Missouri* (Cincinnati, 1839), John Corrill's *A Brief History of the Church of Christ of Latter-Day Saints* (Saint Louis, 1839), and Heber C. Kimball's *Journal* (Nauvoo, 1840) are a few of the many contemporaneous accounts in the collection. They are well complemented by lengthy runs of such important Mormon periodicals as the *Evening and the Morning Star* (Independence, Mo., 1832–33, and Kirtland, Ohio, 1834–35), the *Latter-Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate* (Kirtland, 1834–37), and the *Elders' Journal of the Church of Latter-Day Saints* (Kirtland, Ohio, and Far West, Mo., 1837–38).

As the preceding discussion suggests, Coe was especially interested in printed accounts of Mormon history, but his collection also includes several valuable manuscripts describing Mormon life in Missouri and Illinois. Charles Coulson Rich's daybook describes



his journey from Tazewell County, Illinois, to Mormon Camp at Salt River, Missouri, in June 1834. William Law's daybook records his business accounts in Nauvoo in 1841 and 1842. James Monroe's diary and journal describe his conversion to Mormonism and his service as tutor to the children of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young in 1845. The collection's most extensive manuscripts concerning Nauvoo are the Oliver Olney papers. Olney became a Mormon in 1831 but was denounced by Joseph Smith in 1842. After the denunciation, from April 6, 1842, through January 23, 1843, Olney kept a virtual chronicle of life in Nauvoo. The perspective of a gentile trader familiar with Nauvoo is provided in James M. Sharpe's journal, written principally in 1843 and in September and October 1844.

The dramatic rise and fall of the Mormon community at Nauvoo is thoroughly recounted in complete sets of the *Times and Seasons* (Commerce and Nauvoo, Ill., 1839–46) and of the *Latter-Day Saints' Millennial Star* (Manchester and Liverpool, 1841–1905). Numerous contemporary accounts document the assassination of Joseph and Hyrum Smith as well as the tumult which ensued between the Mormons and their neighbors. Newspapers like the *Nauvoo Neighbor* (Nauvoo, Ill., 1843–44), the *Prophet* (New York, 1844–45) and the *Messenger* (New York, 1845) provide valuable coverage of the events which by the spring of 1845 convinced Brigham Young and the Church elders to abandon Nauvoo. In the Coe collection is a manuscript letter dated April 25, 1845, written by "a Committee in behalf of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints" to Massachusetts Governor George Briggs, which appeals for help and protection against the abuses the Mormons had suffered in Missouri and Illinois and for assistance in establishing an unmolested asylum in the far West. The letter, copies of which were simultaneously sent to the president and to the governors of every state except Missouri and Illinois, was the first public declaration of the Mormon hierarchy's intention to relocate beyond the settled regions of the United States.

The initial exodus of Mormons from Nauvoo to Winter Quarters (now Florence, Nebraska) and then to Salt Lake City is recorded in Howard Egan's journals. A major in the Nauvoo Legion and captain of the ninth group of ten during the trip from Winter Quarters to Salt Lake City in 1847, Egan returned east to repeat the trip with his family in 1848. His first journal covers the period from April 8 to July 27, 1847, when Brigham Young led the so-called



pioneer band from Winter Quarters to the Great Salt Lake. Egan describes the trip in detail, lists the members of the party, quotes Brigham Young's sermons, gives an inventory of provisions and provides a table of distances. Egan's second journal describes life at Salt Lake from July 28 through August 26 and then recounts his return journey to Winter Quarters as far as Pacific Springs. Egan's later journals as well as considerable material written by his son William Monroe Egan are also part of Coe's collection.

On December 23, 1847, after completing the initial trip to Salt Lake, Brigham Young released the first *General Epistle from the Council of the Twelve Apostles to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints throughout the Earth*, in which he described the enlistment of the Mormon Battalion, the establishment of Winter Quarters, the experiences of the pioneer band, and the founding of Salt Lake City. Coe was fortunate to acquire both the Saint Louis and Liverpool editions of this pivotal document of Mormon history as well as copies of William Clayton's *The Latter-Day Saints' Emigrants' Guide; Being a Table of Distances . . . from Council Bluffs to the Valley of the Great Salt Lake* (St. Louis, 1848). The collection also features a complete set of Orson Hyde's *Frontier Guardian* (Kanesville, Iowa [i.e. Council Bluffs], 1849–52). Published at an important jumping-off site on the overland trail, the paper was filled with information for and about Mormon emigrants.

Coe's collection documents in detail the early history of the Salt Lake community. *The Constitution of the State of Deseret* was printed in Kanesville as no local press suitable for the job had been established. On October 20, 1849, however, the first major publication from a press in Utah was issued. Brigham Young's *Second General Epistle of the Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints from the Great Salt Lake Valley to the Saints Scattered throughout the Earth* marked the inauguration of full-scale printing within the new settlement. Coe's collection features forty-five of the territory's earliest imprints including the *Ordinances Passed by the Legislative Council of Great Salt Lake City* (Great Salt Lake City, 1850), Brigham Young's *Third General Epistle . . .* (Great Salt Lake City, April 12, 1850), the *Governor's Message to the Senators and Representatives of the State of Deseret* (Great Salt Lake City, 1850), and the *First Annual Message of the Governor to the Legislative Assembly of Utah Territory* (Great Salt Lake City, 1851). Although



government-related printing predominated through the early 1850s, Utah presses soon began publishing on a broader range of topics. Brigham Young's *A Revelation on Celestial Marriage* (Great Salt Lake City, 1852), a series of issues of W. W. Phelps's *Deseret Almanac* beginning with 1852, and Belinda Pratt's *Defense of Polygamy* (Salt Lake City, 1854) are examples found in Coe's collection. In addition to Utah imprints and other materials published by the Mormons themselves,<sup>1</sup> Coe's collection contains numerous diaries, guide books, and memoirs by men and women who traveled through Salt Lake City on their way to Oregon, California, or other western destinations. Their observations provide important information not only about the social and economic development of Utah, but also about the continuing tension between the Latter-day Saints and other Americans.

Even as Mormon leaders struggled to establish a stable, permanent community in the United States, they began an aggressive, foreign missionary campaign. The world-wide scope of their efforts is reflected in Coe's collection in such pieces as Parley P. Pratt's *Proclamation! To the People of the Coasts and Islands of the Pacific* (Sydney, New South Wales, ca. 1851), his *Proclamation Extraordinary! To the Spanish Americans* (San Francisco, 1852), and Lorenzo Snow's *The Voice of Joseph* (Malta, 1852), as well as numerous nineteenth-century translations of the Book of Mormon. On a more prosaic level, the collection features an extensive set of Liverpool Mission imprints. Among the most spectacular is James Linforth and Frederick Piercy's pictorial work, *Route from Liverpool to Great Salt Lake Valley* (Liverpool, 1855).

The Mormons enjoyed great success in attracting converts, but the Church itself was rent by various schisms. Some dissenters split from Joseph Smith before his assassination, but after his death arguments about who should succeed to the leadership of the Church created further divisions. James Brewster's *The Words of Righteousness* (Springfield, Ill., 1845), *A Warning to the Latter-Day Saints* (Springfield, Ill., 1842), and *An Address to the Church of Latter-Day Saints* (Springfield, Ill., 1848), as well as Sidney Rigdon's *Disunion and Disfellowship with the Adherents of the Twelve* (Nauvoo, Ill., 1844) and Jason Brigg's *A Word of Consolation to the Scattered Saints* (Janesville, Wis., 1853), are among the important schismatic tracts in Coe's collection. One of the most charismatic and outspoken of



Brigham Young's opponents was James Jesse Strang, who claimed to have received a secret appointment by Joseph Smith as his successor. Coe acquired copies of most of Strang's published works as well as some two thousand pages of his correspondence and diaries, including the purported "letter of appointment" on which Strang based his claim.

Brigham Young had hoped to establish the Mormon Zion in an area sufficiently isolated from the principal settlements of the United States to insure its domestic tranquility. The discovery of gold in California shattered those hopes. By the mid-1850s, disputes between Mormon and gentile residents of Utah and between the Mormon hierarchy and the federal government escalated to the brink of war. As for the various topics discussed above, Coe's collection is replete with printed documents and accounts of the test of wills between President Buchanan and Governor Young. Present are Brigham Young's *Proclamation by the Governor* (Great Salt Lake City, September 15, 1857) declaring martial law, his *Governor's Message to the Legislative Assembly . . . December 15, 1857* (Great Salt Lake City), and one of the only two known copies of his *A Series of Instructions and Remarks at Special Council* (Great Salt Lake City, 1858), in which he suggests that the Saints prepare to flee rather than conduct open war against the federal government. Documenting the federal side are a complete file of the "War Department's General Orders of the Army" (New York, 1856–58), "General Orders of the Department of Utah" (Fort Leavenworth, Camp Scott, and Camp Floyd, 1857–59), and a series of pamphlets concerning overland freighting service supplied to the army by the firm of Majors, Russell, and Waddell.

Printed sources about the "Utah War" are complemented by several important manuscripts. Mormon preparations for war are described in "The Record of Orders, Returns, & Courts Martial &c of 2nd Brigade, 1st Division, Nauvoo Legion." Joseph Heger's portfolio of original pencil sketches of scenes in Utah provides a pictorial record of one federal cavalryman's experiences in the campaign. Most important, however, are Thomas L. Kane's papers and correspondence. Colonel Kane had become acquainted with Mormon leaders as early as 1846. In 1858, President Buchanan sent Kane to Utah as his special representative; Kane mediated a compromise between Presidents Buchanan and Young and helped



prevent a major war. His papers provide an invaluable perspective on the crisis and the Mormons' response to it.

Coe had relatively little interest in Mormon history after the Utah War. He did, however, acquire two important manuscript collections which document Mormon affairs in the 1860s. William Clayton's "Letter Press Copy Book" for February 1860 through April 1869 contains documents he executed as notary public of Great Salt Lake County, auditor of public accounts, and territorial recorder of marks and brands. One of the premier items in Coe's entire collection is a file of sixty letters from Brigham Young to William Hooper, Utah's territorial delegate to Congress. The letters, written between November 1859 and January 1869, describe events and conditions in Salt Lake City, gentile attitudes towards Utah, gold discoveries, and Indian affairs, as well as give family and Church news.

Concluding this discussion of Coe's collection, I need to mention that it includes numerous Mormon periodicals from around the world including a complete file of the first twenty-six volumes of the *Deseret News* (Great Salt Lake City, 1850–76).

Since 1949, Yale has added significantly to Coe's collection. Sterling Memorial Library, the university's central research collection, has assumed responsibility for acquiring modern scholarly studies, documentary editions, and other secondary material; the Collection of Western Americana, housed in the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, acquires primary sources in their original format. In its acquisitions, the Western Americana collection has followed Coe's general interests, building upon the strengths of his gift. As did Coe, it has emphasized printed works rather than manuscripts; it has, however, broadened the chronological range of interest to include events and imprints of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Thus acquisitions reflect Yale's continuing interest in early Mormon imprints from Ohio, Missouri, Illinois, and Utah; in the social and economic development of Utah; in doctrinal developments; in missionary activity in Britain, Scandinavia, and the Far East; and in the literature of the various schismatic sects. The collection has also continued to collect Mormon and anti-Mormon polemical tracts and periodical literature. In forty years, it has acquired more than fifteen hundred additional titles on virtually every aspect of early Mormon history.

To complement Coe's initial collection, Yale has sought to identify and acquire printed material concerning the doctrine, practice, and controversy of polygamy, as well as to develop holdings of privately printed reminiscences, memoirs, and local histories. Yale has been fortunate to acquire some great rarities in all areas, but its principal concern has been to build a comprehensive research collection in which scholars can investigate nearly any aspect of the Mormon experience in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. To this end, considerable attention has been devoted to adding important albeit commonplace works.

For more information about Yale's collection of Mormon Americana, readers may consult Mary Withington, *A Catalog of Manuscripts in the Collection of Western Americana Formed by William Robertson Coe: Yale University Library* (New Haven, 1952); Edward Eberstadt, *The William Robertson Coe Collection of Western Americana* (New Haven, 1948); or the G. K. Hall Company's reproduction of the collection's catalogue (Boston, 1974). Since 1981 additions to the collection have been catalogued on the Research Libraries Information Network (RLIN). Inquiries about the collection, its hours, and photoduplication policies may be directed to The Yale Collection of Western Americana, Box 1603A Yale Station, New Haven, Connecticut 06520-1603.

#### NOTE

<sup>1</sup>See the brief sketch by Jeffrey R. Holland, "A Note on Mormon Americana at Yale," *BYU Studies* 10 (Spring 1970): 386–88.



## Emma Smith Speaks Her Piece

I asked you not to go  
But someone got there first  
With other words  
As they so often do;  
So now I speak my piece.

Please, forgive  
A wife's proclivity for last words  
And fond distrust of those  
Who dream  
Without sleeping.

Please know  
Of all my pains  
None is more exquisite than  
That inflicted by  
This understanding: the only  
Reward God gives a true prophet  
Is the vision.

In the end  
Nothing of this world  
Was yours to keep,  
Not even the mantle.

And please know, too,  
That I was less jealous  
Of other handmaidens  
Than I was of  
Other voices.

—Thomas Asplund

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Thomas Asplund, formerly a member of the faculty of law, Queens University, Kingston, Ontario, Canada, has passed away. Final preparation of this poem for publication was made by the editors.

# **Studying the Saints: Resources for Research in Mormon History at the Huntington Library**

Peter J. Blodgett

When Henry Edwards Huntington retired in 1910 from a successful career in railroading and land development, he turned both his great fortune and his vast experience to the advancement of his fondest personal avocation, the collecting of rare books and manuscripts. Already well known for his accomplishments as a collector, he now applied himself with greater effort to this pursuit. By the time of his death in 1927, he had assembled one of the finest private holdings then in existence relating to Anglo-American history and literature. The research library established by Huntington on the foundation of that private collection has remained one of the preeminent resources for scholarship in America to this day. From the beginning, it has numbered significant documents of Mormon history among its many treasures.

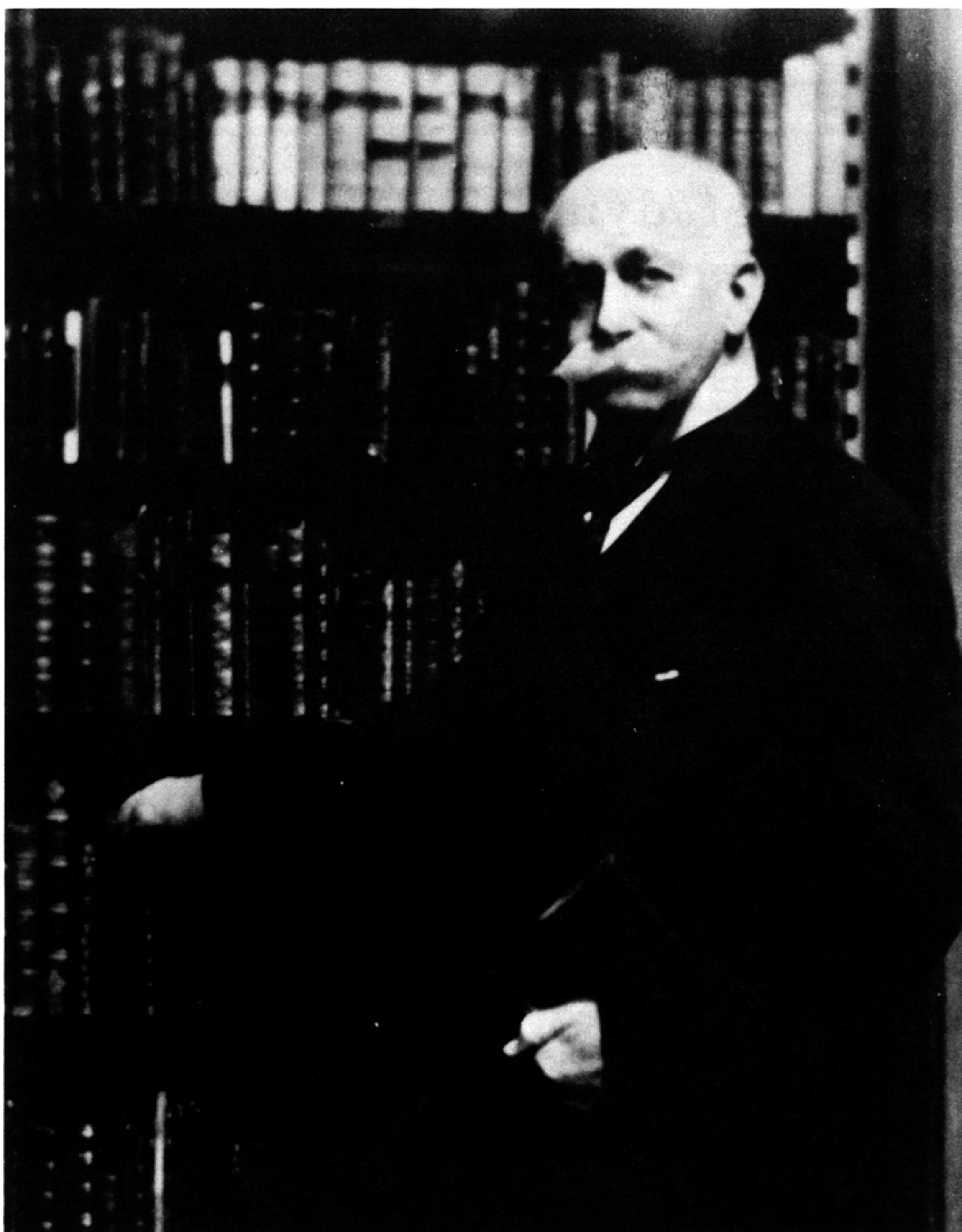
The earliest Mormon acquisitions by Huntington resulted primarily from his enthusiasm for printed Americana and his decision to buy several large collections in their entirety. First and second editions of the Book of Mormon, for example, came to his library with the purchases of the E. Dwight Church and Augustin MacDonald collections in 1911 and 1916. The purchase in 1922 of Henry R. Wagner's magnificent library of Western Americana capped this trend, adding seventy-eight volumes concerning Mormonism alone, such as a first edition of William Clayton's renowned *The Latter-Day Saints' Emigrants' Guide*. By 1925, Huntington had already gathered a fine collection of printed Mormon titles, particularly focused upon the era of immigration to and settlement of Utah.

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Henry Edwards Huntington (1850–1927), the developer and book collector who devoted much of the last years of his life to gathering and preserving an extensive collection of manuscripts and rare books emphasizing American and English literature. In time his collecting embraced Western Americana, which included Mormons in the West. To house these collections, he built and endowed the library that bears his name. (Courtesy of the Huntington Library)

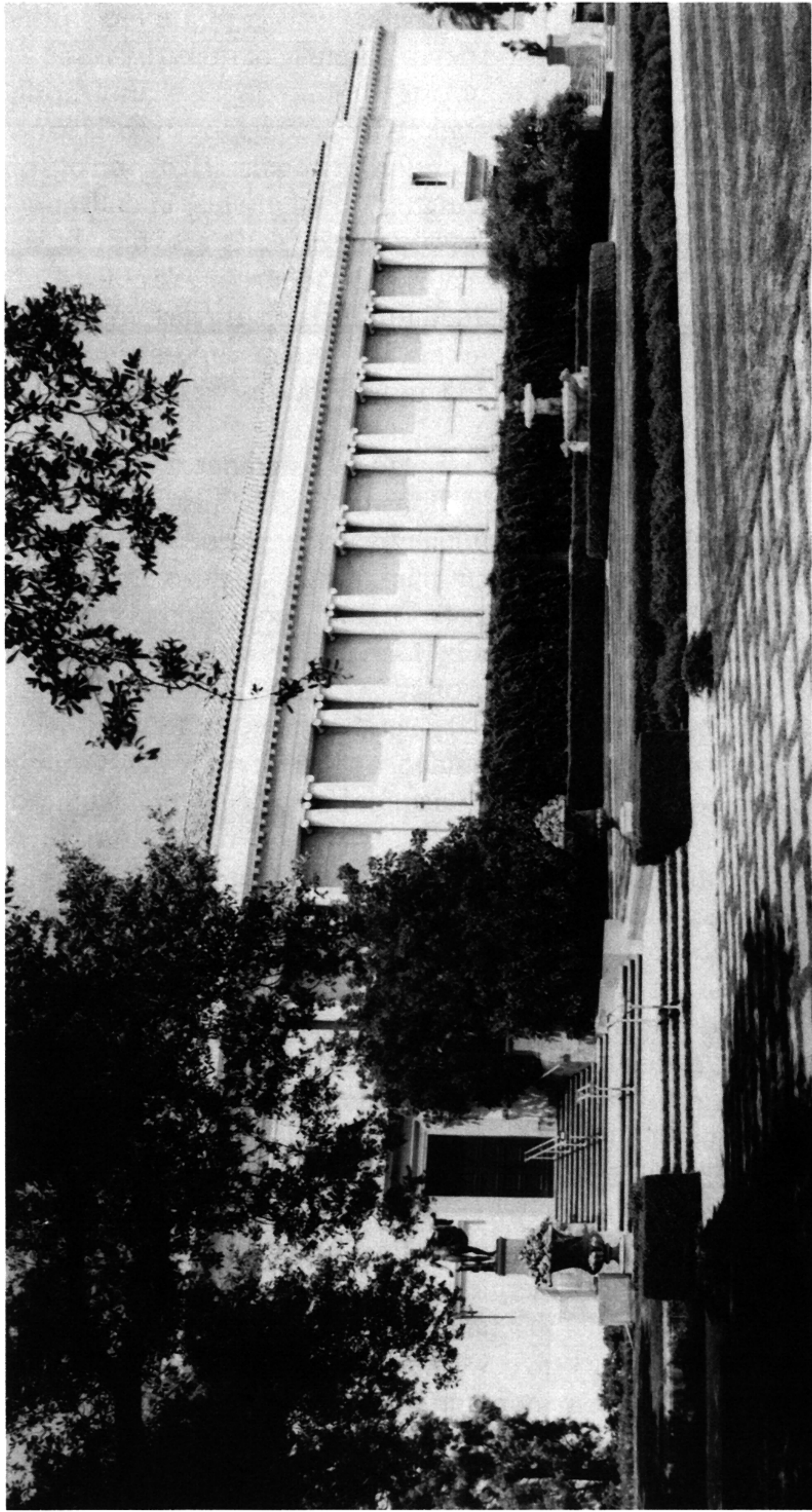
In subsequent years, that original collection of printed works grew enormously in breadth and depth, carefully nurtured by Leslie E. Bliss throughout his lengthy tenure as Huntington librarian. During the 1920s under Bliss's administration, the library began to expand into the field of unpublished Mormon materials. That pursuit of original sources reinforced Huntington's own interest in collecting the "background materials" necessary for scholarly research, however pedestrian such materials might seem to rare-book collectors. The background materials obtained for the field of western Americana included letters, diaries, journals, and reminiscences written by Latter-day Saints both famous and anonymous as well as by other observant commentators.

As early as 1929, the library added significant groups of Mormon manuscripts to its collections of original historical documents. Although not pursued initially with the vigor seen in later years, the acquisition of Mormon manuscripts began with several notable triumphs. In 1929, for instance, the Huntington obtained a series of six original diaries kept by John D. Lee, spanning a period from 1846 to 1876, as well as assorted Lee correspondence and an original diary from Rachel Woolsey Lee for the years 1856–60. The papers of Jacob S. Boreman, prominent opponent of the LDS Church and presiding judge at the two trials of John D. Lee, were acquired in 1934.<sup>1</sup> And in 1942, as the New Deal's Works Progress Administration was winding down its operations, the Huntington secured carbon copies of various pioneer reminiscences and histories as well as original historical ephemera brought together by Hugh O'Neil, an editor with the WPA Historic Records Survey in Utah.

Measured merely by these three acquisitions, the library had thus gathered a small but important collection of Mormon manuscripts that touched upon the end of the crucial Nauvoo period, the transcontinental flight to Utah, the colonization of the Great Basin, and the bitter conflict between Gentiles and Mormons in late nineteenth-century Utah.

By 1942, of course, the United States had joined World War II, and most of the nation's energies were absorbed by the escalating war effort. At the time, it must have seemed that the preservation of the past would have to give way to the urgent demands of the present. Yet, at that very moment, a series of coincidental events were about to occur that would thrust the Huntington Library into the forefront of those institutions collecting Mormon historical materials.





The Henry E. Huntington Library, San Marino, California  
(Courtesy of the Huntington Library)



The first link in that chain of events was forged in 1943 when Robert Glass Cleland, professor of history at Occidental College, became affiliated with the Huntington's research staff. Cleland, a renowned expert in the history of California and the Southwest, sought ways to promote further research in Southwestern history at the library. Aware of the financial support being given to the study of regional history by the Rockefeller Foundation, Cleland prodded the library into applying for a foundation grant. The foundation's humanities program responded in August 1944 with the offer of an annual award of \$10,000 a year for a five-year term, to support fellowships, research grants, and the acquisition of both original documents and reproductions of those materials not available for purchase. Under the direction of an advisory committee headed by Cleland, a Southwest studies program took shape at the Huntington and began to attract a distinguished community of scholars to San Marino.

Cleland and the Rockefeller grant gave the library the impetus and the wherewithal to collect original source materials of Southwestern history. The Huntington's librarian, Leslie Bliss, faced the challenge of insuring that the funds devoted each year to acquisitions were well spent. Bliss himself had a well-deserved reputation as an able collector and an intelligent student of Western Americana, but collecting on the scale envisioned by the grant suggested the need for a full-time field representative. Thus did the Rockefeller grant serve its most important (if unintended) function by triggering the long and fruitful collaboration between the Huntington Library and Juanita Brooks.

Levi Peterson's recent biography of Juanita Brooks tells us much about this relationship.<sup>2</sup> The basic details, however, can be recounted quickly. Brooks had first come into contact with the Huntington in 1944, when she had learned of the library's John D. Lee diaries. She visited the library at the invitation of Robert Cleland to consult them for her book on the Mountain Meadows Massacre. After the Huntington had received the Rockefeller grant, Brooks received one of the research fellowships in Southwestern history to continue her work. Apparently impressed with the caliber of her research and with her personal contacts in the Southwest, Bliss also hired her under the auspices of the grant as a field agent to collect manuscript material on the region's history. Through the remainder of the 1940s and into the 1950s, Brooks scoured Utah and northern





Juanita Brooks (1898–1989), the diligent field agent for the Huntington Library during the 1940s and early 1950s. Brooks was instrumental in bringing many southern Utah and northern Arizona Mormon collections to the library.



Arizona for diaries, journals, letters, and reminiscences that would illuminate the settlement and the growth of the Great Basin area. In particular, she focused upon the southern portions of Utah known as Dixie and, during her labors, harvested an enormous crop of original records that were either acquired outright by the library or copied and then returned to the owners. The grant's renewal in 1951 and Brooks's personal friendship with Leslie Bliss kept her active as a field agent well into the 1950s.

Juanita Brooks's notable success as a field agent made the post-war decade a golden era for the acquisition of Mormon historical documents at the Huntington. The accomplishments of the next two decades under Bliss's direction in that field, although somewhat more modest in scope, maintained the momentum of previous years. Besides a continuing influx of individual diaries, journals, and autobiographies received from Brooks and other sources in Utah, several large and significant individual collections were added to the library's holdings. The 1959 acquisition of the papers of Frederic E. Lockley, Jr., Oregon historian, editor, and rare-book dealer, included various letters written by his father, the editor of the *Salt Lake City Tribune* from 1873 to 1875. The senior Lockley's correspondence commented on many aspects of Mormonism as well as on the 1875 trial of John D. Lee, which Lockley attended. In 1965 the Huntington received another collection dealing with a controversial phase of Mormon history when it obtained the original transcripts of Kimball Young's interviews for his examination of polygamy, *Isn't One Wife Enough?* A year later, the Huntington purchased a group of letters and documents concerning the business affairs of Lewis C. Bidamon, Illinois businessman and second husband of Emma Hale Smith, widow of the Mormon prophet Joseph Smith. Inspection of that collection revealed that it contained papers of Emma Smith Bidamon and her son Joseph Smith, eventual leader of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. Finally, in the field of printed matter, Bliss achieved his greatest coup with his successful pursuit of the Loughran Collection in 1962. The 15,000 books, pamphlets, and periodicals that comprised it represented an enormous treasure trove of rare Mormon documents that vastly expanded the library's holdings.

As the 1960s closed, the Huntington could look back on three extraordinarily productive decades of collecting historical Mormon materials. Since then, the pace has slowed but the library continues



to make significant additions to both the printed and manuscript collections. The purchase or reproduction of Mormon family diaries and journals has continued, sometimes with the assistance of Brooks or other Mormon scholars, while fugitive copies of important printed texts have been tracked down through dealers and private collectors. In recent years, the library has acquired several valuable new pieces. A very rare 1845 broadside printed in Nauvoo announces the imminent departure of the Mormons from that beleaguered city. A run of *Zion's Watchman* (Sydney, Australia) from its inauguration in 1853 through May 1856 includes the announcement to the Australian Saints of the doctrine of plural marriage. And, from a later period of Mormon history, the manuscript autobiography of Almeda Perry Brown captures in detail the life story of a twentieth-century Mormon woman who overcame great obstacles to become a prominent member of Utah State University's faculty at an important stage in its development.

Such a brief sketch can hardly do justice to the intricate history behind the Huntington Library's Mormon collection. It may convey, however, some sense of the great breadth of resources assembled over the last sixty years. But if the mere size of this collection commands our attention, do its contents merit the scholar's interest?

In the field of printed works alone, the library's accumulated holdings represent an exceptionally useful resource for scholars in many fields. Among the foundation texts of the Mormon faith, the Huntington's Rare Books Department possesses over 100 English-language editions of the Book of Mormon, another 40 editions in eighteen separate languages, and examples of editions produced by other groups such as the Brooksites and Whitmerites. Supplementing those many texts are first editions of the Doctrine and Covenants of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Kirtland, Ohio, 1835), the Pearl of Great Price (Liverpool, 1851) and Parley P. Pratt's *A Voice of Warning and Instruction to All People* (New York, 1837), as well as many subsequent printings in the United States and, in the case of *A Voice of Warning*, from overseas as well. Other volumes in the collection include most of the salient writings authored by early Church leaders.<sup>3</sup>

Over time, the library's collecting also brought together an extensive file of newspapers and periodicals documenting the Church's first half-century. Especially of note are complete runs of the *Evening and the Morning Star* in both its original publication



between 1832 and 1834 and its 1835–1836 Kirtland, Ohio, reissue; the *Latter-Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate* (Kirtland, Ohio, 1834–37); and the *Elders' Journal of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Kirtland, Ohio, and Far West, Mo., 1837–38). Other publications inform readers about events during the Nauvoo years (*Times and Seasons*, vols. 1–6, 1839–46), about the course of the Church's foreign mission endeavors (*Latter-Day Saints' Millennial Star*, Liverpool, 1840–98), and about the initial settlement of the Great Basin (*Deseret News*, vols. 1–12, 1850–63 and scattered issues from later periods). The Huntington's microfilm collection reinforces our holdings of the *Deseret News* in particular with a copy of the weekly paper from 1850 through 1898 and the daily paper from volume 1, no. 1 through volume 4, no. 124 (November 21, 1867, through April 15, 1871).

Lastly, in its holdings the Huntington also numbers a great many of the major printed works about the Church. Since Huntington's time, the library has acquired a great assortment of volumes attacking, defending, or merely commenting upon Mormonism. Readers may discover the reminiscences of faithful Church members and bitter apostates, doctrinal works elaborating upon the structures of belief within the Church, the observations of such fascinated travelers as Sir Richard Burton, and the vast popular literature including dramas and dime novels that used Mormonism as the backdrop to adventure.

Equally close study of the Huntington's Mormon manuscript holdings reveals similarly impressive breadth and depth. The separate collections previously mentioned such as the Bidamon, the Boreman, and the Lee papers and such individual treasures as an 1834–38 Oliver Cowdery letterbook and two volumes of diaries kept by Eliza Roxcy Snow for the years 1846 to 1849 constitute by themselves a splendid array of original documents on the Mormon experience.

The heart of the matter, however, remains the Mormon File, a synthetic arrangement of manuscripts containing approximately 120 reels of microfilm, 160 bound photostats and typescripts, and over 1200 discrete letters and documents, assembled in large part under the sponsorship of the Rockefeller Foundation forty years ago. Taken in toto, this file now encompasses every phase of Mormon history from the era of the Prophet, through the exodus and the gathering of Zion, to the colonization of the intermountain region



and the evolution of modern Utah. While it would be impossible to comment here upon the contents of every manuscript, let me offer several examples of the collection's strengths. Mormonism's early evolution and the Church's combative relations with its gentile neighbors, for instance, especially in the state of Missouri, can be followed through a number of sources. Besides Oliver Cowdery's letterbook, the Huntington possesses original transcripts of the court suits filed in 1833 by Edward Partridge and William W. Phelps in Jackson County, Missouri, against the men who tarred and feathered Partridge and looted Phelps's home in Independence; a microfilm copy of David Lewis's account of the Haun's Mill massacre; and Reed Peck's 1839 manuscript sketch of Mormonism's Missouri period.

With the sesquicentennial of the British mission in mind, it should be noted that the Mormon File includes over thirty-five diaries and journals of Mormon missionaries in foreign lands. Most, of course, portray mission work in the British Isles or Scandinavia, but a few describe the search for converts in such distant locations as South Africa, India, New Zealand, Samoa, and the Sandwich Islands. Even those diaries kept by missionaries in the United Kingdom, although concentrating upon the same general subject, reproduce the experiences of many dedicated Saints over a five-decade span.

Other documents in the Mormon File capture all the steps in the process of gathering the faithful, including the drafts of converts raised by the foreign missions, and then dispersing them across the Great Basin Zion to hold it for God's chosen people. We can follow many emigrants through their diaries and autobiographies on their difficult passage from European ports or the Eastern states to Utah and realize that despite the helping hand extended by the Church through such mechanisms as the Perpetual Emigrating Fund (PEF), such a journey required great reserves of strength and courage. The papers of one PEF agent in Missouri, William Young Empey, outline the Fund's operations for the 1854 travel season, capturing with unintended pathos the tribulations that might befall the emigrants. In a letter of April 24, 1854, written from the port of Liverpool, Samuel W. Richards, head of the British mission, chided Empey for failing to notify him of those emigrants in the parties Richards had sent out who had died in passage. The lack of news, he sternly reminded Empey, "leaves their friends in this country in terrible suspense." And among Empey's papers are several notebooks



containing lists of PEF and 13& Co. passengers that record the names of those who succumbed.

At the end of that long voyage to the promised land, many of the Saints soon found themselves called upon to abandon their new homes and lay the cornerstones of new settlements in many different parts of the Great Basin. Within the Mormon File, researchers can find many diaries, journals, and other papers that picture the Mormon colonization of the Southwest. There are over twenty journals, diaries, and autobiographies, as well as several collections of personal papers, that describe colony-building in Nevada, Arizona, and the southern reaches of Utah. The Edwin Bunker Collection includes many personal and business papers that highlight efforts to establish the United Order in Bunkerville, Nevada, between 1877 and 1879 as well as Bunker's many responsibilities as a Mormon bishop in Bunkerville during the 1880s, responsibilities which ranged from collecting tithes and making distributions to the poor to laying down rules that governed the conduct of dancing parties. The United Order is also the subject of Emma Seegmiller Higbee's account of life at Orderville, "Voices from Within." Efforts to advance the economic development of the region can be followed through the Huntington's Frederick Kesler Collection, which includes nearly sixty volumes of daybooks and account books discussing the various mills that Kesler, a skilled practical engineer, built or operated all over the territory between 1857 and 1894.

On these and many other topics, Mormon collections at the Huntington offer considerable scope for scholarly investigation. The complex phenomenon that is Mormonism, however, did not live in a vacuum and should not be studied in one. The Huntington also offers scholars access to a uniquely rich array of collateral materials that establishes the essential context of Mormonism's place in Western history. The library's superb collection of overland journals, for example, furnishes a massive amount of information about the trans-Mississippi West and about westward migration, especially during the height of the California Gold Rush. Some of these manuscripts record the passage of their authors through the new Mormon commonwealth; as a group, they describe the hopes and aspirations of western immigrants as well as the experience of overland migration. The Huntington's recent acquisition of Professor Ralph P. Bieber's research archive deepens its resources concerning western migration and settlement. Bieber accumulated an enormous



collection of newspaper transcriptions in the course of a long career spent studying the great rush to California in 1849–50 and the development of the American Southwest. Thousands of handwritten notecards or photostatic copies were made from hundreds of newspapers in every state and many territories, documenting the overland trek to California, the opening of the Santa Fe Trail, the Mexican War, the organization of the western range-cattle industry, and the establishment of overland trade and communications with California after statehood. Another set of newspaper transcriptions compiled by another leading Western historian gathers together information on the topic “Mormons and the Far West.” Dale Morgan drew upon newspapers in every state between 1809 and 1857 to reproduce hundreds of articles that might be useful to historians of Mormonism. His assiduous research, like that of Bieber, saved from near-permanent obscurity hundreds of sources residing in private hands or in anonymous local historical collections. Lastly, the Huntington has acquired for its reference collection hundreds of biographical dictionaries, state and county histories, city directories, and microfilm copies of territorial records from the federal government pertaining to Utah and several of its neighbors. These references help provide the substratum of facts necessary for much historical research.

Without attempting, therefore, to produce a detailed handlist that enumerates every item in the Huntington’s collections, this essay has sought to describe the general contours of the collection and to highlight some of its particular strengths. The individual pieces and specific collections cited here represent only a small portion of the whole. Confronted by this vast assortment of materials, what can contemporary students of Mormonism and of Western American history learn from it as they conduct their research? And how can access to it at the Huntington be improved?

Clearly the importance of the Huntington’s Mormon holdings, especially its numerous diaries, journals, and autobiographies, is as great, if not greater, to Western history than ever before. The growing sophistication of many regional historians, influenced by new techniques of social and cultural analysis, have encouraged a mounting interest in the documentary records kept by the relatively anonymous. Desirous of portraying society “from the bottom up,” many historians now seek to understand how individuals shaped and in turn were shaped by the systems of belief or the social



organizations of their times. For Mormon history, these manuscripts provide a great reservoir of details about all aspects of daily life in many Mormon communities from the perspectives of men and women, immigrants and old-stock Americans, farmers and town dwellers, recent converts and second-generation believers. For the social history of the American West, these manuscripts chronicle the settlement and development of a large portion of the Great Basin zone, often in minute detail. Scholars researching questions in these fields should find a number of productive sources at hand. They may even have the opportunity to delve into some of the diaries, journals, autobiographies, or life sketches that escaped inclusion in Davis Bitton's splendid *Guide to Mormon Diaries and Autobiographies*.

Bitton's guide remains an absolutely essential road map with which to plot the course of one's research in Mormon diaries and autobiographies. Over time, however, as cataloguing of the Huntington's Mormon manuscripts has continued, a number of original and facsimile items not known to Bitton have surfaced. Among these manuscripts are various accounts of foreign missions, including the holograph missionary journals of Andrew Henry in Ireland during 1842 and 1843, Ira Hinckley in New Zealand during 1882 and 1883, and Edwin T. Wooley in England during 1884, as well as microfilm copies of William Fotheringham's mission journals from India, China, and South Africa in 1854–55 and 1861–62. Other original or reproduced manuscripts that were not listed in Bitton include life sketches of Sariah Louisa Chamberlain, Margaret Miller Watson De Witt, Lorin Farr, George Elmer Gardner, Silas Harris, Heber Jarvis, Zadoc Judd, Mons Larson, James Richey, George Thomas Rogers, George H. Rothrock, August Maria Outzan Smith, Janet Mauretta Johnson Smith, and Barry Wride; autobiographies of Asahel Woodruff Burk, Joan Walker Fotheringham, John Addison Hunt, James W. Le Sueur, Sophrania Moore Martin, Samuel Miles, Lemuel Harrison Redd, and William Henry Streeper; and reminiscences of Thomas Day, Anna Maria Hafen, and Mary Minerva Judd. Also worthy of note in the Mormon File are journals kept by Elias H. Blackburn (1904–1905), Harriet Bunting (1885–90), Prime Thornton Coleman (1879–1930), Joab Collier (1874–75 and 1889), William Farrer (1849–54), James Holt (1841–53), Sarah Sturdevant Leavitt (1874–75), Knud Swensen (1857–1902), Dana O. Walton (1890–1901), and Edwin Thomas Wooley (1884–86 and 1900–1906), as well as diaries written by James G. Bleak (1873), J. R. Bodham (1886),



Orville S. Cox (1852–67), Moses H. Farnsworth (1862–64), Osmer Dennis Flake (1896–1938), A. H. Hill (1865), George W. McCune (1896–98), Emma W. Neilson (1887–1916), George Pectol (1871–98), Ethan Pettit (1855–91), John H. Richards (1876–92), and William Wride (1898–1901).

Unfortunately, the substantial number of relatively untapped sources within our collection points up the existence of certain problems that have hampered efficient use of our Mormon manuscripts in the past, stemming in large part from the sheer bulk of the Mormon File and from the manner in which it was gathered. During the late 1940s and early 1950s, as original and facsimile copies of Mormon manuscripts poured into the library through the efforts of Juanita Brooks and others, the number of acquisitions taxed the resources of the institution to accession and organize them rapidly enough to remain current with new acquisitions at a time when large additions were being made to the holdings in other fields. Although no detailed records exist discussing the library's plans for the Mormon File, it seems likely that the file was created as a temporary expedient to absorb all the Mormon manuscripts in a common grouping.

The author card file established to inventory all these manuscripts served for a number of years with some success as the primary finding aid for the Mormon file. The card file's structure, however, has always imposed intractable limits upon its utility. The only bibliographic data common to each card has been the author's name. If the initial precataloguing examination failed to reveal the inclusive dates or descriptive information about the subjects discussed in the manuscript, then such information was omitted, under the assumption that the collection would soon be receiving more systematic attention. For the same reason, almost no subject indexing was done on these texts. Many items were not even assigned call numbers since it was expected that the entire file would be reorganized. Today, the lack of call numbers slows down the process of locating and retrieving these manuscripts for readers and for photo reproduction orders. The lack of chronological detail and of subject indexing makes it very difficult for researchers to identify sources containing information on specific topics unless they have prepared a list of relevant individuals whose names can be cross-checked against our card index. Under some circumstances, therefore, the Mormon File can be a cumbersome tool to use.

Despite all these difficulties, many historians have drawn upon the rich resources of the Huntington's collections. We expect that this trend will only increase. Therefore, the library has embarked on a long-term project to remedy the existing problems with the Mormon File. An item-by-item review of its contents will produce necessary bibliographic information about each piece, including, in the case of reproductions, details about the original manuscript that will enable scholars, through comparison with guides such as Bitton's, to verify whether they are reading an exact copy of an original or a variation. Standardized cataloguing will be accompanied by indexing of the most significant subjects in the card catalogue under Library of Congress subject headings. Eventually, this review will result in a full, printed inventory of all Mormon items and, perhaps, a computerized data base for the Mormon File that could be updated routinely.

The Huntington's relationship with the history of Mormons and Mormonism has been a long and successful one. Since its founding, the library has assembled a collection of Mormon materials with few parallels outside of Utah. It has hosted several generations of scholars, who have authored many fine historical or biographical studies. The projected reorganization of the Mormon File, now in the preliminary stages, will enhance the file's accessibility to readers at the Huntington and improve the library's ability to assist serious advanced research in Mormon history for many years to come.

Researchers seeking more information about manuscripts mentioned in this essay or about other portions of the library's Mormon holdings are encouraged to inquire of the Department of Manuscripts, the Department of Rare Books, or the Reader Services Department, Huntington Library, 1151 Oxford Road, San Marino, California 91108.<sup>4</sup> Since the library is not a public institution, researchers should also contact the Department of Reader Services for further information about guidelines for admission and applications for reading privileges.



## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Leonard J. Arrington, ed., "Crusade against Theocracy: The Reminiscences of Judge Jacob Smith Boreman of Utah, 1872–1877," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 24 (November 1960): 1–45.

<sup>2</sup> See Levi Peterson, *Juanita Brooks, Mormon Woman Historian* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1988), esp. chapter 5. See also Juanita Brooks, "Jest a Copyin'—Word fr Word," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 37 (Fall 1969): 375–95.

<sup>3</sup> See the brief sketch by Peter Crawley, "Mormon Americana at the Huntington Library," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 6 (Autumn–Winter 1971): 138–40.

<sup>4</sup> For more information about the history of the library, see John E. Pomfret, *The Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery: From Its Beginnings to 1969* (San Marino, Calif.: Huntington Library, 1969); *The Founding of the Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery*, which was the August 1969 issue of *The Huntington Library Quarterly*, vol. 32, no. 4; and Selena A. Spurgeon, *Henry Edwards Huntington, His Life and His Collections, a Docent Guide* (San Marino, Calif.: Huntington Library, 1992), especially chapter 6, "The Library."

# The Historians' Corner

Ronald W. Walker and David J. Whittaker

This Historians' Corner deals with Brigham Young—the man who dominated Mormonism from Joseph Smith's death in 1844 until his own demise thirty-three years later. He was a complex man, and biographers have struggled to capture his variety.

The two Brigham Young documents printed here for the first time in their entirety emphasize this point. The first is a three-and-a-half page letter that Young wrote to his wife, Mary Ann Angel, just months before the portentous events of June 1844. The letter is full of Young's interests and activity. He frets about his never too robust health. He mentions his religious feeling and expresses concern about his home and friends ("there is no place like home to me"). While an ardent and devoted missionary, Elder Young's preaching zeal clearly did not supplant his tenderness for hearth and companions.

Brigham Young wrote this letter while he was in the East raising money for Nauvoo's public buildings and trying to encourage emigration to what was then the LDS Church's capital. His letter conveys these goals as well as his larger Mormon faith. But what seems especially interesting are the kinds of things that delight him: bathing in a discrete place on the Coney Island beach, spending a few days fraternizing with Mormon sympathizer James Arlington Bennet, preaching to the Saints in novel ways to make them understand the will of the Lord, or observing, with his typical enthusiasm for detail, Philadelphia's Fairmount Waterworks. He was an animated, physical man, who liked useful things.

He was more. The second letter tells of Young's spiritual dimension. It is addressed to Elder Hiram McKee, a Methodist lay

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minister, who was then living in Fond du Lac County, Wisconsin. Thirty years earlier, Young and McKee were neighbors in Oswego, New York, where the two were close spiritual allies as each searched for a satisfying faith. “How sweet was our communion in old Oswego,” McKee remembered, “how encouraging our prayers, and enlivening our Songs, when we used to sing.” The future Mormon leader gave McKee “advise, counsel, [and] prayers” and showed “deep piety” and “faith.”<sup>1</sup>

The intervening years separated the two men not only by time and miles, but also by religious profession. Young moved to Mendon, New York, and converted to Mormonism. During one of his first missions for his new church, he sought out and attempted to convert McKee, who by this time was living in Sackets Harbor, New York. Young’s preaching left McKee unconvinced, and the two parted, firmly disagreeing.

Now, after the lapse of so many years, McKee wondered about Young’s spiritual state. The Methodist had followed his former friend’s career in the national press, and what he read deeply disturbed him. “Disclosure after disclosure” seemed to indicate Young’s need for repentance. As Brigham Young had once helped McKee in his “dark hour of sin,” perhaps he, McKee, could now help his old friend.<sup>2</sup> In April 1860, McKee wrote Young inviting him to do penance.

McKee’s letter summoned the response from President Young that is reproduced here. In his reply, the Mormon leader not only defended his character and career, but spoke revealingly about how he, as a Mormon convert of almost thirty years, had come to see himself. He remained a sincere, believing Christian, he assured McKee, whose religious faith had grown—not ebbed—with the passing years. Indeed, President Young believed that Mormonism had given him the strength to endure the slander that swirled so violently around him.

The matter did not end here. Additional letters passed between the two men that suggest McKee probably accepted Young’s invitation to visit Salt Lake City.<sup>3</sup> While their religious disagreements likely continued, we can hope the two old religious seekers renewed and even strengthened the ties of their youth.

## **Brigham Young to Mary Ann Young: August 17, 1843**

Pheledelpha August 17<sup>th</sup> 1843<sup>4</sup>

My Dear Mary ann.<sup>5</sup> I am thankful to have the oppertuny to wright once more to you. Yesterday I posted a letter to you and shal continue this till I fil it and then post it for Nauvoo. I have ben verry sick with my old complaint feele some better to day. I have ben out to the Fairmount waterworks that waters the citty of Phele 'tis a butiful place.<sup>6</sup> 'tis elevated about 95 feet a bove the school chil River<sup>7</sup> out of which the water is taken. Br Hess<sup>8</sup> was with me. I think it is about as good apiece of work as I have seene in all my travels the little yard that is atached to the house where the keeper lives is verry nisley laid out and fild with srubery. We went on to the wire bridge which is a bout 360 feet from one butmand to the other. it is all suported by small wires put together. it is about 2 1/2 9r 3 miles out. to morrow we shall goe to mount Holly and so on to New York. We have ben here a most 2 weaks. the saints feele perty well and a good meny think they will goe to the West this season,<sup>9</sup> as soon as the water rises in the ohio river. When I was so sick I thought if I could only be at home, I should be thankful there is no place like home to me. I due not value leveing home and all that is deare to me for the sake of the gospel if I could onley injoy my helth. you and I must take som masurs to re /recover/ cut our helth or we shall not last a grate meny years; and I want that we shou -ld live meny years yet and due much good on the earth.<sup>10</sup> we leff Pheledelpha last frida[y]<sup>11</sup> on the steam Boat came to Burlington 28 miles took stage for mount Holly<sup>12</sup> Br H. C. Kimball<sup>13</sup> and B. Winchester<sup>14</sup> was with me. we stoped with Judge Richards<sup>15</sup> we ordained him an Elder gave him Charge of the church in that place, had meeting frida[y] and Saterdag nights with the Bretherin. left Suday morning came to a place cold rising Sun a bout 10 miles, to a woods meeting, here we found Br Wm Smith.<sup>16</sup> Br Page<sup>17</sup> Preachd in the morning Br Kimball and my self in the afternoon.<sup>18</sup> we had a perty good congration and a good meeting. I saw a good meny that I knew sted all night with Br Athinson<sup>19</sup> came on monday morning to



Bordon town<sup>20</sup> 2 miles, took the rales cares for New york arived a 6 P. M. it commenced raining in the after noon we had a grate flood in this place. my teth commenced aking about the time it commenced raining.<sup>21</sup> I was sick and destresed about 4 day & nights hardley got enny sleep. I sufferd much

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New york August 29 this morning I set down to finish my letter and post it for Nauvoo. to returne to my helth I took som pill, was anointed had hands laid on me thursday night. my distress continued till a bout 12 o.c. I laid down went to sleep had a good night's rest have ben perty well ever since. our confrence commenced on saterday 1/2 past 10 in the morning.<sup>22</sup> I laid before the Bretherin the object of our mision. We had a good meeting but did no buisness there no man to take a share of nauvoo stock So all we could due was to invite the Bretherin to goe to Nauvoo and assist in building the houses and building up the place we felt allmost like strang men in a strang place we could hardly teach the church enny thing they seamed to know all a bout it. they have had such grate men amoung them here from Nauvoo, that Br Foster<sup>23</sup> could not teach them much and it was hard for us to teach them only by paribles and we had a good menny of them. Som of the Brs thought it was courous teaching and I thought jest so to. and I find that the Churches need courious teaching to make them understand what the Lord wants of them. the Saints seeme to have som faith here a bout going up to Nauvoo we leave the saints yesterday with the best of feelings they are jenerly verry poore and it is hard for us to get expence monny to carey us from place to place. tel Doct. Willard I recived his letter and I thanke him for it. I expect to goe over to the arlington house to day with Br Foster. I hope to [see?] the General,<sup>24</sup> give my warm respects to Brs L. and W. and sisters Rhoda and Jennett. tel Br W. I herd his salut saw the token when I past by on the Steam Boat. I have not herd a word direct from you sence I left home. I was in hops to have recived a letter from you at this citty. I still look for one it would be a grate satisfaction to me to have a line from you. if you see enny of Br Fars famely tel them Br Lorin is here is well and in good spirits will go on to New London in Connecticut to morrow. I think I Shal make my Way home home as soon as convenent after the Boston Confrence<sup>25</sup> for all the Saints that

have faith and means to goe west or build up the kingdom is going emeditly and it is of no use for us to stay here, that is if and if I can get means to goe home with

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Sept 2 I now set down to finish my letter to you. Br Foster and my self went to the Arlington house on L. Island on tusday,<sup>26</sup> we had a good visit With Generel Bennet we staed all night the next day we went over his farm vued his fine felds, took a veu from the top of his house, could see out on to the osion Sandy hook Straton Island, &c\_ a bout 5 o.c. P. M. the Gan took his wife Daughter and little son in to his caredge with my Self. firmished a hors for Elder Foster to ride on hors back we all wen down to cony Island 2 or 3 miles the hansomist Beach I ever saw. we drove to where we could get out of sight Bathed in the salt water and returned home to his house the next day in the after noon he took us in to his caredge Brought us to New York the Ganeral wished to be remembered to Ganeral Smith and famely. Mrs & Miss Bennet with the Gan Join in Sending there warm respects to Doct Richards<sup>27</sup> and wife. I never injoind a visit Better in my life. let Doct Willard see this—. this day the Bretherin leve for L pool viz R. Headlock John Carns James Slone & wife James Houston and Br Jarmond they are all well.<sup>28</sup> they sale on the ship Columbus. Br Stone wish me to say to his famely as he could not wright that Br Foster from N. York would soon be there and would bord with [page torn] [Br?] Lurish [?] you to get Edmond to convay word to the famelis of the Elders. Br. Kimball has a savere a tact of the corley morbus but is better the rest of the Brethern are well, we shall goe to Boston on Monday net if all is well. my heth is good at present. I hope you and the children are well. I have herd that 4 of the children have ben severley atacted with the Canker but was better. I pray the Lord to keep you and the children in good helth<sup>29</sup> I think to see you in the corse of 6 weaks or 2 months. I understand Judy Adams<sup>30</sup> ~~is did~~ died with the colery. I was sorey to here that it was sickley in and about Nauvoo I expect to wright one letter more before I reach home. I have not recived one line from you. you know how anxious you are to here from me when I am gon ~~you~~ if you was here and the children with me in Nauvoo, you could ges how much I want to here from you. give my love to Edman, /&/ Elizabeth Vlate Joseph Brigham Mary ann Rocksey Emma



Alas and especely to U. Carolina, to Br J. Young L. Young & famely sister Laney Susand. Br Deckers famely<sup>31</sup> and finely all that you have an opertunity may the Lord Bles you and the children and I Bless you. take the first Share of my Love to your self and then to the rest.<sup>32</sup>

to M. A. Young [s] Brigham Young

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this is the six letter I have writton to you, I think you will not complane of my not wrighting to you give my love to Sister Haritt<sup>33</sup> if she is there Br James Muntoss Mother Sister and Daughter came down from Utica on a visit She is a fine wooman. I shall wright from Boston I expect. we have not don enny thing for the houses as yet I due not think we shall.

## **Brigham Young to Hiram McKee: May 3, 1860**

Gt. S. L. City, May 3, 1860

Elder Hiram McKee<sup>34</sup>

Brandon, Fond du Lac County, Wisconsin,

Dear Brother:

Your very friendly, frank, and interesting letter of April 4 came safe to hand. I was highly gratified with its perusal, and will endeavor to reply with at least an equal degree of kindness and frankness.

As you state, I could hardly expect that you would so distinctly bear in mind the long past scenes in our acquaintance in Oswego and our last interview at Sacket's Harbor, especially since our views of Scripture and consequent courses have cast our lines so differently, and have at present located so remote from each other. I also vividly remember the scenes, feelings and experience of the times to which you kindly allude, when we were fellow seekers after the truths revealed from Heaven for the salvation of the human family. You state that in Oswego

you deemed me sincere in my efforts to secure salvation, and exemplary in my conduct and conversation. I daily examine my desires, efforts and views by the best light I can obtain, which I most confidently trust is the light sent from above for our guidance, and, so far as I am able to determine, I feel that I am and ever since have been as honest a seeker after truth as I was during our acquaintance in Oswego, and as my information and experience increase I feel constrained at times, to exclaim "What is man, that thou art mindful of him and the son of man, that thou visitest him?"<sup>35</sup>

Through the mercies of our God my hope of heaven and knowledge of truth and heavenly things has increased in a manifold degree since I last saw you, and, like yourself and the ancient prophets, and apostles, I esteem this world, with all its wealth and power, but a poor exchange for the gift of eternal life or the loss of one's soul, could a person even secure it by so inconceivable a sacrifice. And I have striven and am striving, through the help of Israel's God, to ever keep my gaze steadfastly fixed upon Salvation's port, and to steer my bark safely to anchor in "heaven's broad bay." As to ambition, love of fame and property, could we both be thoroughly understood, I am of the opinion that you think more of a dollar than I do. And facing the storm of villification, slander, abuse, and persecution of the most vile and cruel character, from the period of my joining the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints until this moment, is very strong proof that I do not trim my sails to catch the popular breezes of this world's cliques and circles, whether they be blown by individuals, communities, or nations. No, br. McKee, I do not put my trust in man, realizing how frail we are; but endeavor to so order my ways as to meet the approbation of Heaven, knowing that by so doing the Author of our existence will temper to my weaknesses the trials I am called to pass through, and enable me to overcome the allurements of the adversary.

As you truly mention, our "communion" in Oswego was sweet, our prayers were "encouraging," our songs "enlivening," according to the belief, obedience and understanding we then had. But I am not able to express to you in writing, short of volumes, the increase of faith and understanding that I now feel



that I am blessed with; nor to now explain the steps taken to obtain so great blessings, further than to briefly state that they have been vouchsafed to me upon conditions of faithfulness and obedience to the commandments revealed from Heaven for our salvation, and are equally free to all upon like conditions, "without money, and without price". I am pleased to learn that you still recognize the "all-seeing eye of God," and under its searching glance I can truly answer that "my hope of heaven" is not simply "as good" now as it was then, but is as much better as the gospel plan is better than the prevailing and popular man-made plans. Under that "all seeing eye" I can also truthfully inform you that I have ever aimed to so order my ways as to enjoy a conscience void of offence toward God, Angels and all men, especially since making a profession of religion. And I take the liberty to further inform you that most of the crimes you mention as being charged to me were never before so much as heard of by me; and I can hardly persuade myself that you need my assurance, which you may implicitly reply upon, that I am strongly of the opinion that I abhor such crimes far more than you possibly can at present, and that I am as innocent as a nursing babe of committing, counseling, in any way, having anything to do with such deeds—they are most excruciating and horrifying to all my feelings and natural organization.

Can you now judge of my astonishment at reading in your letter of the murder of a daughter of mine, by "Danites" as you term them, on her way to California. All the daughters I have been blest with, except one who when a child, died a natural and peaceful death by disease, are now living in this Territory, and in the enjoyment of the faith I profess and strive, so far as they have arrived at years of accountability. Your story of a murdered man found in N. V. Jones' meat-market was also entirely new to me, and also the murder of one Dr. Roberts.<sup>36</sup> To my great regret Indians and wicked men have cruelly and wantonly killed human beings within our borders,<sup>37</sup> but not to the number indicated in your letter, and certainly far more repugnant to my feelings than I suppose it can be to yours.

The "disclosures" you mention, so far as they have come under my notice, are a tissue of gross, death-designed lies,

larded here and there with a little truth, when telling that truth does not militate against the effect of those lies concocted with the well known and express design to exterminate us from the earth. But the Lord God of Israel overrules and will continue to overrule the results of the acts of the children of men to accomplish His purposes, and no power can hinder. In that Being I put my trust, and Him I strive to serve.

In regard to plurality of wives, I will merely ask you how you expect to reach Abraham's bosom, except you do the works of Abraham?

Is the Gospel the same as it was in the days of the Apostles? Is baptism instituted for the remission of sins? Was the laying on of hands instituted for the reception of the Holy Ghost? Is God a personage of tabernacle? Has heaven a location?

On the 26th inst. I took the liberty to give Capt. Gibson, a friend of mine, a letter of introduction to you.<sup>38</sup> He has traveled extensively in different climes and among many people, is a gentleman of a good share of intelligence and general information, and in his travels has sojourned a few months in this City. He started for the States on the 27th inst. and thought he would be able, in his round, to pay you a visit. I trust he will, and should he do so you will have an excellent opportunity to derive from him much reliable information concerning myself, Utah, and our affairs and modes of managing them, especially should you wish him to lecture upon his travels, other topics of general interest, and what he has seen and experienced.<sup>39</sup>

I have cheerfully complied with your request for an answer to your very welcome letter, but in a manner by no means so minute and satisfactory as I could had I the opportunity to see you "face to face". Where I at liberty, as I presume you are, I would glad[l]y visit you and many other friends in the States, but numerous and important home duties prevent. If you will come here you can have the privilege of seeing and knowing for yourself. The journey is not so long, tedious nor expensive as to preclude your being an eye witness of our sayings and doings in Utah, where you can have an opportunity for learning our faith, conduct and conversation as they really are.

This Fall will be an excellent time for you to journey across the plains, having so arranged your business as to admit of your



tarrying here during the winter. Should you do so, I will gladly give you opportunity to preach to the assemblies in the Tabernacle in this City, and will guarantee you the candid, careful attention of your audiences.

I shall be much gratified if you will accept of my now kindly proffered invitation to pay me a visit at your earliest convenience—to see and hear for yourself—and trust you will rest assured that you will meet a hospitable welcome and kind entertainment in my house, by

Truly Your Friend and the Friend of all  
who love the Truth,

Brigham Young

P. S. I shall be pleased to have you write to me again at your earliest convenience

I have seen and heard of several “anti Mormon” publications, —the ‘Spaulding story,’ E. D. Howe’s book written by one D. P. Hurlbert, Dr. J. C. Bennets book, the publication of John Hyde Jr., “Female life among the Mormons”<sup>40</sup> and the saying of one or two women, professing to have been my wives, that I have heard have been lecturing against us in different parts of the States, &c., &c, all written at the instigation of the Spirits of the Devil—but the statement in your letter, mentioned in my reply as entirely new to me, I had never before heard of, and they are utterly and maliciously false, like the other exceedingly numerous lies that have been so widely and zealously circulated against us. One thing is a consolation, the Lord will overrule all these things for the good of those who love and serve him, and the Enemy of all righteousness cannot help it.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Hiram McKee to Brigham Young, April 4, 1860, Incoming Correspondence, Brigham Young Papers, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Archives, Salt Lake City (hereafter cited as Brigham Young Papers).

<sup>2</sup> McKee to Young, April 4, 1860, Brigham Young Papers.

<sup>3</sup> For example, David McKenzie to Hiram McKee, July 18, 1871, Brigham Young Papers. McKee was then living in Arcata, Humboldt County, California. McKenzie, one of Brigham Young's secretaries, wrote with a familiarity that implied he had made McKee's acquaintance.

<sup>4</sup> This letter is reproduced here with the kind permission of the Western Americana Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, the owner of the original. It was written on various dates, although the manuscript itself only mentions three different dates: August 17, 1843, in Philadelphia, and August 29 and September 2, 1843, in New York. The letter is postmarked New York, September 4, 1843, and is addressed, "Mrs. Mary A. Young, Nauvoo Hancock Co., Ill." The original spelling is retained. At this time, Brigham Young (1801–1877) was serving a short-term mission to the east coast to collect funds for the building of the Temple and Nauvoo House. See *Times and Seasons* 4 (May 1, 1843):180–83, for an account of the April 6, 1843, special conference in Nauvoo assigning the Apostles this mission. Elder Young, with several others, left Nauvoo on July 7 and returned on October 22, 1843. He arrived in Philadelphia on the morning of August 5; in addition to doing missionary work, he visited a variety of local sites in the area, including Independence Hall and Peel's Museum, prior to his departure on August 18. The most detailed account of his experiences is in Elden Jay Watson, comp., *Manuscript History of Brigham Young, 1801–1844* (Salt Lake City: Smith Secretarial Service, 1968), 130–54. See also Leonard J. Arrington, *Brigham Young: American Moses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), 105–8.

<sup>5</sup> Mary Ann Angell Young (1803–1882) was the second wife of Brigham Young. They were married on February 18, 1834. Brigham's first wife, Miriam Works, died on September 8, 1832, leaving him with two daughters to care for. Mary Ann bore Brigham six more children, five of which were born by 1843.

<sup>6</sup> Originally called Morris Hill, by the time Brigham Young visited there in 1843 it was called Fairmount. The waterworks he describes in his letter had been completed in 1822, and they were one of the principal attractions of the city. An engraving of the Fairmount Waterworks is reproduced in Russell F. Weighley, ed., *Philadelphia: A 300-Year History* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1982), 229.

<sup>7</sup> Schuylkill River.

<sup>8</sup> Peter Hess had been appointed president of the Philadelphia branch on October 15, 1842.

<sup>9</sup> In May 1843, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles had directed the Philadelphia Saints to gather to Nauvoo. See the public notice in *Times and Seasons* 4 (June 15, 1843): 232.

<sup>10</sup> While it is not generally known, Brigham Young struggled with health problems all of his life. He refers to these problems throughout this letter. See also Lester E. Bush, Jr., "Brigham Young in Life and Death: A Medical Overview," *Journal of Mormon History* 5 (1978): 79–103.

<sup>11</sup> On August 18.



<sup>12</sup> Mt. Holley, New Jersey.

<sup>13</sup> Heber C. Kimball (1801–1868), an apostle and close friend of Brigham Young.

<sup>14</sup> Benjamin Winchester (1817–1901), an early leader of the Church in the Philadelphia area.

<sup>15</sup> Judge William Richards, of Mt. Holley, New Jersey.

<sup>16</sup> William Smith (1811–1894), an apostle and the youngest brother of Joseph Smith, Jr.

<sup>17</sup> John E. Page (1799–1867), an apostle.

<sup>18</sup> August 19–20, 1843.

<sup>19</sup> Probably Thomas Atkinson (1810–1863). It was while George A. Smith and Brigham Young were staying with brother Atkinson in a house that was over 150 years old that Brigham described a night with bedbugs: the house “was so infested with bed bugs that we could not sleep. Brother George A. Smith gave it as his legal opinion that there were bed-bugs there which had danced to the music at the battle of Trenton, as their heads were perfectly grey. We took our blankets and retreated to the further end of the room, and, as the bugs followed us, I lit a candle, and as they approached, caught them and burnt them in the candle, and thus spent the night.” Watson, *Manuscript History*, 146.

<sup>20</sup> Bordentown, New Jersey.

<sup>21</sup> Brigham Young had tooth problems until 1862, when his last permanent teeth were removed and replaced with dentures. See the comments in Arrington, *Brigham Young*, 312–13.

<sup>22</sup> The conference was held in Columbian Hall on Grand Street, New York City, Saturday and Sunday, August 26 and 27, 1843.

<sup>23</sup> Lucien R. Foster (1806–?) was made the president of the New York City branch in April 1841. It was at Foster’s request and expense that Brigham Young visited the phrenologist, Orson S. Fowler, on September 20, 1843. Young was not impressed with Fowler: “He is just as nigh being an idiot as a man can be, and have any sense left to pass through the world decently; and it appeared to me that the cause of his success was the amount of impudence and self-importance he possesses, and the high opinion he entertained of his own abilities.” Watson, *Manuscript History*, 150–51. Early Mormon interest in phrenology is discussed in Davis Bitton and Gary L. Bunker, “Phrenology among the Mormons,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 9 (Spring 1974): 43–61.

<sup>24</sup> General James Arlington Bennet (1785–1865). Bennet proved to be an opportunist in his relationships with the Mormons. His friend, John C. Bennett had him appointed as the inspector-general of the Nauvoo Legion in April 1842, and in 1844 he was chosen as Joseph Smith’s Vice Presidential running mate. He was the proprietor and principal of the Arlington House, an educational institution on Long Island when Young visited him. For more detail see Lyndon W. Cook, “James Arlington Bennet and the Mormons,” *BYU Studies* 19 (Winter 1979): 247–49.

<sup>25</sup> The conference was held in Boylston Hall, Boston, September 9–11, 1843. While in the Boston area from September 4–29, Brigham Young also visited local sites such as the Bunker Hill monument, the State House, and Boston Harbor.

<sup>26</sup> August 29, 1843. On August 30, Brigham Young baptized Bennet in the Atlantic Ocean just off Coney Island. Bennet wrote to Joseph Smith on October 24, 1843, of Young’s visit. See *Times and Seasons* 4 (November 1, 1843): 371.



<sup>27</sup> Willard Richards (1804–1854), an apostle.

<sup>28</sup> Reuben Hedlock (1801–?), John Cairns (1808–?), James Sloan (1792–1886), James Houston (1817–1863) and a brother Jarmine. These men had been appointed to missions to the British Isles. Most of them are mentioned in the notice of the mission published in the *Times and Seasons* 4 (June 15, 1843): 232. Their arrival in the British Isles on the ship Columbus is noted in the *Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star* 4 (October 1843): 94. Hedlock had been appointed the president of the English Mission, the details of which are given in the *Millennial Star* 4 (November 1843): 108–9.

<sup>29</sup> While Brigham Young was away on this mission, his six-year-old daughter Mary Ann died of “dropsy and canker.” She was the twin of Brigham Young, Jr. See Arrington, *Brigham Young*, 108.

<sup>30</sup> Probably the wife of George J. Adams, a church leader in the Boston area.

<sup>31</sup> Isaac Decker (1800–1873) was a native of the Netherlands and later a member of the first pioneer company in 1847. Two of his daughters became plural wives of Brigham Young: Lucy Ann Decker (1822–1890) became his first plural wife in 1842; Clarissa Decker (1828–1889) married him in 1844.

<sup>32</sup> Although Brigham Young protected his family's privacy throughout his life, even instructing the Church Historians to ignore these more private concerns, Young's correspondence leaves little doubt about his role as a devoted husband and father. For information on his family during this period, see Dean C. Jessee, “Brigham Young's Family: Part I 1824–1845,” *BYU Studies* 18 (Spring 1978): 311–27.

<sup>33</sup> Harriett E. Cook (1824–1894). She married Brigham Young in 1843.

<sup>34</sup> This letter is published courtesy of LDS Church Historical Department. Used by permission. Two copies of Young's letter are found in his correspondence. The first is a rough but complete early draft; the second is a letterpress facsimile of the actual letter sent to McKee that the clerks in Young's office failed to copy completely into the office letterbooks. So far as comparison is possible, the two versions are identical in content. See Young's Draft Letterbook and volume 5 of his Letterpress Copy Book.

Biographical data on McKee is sketchy. Censuses show a “Hiram McKee” at the following places and dates: 1830, Oswego, County, New York; 1840, Sackets Harbor, Jefferson County, New York; 1855, Lake Mills, Jefferson County, Wisconsin; 1860, Fond du Lac County, Wisconsin; 1870, Racine 1st Ward, Racine County, Wisconsin. His name does not appear on the 1850 census for either Wisconsin or New York. McKenzie's 1871 letter was directed to Arcata, Humboldt County, California. According to McKee's letter to Young, McKee was the father of six children and began his Methodist preaching in 1833, three years after the Sackets Harbor interview between the two men.

<sup>35</sup> Psalms 8:6; Hebrews 2:6.

<sup>36</sup> Nathaniel Vary Jones (1822–1863) was bishop of Salt Lake City's Fifteenth Ward and later a Latter-day Saint missionary to India and the British Isles, where he briefly presided over the British Mission. The allusion to the alleged murder at his meat market and to the atrocity involving “Mr. Roberts” are uncertain.

<sup>37</sup> The reference apparently is to the Mountain Meadows Massacre, September 1857. McKee's letter ambiguously speaks of the killing of “hundreds of others” in Utah Territory, which likely had reference to the southern Utah disaster.



<sup>38</sup> Walter Murray Gibson (1822–1887) was a world traveler, romantic, and briefly an LDS convert. He later distinguished himself as a Hawaiian adventurer and politician. Gibson was unable to meet McKee during his 1860 mission to the East. Receiving Young's instructions, Gibson was first "prostate sick" and then waylaid and injured while going to a Mormon meeting in New York City. Walter Murray Gibson to Brigham Young, October 15, 1860, Incoming Correspondence, Brigham Young Papers.

<sup>39</sup> Young hoped that Gibson's lectures on the East Indies would provide the means for also discussing Utah Mormonism, thus helping the Church's image in the East.

<sup>40</sup> President Young lists several anti-Mormon books current at the time that McKee apparently had reference to in his letter, including Eber D. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled: Or, A Faithful Account of that Singular Imposition and Delusion from its Rise to the Present Time* (Painesville, Ohio: The Author, 1834); John Cook Bennett, *The History of the Saints: Or, An Exposé of Joe Smith and Mormonism* (Boston: Leland & Whiting, 1842); John Hyde, *Mormonism: Its Leaders and Designs* (New York: W. P. Fetridge, 1857); and Maria N. Ward [pseud.], *Female Life among the Mormons* (London: C. H. Clarke [1855]).

# Henri-Robert Bresil's *Alma Baptizing in the Waters of Mormon*

Richard G. Oman

The exuberant painting on this issue's cover, *Alma Baptizing in the Waters of Mormon*, is by one the earliest Latter-day Saint Haitian converts, Henri-Robert Bresil.<sup>1</sup> Colorful and dynamic paintings such as those by Bresil have become Haiti's most acclaimed cultural expression as well as one of the most widely recognized styles of contemporary art. Haitian art is a mixture of folk art and early modern European art as practiced by artists like Henri Rousseau. Landscapes, cityscapes, and genre subjects of Haiti are the favored themes. In Haitian painting, detail is subordinated to bold brush strokes, resulting in highly stylized forms. Emphasis is on rhythm and energy. Because atmospheric perspective is ignored, objects in the distance have the same crisp outlines as objects in the foreground. The picture plane is flattened, heightening the decorative effect of the surface. The joyous vitality of this art shows the resilience of the Haitian people to decades of crushing poverty and political oppression.

The artist was born in 1952 in the northern Haitian city of Gonaïves. In 1973 Bresil moved to the capital, Port-au-Prince, and began his career in art.<sup>2</sup> Recognition came in 1981, when he won the Ispan-Unesco prize of honor at the Museum of Haitian Art at St. Pierre's College. Since then, he has exhibited in the top galleries in Haiti as well as galleries in Puerto Rico, the United States, France, Italy, and Switzerland. His work has been lauded in such publications as the *New York Times* and the *Miami Herald*. Bresil is best known for his dynamic, rhythmical landscapes of which this painting is a fine example. He is also a poet and jazz singer.<sup>3</sup>

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This 1988 work draws upon the Book of Mormon account, which states that the Waters of Mormon were “on the borders of the land” with a “fountain of pure water” and a “thicket” (Mosiah 18:4–5). Bresil has placed these features in a lush, tropical, Caribbean-like paradise. Paintings like this piece by Henri-Robert Bresil remind Latter-day Saints that shared faith, rather than national origin or ethnicity, bonds them together as a people.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Personal communication with Rosalie King, wife of Haitian Mission President, David King. See also a note in the Artists File, Museum of Church History and Art, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City. The history of the Church in Haiti begins in 1977 with the baptism of Alexandre Mourra, a Haitian of Lebanese/Palestinian extraction. In July 1978, about a month after the revelation on blacks and the priesthood (see D&C Official Declaration—2), Mourra asked the Ft. Lauderdale Mission to send missionaries to baptize some new converts. Among those baptized were five Presbyterian ministers. A short time later, Alexander Paul, the Haitian consul general to the Bahamas, contacted Church headquarters in Salt Lake City, requesting missionaries for Haiti. In the spring of 1980, the first permanent missionaries were sent to Haiti from the Ft. Lauderdale Mission. Today there are over five thousand members of the Church in Haiti, a Haitian mission, and about eighteen native Haitian missionaries (personal communication with Richard Millet, Church Missionary Department, October 1, 1992). Over two-thirds of all new LDS converts now come from Haiti and other developing nations; see *1991–1992 Church Almanac* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1990).

<sup>2</sup> The Franciscus Family Foundation, *Haiti, Voodoo Kingdom to Modern Riviera* (San Juan, Puerto Rico: The Franciscus Family Foundation, 1980), 100.

<sup>3</sup> Gerald Bloncourt, *La Peinture Haitienne*, a clipping in the Artists File, Museum of Church History and Art, Salt Lake City.

## Book Reviews

HUGH NIBLEY. *The Ancient State: The Rulers and the Ruled*. Edited by Donald W. Parry and Stephen D. Ricks. Vol. 10 of *The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and F.A.R.M.S., 1991. xi; 515 pp. Illus. Index. \$21.95.

Reviewed by David B. Honey, Assistant Professor of Asian and Near Eastern Languages, Brigham Young University, with an interest in Inner Asian languages and history.

This book may be the most important product of Hugh Nibley's enormous scholarly output. At the very least it should be considered the most useful, if not the most appreciated or cherished. As such it is unfortunate that this was not the first volume in *The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley*. After all, the articles reprinted here do not culminate his lifetime of scholarship; rather, they initiated it.

*The Ancient State* is made up almost entirely of what we may term Hugh Nibley's secular studies. Among them are his first six professional publications in academic journals. They comprise Nibley's most sophisticated and successful work on the secular side of his life-long concern to contrast the ephemeral gauds and gewgaws of human artifice with the eternal glories of the Heavenly Kingdom. Subtitled *The Rulers and the Ruled*, the interrelated works in this singular volume develop three major themes: (1) the hierocentric nature of the ancient state and its remnants of rituals that distantly reflect an ultimate but now broken divine connection, (2) the nomadic provenance of the institutions and ideological underpinnings of the ancient state, and (3) the policies of rulership and techniques of political rhetoric that either represent desperate attempts to retap the divine source or to reject and replace it with man-made goods. These articles established Nibley's credentials in the world of scholarship and either forced or allowed his audience, whether critic or partisan, to take him seriously.



Reprinting these materials at the head of *The Collected Works* would have provided the entire set with an entrée to Nibley's investigative methodology, a window on the working principles that have guided the course of his research for five decades. But more importantly, virtually every entry included in the first nine volumes already published in the *Collected Works* either follows up or expands on the themes first introduced and discussed by Nibley in the secular settings treated by the works in *The Ancient State*. This volume therefore forms a thematic encapsulation of his entire oeuvre and contains concise epitomes of the principles that ground Nibley's vision of the cosmic order and mankind's vain attempts throughout history to duplicate it on earth. In short, what Nibley has tried to learn all his life and how he has learned it are most clearly presented with this volume, hence its importance.

Why, then, is *The Ancient State* only volume ten in the series? Apparently not for any lack of effort or enthusiasm. Indeed, in planning meetings in 1984 and 1985, in which the entire collection was mapped out, it was agreed that this book should be published as soon as possible. But the unblemished printed text as it appears now, with a minimum of readjusting and the addition of extensive illustrations by Michael Lyon, belies the great effort that went into checking each footnote for accuracy and completeness. Over a score of workers have labored since 1985 to track down and verify the sources that Nibley used to produce these pioneering pieces. They also worked to supplement bibliographic information. Their efforts, then, deserve more than the understated acknowledgment in the preface. Now that this book has finally appeared, it does celebrate an anniversary of a sort: 1992 marks fifty years since the date of Nibley's first published article.

Taking a lead from Joseph Scaliger, the master of ancient chronology as preserved in classical and oriental sources and also the subject of Nibley's very first article, let us review the publication dates of Nibley's strictly secular studies in chronological order: 1942, 1945, 1949, 1951, 1953, 1956, (1959), (1961), 1963, 1963, (1965), 1966, (1966), (1967), 1969, (1972).<sup>1</sup> (The dates in parentheses represent studies not reprinted in this volume.) We see that no more than four years passed during the thirty-year interval between 1942 and 1972 without a piece



being published in non-Mormon journals or on non-Mormon-related themes. This despite the fact that pioneering, seminal, and still crucial studies on a variety of religious topics for the home audience were continually produced. On average, every two or three years Nibley paid his dues to his profession and renewed his contact with the sources to keep both current and credible in his field. After thirty years, at age 62, Nibley may have felt that he had discharged his professional debt in full, because he then turned virtually all of his attention to his private calling of defending the faith, debunking the false, and dethroning the ephemeral fads and fashions in Mormon belief and society.<sup>2</sup> Neither wobbly tradition nor mercenary opportunism has ever stood much of a chance against either Nibley's erudite offensives or the devastating logic of his defenses.

His earliest article, "New Light on Scaliger" (303–10),<sup>3</sup> is thematically unrelated but entirely appropriate as a methodological gem illustrative of his skill as a philologist. By consulting an original edition of one of Scaliger's works to examine existing scholia and by scrutinizing a contemporary portrait of the great man, Nibley was able to supply hitherto unknown data on various aspects of Joseph Justus Scaliger (1540–1609), one of Nibley's personal heroes (to judge from Nibley's method of study<sup>4</sup>). For example, Nibley determined the correct pronunciation of Scaliger's surname (hard g, after an Arabic reading), his education (not exclusively self-taught), and reputation. The penultimate point was noted by Rudolf Pfeiffer, who in his magisterial survey of the development of classical studies cited Nibley's article and appreciated the uniqueness of the source.<sup>5</sup>

Nibley's next professional contribution, "Sparsiones" (148–94), introduces Theme One, the hierocentric nature of the ancient state. It treats "the Roman practice . . . of bestowing public donatives by throwing things among the multitude to be scrambled for in scenes of wild disorder" (148). With evidence based on chapter four, "The Cult of Hospitality at Rome," of his 1938 dissertation,<sup>6</sup> Nibley demonstrated that the provenance of this and related gift-giving ceremonies lay in the kingly rite of dispensing gifts as part of the New Year cult and that the ceremony was symbolic of both the largess of the giver and his blessed or divine nature. The restless Nibley curiosity was not content to detail the practice in its Roman guise but



ranged the whole of the ancient world in seeking to follow the complicated and often barely perceptible course of the thread that led to an entire nexus of related rituals preserved in other cultures and striving to approach its origins.<sup>7</sup> This concern for origins dictated the methodology employed for this and most of his later works—the comparative approach—and impelled him to master as many relevant ancient languages as possible; no one has ever rightly accused Nibley of being narrow of vision or daunted in the face of temporarily inaccessible language sources.

Theme Two, a nomadic provenance for political institutions and ideology, commences with the first republished piece in the *Ancient State*, “The Arrow, the Hunter, and the State” (1–32). Appearing first in 1949,<sup>8</sup> this piece actually expands on a short comment in “Sparsiones” and the extended footnote that supported it (162; 189, n. 152). The study examines the function of the marked arrow in enabling nomadic hunters to identify game, exploit the sedentary peasant populace who lacked such advanced weaponry, and through ritual extension, claim all that an arrow could over-fly. Its use in taking the census and in symbolizing the authority of the suzerain paralleled the use of the written word in recording and enforcing the imperial will.<sup>9</sup> The marked arrow is thus seen as an important element in the formation of the earliest empires.<sup>10</sup>

With his next professional article, Nibley combined both Themes One and Two in highlighting another nomadic contribution to political organization, one that reflects a distant divine origin. In “The Hierocentric State” (99–147),<sup>11</sup> Nibley sets the nomadic custom of the *quriltai* or election *cum* elevation ceremony in the framework of world-wide royal new-year assemblies. After surveying the identifying elements in ancient cultures that reveal the existence of an underlying conception of universal kingship and the hierocentric role played by the king and his ritual hunts, progressions, and mobile palaces, Nibley traced the source of this concept and these rituals to Central Asiatic origins. Even Byzantine and European court ceremonies are seen as imitations of barbarian pageantry. Only recently has the same provenance (for ideology, not actual institutions), by way of the Aryans, been tentatively posited as a “working hypothesis” by a historian of the steppes, the late Joseph Fletcher.<sup>12</sup>



Nibley again uncovers the steppe origin of widespread religio-political practices in his 1966 offering “Tenting, Toll, and Taxing” (33–98).<sup>13</sup> We see vast movements of nomadic hordes across the expanse of the steppes, with the tent as holy center and the royal progression on center stage. The interrelationship between political tolls and taxes on the one hand and religious rights of passage and ritual combats on the other is ingeniously and convincingly portrayed. All in all, Nibley’s work on the divine origin and organization of the state retains its relevance today in both broad outlines and most minor details, as borne out by an increasing amount of modern scholarship that unfortunately takes no notice of these pioneering studies.<sup>14</sup> Of course, it is impossible to read all relevant works—Nibley himself missed an early treatment on arrow divination that covered much of the same ground, albeit in a much less deliberate, detailed, and documented manner.<sup>15</sup> But by missing Nibley’s contributions, these recent works, in failing to see that the institutions, rites, or religious thought they treat form part of a world-wide complex that can be traced back to earliest times, regard them instead as isolated phenomena of their respective cultures, at most taking in other Asian analogues, and hence misconstrue their value as indigenous elements in those cultures.<sup>16</sup>

The remaining works in this volume treat Theme Three: political policies and refined rhetoric are second-best replacements of divine originals. These essays are all about decline: decline from loyalty to deserving individual leaders to a diffused, abstract, civic loyalty easily manipulated for the wrong reasons and further decline from that public loyalty to private selfishness devoid of responsibility, treated in “The Unsolved Loyalty Problem: Our Western Heritage” (195–242);<sup>17</sup> decline in true wisdom to slickly sold sophistry, in “Victoriosa Loquacitas: The Rise of Rhetoric and the Decline of Everything Else” (243–86);<sup>18</sup> and decline from education for learning and self-cultivation to education for monetary and social success, in “How to Have a Quiet Campus, Antique Style” (287–302).<sup>19</sup> When first published, these essays must have seemed immediately and uncomfortably relevant even though they addressed contemporary problems from the indirect and therefore usually less threatening perspective of the past. These three essays, then, complement Nibley’s many contributions



to current issues made from the perspective of a deeply concerned participant who, strikingly enough, practices what he preaches.

Two concluding efforts are “Three Shrines: Sophic, Mantic, and Sophistic” (311–79), a series of lectures delivered at Yale University May 1–3, 1963, and “Paths That Stray: Some Notes on Sophic and Mantic” (380–479), compiled as aides to research, also around 1963. They both form a natural bridge between this volume and his more overtly religious works,<sup>20</sup> because they take the theme of the opposition between honorable applied learning and cheap rhetorical huckstering, adroitly summing up the conclusions along these lines already reached in this volume and elsewhere and contrasting them both to revealed knowledge.

In conclusion, this volume consists of a set of interlocking essays, each indebted to the former and launching the next, that exemplify Nibley’s scholarship at its best. These essays undergird virtually all of Nibley’s works. Time and time again his writings have revisited the central themes of the temple, the human condition, and the ways of the world in contrast to the ways of God. As is well stated in the foreword to this volume, “Despite the book’s title, these essays are in fact often highly pertinent to our own time. Astute readers will recognize in these essays many now-familiar themes of Nibley’s trenchant social commentaries. The foibles of our age are nothing new, repeating what has been done in other eras” (ix). No wonder Nibley personally considers this volume the most important for understanding his lifetime scholarly contributions.

These essays further illustrate the practical use Nibley has always made of his scholarly gifts in serving society by laying the lessons of the past at the feet of the present while treating these three fundamental Nibley themes. The conclusions we may draw from this work are many but can again be grouped under three major points. First, nomadic institutions, in their very mobility, are symbolic of fallen humankind’s wandering in the wilderness in search of the divine center, and to the extent that ancient states drew their political models from nomadic exemplars, all political institutions and their underlying ideologies are but temporary stop-gap measures at social organization and improvement to be discarded as soon as the gospel can fully flourish. Second, political polarization, whether East against West, *Pax Romana* against the barbarian

periphery, or party against party, is thus another reflection of the original dichotomy between the sacred Kingdom of God and the secular kingdoms of this world, that, unhappily, quickly degenerated into a vain competition between the unrighteous “they” group and the equally unrighteous “we” group, whatever their transient membership categories. Finally, rhetoric is itself seen as an unsuccessful attempt at reclaiming the inspiration and wisdom that was lost due to the degeneration of the crucial qualities of personal virtue and responsibility. It is at this personal level that we may begin to make the political process work.

These messages are not only timely messages from timeless scholarship. They are the key to understanding—and applying—all that Nibley has been trying to tell us through the years. No student who appreciates the uniqueness of Nibley, therefore, can be without this book. It teaches us, the ruled, just whom we should choose for our rulers, and that we should go beyond the tents of the ancient and modern states to what they dimly and vainly reflect: the temple of the Kingdom of God.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> See Louis Midgley, “Hugh Winder Nibley: Bibliography and Register,” in *By Study and Also by Faith: Essays in Honor of Hugh Nibley*, eds. John M. Lundquist and Stephen D. Ricks, 2 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and F.A.R.M.S., 1990), 1:xv–lxxxvii, for a complete listing with annotations of Nibley’s works.

<sup>2</sup> One piece published in 1983 (but based in part on a conference paper read in 1941) does return to a secular setting and was published outside of Deseret: “Acclamation (Never Cry Mob),” in *Toward a Humanistic Science of Politics: Essays in Honor of Francis Dunham Wormuth*, ed. Dalmas H. Nelson and Richard L. Sklar (Lanham, Md: University Press of America, 1983), 11–22. Also partaking of the themes of this volume but not included is the essay “Beyond Politics,” *BYU Studies* 15 (Autumn 1974): 3–28; the mainly Mormon sources it draws on would have made it the odd piece out in this volume devoted to secular studies.

<sup>3</sup> Originally published in *Classical Journal* 37 (February 1942): 291–95.

<sup>4</sup> See Nibley’s depiction of his undergraduate study habits as “Scaliger’s Method or the Method of the Renaissance Scholars,” in “Nibliography,” *Century Two: A BYU Student Journal* 1 (October 1976): 54–55.

<sup>5</sup> Rudolf Pfeiffer, *History of Classical Scholarship: From 1300 to 1850* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1976), 114, n. 1. The greatness of Scaliger, and thereby the splash this article must have made when the neophyte Nibley contributed



something new on this much-studied man, can be best appreciated by reading Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *History of Classical Scholarship*, trans. Alan Harris, ed. Hugh Lloyd-Jones (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1982). Scholars ranging from Politian to Otto Jahn are constantly compared, either implicitly or explicitly, with Scaliger and his erudition and methods.

<sup>6</sup> Hugh Nibley, "The Roman Games as a Survival of an Archaic Year-Cult" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, 1938).

<sup>7</sup> This formed the basis for Nibley's work on Old-World ritual in King Benjamin's speech. See *An Approach to the Book of Mormon* in *The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and F.A.R.M.S., 1988), 6:295–310.

<sup>8</sup> It was Nibley's third professionally published article, first appearing in *Western Political Quarterly* 2 (September 1949): 328–44.

<sup>9</sup> Nibley would in due course see connections here with Ezekiel's sticks and the Liahona's spindles. See materials in two other volumes in *The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley*, namely *The Prophetic Book of Mormon* 8:1–48 and *Since Cumorah* 7:255–60.

<sup>10</sup> The present consensus on state formation is that it took place first in the ancient agricultural societies of Mesopotamia. Thus, while not a currently viable theory on state formation, if ever intended as such—the use of the terms *state* and *empire* is, I suspect more general than technical—Nibley's views on the use of the arrow to enable nomadic hunters to overpower farmers and then to impose their will on them over long distances is reasonable in terms of positing an actual mechanism first for conquest and social control and then for organization for exploitation in empires of conquest, Nibley's "great empires." This scenario is supported by John H. Kautsky, *The Politics of Aristocratic Empires* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982). A recent anthropological work posits the reverse of Nibley's theory and claims instead that sedentary states expanded by exploiting nomadic populaces; see Pierre Briant, *État et pasteurs au Moyen-Orient ancien* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982). This view has, however, been shot down in the reviews. For the most accurate marksmanship, see Henri-Paul Francfort, in *Bulletin de l'Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient* 73 (1984): 369–84, who incidentally grants to the nomads the primary role in the formation of empires, if not states.

<sup>11</sup> Originally published in *Western Political Quarterly* 4 (June 1951): 226–53.

<sup>12</sup> Joseph Fletcher, "The Mongols: Ecological and Social Perspectives," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 46 (June 1980): 30.

<sup>13</sup> Originally published in *Western Political Quarterly* 19 (December 1966): 599–630.

<sup>14</sup> The following are just a few works from the Asian sphere that underscore the importance of the hierocentric view. The main contribution is Paul Wheatley, *The Pivot of the Four Quarter: A Preliminary Enquiry into the Origins and Character of the Ancient Chinese City* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1971). Rolf Stein, *The World in Miniature: Container Gardens and Dwellings in Far Eastern Religious Thought*, trans. Phyllis Brooks (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), reprints in English translation three seminal monographs on prehistoric dwellings, historical palaces, magical mountains, grotto heavens, trees and other numinous

nodes, miniature gardens, and other microcosmic models that reflect macrocosmic reality in Asian thought. For individual motifs, see further Paul Pelliot, "Dry (Lone) Tree," in *Notes on Marco Polo*, 3 vols. (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1959–73), 2:627–37; and Michael Sullivan, "The Magic Mountain," *Asian Review* 51, no. 188 (1955): 300–10. For hunting preserves as symbols of universal suzerainty over both animal and spirit worlds, see Edward H. Schafer, "Hunting Parks and Animal Enclosures in Ancient China," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 11, no. 3 (1968): 318–43.

<sup>15</sup> A. W. Buckland, "Rhabdomancy and Belomancy, or Divination by the Rod and by the Arrow," *Journal of the Anthropological Institute* 5, no. 4 (April 1876): 436–50.

<sup>16</sup> For instance, only William Boltz, "Philological Footnotes to the Han New Year Rites," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 99 (July–September 1979): 423–38, attempts to set the Chinese practice within the Middle Eastern complex as outlined in Theodore H. Gaster's *Thespis: Ritual, Myth, and Drama in the Ancient Near East* (1950; reprint. New York: W.W. Norton, 1977). (Gaster's book could have itself benefited from Nibley's work, which it ignores.)

<sup>17</sup> Originally published in *Western Political Quarterly* 6 (December 1953): 631–57.

<sup>18</sup> Originally published in *Western Speech* 20 (Spring 1956): 57–82.

<sup>19</sup> Originally published in *BYU Studies* 9 (Summer 1969): 440–52.

<sup>20</sup> See, for example, *Approaching Zion*, vol. 9 of *The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and F.A.R.M.S., 1989).



GARY JAMES BERGERA, ed. *The Autobiography of B. H. Roberts*. Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1990. xvii; 266 pp. Index. Paperback, \$12.95.

Reviewed by Davis Bitton, Professor of History at the University of Utah.

Mormons now have a first-person narrative of a significant leader—a narrative that stands on the same level as the autobiography of Parley P. Pratt. Not just anyone who writes an account of his or her life will attract interest beyond the built-in audience of the immediate family. But when you combine a varied life extending over the turbulent decades of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with a colorful personality and a vigorous writing style, the result makes for a good read.

Although Roberts never became president of the Church or a member of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles, he touched the Mormon experience at so many points that his life provides a valuable vantage point for understanding the larger history. Here are some of the rubrics of his life: family conversion and immigration, growing up in a frontier environment, missionary work and defending Mormonism, polygamy, politics, the writing and editing of Church history, and tensions within the growing Church organization. In each of these areas, Roberts was a central, sometimes a noisy, figure.

Like the Pratt autobiography, this one followed a tortuous path before achieving publication. Written in the third person (a somewhat fashionable style since the success of *The Education of Henry Adams*), the manuscript was dictated in 1933 to his secretary, Elsa Cook, during the closing months of Roberts's life. That typescript was retyped by daughter Georgia Roberts Livingston. It was the happy idea of Gary James Bergera to do the necessary comparison and collation of these two typescripts, change the third-person narrative to first person, and make corrections and some deletions, as fully explained in the editor's introduction.

An appreciative foreword has been written by Sterling M. McMurrin, who has long been interested in Roberts. There is some nostalgia for the good old days here:

Where once he [Roberts] was easily the most interesting and exciting and stimulating person in its [the LDS Church's]

leadership, its most prolific writer, its chief theologian and historian, and its most capable defender, today his name is scarcely known to large segments of the membership of the church. He has been eclipsed by a deluge of writers of varying but lesser talent, many of whom lack even the grace to acknowledge their indebtedness to him. (vii)

McMurrin gives a judicious evaluation of Roberts's strengths and weaknesses as a historian and as a religious thinker. With the intelligence and analytical powers to be always informative, McMurrin, like Roberts, is sufficiently opinionated to be provocative.

Like all autobiographies, this one is selective. Roberts narrates his life from the time of his childhood in England. The father and mother separated but were not divorced. Then the mother and an older sister migrated to Utah, leaving the boy behind to live with a couple who were Church members but "scarcely ideal people for honesty and right living" (10). At one point he ran away, a waif in London reminiscent of the novels of Charles Dickens.

In 1866 young Roberts, age nine, was sent with his sister Mary to rejoin their mother in Utah. His later memories of the ocean voyage and crossing the plains remind us of how far from idyllic the journey with its human interactions could be. In Utah the boy continued his insecure existence and, growing up, came close to abandoning the standards of his faith. All these experiences are interesting, even inspiring, as he overcame extraordinary obstacles to survive and excel.

As we follow Roberts through his year at the University of Deseret, his service as a missionary and then a mission leader in the Southern States, a mission to England, a term in the Utah penitentiary for polygamy, and participation in Utah politics, there is an abundance of detail. If he ran for the U.S. Congress in 1895, losing a close election and then finding himself in hot water with Church authorities, he explains he ran partly because the impression had been given during the constitutional convention of that year that to prohibit General Authorities from running for office would deprive the state of some of its best minds. If he argued in the convention against female suffrage, he explains he did so originally and primarily on the grounds that such an inclusion might lead to a veto by the president. The extension of suffrage, he argued, could easily be



taken care of by legislative enactment after statehood. In telling of his election to Congress in 1898 and subsequent exclusion on grounds of polygamy, he explains why at the time it seemed not at all implausible that he might be allowed to serve. It is good fun to follow our hero through these stormy times, especially as he quotes from various editorials praising him and from some of his own speeches.

There are a few statements that might lead to misunderstanding. His description of the history of Joseph Smith (eventually published as the so-called documentary history) as “merely the publication of the daily journal he [Joseph] kept during his lifetime” (221) may reflect Roberts’s own assumption, but, as Dean Jessee has carefully demonstrated, it is by no means an accurate portrayal of the original work. When Roberts describes his triumphant verbal victory over opponents such as Orson F. Whitney, he may of course be the soul of disinterested evaluation, but that is not very likely. Throughout, one discerns an assertive personality, determined to put the best face on the life and labors of one B. H. Roberts. Like all autobiography, to a greater or lesser degree, this is an *apologia pro vita sua*.

Roberts did not lack confidence. He explains how he came to write the six-volume *Comprehensive History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*.<sup>1</sup> Recognizing that he may have been a little strong in praise of his own achievement, he manages a feeble disclaimer: “This may seem like much vaunting of praise for the work, but undoubtedly it is the masterpiece of historical writings in the first century of the church’s history” (229). While smiling, we should probably admit that he was right.

But the biggest problem is that of omission. For practical purposes there is nothing here about Roberts’s family life, his wives and children. Some of the controversies in which he became embroiled are passed over briefly or simply ignored. Editor Bergera’s three-page afterward briefly and selectively summarizes the circumstances under which Roberts prepared two manuscripts regarding “difficulties” of the Book of Mormon for private discussion by the Quorum of the Twelve. In the same afterward, we get a brief narrative about the writing of the still unpublished “The Truth, the Way, the Life,”<sup>2</sup> its review by

a reading committee of the Twelve, and subsequent discussion regarding the age of the earth. Both of these encounters require (and have received) much more lengthy treatment for adequate understanding. It is not Bergera's fault if Roberts failed to include something on these and many other topics in the manuscript, of course, but one wonders what Roberts might have done with his autobiography had he lived longer.

The final two chapters are concerned with his presidency of the Eastern States Mission (1922–27), remembered with loyalty and fondness by his missionaries to the ends of their lives, and his effort to defend what he considered the proper role and authority of the First Council of the Seventy.

For a more comprehensive life of Roberts, one still needs to read Truman G. Madsen, *Defender of the Faith: The B. H. Roberts Story*,<sup>3</sup> which, even with its adulation and omission of some controversial detail, remains the standard treatment. For some topics of interest, articles are the best resource. Other facets of Roberts's life still deserve study.

Suffering severely with diabetes and other afflictions, increasingly morose and incapacitated, continuing to feel a kind of persecution or lack of appreciation from his brethren, Roberts did not much enjoy his last two or three years on earth. It is to his credit that he managed to avoid a spirit of bitterness. As it stands, his autobiography, with all its deficiencies, is a sprightly, personal account that touches many bases of Mormon history. B. H. Roberts was a grand old warrior and, as Brigham Young would have said, had the grit in him. Right to the end.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Davis Bitton, "B. H. Roberts as Historian," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 3 (Winter 1968): 25–44.

<sup>2</sup>See Truman G. Madsen, "The Meaning of Christ—The Truth, the Way, the Life: An Analysis of B. H. Roberts' Unpublished Masterwork," *BYU Studies* 15 (Spring 1975): 259–92.

<sup>3</sup>Truman G. Madsen, *Defender of the Faith: The B. H. Roberts Story* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1980).



JEAN BICKMORE WHITE, ed. *Church, State, and Politics: The Diaries of John Henry Smith*. Salt Lake City: Signature Books and Smith Research Associates, 1990. xxx; 700 pp. Index. \$75.00.

Reviewed by Paul H. Peterson, Associate Professor of Church History and Doctrine, Brigham Young University.

Apostle and counselor in the First Presidency, prominent politician and co-founder of the Republican Party in Utah, consummate businessman and community activist, John Henry Smith (1848–1911) was an influential Latter-day Saint churchman in a turbulent and transitory era. In volume 4 of the Signature Press Diaries Series, Jean Bickmore White has edited Smith's extensive diaries into one, albeit weighty, volume. Smith left over thirty-six volumes of personal journals as well as extensive papers and letters, making White's selection responsibility both delightful and difficult.

John Henry, a son of Sarah Ann Libby and George A. Smith, an apostle and counselor to Brigham Young, was a candid chronicler. Told by President Joseph F. Smith that "I must keep an accurate history of facts as they occur" (33), John Henry surely did not disappoint his church-leader cousin. From the mundane and superficial to the gut-wrenching, John Henry described events with frankness and candor. I found myself alternately amused and saddened by his frank disclosures. I was amused (and empathetic) with missionary Smith's observation that dinner at a Brother Cardwell's featured "the dirtiest table and meal" (10) he ever saw and interested in his contrasting of the "homliest women" and "hardly average men" (40) of Berlin with their handsome counterparts in Paris (43). I was saddened to read of the comparatively few, but highly unfortunate, sexual indiscretions of certain elders and the resultant regret and anguish they experienced.

But a journal must be more than candid to be a great journal. This is a good journal but certainly not vintage Abraham Cannon or Wilford Woodruff. John Henry Smith was seldom reflective and not particularly literary. His seeming modesty and reserve make it difficult for the reader to get inside the man. Seldom did John Henry reveal himself—even when recording events that would seemingly evoke passion and

feeling. Thus it was that he noted the deaths of loved ones, wrote of his elevation to the Apostleship and First Presidency, and even recorded seeing the Savior with a dispassionate detachment that I found baffling. Surely he must have felt keenly about each of these events, but rarely could I discern any overt sentiment in his journals. Apparently John Henry, restrained and modest by nature and writing under the conventions of his day, was inclined to bridle his emotions.

Having said that, I would still maintain there is much to reward the reader who can thrash through the hundreds of ordinary and routine entries and finish the book. Both knowledgeable historians and novices will come away with a deeper understanding of the workings and challenges of the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Church. They will readily note that the Church truly had both a temporal and spiritual dimension. They will realize, perhaps more fully than before, that the Brethren were human and reflected their environment as often as they transcended it. Some readers will be taken aback by the occasional accounts of internal disagreement among General Authorities. Certainly, John Henry was not hesitant to record his concern (and oftentimes the concern of other Quorum members) with what he perceived to be the authoritarian tendencies of President John Taylor and the determined leadership and economic direction of President George Q. Cannon. But balanced readers will also observe, perhaps even be impressed by, the ability of capable, strong-minded men to disagree sharply then resolve their differences without rancor or bitterness. In the end, with few exceptions, their united devotion to the kingdom transcended their personal differences.

And what of John Henry, the man. Though reluctant to talk about himself, the sheer number of his recordings affords us some glimpses into his character. Diary entries reveal that he was a highly literate (but not especially literary) man. A voracious reader, he apparently spent every free day reading. While interested in many subjects, he seemed to be singularly fond of history and biography. He also enjoyed theater and attended performances whenever he could. But John Henry's greatest loves were reserved for his wives, family, and Church. His devotion to his wives and children and his dedication to his



Church set him apart as a man of strong loyalties. He was also endowed with a remarkable ability to relate to the broad spectrum of humanity. As White notes in her prefatory biographical sketch, the *Salt Lake Tribune* was not in the habit of lavishing praise on Mormon leaders in the early twentieth century but was unabashed in its praise of this particular Mormon Apostle. I was also impressed with how often John Henry was able to solve internal squabbles in the various stakes and wards of Zion. Clearly, Elder Smith was a peacemaker.

Editor White did not take her editorial duties lightly. In addition to an introduction, she included a chronology, biographical tables, and an extremely helpful listing of all prominent characters mentioned in the journal. Rather than succumbing to the temptation of many editors to limit annotation because it displays pedantry or self-promotion (a lame excuse in many instances for failure to do one's homework), White has provided explanatory notes that are comprehensive and, I would add, essential for most readers. Certainly, this fine volume is one of the most professional and polished of any that Signature Books has produced.

# Mormon Bibliography 1991

Ellen M. Copley

## INTRODUCTION

The Mormon Bibliography 1991 is a selective bibliography of publications about Mormons and Mormonism. It is selective because, although every attempt was made to include all aspects of Mormonism, we have excluded some types of items. Specifically, we excluded all newspaper articles and articles published in the official magazines of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; these are well indexed by the Church itself. We have, however, retained and listed in the Arts and Literature section of the bibliography the individual poems, short stories, etc., from these official magazines.

In the Arts and Literature section, we have included every item pertaining to this category, except critical essays, which is written by a Mormon author, regardless of the content. The other sections include only articles and books written by Mormon authors with a specific Mormon focus and theme.

As with any bibliography, of course, we constantly fear not knowing of a publication and therefore leaving it out. If readers know of publications that should have been included in this Mormon Bibliography, please contact Ellen Copley or Scott Duvall in the Department of Special Collections of the Harold B. Lee Library at BYU. We will include those publications in the 1992 Mormon Bibliography.

This bibliography is broadly organized into the following sections: List of Abbreviations, Arts and Literature, Bibliography, Biography and Autobiography, Contemporary Issues, Doctrine and Scripture, History, and Inspiration. The works are listed alphabetically by author within each section.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations are used for Mormon-content periodicals and anthologies that have been analyzed by chapters.

### Mormon-Content Periodicals

#### *BH*

*Beehive History* 17 (1991). Published annually by the Utah State Historical Society, Salt Lake City. This issue was dedicated to twentieth-century Utahns of achievement. We included the works of those authors whose descriptions clearly indicated they were Latter-day Saints.

#### *BYU Studies*

*BYU Studies* 31 (1991). Published quarterly by Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

#### *BYU Today*

*BYU Today* 45 (1991). Published six times a year by Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah. Includes feature articles, news items, and columns.

#### *CMSA*

*CMSA: Canadian Mormon Studies Association Newsletter/ACEM: Bulletin de L'Association Canadienne D'Etudes Mormones*. Edited by Clyde R. Forsberg. Vol. 1, no. 1 in August 1991, frequency not listed. Published by CMSA/ACEM, an organization which promotes the study of the Mormon experience in Canada.

#### *Dialogue*

*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 24 (1991). Published quarterly by the Dialogue Foundation, Logan, Utah.

#### *Ensign*

*Ensign* 21 (1991). Published monthly by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

#### *Exponent II*

*Exponent II* 16 (1991). Published quarterly by Exponent II, Inc., Arlington, Massachusetts. No official connection with the LDS Church. Issue no. 4 not available at time of compilation.

#### *Inscape*

*Inscape* (1991). A forum for student fiction, published semiannually by the Brigham Young University English Department and College of Humanities, Provo, Utah.

#### *Insight*

*Insight* 6 (1991). A forum for nonfiction writing, published once each semester by the Brigham Young University Honors Program, Provo, Utah.

#### *Insights*

*Insights: An Ancient Window*, nos. 1–6 (1991). Published six times a year by the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (F.A.R.M.S.), Provo, Utah.

*JMH*

*Journal of Mormon History* 17 (1991). Published annually by the Mormon History Association, Provo, Utah.

*JWHAJ*

*The John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 11 (1991). Published annually by the association, Lamoni, Iowa. Deals with Latter-day Saint history.

*L&B*

*Literature and Belief* 11 (1991). Published annually by the Brigham Young University College of Humanities, Provo, Utah.

*LE*

*The Leading Edge*, nos. 23–24 (1991). A forum for science fiction and fantasy, published triannually by Brigham Young University English Department and College of Humanities, Provo, Utah. Only two issues appeared in 1991.

*MHAN*

*The Mormon History Association Newsletter*, nos. 79–82 (1991). Published quarterly by the Mormon History Association, Provo, Utah.

*Mormon Issues*

*Mormon Issues* 1–2 (1991). Published monthly by Mormon Miscellaneous, Sandy, Utah. Only issues 1 and 2 were available at time of compilation.

*Nauvoo Journal*

*Nauvoo Journal* 3 (1991). Published quarterly by the Early Mormon Research Institute, Hyrum, Utah. Contains a continuing article entitled “Early Branches 1830–1850.” Also includes other miscellaneous articles about Nauvoo.

*New Era*

*New Era* 21 (1991). Official monthly publication for youth of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

*Pioneer*

*Pioneer* 38 (1991). Published bimonthly by the National Society of the Sons of Utah Pioneers, Salt Lake City.

*RV*

*Restoration Voice* 75–80 (1991). Published six times a year by Cumorah Books, Independence, Missouri. No official connection with the RLDS Church. Included in this bibliography are only articles of a historical nature relating to the period of time before the separation.

*RBBM*

*Review of Books on Mormonism* 3 (1991). Published annually by the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (F.A.R.M.S.), Provo, Utah.



*Saints Herald*

*Saints Herald* 138 (1991). The monthly family magazine published by the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, with headquarters in the Auditorium, Independence, Missouri.

*SRE*

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## Good Eye

Mother stayed up all night  
applying medicine  
to my right eye,  
gouged by Barrett's fourth finger.  
She leaned over,  
touching my eyelid  
with an ice pack,  
while I lay,  
my backside down.

My good eye could see  
between her pink fingernails  
her eyes opening  
under the living room light.  
I waited for numbness  
to set in and my eyelid  
to drop. My good eye  
clearly saw her two eyes.  
What they said  
was better than healing.

—William Powley





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