

LATTER-DAY ANGUISH AND THE EPIC OF GREATER MORMONISM

By

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To Jennifer Graham Bryant

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>page</u>
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	4
ABSTRACT	8
CHAPTER	
1 THE SHATTERED COSMOS	10
Introduction.....	10
Orson Pratt	11
The Mormon Cosmos and Ethnic Identity	14
Dissidents and the Institution.....	21
Conclusion	23
2 REVIVING THE MILLENNIAL KINGDOM	28
Introduction.....	28
Unrealized Zions	32
Joseph Smith.....	32
William Morris.....	36
New Zion and Old Tensions	38
Internal Dissonance	38
The Morrisite War.....	43
Theology, Theocracy, and Violence	48
Conclusion	57
3 BREAKING THE ECONOMIC BACK OF ZION	61
Introduction.....	61
The Godbeite Dilemma	66
The Trial of Godbe and Harrison	75
The New Movement.....	81
British Mormonism	83
Spiritualism.....	86
Conclusion	95
4 IN SEARCH OF <i>NEW NEW</i> JERUSALEMS	98
Introduction.....	98
Mormonism, NRMs, and the Prophetic Impulse	99
The Necessity of Conflict.....	108
Conclusion	113

LIST OF REFERENCES 116
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH..... 121

LIST OF TABLES

<u>Table</u>	<u>page</u>
2-1. <i>Utah Magazine</i> and spiritualism, universalism, and “questionable” topics	97

Abstract of Thesis Presented to the Graduate School
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For believers, the Mormon cosmos is integral to all aspects of their lives. More than a denomination, but having undergone a process of ethnogenesis, Mormonism is an ethnic identity as well as a religion, culture, and worldview. It is potentially troublesome for some believers when, through processes of institutionalization, certain doctrines have been deemphasized or retired to ensure institutional perpetuity. Using what I term “moving-target orthodoxy,” Mormon *prophet-presidents*—who claim sole guardianship to the essence of Mormonism—potentially threaten the unified cosmos of believers who see the deemphasized or retired doctrines as central to their life and worldview. The resulting existential anguish drives some to rediscover themselves still within a Mormon cosmos but outside of institutional sanction.

I examined Orson Pratt’s life, and two dissident splinter groups, the Morrisites and Godbeites. Through a study of nineteenth-century Mormon experience and dissent, my study offers insights into the functioning of religious institutions. I assert that a larger or greater Mormonism exists beyond institutional definition. I also stress that studies of Mormonism are remiss if histories are not decentered from institutional definitions.

My findings support that Mormon dissidents still perceived themselves active contributors to Zion and being within Mormonism or the message of the Restoration first

presented by Joseph Smith. My research into the experience of these believing dissidents was largely from primary source materials at several archives in Utah, as well as from secondary sources by Mormon historians. The significance of these findings is that they expand Mormon identity and notions of a Mormon cosmos beyond the normative parameters established within a mainstream, faith-based perspective (which is often represented, even if at a subconscious level, within Mormon histories). Further, my study regarding the intersection between institutionally-defined orthodoxy and popular religious identity and resistance provides insights for religious studies at large.

CHAPTER 1 THE SHATTERED COSMOS

Introduction

In 1842, the residents of Nauvoo, Illinois, were called on to search for a missing, endangered member of their community. The town mayor, Joseph Smith—“Prophet and President” of the Mormon Church which was then headquartered in Nauvoo—had ordered the search “lest” the man, as Smith stated, “should have laid violent hands on himself.” The search was prompted by a note, apparently written in blood¹:

I am a ruined man! My future prospects are blasted! The testimony upon both sides seems to be equal: The one in *direct contradiction* to the other—[H]ow to decide I know not[,] *neither does it matter*[,] for let it be *either way*[,] my temporal happiness is gone in this world[....] My sorrows are greater than I can bear! Where I am henceforth[,] it matters not.²

The man distraught enough to lay “violent hands on himself” was Elder Orson Pratt, a member of the Twelve Apostles and an early and influential leader in the church.

Pratt’s despondent letter reflected a cosmos-shattering event: an incompatibility between his worldview and identity, or Mormon cosmos, and the actions of Joseph Smith, the founder of Mormonism. A strict literalist, Pratt felt that Mormonism represented the Truth in all its forms (religion, philosophy, math, science, government, etc.), divinely restored through the mouthpiece of God, Joseph Smith. When the Prophet continued his prophetic innovations and license in ways that Pratt felt were contradictory to Pratt’s understanding of the Truth, he was left to question the divinity or legitimacy of the earlier revelations. This was especially problematic,

¹ Gary James Bergera, *Conflict in the Quorum* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Signature Books, 2002), 23n52. Bergera writes that “This document, apparently in Pratt’s hand [...] may have been the letter that Pratt family legend claims the distraught apostle wrote in his own blood.” Pratt’s biographer states that Pratt “[f]amily tradition renounces the story of an attempted suicide but perpetuates a legend that Orson did cut himself with a knife in order to write a letter in blood to the Prophet Joseph Smith”: Breck England, *The Life and Thought of Orson Pratt* (Salt Lake City, Utah: University of Utah Press, 1985), 80.

² Bergera, *Conflict in the Quorum*, 23, emphasis mine.

for Pratt, like most believing Mormons, had ordered his life and cosmos to Smith's Restoration of the Gospel. Distrust in Smith drained Pratt's Mormon universe of its absolutes, bringing on his suicidal state. In the anguish of an existential crisis, nothing seemed to matter, including life—for Smith's prophetic innovations had shattered his cosmos by presenting a very different picture of Mormonism than the one Pratt thought he uniquely understood.

Orson Pratt

If anyone had the right to think that they *knew* Mormonism, it was Orson Pratt.

Preeminent Mormon historian Leonard Arrington notes that “to many Americans and Europeans in the nineteenth century, [Apostle Pratt] was the best-known besides Joseph Smith and Brigham Young.”³ Baptized in 1830, the year the Church was first organized, Pratt would later go on to be the oldest, most experienced Mormon church leader by his death in 1881. He was the first to enter the Salt Lake Valley, dedicating it before Brigham Young even saw it. He was a member of the first quorum of Twelve Apostles, and, if it were not for a brief period when he removed himself from the quorum, he would have become President of the Church. His legacy is his effort to organize Mormon thought, Arrington observing that Pratt “was the foremost intellectual in the Church,”⁴ well known in and outside of Mormonism for his efforts to systematize the faith.

As a testament to his faith in and commitment to Mormonism, in 1841 Pratt left Nauvoo for a mission to England, shaking from malaria, his family sick in bed and unable to see him off, and his infant daughter recently buried. Preaching in Edinburgh, and influenced by empirical Scottish philosophy, he wrote a straight-forward pamphlet entitled *Remarkable Visions*, in which

³ Leonard J. Arrington, “Foreword,” located in Breck England’s *The Life and Thought of Orson Pratt* (Salt Lake City, Utah: University of Utah Press, 1985), ix.

⁴ Arrington, “Foreword,” *Life and Thought*, ix.

he recounted the First Vision of Joseph Smith.⁵ In the second half of the pamphlet, Pratt provided a systematic series of statements on the Mormon faith. Several years later, Joseph Smith used the pamphlet to create “The Articles of Faith,” which are part of the LDS canon to this day. The Articles of Faith recount the thirteen fundamental beliefs of Smith’s Restoration,⁶ and in at least ten, Pratt could rightly be said to be the originator of the idea—Smith at times using Pratt’s statements word-for-word. Again to quote Arrington, Pratt’s writings, including those appropriated by Smith, “are still regarded as perhaps the most significant contributions to Mormon theology and metaphysics in the nineteenth century.”⁷

With his unique position as a Mormon authority, a man who shaped much of Mormonism’s metaphysics and overall doctrinal systematization, imagine Pratt’s shock upon returning home from this mission to England and finding that Mormonism had evolved in ways which he could not condone. In 1842 only an inner circle had been initiated into Smith’s esoteric practices which included polygamy. Pratt was not one of them, at very least, due to being away on his mission in England. He was not the only church officer unaware, Smith hesitating to invite his own brother Hyrum who was serving as Associate President of the Church. Pratt knew about Mormonism’s potential practice of polygamy—or, better put, of polygyny, as part of restoring the doctrines of the biblical patriarchs.

⁵ The first time any Mormon leader had done so, Joseph’s prophetic calling previously connected to the coming forth of the Book of Mormon and visitations by an angel (early Mormon history suggesting that it was the Angel Nephi who visited Smith, but later histories have changed the angelic visitor to Moroni). This new approach to Smith’s prophetic calling became the standard for Mormonism today.

⁶ The Restoration of the Gospel through Smith refers to God’s preparations, through the Saints (Christians) of the latter or last days, to bring about the Second Coming. It implies an apostasy of Christianity due to the death of the primitive apostles, and a restoration of God’s authority and true teachings necessary to prepare a people to receive Christ. Often, it is simply called “The Restoration,” and in an academic setting, can refer to the entire Latter Day Saint movement.

⁷ Arrington, “Foreword,” *Life and Thought*, x.

He, however, never anticipated polyandry. To his horror, after returning home from England, Pratt's wife Sarah broke the news that the Prophet had propositioned her to become his eternal wife. Pratt's biographer Breck England records that "almost overnight Orson was transformed from single-minded disciple to sullen rebel," and with his entire identity and purpose in life caught up in the paradox, "under these circumstances his mind temporarily gave way" and he contemplated killing himself.⁸ After recovering from the suicidal moment, Pratt refused to sustain Joseph Smith as Prophet, and withdrew his activities in the Quorum of Twelve Apostles.

Orson Pratt's 1842 conflict with Mormon leaders represents a primal moment—a paradigm shifting, earth-shattering experience when his once-unified Mormon cosmos ruptured over the realization that his beliefs and reality were incompatible with the institutional goals of the church. In this thesis, I will argue, through the lens of Pratt's experience and that of two later groups, the Morrisites and the Godbeites, that there is a larger Mormonism than the subset defined by the institutional church. These believing dissidents found themselves caught between paradoxes representing the conflict between the Mormon institution and greater Mormonism. Faced with not only cognitive dissonance, but the anguish of an existential crisis, believing dissidents are left to choose between what they see as essential Mormon teachings or the shifting orthodoxy of the institution. Some, like Pratt, found ways to forever stay on the fringe; others, like the Godbeites and Morrisites, venture outside of institutional boundaries and into larger Mormonism. No matter where Mormons find themselves in this continuum, the seriousness of this struggle over identity and orthodoxy is a singular epic of greater Mormonism.

⁸ England, *Life and Thought*, 78-79.

The Mormon Cosmos and Ethnic Identity

I intend to prove that Mormonism is more than just an institution, or even a denomination, but an integral worldview that provides a unified cosmos encompassing all aspects of life. Thomas O’Dea, in his landmark sociological study, *The Mormons*, wrote in 1957 that the development of the religion involves “the clearest example to be found in” U.S. history “of the evolution of a native and indigenously developed ethnic minority.”⁹ Harold Bloom, in his chapter on Mormonism within his larger history *The American Religion*, traces the Mormon “stages of transmutation by which a new religion became a new people (thus assuring the permanent survival of the religion).”¹⁰

Going further with the idea of peoplehood, *The Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups* refers to the “ethnogenesis” of Mormonism upon American soil, stating that, as an “ethnic religion,” Mormons forged “a new ethnic identity,” emerging through “the fusion of cultural ingredients.”¹¹ Ethnogenesis refers to the “synthesis of a people’s cultural and political struggles to exist as well as their historical consciousness of these struggles.”¹² It usually involves the creation or synthesis of a new language, which also held true for Mormons. Brigham Young ordered the creation of a new, phonetic approach to English revolving around an entirely new alphabet. The new orthography was never popular—but it speaks to the process of forging peoplehood against the centrifugal forces of diverse languages and backgrounds.

⁹ Thomas O’Dea, *The Mormons*, (University of Chicago Press, 1957).

¹⁰ Harold Bloom, *The American Religion*, (Chu Hartley Publishers Llc., 2006), 79.

¹¹ See pages 150, 158, and 870 of *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups*, ed. Stephan Thernstrom et al. (Harvard University Belknap Press, 1980).

¹² Jonathan D. Hill, “Introduction,” *History, Power, and Identity: Ethnogenesis in the Americas, 1492-1992*, ed. Jonathan D. Hill (Iowa City, Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 1996), 2.

Throughout the process of ethnogenesis, Mormons have become a people. The mythos of peoplehood both shapes and is shaped by the people who embrace it. Mormons, collectively and individually, externalized, objectified, and then reified Mormon beliefs, then to be again internalized.¹³ The result was an all-encompassing cosmos connected to an ethnic identity, involving conceptions of identity and existence, society and culture, family and salvation. For many Mormons, to maintain existential harmony—or to avoid bursting the bubble of their cosmos—requires conformity to Mormon orthodoxy and orthopraxy, as established institutionally and socially.

Conflict among believing but dissident Mormons often is derived from the tension between obedience to principles and obedience to a “prophetic” institution. In other words, an unwillingness to concede that the institution represents the Mormon cosmos solely and perfectly. Orson Pratt’s 1842 conflict with Mormon leaders represents a paradigm shifting experience when his once-unified Mormon canopy ruptured over the realization that his belief and reality, were in conflict. Dissent within Mormonism follows this paradigmatic moment. The call for a return to primitive Mormon principles allows the believing but dissident Mormon the ability to protest the Mormon institution without renouncing Mormonism itself.

For heuristic purposes, imagine three circles; the first is what God knows to be True and necessary for salvation; the second, what the Mormon institution states is True and necessary for salvation (i.e., Mormonism); and the third, what Mormons believe is Mormonism. The Mormon institution presents all three stacked together into one absolute. Importantly, institutional leaders

¹³ While my concept of a Mormon cosmos is similar to Berger’s sacred canopy, I contend that human experience is more complex and nuanced than a simplistic cosmos that might overdetermine social interactions. Recognizing agency, and layers to human interaction beyond ideology, I still suggest that Berger’s theory has relevance within the Mormon experience of ethnogenesis, ethnic religion, and conversion, where the religion becomes an essential reality among believers: Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York: Anchor, 1990), 4.

present themselves as *the* representatives of this conflation, and “true” Mormons as falling within the triune intersection. Dissident but believing Mormons challenge a complete overlap of all three circles, thinking of them as a traditional Venn diagram if overlapping at all.¹⁴ It is in the areas outside of the institution’s isomorphic conflation that the epic of greater Mormonism is found—experienced by a variety of believers inside but often out of the LDS Church, whose identities and world are caught up in the integral cosmos of Mormonism, but who have been cut off from institutional sanction.

While perhaps dated, Festinger’s cognitive dissonance theory is still helpful here in explaining the internal conflict faced during such a faith-crushing situation, and the seemingly contradictory responses of believers who choose to continue to believe. Also, as will be evident in the next chapter, cognitive dissonance is relevant within current scholarship on violence and religion. A psychological approach, cognitive dissonance occurs when two contradictory beliefs are simultaneously held. The resulting internal conflict—from the paradox of realizing that reality does not match beliefs—drives the person to justify or explain the contradiction through revision of past histories or motivations. Some cases of routinization or institutionalization can be attributed to resolving these conflicts on a corporate level, such as the delay of the New Jerusalem for the Latter Day Saints.

While this dissonance might be crushing to religious conviction, often the reverse is true: when a true believer “is presented with evidence, unequivocal and undeniable evidence, that his belief is wrong” the “individual will frequently emerge, not only unshaken, but even more convinced of the truth of his beliefs than ever before. Indeed, he may even show a new fervor

¹⁴ For these three heuristic circles, I am indebted to D. Michael Quinn’s comments during a book panel on Bill Russell’s *Homosexual Saints: The Community of Christ Experience*. The panel was part of the JWHA Annual Meeting in Voree (Burlington), Wisconsin, September 25-28, 2008.

about convincing and converting other people to his view.”¹⁵ Applicable to Mormons who find themselves in the menacing realm outside of institutional sanction, the resulting cognitive dissonance accounts for the old saying that Mormons “can leave the church, but can’t leave it alone.” Responses to this dissonance manifest in many ways, for Mormonism is most often too integral to a Mormon’s worldview and identity to simply walk away.

Weber’s sect-to-church model is also helpful. Weber theorizes on shifting authority from a charismatic figure to institutional officers. Weber defines charismatic authority as “devotion to the exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character of an individual person, and of the normative patterns or order revealed or ordained by him.” Specifically in the case of the routinization of charisma at the death of a founding prophet, Weber “was most intrigued by the way the Catholic Church addressed this issue by institutionalizing the personal charisma of Christ within a hierarchical system of sacred officers.”¹⁶ Someone or something has to replace the original charismatic authority if the movement is to continue beyond the life of the founder.

There can be only one founding, charismatic prophet. The term “The Prophet” in Mormon speech, especially in the past tense, almost always and solely refers to Smith. In the present tense, it speaks to the institutional connection of the current President of the Church to the personal charisma of the Prophet Joseph Smith. But current Mormon presidents do have the power to innovate; in this, Smith’s successors come closer to Smith’s role than the Catholic officers that Weber studied can come to Christ, as Son of God.

Thus, the Catholic example has its limitations for Mormonism, as Omri Elisha notes in his article “Sustaining Charisma,” because “Mormonism has worn many different hats at once,

¹⁵ Leon Festinger et alii, *When Prophecy Fails: A Social and Psychological Study of a Modern Group That Predicted the Destruction of the World* (New York City: Harper & Row, 1956), 3.

¹⁶ Michele Dillon, *Handbook of the Sociology of Religion* (Cambridge UP, 2003), 124.

positioning awkwardly along a spectrum of resistance and accommodation vis-à-vis the outside world” through vacillating between sect and church.¹⁷ The work of Armand Mauss, a renowned sociologist of Mormonism, supports Elisha’s statement, in that Mauss asserts that the Mormon Church has vacillated between mainstreaming and entrenchment, resembling more an established sect than established church. Speaking generally, Elisha also questions the absolute progression from sect-to-church because “expressions of charisma (revelation/innovation) and routinization (indoctrination/stasis) in the life of a religious community coexist in ways that defy the rigid dichotomization of those concepts.”¹⁸

Recognizing these limitations (generally and as applied to Mormonism), to represent all potential charismatic claims to authority by a Mormon hierarchy of legal-rational officers, I use the term “prophetic institution.” Instead of a classic prophet-to-priest shift in authority—as charisma was routinized, Mormonism maintained a dualistic office of prophet-president that, while always institutional, can at times be charismatic and revolutionary (although to the support of the institution in dealing with old principles in new environments). Contrary to the Catholic example where Christ is irreplaceable by a successor, Smith’s mantle of authority has been institutionalized in the Mormon hierarchy. Mormon Church Presidents are Smith’s institutional successors, and may have brief flashes of charisma that revolutionize Mormonism. Consider that Latter Day Saint leaders, throughout the Restoration, are thought of as a “Prophet-President,” a dichotomistic concept that is paradoxical in Weber’s model, with both institution and charisma fused together (but institution {president} often winning out over charisma {prophet}).

¹⁷ Omri Elisha, “Sustaining Charisma: Mormon Sectarian Culture and the Struggle for Plural Marriage, 1852–1890,” *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* 6.1 (2002):48.

¹⁸ Elisha, “Sustaining Charisma,” 48.

Pratt's example is one of enshrining the prophecies of the prophet—especially in his earlier, charismatic days—while refusing absolute obedience to the man who stands at the head of the institution as Church President. For Pratt, the charismatic authority of Mormonism died two years before the charismatic figure himself was shot to death. Only through separating out the prophecy from the prophet-turned-president could he reconcile the urgent predicament. His solution—which allowed him to remain in the LDS Church, but put him forever at odds with the institutional leaders who expected more deference—came through devaluing the charismatic person of Smith and elevating the prophetic principles of the Restoration. From then on out, he was a strict literalist who would question any alteration by the institution. This of course fits with Weber's notion that, in response to a maturing institution necessarily devoting its energies to more mundane concerns, "revolutionizing sects would frequently emerge, championing the pure idealism of Christ and calling on the Church to return to a more pure vision of Christian idealism[...] represent[ing] an inherent tension posed by the routinization of charisma" into sacred but human officers.¹⁹

While Pratt never broke off from the church, he remained throughout his life in tension with Smith and Young. But Pratt is no charismatic figure: if anything, he wanted a death of charisma and the special authority it offered, instead placing all faith in the pure and primal and unchanging or eternal principles of Mormonism. He was the great doctrinal systematizer that was forever frustrated by what I term the moving-target orthodoxy of Mormonism, where eternal principles come second to the authority of the church.

¹⁹ Dillon, *Handbook*, 124.

Institutional efforts to correlate history with doctrine—or sacred history reporting within the context of promoting belief in the Mormonism—creates easily conflicted histories (and believers). This is reflected in Shipps’ statement that

the “facts” of LDS history do not necessarily speak for themselves. It is as important to remember that the very same descriptions of the very same events can take on radically different meanings when they are placed in different settings as it is to keep in mind that ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ perceptions of what was happening differed at practically every point in LDS history.²⁰

The potential for greatest friction in Mormon identity lies here in the intersection of Mormon orthodoxy and identity. With the institution claiming authority over defining what Mormonism is and who is a Mormon, it is a chilling discovery for a believing but dissident Mormon to find him or herself in the outer darkness beyond the Mormon cosmos, and seemingly cut off from their identity, purpose, culture, society, family, and religion. Some Mormons suffer from metaphysical whiplash as their hopes crash against the reality that, somewhere in the codification of principles and authority that were previously in the realm of the spirit, legalistic and bounded Mormonism has lost or deviated from the larger intention, meaning, and power that was so integral to their existence.

In Pratt’s case, a fine distinction must be made regarding his dilemma that arose from routinization. It was not over the codification of principles. In fact, Pratt wanted a systemization of Mormon principles to reflect their eternal and unchanging nature. And it was not over polygamy, per se. Pratt was not necessarily opposed to polygamy, becoming one of its greatest proponents—Brigham Young choosing him to announce its practice to the world.

Ultimately, his dilemma that the institution, which he represented and which represented him, had shifted Mormonism; having once been the source of existential surety, happiness, and

²⁰ Jan Shipps, *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition*, (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 4.

purpose, the new direction of Mormonism was in direct conflict with his happiness. It was a complete reversal of his beliefs regarding Mormonism as the source of absolute morality and the source of his happiness. He was distraught that Smith could or would use the same authority that he restored the Gospel with to then proposition his wife, and it led him to question the entire Restoration and his life's work and purpose. Pratt came to realize that the problem, for him, was that infallible, prophetic authority has been institutionalized into the office of Church President, necessarily occupied by a human. In the end, he embraced the systemization of doctrines into fixed Absolutes, while rejecting that the same sort of unquestionable authority is bestowed in the office of Church President—even if it represents the charismatic prophecy that first gave the world the “unchanging” principles of Mormonism.

Some Mormons, like Pratt, when faced with this sort of conflict, acknowledge the necessity of the institution, and find ways of reconciliation; still others cannot, for they hold that an institutional-end-unto-itself has replaced the power and spirit of what was once a living message to them. It is this latter group that reflect the next two chapters, as Morrisites and Godbeites experienced Mormonism beyond the institution, propelled to reconcile their shattered cosmos and existential anguish. Beyond the boundaries, believing dissidents contest for new spaces that allows for as much of a cohesive worldview as possible. Like Morris and Godbe, some transform heterodox fringe into new orthodox centers or new institutions—a new Mormonism within greater Mormonism. Pratt, however, who was always in tension and expert at existing at the borders but within institutional sanction, serves as prototype for these believing dissidents.

Dissidents and the Institution

Once Pratt separated the institution from his identity and cosmos of Mormonism, he had created space within Mormonism for an identity that at times could conflict with Mormon

leaders yet still held true to himself and his worldview. Still Pratt remained in the institution. Brigham Young, exasperated at times with this position, demanding that Pratt should fall in line and accept prophetic authority as the final and only fundamental to Mormonism. At the time of Pratt's reinstatement into the Twelve after his period of refusing to sustain Joseph as Prophet, Brigham Young stated that "all he had against Orson was when he came home" from England

'he loved his wife better than David,' an allusion to the Old Testament story of Uriah who, unlike Orson, loved his leader more than he loved his own wife, Bathsheba (2 Sam. 11-12). Young seems to suggest that Orson (Uriah) should have remained loyal to Joseph (King David), even if Joseph had been sexually intimate with Sarah (Bathsheba).²¹

Problems with Brother Brigham didn't end with the 1842 episode. Pratt's commitment to principles over prophets placed him at odds with institutional Mormonism throughout the rest of his life and ministry. An exasperated Young, long after his complaints in Nauvoo, commented that Orson Pratt

is strangely Constituted. He aquired a good deal of knowledge upon many things in other things He [is] one of the most ignorant men [I] ever saw in [my] life. He [is] full of integrity & would lie down & have his head Cut off for mor or his religin if necessary but he will never see his Error untill he goes into the spirit world. then he will say Brother Brigham how foolish I was.

Decades later in 1875, two years before Brigham's death—and again due to Pratt's unwillingness to accept prophets over principles—Brigham Young used Pratt's brief rebellion as an excuse to demote his standing in the Quorum of Apostles. Were it not for this, Pratt in all likelihood would have served as President of the Church.

Historical evidence, however, points to Smith considering Pratt reinstated into his former standing in the Quorum, including his seniority. In this is but one example of Young's redefinition and restriction of the boundaries of Mormon identity to only those who accepted Mormonism's only fundamental principle as *Follow the Prophet*. Still, Young recognized and

²¹ Bergera, *Conflict in the Quorum*, 35.

stated that “[i]f you were to chop up Elder Pratt into inch-square pieces, each piece would cry out, ‘Mormonism is true.’” But, he could not have Pratt at the head of the institution that he did not incontrovertibly support. Young’s tightening grip upon Mormon identity, individual and corporate, would cement in place Mormon orthodoxy and orthopraxy—the right thoughts are those of the prophetic institution, and the right acts are following that institution. Especially in his efforts to convince Latter Day Saints to practice polygamy, Young wasn’t always successful; and many simply did not travel west, but existed within a larger definition of Mormonism.

As a canary in the coalmine, Pratt’s experience was an omen of the coming splintering of the Latter Day Saint church into a movement with multiple evolutions or expressions of Smith’s thought. To counter this tendency, Utah Mormonism presents the institution in monolithic terms, as the sole representation to the sole true religion and the sole source of salvation. Due to this, for many believing Latter-day Saints,²² orthodoxy and orthopraxy are almost always required for a stable cosmos. For believing Mormons, a loss of or inability to maintain worthiness, or (perhaps worse) of their belief in the institution as an exclusive guardian of salvation and exaltation, almost always results in identity or existential crisis—the anguish of being severed from an absolute universe. The response may be as varied as suicide, creation of a dissident movement, or, as in the case of Pratt, an uneasy acquiescence with the institution.

Conclusion

Like many later at-risk Mormons, Orson Pratt met the identity and existential crises of a ruptured Mormon canopy before the Martyrdom of Smith, the greatest crisis within the Latter Day Saint movement to date. Yet the anguish for Pratt was no less real. In fact, and perhaps at

²² It is important to note that a hyphenated “Latter-day” refers to the Utah Church, while an unhyphenated “Latter Day” refers to any or perhaps all groups within the Restoration movement, but especially those who groups that did not follow Brigham Young west.

an accelerated pace due to an age of information, it continues to this day. In the next chapter, I will focus on the Morrisites, nineteenth-century “primitive” Mormons who wanted to keep the sacred story going well beyond Brigham Young’s liking, he having set the capstone on Mormon recapitulation of Israel in America. Simply put, these Morrisites upheld the principle of a charismatic prophet as most fundamental, not obedience to the unenthusiastic Church President Brigham Young.

Chapter three will consider the Godbeites, who, a decade later, faced a paradox of Mormonism which was magnified by institutionalization: individual verses corporate good. While related to and perhaps stemming from the prophet-president paradox, it involves different considerations from the challenges and response of the Morrisites. The concluding chapter will consider contemporary Latter-day anguish, followed by Mormonism as a new religious movement. The thesis will then close with the necessity of conflict in Mormon Zions.

My intent is to contribute to the understanding of Mormonism, as known and experienced by those outside of institutional sanction or definitions. This I call greater Mormonism, involving epic journeys by those in search of what they perceive as not only essential to their cosmos but their own identities. Believing dissidents challenge the institution’s guardianship to Mormonism when leaders betray what the dissidents see as essential. Fittingly, some of the nineteenth-century dissenters saw themselves as Mormon Protestants, or challengers to an institution’s adaptation of essential Mormonism, as Luther, Calvin, and others had challenged Catholicism during the Protestant Reformation.

Within these histories of believing dissidents are several larger lessons. Through a study of Mormon dissent, this thesis offers insights into the functioning of religious institutions. Specifically, and in themes that are interrelated, I am concerned with the challenges faced by

new religious movements (NRMs) as they become established; with creativity within popular religious observance; with popular or immigrant practice, formed outside of the gaze of the institution, and potentially as repositories of primal, charismatic strains of spirituality and experience; with heterodoxy and orthodoxy, and issues of identity within an ethnic religion; and, with change, and control over change—or cooption of popular practices to serve institutional ends.

I claim that there is larger space within the Mormon cosmos, and thus a need for larger parameters of Mormon identity and doctrines within Mormon histories. As a student of religious studies, not only academic distance has been required to understand Mormonism, but a decentering of the institution as the focal point. As an eighth-generation Mormon—with some of my ancestors having known Joseph Smith, and most suffering greatly to make the trek across the plains as pioneers—this has been a difficult, even painful task that has placed me at odds with the institution. While I do not present this thesis as autobiographical, I realize that there are autobiographical motivations within my parameters and to the questions that I am asking. I not only empathize with the anguish of nineteenth-century dissenters, but can sympathize with the experience outside of institutional sanction but within a greater Mormon cosmos.²³ Embedded as an institutionally-unauthorized insider, I recognize that to properly understand believing but dissident Mormons requires distance from and decentering of the institution—although without losing sight of its importance.

²³ A hyphenated “Latter-day Saint,” also rendered as “LDS” refers solely to the Utah Mormon Church; the unhyphenated “Latter Day Saint” refers to any and all groups within the larger Restoration movement, but especially those who did not follow Brigham Young west. On a variety of levels including culture and religious affiliation, I am both an unhyphenated and hyphenated Saint. Having left the LDS Church and aligned myself with the Community of Christ or former RLDS Church, I am an outsider to the Mormon institution but insider to greater Mormonism.

As an academic, with a few caveats and a friendly critique, I align myself with the school of thought known as New Mormon History. The leading voices—Leonard J. Arrington, D. Michael Quinn, and Thomas G. Alexander—embrace a creed of remaining as functionally objective as possible, and not using Mormon history “as a religious battering ram” either to win converts for or against Mormonism.²⁴ As revisionist historians, their readings have run contrary to traditional or sacred histories produced by leaders within the Mormon institution, or “apostle-historians” who are concerned more about promoting faith than presenting history. As a threat to the institutional message and focus, several New Mormon historians have been excommunicated on various charges of apostasy.

While a disciple of this school, I question the claim to “functional objectivity,” and present acknowledgement of embeddedness as a necessary foundation to dialogue. By admitting one’s situated experience, angles and vectors of approach illumine the complexity of Mormonism—and move beyond the *sui generis* and bounded religion presented within Mormon sacred history. While New Mormon historians do not necessarily promote or refute institutional agendas, their attempted objectivity fails to strike at the heart of bounded histories. Though theirs is a softened objectivity, still—as a denial of situatedness—it is limited in its power to overturn the overarching essentialism promoted by the institution. Further, while functional objectivity distances New Mormon historians, often the ensuing dialogue *beyond* the school is unable to escape institutional gravity; this results in a loss of complexity when examining the intricate Mormon cosmos and experience. Within some Mormon histories, believing dissidents such as the Godbeites are seen as having moved beyond or outside of Mormonism. Yet

²⁴ D. Michael Quinn, *The New Mormon History*, “Introduction,” ed. D. Michael Quinn (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992): vii. The term “New Mormon History” was first coined in 1969 by Moses Rischin in an article of the same name: “The New Mormon History,” *The American West* (Mar. 1969): 49. Quinn, in his introduction to *The New Mormon History* cites the beginning of the school as being much earlier with Juanita Brooks’ publication of *The Mountain Meadows Massacre* in 1950.

Mormons can be found beyond institutional sanction, particularly with the religion's breadth and depth as an ethnic identity, and with the expansive doctrines of Joseph Smith. Their experience is no less authentic, only different than that upheld by the Church as the only valid expression.

While dissenters and institutional leaders alike were affirming the principles which they saw as essential to Mormonism, academic history requires distance from either camp or either claims to essential Mormonism. This is especially true for believing Mormon historians who often instinctually accept as normative that the institution is the guardian of the essence of Mormonism; and even outside of a faith-based perspective, it is too easy to conceive of Mormonism as a social construct, and then award sole custodianship of authentic constructs to the institution. I neither embrace a wholly constructed or wholly essential argument. My reasoning is that the Mormons presented in this thesis took Mormonism seriously enough to die and even kill for; on the other hand, while I understand the need for distance, I am not willing to completely deconstruct these cosmos, for it is the solemnity of Mormon experience that persuades me to take it seriously as well.

Thus, in this thesis, religious ideas are central. By this, I do not mean to say that actors are not shaped and enabled by social and economic factors and historical realities. Neither do I assert that these *actors* are overdetermined by ideology. Recognizing complexities, I present ideas at the center of conflict and tension within Mormonism, on individual and corporate levels. It is the power of the Mormon cosmos, the ideological webs of assumptions regarding the self and the universe, that makes Mormonism serious business. Further, it is the fluid, interactive, and reactive nature of ideas that bestows the seriousness of the situation into social fields—or, metaphysical “realities” are enacted or brought to pass as Mormons sought to make sense of the world around them.

CHAPTER 2 REVIVING THE MILLENNIAL KINGDOM

Introduction

The posse sent in their terms of surrender with a young boy who had been herding sheep outside of the fort. Those inside the compound would have little time to respond before the posse fired a twelve pound Howitzer. It was meant to be a warning shot, but it bounded across the ground and into the congregation that had gathered to discuss the terms. The softball-sized shot killed two, and severely injured another—a young girl, whose chin was left shattered and hanging by a flap of skin. The Morrisite War would end with the posse commander riding in after surrender and shooting the Morrisite prophet point blank.

The Morrisite Movement began with Joseph Morris, an Englishman who converted to Mormonism and then immigrated to Utah in 1853, nine years after Smith's death. During a period of revival in Utah in 1856 and 1857 known as the Mormon Reformation, Morris responded zealously, calling on the Saints and the Church leadership to repent of their pride. However, completely contrary to the focus of the Mormon Reformation—which was to stimulate strict obedience to the Mormon commandments, especially polygamy, and to build up the material kingdom of God—Morris had lost three wives to divorce.²⁵ Never a polygamist, he could not maintain even

²⁵ Wives in polygamous Mormon communities are a limited “commodity,” then and now. But especially in Deseret in the 1850s, the remote and difficult location exacerbated the problem, Apostle George A. Smith stating that “women are scarce and hard to get”: *JOD* 1:197, Oct. 7, 1853. It is likely, in the case of Morris, that other Mormons influenced his wives to leave him so that the women could marry more successful priesthood holders. A similar phenomenon occurs today in FLDS communities when teenage males, known as “Lost Boys,” are cast out of the community, supposedly for apostasy but more likely to decrease competition, the younger males being a threat to the older patriarchs. During the Mormon Reformation, at least one young male was castrated by local priesthood leaders when he refused to surrender his sweetheart to the Mormon bishop who wanted her for his own plural wife; regarding the punishment, Young remarked, “I feel to sustain [the bishop]”: Quinn, *Extensions*, 250-51.

one marriage because his fellow Saints, including his bishop, urged his wives to leave him for other, more successful Mormon males.

In addition to being unable to hold a wife, let alone wives, he had economic difficulties and was not contributing to the building of an economic, material Zion. Ridiculed by those around him, and forbidden to continue preaching, Morris appealed to Brigham Young—but the Mormon President did not answer. Unable to fit within the institutional vision of Mormonism, he began to have his own revelations which in time would renounce Brigham Young and the materialism of Zion, and call for an immanent Advent led by himself. These revelations by a charismatic prophet appealed to some Mormons, leading to the creation of a Morrisite movement within Mormonism.

Calling to mind the prophet-president paradox of Smith, Morris approached Brigham Young with an unusual arrangement: a co-leadership of the church, with Morris as prophet and Young as president, “for,” he wrote, “it is not a prophets place to preside but to dick tate him that dus preside.”²⁶ The proposition was unanswered, leaving the charismatic Morris isolated from the institution.

As with the early, charismatic Smith, Morris and all subsequent Mormon prophetic movements have sought unconditionally new revelations. As Mormons have been charged as non-Christian by others, so too were Morrisites charged as non-Mormon by Mormons. Ironically, as Smith’s interpretation of Christ’s message was a challenge to established Christian institutions, Mormon prophetic movements have to deal with an institutional Mormon church that has routinized Smith’s revelations. The result within Mormon history has been a series of prophetic movements that, like the early Smith, are

²⁶ David Bigler, *Forgotten Kingdom*, (Logan, Utah: Utah State UP, 1998), 209.

guided by revelation, yet, unlike the later Smith, are not willing to work within the narrower confines of the institutional church. One side sees prophecy as a threat to institutional authority and stability, yet the other demands that prophecy domesticated by institutional authority denies the primitive and greater meaning of Mormonism.

Within the story of the Morrisites is an epic of greater Mormonism, as believing but dissident Mormons have sought to make space beyond the pale of institutional boundaries in response to existential anguish produced by moving-target orthodoxy. Much like Mormons were presenting an alternative American vision during the developmental years of the American experience, Morrisites were seeking alternative ways of reviving the millennial kingdom at the same time that Young was developing his Zion. Whether it was Mormons and Americans, or Morrisites and Mormons, these visions were mutually exclusive and led to violence.

Though believers in the Restoration of Joseph Smith, Morrisites could not support the routinization of his message. By the time of Brigham Young, Zion's full redemption had been conditioned on material, theocratic, and personal preparations. Misunderstanding the mixed signals of an institutional revival, Morris saw these contingencies to Zion as distractions to its realization. In the late 1850s, Utah Mormonism had left mythical time to ensure institutional perpetuity. But for the Morrisites, the essential principle of Mormonism was an immediate millennium: they were liminal beings who longed for an intrepid visionary and charismatic prophet to lead their unconditional march towards Christ's literal Kingdom.

Previous scholarship on the Morrisites includes the work of Gordon W. Howard, who in 1976 wrote "Men, Motives, and Misunderstandings: A New Look at the Morrisite

War of 1862.”²⁷ Howard’s article provided a detailed history of Morris’s background, those who followed him, and the Morrisite War within the larger context of Utah and U.S. History. Five years later, C. LeRoy Anderson was unexpectedly given a trove of original Morrisite documents. Employing sociological perspectives, he further fleshed out Morrisite history (and Mormon history) from beginnings in Utah to the sect’s demise a century later in Montana.²⁸ In 2002, Eric Paul Rogers expanded the documentary history, and made connections to larger Restoration Studies with his article “Mark Hill Forscutt: Mormon Missionary, Morrisite Apostle, RLDS Minister.”²⁹

Two years ago, Rogers presented “The Morrisites and the Sociology of Religious Schism.” Countering the common belief that ideological differences are the driving force behind schisms, he presents a long list of sociological factors that are at the root of sect formation—including immigration, economic disparity, and institutional stratification. While not denying the power of ideological conflict in the schism, Rogers argues “that the sociological influences on the whole outweighed the ideological in the formation and growth of the” Morrisites.³⁰ I agree with Rogers’s sociological argument regarding

²⁷ Howard’s research materials are located at the Utah State Historical Archives, in the old Rio Grande Station in downtown Salt Lake City, Utah: Gordon M. Howard Collection, Mss B-279.

²⁸ Anderson’s book is entitled *For Christ Will Come Tomorrow: The Saga of the Morrisites*, reprinted as *Joseph Morris And The Saga Of The Morrisites*, (Logan, Utah: Utah State UP, 1988). Anderson’s research, which includes the largest collection of original Morrisite documents, is available at the Marie Eccles-Caine Archive of Intermountain Americana at Utah State University.

²⁹ For which he won the 2002 JWHA Best Article Award. Rogers’ “contributions to the documentary history of the Morrisites is limited to the journals of Mark Hill Forscutt that [he] acquired on behalf of the Brigham Young University Special Collections—a transcription of which is available in the Community of Christ archives; and a transcription of an inscription upon three wooden staffs belonging to Joseph Morris and two of his followers (Daniel Smith and Hugh Park) that are housed in the LDS Archives which [he has] not found documented elsewhere”: Eric. P. Rogers, “The Morrisites and the Sociology of Religious Schism,” 2006 JWHA Annual Conference held in Independence, MO, September 29-31. This text is taken from Slide 3 of his presentation, in author’s possession.

³⁰ Rogers, 2006 JWHA Presentation, Slide 36.

growth and formation, although I believe that it is the realm of ideas that emboldened competing parties unto conflict.

The Morrisite schism was more violent than that which sect-formation theories attempt to explain. When the Morrisites broke away from the Mormon Church, it was more than a classic schism among Christians where conflict rarely escalates above heated words. People died as two groups with competing evolutions of Mormon identity and thought battled over their mutually exclusive visions of Zion. This discussion will begin with Joseph Smith's institutionalization of millennialism, followed by Joseph Morris's experience. I will then review the Morrisite's efforts at creating a Zion, and the resulting internal tensions due to failed prophecies and external violence during the Morrisite War. I will close with competing visions of Zion within the epic of greater Mormonism.³¹

Unrealized Zions

Joseph Smith

The basis for conflict over what is Mormonism and who are Mormons can be traced to Joseph Smith. Smith's vision of Zion began as a primitive Christian movement—and fitting to the mindset of the original Christians—his Saints were awaiting a Second Coming in their generation. Their New Jerusalem in America, however, was short lived: Mormon settlers in Independence, Missouri, then on the fringe of the American frontier, did not mix well with the “old” settlers who had different outlooks on government and community. In 1834, with most of the church members in

³¹ This idea is indebted to Herbert Bolton's paper, “The Epic of Greater America,” *The American Historical Review* 38.3 (April 1933): 448-474. Seventy-five years ago, Bolton argued for a transnational approach to American history. Similar to an acceptance of coevalness, equal footing, and historical interdependence and exchange between America and other nations, I argue that Mormonism neither began nor exists in a cultural or ideological vacuum, and thus bounded or even comparative narratives are incomplete at best. Yet, as with a transnational narrative for American history, this approach can be threatening to exceptionalism (and thus institutional control).

Kirtland, Ohio, Joseph Smith received a revelation from God calling on the Saints to form an army, later named Zion's Camp.

The Lord not only reminded them that they were modeled after ancient Israel, but literally called them "the children of Israel," and promised them a leader like Moses of old (i.e. Joseph Smith). Speaking through Smith, the Lord stated that "the redemption of Zion must needs come by power; [...] and ye must needs be led out [...] as your fathers [the Israelites] were led at the first."³² Still, the Lord gave an even greater promise than that delivered to their predecessors and model, ancient Israel:

Therefore, let not your hearts faint, for I say not unto you as I said unto your fathers: Mine angel shall go up before you, but not my presence. But I say unto you: Mine angels shall go up before you, and also my presence, and in time ye shall possess the goodly land.³³

Zion's Camp left Ohio with this Divine and unconditioned assurance that the redemption of Zion would be a military conquest of and even greater than Old-Testament proportions, with the Lord Himself at the head of the battle. Boldly marching with great difficulty and suffering sickness along the way, the men fully expected to see the Divine redemption of their brethren in Missouri.

Having just crossed the border into Missouri after almost 800 miles of travel, marching under extremely difficult conditions, Smith received another revelation "concerning the redemption of mine [God's] afflicted people."³⁴ Zion's Camp was informed that, "were it not for the transgressions of my people," the Saints in Zion

³² See Doctrine and Covenants (D&C) 103:1-18. The D&C is one of the four books of scripture in the Latter-day Saint canon, including the Bible, Book of Mormon, and Pearl of Great Price. As a collection of Joseph Smith's revelations, it also includes revelations by those who followed him as prophet and president. All references in this thesis refer to the LDS D&C.

³³ D&C 103:19-20

³⁴ D&C 105:1.

“might have been redeemed even now”; but, “they have not learned to be obedient to the things which I required at their hands.”³⁵ Explaining His delay, the Lord complained that the Saints in Zion “are full of all manner of evil, and do not impart of their substance, as becometh saints, to the poor and afflicted among them.”³⁶ Thus, the ready-for-battle militia was told that “it is expedient in me that mine elders should wait for a little season, for the redemption of Zion. For behold, I do not require at their hands to fight the battles of Zion; for, as I said in a former commandment, even so will I fulfil [sic]—I will fight your battles.”³⁷

Perhaps out of the impossibility of the situation, and pending danger of open engagement with the Missouriians, Smith’s vision of the imminent New Jerusalem came into direct conflict with reality. Were it a moment of cognitive dissonance, it would explain why the redemption of Zion went from unqualified to contingent. He was thinking less as prophet and more as president, showing the first signs of institutionalization within Mormonism. Fittingly, upon their return, Smith created the hierarchies of the church, organizing for the first time a quorum of twelve apostles and quorums of seventy. Soldiers of Zion’s Camp made up the majority of those called to serve in these new sacred institutional offices. In fact, in the sacred histories of Mormonism, the failure of the military expedition is explained as necessary training for the new leaders to assist Joseph Smith—the Lord knowing from the beginning the true purpose of the expedition—and Brigham Young is often portrayed as leading the camp side-by-side with Smith. Starting at Zion’s Camp, and increasingly until his death,

³⁵ D&C 105:2-3.

³⁶ D&C 105:2-3.

³⁷ D&C 105:13-14.

Smith's vision of the Second Coming was contingent on the Saints, either to prepare themselves or to lay the proper foundation first. When millennial prophesy and reality did not mesh, Smith then was able to identify a lack of purity as the problem, not his own prophecy.

Brigham Young would carry this institutionalization further. During a period of revival sweeping the nation, Young called on Jedediah M. Grant to use the same methods of fiery preaching of American revivalism, but for the purposes of routinization of Smith's message, especially polygamy. Young felt that if the Saints would but prepare materially and spiritually, then they could build a sovereign kingdom for Christ to receive. In large part, it was an effort to demand conformity regarding polygamy. Many immigrants knew nothing regarding polygamy until their arrival to the territory, which was a terrible surprise. Having been converted to a prophetic, premillennial Mormonism, European immigrants, after having risked everything and traveled great distances to build Zion, were easily disenchanted by Young's practical, routinized theocracy.

Young's response was to send out Grant, known as "Brigham's Sledgehammer," to call the Saints to repentance for not embracing polygamy. Strict orthodoxy was his specialty, particularly as it related to polygamy. Two years before the Reformation, apparently referring to Orson Pratt and others, he taught that "[w]hen the family organization was revealed from heaven—the patriarchal order of God, and Joseph began, on the right and on the left, to add to his family, what a quaking there was in Israel." He then illustrates this lack of faith among the Saints through an imagined conversation from 1842:

Says one brother to another, "Joseph says all covenants [including marriages performed outside of Joseph's priesthood] are done away, and none are binding but

the new covenants; now suppose Joseph should come and say he wanted your wife, what would you say to that?" [The other brother replies,] "I would tell him to go to hell." This was the spirit of many in the early days of this Church.³⁸

Grant's conclusion: The proper response for an orthodox Mormon, if Joseph came to them stating "I want your wife," would be to say, "O yes [...] here she is, [for] there are plenty more."³⁹ Not all, especially newly arrived immigrants, would have difficulty embracing this sort of logic and faith—especially because only Mormon elite males, such as Young and Grant, were favored with plural wives by the institution who controlled the practice, but all were supposed to willingly support it in word and deed.

William Morris

During this revival, Morris was called⁴⁰ as a ward teacher. Taking his priesthood very seriously, he magnified his duties well beyond the original commission. His charge had been to strengthen Young's Reformation; instead, Morris felt that his calling was to criticize Mormonism on all levels. Not surprisingly, he was a dismal failure as ward teacher—and his zealous, "incorrect" reaction to the revival was scoffed at by fellow Mormons. Howard notes that

Before very long, however, Joseph's preaching ran him afoul of local church authorities. Apparently, the issue was polygamy. Morris had received no inkling of the plural marriage practice until his arrival in Salt Lake City in 1853, and he

³⁸Jedediah M. Grant, "The Power of God and the Power of Satan," *Journal of Discourses, Volume 2* (19 February 1854): 10-16. The *Journal of Discourses*, hereafter, is "*JOD*."

³⁹Grant, "The Power of God," *JOD* 2:10-16.

⁴⁰ Callings within Mormonism are issued by priesthood leaders, often on the local level, but they are received as God's will. Morris was called to be a teacher, one of four offices in the Aaronic or "lesser" Priesthood which is charged with looking after the temporal concerns of local churches. Ward teachers during the Mormon Reformation were sent into the homes of members to ensure that they were living up to reform measures of the revival. Given a long list of questions to ask the members, they became a means of extending the power and vision of the church hierarchy.

had never been able to reconcile himself to it. To him it was nothing less than adultery, and his Reformation rhetoric probably reflected that conviction.⁴¹

During this, the lowest point in his life, after losing three wives (and, in turn, a son), he began receiving revelations. Over the next three years, he sent letters to Brigham Young regarding his vision of the kingdom, but without any response. Angry at the Mormon leader's refusal to honor his prophetic calling, and for leaving him in a destitute state, Morris's revelations eventually renounced Young and Utah Mormonism altogether.

As a wandering prophet unwelcome in Zion, by 1860 Morris began to gain a following, especially among other immigrants who had traveled so very far, likely to follow a prophet and not an institution. Noting that the "ethnic background" of Morris's followers is significant, he states that

most of them were Scandinavians, especially Danes, generally unschooled in the English language, unfamiliar with American customs and legal procedures, and disenchanted with Mormon orthodoxy. The source of disillusionment among these Danish converts was not with religious dogma—though many of them seem to have been poorly prepared for the shock of polygamy—as much as with the practical matter of how one wore the mantle of prophet.⁴²

While Young was the epitome of an institutional leader, Morris prophesied boldly in the name of the Lord. By 1861, hundreds had joined, and hundreds more were sympathetic, prompting the LDS authorities to send Apostles John Taylor and Wilford Woodruff—the next two Presidents of the Church after Brigham Young—to investigate. In February of 1861, they excommunicated Morris and several others for apostasy. While this fate ended their membership, it was a much better fate than that suggested by Brother Watts, a Mormon living near the Morrisites, who announced during the proceedings that he

⁴¹ Gordon M. Howard, "Men, Motives, and Misunderstandings: A New Look at the Morrisite War of 1862," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 44 (1976): 112-132. Available online at <http://www.gordonbanks.com/gordon/family/Morrisite.html>, last accessed 17 October 2008.

⁴² Howard, "Men, Motives, and Misunderstandings."

wanted to see their throats cut from ear to ear for violation of their temple oaths.⁴³ While Woodruff and Taylor rebuked Watts, it represented the sentiments of the average Mormon towards apostates.

New Zion and Old Tensions

Internal Dissonance

On April 6th, 1861, on the thirty-first anniversary of Smith organizing the original Mormon church with six members, Morris organized his church with six members: The Church of Jesus Christ of Saints of the Most High, later named The Church of the Firstborn. In Mormon theology, members of the Church of the Firstborn are of an inner circle,⁴⁴ having received the highest ordinances of exaltation received only by Mormon elites. By linking his church with Christ's church in the Celestial Kingdom, Morris was elevating the Morrisites above the Brighamites, while tearing down the institutional stratification of Utah Mormonism and offering membership in the inner circle to everyone.

As the Church of the Firstborn, Morris was revitalizing or reviving primitive Mormonism which was egalitarian and, unlike its then-present form, privileged no one in its *communitas*. He was creating a new Mormonism that honored his vision of the primitive spirit of Mormonism. This, he felt, was the correct approach to building a Zion

⁴³ Part of the Temple Endowment up until the late-twentieth century included "blood oaths," in which those who were initiated into the Endowment promised that terrible things should happen to them if they ever revealed the secrets of the temple. The first such oath of three was that they would be subject to having their "throat [...] cut from ear to ear, and [their] tongue torn out by its roots." This language was toned down in the early twentieth century, and then deleted altogether in 1990. In nineteenth-century Utah, apostates often were found dead with their neck "unhinged," especially during the Mormon Reformation when Blood Atonement was part preached as a necessary doctrine for salvation.

⁴⁴ This is same group of person that Orson Pratt had been excluded before and during his conflict with Smith. Having received their "Second Anointing," these Mormon elites have been assured exaltation. Virtually unknown among the general membership of the LDS Church, it is still practiced today in the temples of the Church.

and awaiting the Second Coming. Sure of an immediate advent, as had been Smith in his early ministry, the Morrisites gathered in preparation for the Second Coming, in their communal center place at Kingston Fort in South Weber, Utah.

Mirroring the exuberance of the first Saints to travel to Independence, Missouri, and with expectations and prophecies of an immediate Advent, the Morrisites made no preparations for the winter for the hundreds who had gathered. One Morrisite remembered that “some of the Morrisites went so far as to tramp down their crops of wheat and corn, doubtless to prove [...] that they were certain that Christ would come before the grain would have time to ripen.”⁴⁵ So soon was the Advent that Morris felt that both his church would be organized and the Second Coming would occur in 1861. As winter set in, and the Morrisites became destitute, they looked forward to the end of the year, knowing that they only had to hold out until then. Several dates in December were promised as the day of the Lord’s Coming, but as the final and hungry days of a cold December set in, the Morrisites’ hopes in an 1861 Advent were dashed.

Festinger’s cognitive dissonance theory, which was outlined in the introduction, is especially applicable to Morris’s prophecies beyond these series of disappointments in late December; it also explains the increasing institutionalization of Joseph Smith’s millennium starting at the time of Zion’s Camp. Cognitive dissonance theory has been brought into current conversations regarding religiously-motivated violence by Charles Selengut, in his book *Sacred Fury*. When mythical realities have failed to materialize within time or end it, Selengut states that those who see their “faith as ultimate truth, as obligatory rules to be followed by all, and believe their leaders and prophets to be God’s

⁴⁵ LeRoy Anderson, *Joseph Morris And The Saga Of The Morrisites* (Logan, Utah: Utah State UP, 1988), 76.

messengers, face an enormous conflict.”⁴⁶ He identifies “three solutions to the experience of cognitive dissonance and chronic religious disappointment: (1) surrender, (2) reinterpretation, and (3) militant transformation”⁴⁷ which “has the greatest propensity for violence.”⁴⁸ Throughout its history, Utah Mormonism has experienced all three responses to cognitive dissonance, the Morrisite War being but one of many militant conquests to transform Zion back to the realm of homogenous Saints. Surrender and reinterpretation were experienced when increasing pressures by the federal government led to the cessation of polygamy, and the begrudging restructuring of families in Zion.

Morris’s experience, however, did not involve surrender or militancy, his army—unlike Brigham’s—being purely symbolic. But when his prophecies failed, like Smith before him Morris began to reinterpret or make redemption contingent. This is best displayed in his revelations that explain why the Lord was delayed: the most prominent reason was that it was necessary that the Mormons come against the Morrisites, so that in their most dire moment the Lord could deliver his people. On 16 December 1861, the Lord stated through Morris that

if mine enemies had come up against my people on that day which they had appointed, I should have come out of my hiding place and swept them off and cleared the way for my people, whether they had been prepared for me or not. But it was better for them that I did not come out in power on that day. They were not prepared for me.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Charles Selengut, *Sacred Fury: Understanding Religious Violence* (Lanham, Maryland: AltaMira Press, 2004), 59.

⁴⁷ Charles Selengut, *Sacred Fury*, 57.

⁴⁸ Charles Selengut, *Sacred Fury*, 59.

⁴⁹ Similar to the Doctrine and Covenants which contains Joseph Smith’s revelations, the collected revelations of William Morris are found within *The Spirit Prevails: Containing the Revelations, Articles, and Letters of Joseph Morris, published by George S. Dove, 1886*. This extremely rare (and long) book of scripture is available within only a few historical archives, but most easily accessible in PDF form, originally digitized at the University of California libraries and available at the following site:

The next day, the Lord (Jesus Christ) states through Morris that because of the Mormon's failure, He had to travel back to heaven—which the Morrisite revelations indicate is a time-consuming task, even for the Lord (the later examination on theology elucidates this odd “reality”). Once there in Heaven, Christ through Morris states that He and His Father had “to meet in council and make other arrangements; and *we had to take time* in order to do so,” explaining the Lord's delay.⁵⁰ But fear not, for “We [God the Father and Son] shall soon prepare ourselves again; and when I come again, my people shall not be disappointed. I shall not have to trust to the failures of mine enemies any more. I am the Lord.”⁵¹

Disenchanted, some began leaving the Order, taking goods with them; because of this, already scarce food stores became critical. The situation looked bleak as the looming date of April 6th approached—pregnant with meaning throughout the Restoration as the day of Christ's birth and day of the Church's Latter Day organization; and particularly important for the Morrisites, it was the one year anniversary of their founding.

On April 3rd the Morrisite Lord chided His people for not having finished their preparations for His “almost immediat[e]” return, which included preparing four horses:

<http://www.archive.org/details/spiritprevails00morrinch> , last accessed 18 September 2008. This particular verse is 168:2, given 16 Dec. 1861, pg. 297.

⁵⁰ Spirit Prevails 170:5 (17 Dec. 1861), 302, emphasis mine.

⁵¹ Spirit Prevails 170:5 (17 Dec. 1861), 302. Interestingly, both Joseph Smith and Joseph Morris made the Second Coming contingent on the Mormons—and in both cases the Mormons not following through was used to explain why the Lord did not come. But as with Morris questioning the Zion of institutional Mormonism, more and more Morrisites began questioning the routinization of the Morrisite Zion.

red, black, white, and pale in color to herald in the Apocalypse.⁵² After finishing His comments on the horses, the Lord gets angry with those who trifle with His property:

You shall suffer no more apostates to take away property which they have consecrated unto me both by oath and deed; and if they attempt to do so, you must appoint men to stop them on the spot. If they wish to leave my people, they must leave empty-handed.⁵³

Apostates in general, however, rarely honor such revelations as valid. In the spring of 1862, growing internal tensions over apostasy and property came to a head, preparing the way for external conflict.

Morrisites captured and imprisoned three members who, while leaving, were also attempting to recover or replace their former possessions. One of them, William Jones, an early and wealthy convert to the Morrisites, was the “first to acknowledge Morris as a prophet of God” when Morris was still destitute.⁵⁴ Anderson notes the irony in this situation over Morris’s first convert leaving, and inadvertently starting the beginning of the end; but it is also fitting, for Morris had failed to follow through in his original message, but was predicating the Second Coming on so many material preparations. And as such, Jones likely didn’t see any reason to honor Morris’s revelations that apostates could not reclaim property, especially since it was issued *post facto* from when Jones entered into the United Order.

With Jones and two others held prisoner for trying to take their property, territorial authorities demanded their release. But the Morrisites refused, stating that they honored no authority but their own, which was the highest on earth. In fact, the Lord

⁵² See Revelation 6:2-8; Spirit Prevails 254:1.

⁵³ Spirit Prevails 254:3 (3 April 1862), 490.

⁵⁴ Anderson, *Joseph Morris*, 103.

reassured Morris that the taking of these men prisoner was necessary to get the Mormons to follow through on attacking the Morrisites; on the 29th of May, the Lord declared to Morris: “You understand my situation very well. You know that I cannot cut off your enemies until they have gathered themselves together and made the attempt to come up against my people with the intention to destroy them.”⁵⁵

At least half of this prophecy came true: on 10 June 1862, a posse was organized among the Mormons, and likely by the leaders of Mormon congregations, to enforce the writ of *habeas corpus* and new warrants for Morrisite leaders.⁵⁶ Robert Burton, a colonel in the territorial militia, was charged with enforcing the order, but

it was not in that capacity that he directed the posse; rather, he rode as deputy territorial marshal. Territorial Marshal Henry W. Lawrence expressed opposition to such an armed confrontation with the Morrisites and left the territory rather than be a part of it.⁵⁷

Lawrence would later become one of the founding Godbeites, a dissenting group to be examined in the next chapter. Although reports vary as to the strength, five companies and volunteers of at least hundreds of men and perhaps a thousand, equipped with military armaments, positioned themselves around Kingston Fort on 13 June 1862.

The Morrisite War

With a Mormon Army situated to attack, the Morrisites were both alarmed and relieved: it was a fulfillment of long-awaited prophecy, and they expected the coming Lord to rescue them. They gathered together to discuss Burton’s terms, brought to them by the young boy who had been shepherding outside the fort and not by the posse’s

⁵⁵ Spirit Prevails 289:1 (29 May 1862), 585.

⁵⁶ Anderson, *Joseph Morris*, 117.

⁵⁷ Howard, “Men, Motives, and Misunderstandings.

officers. Burton had given them a deadline to respond, but it had taken time for the boy to bring the message, then for Morris to receive a revelation, and then for the revelation to be read to the congregation. Before they could even respond, Burton ordered the artillery to shoot two warning shots from a twelve pound Howitzer. Countless times throughout their revelations, the Lord had promised that while blood would be shed, it would be Mormon. But the second of the two “warning shots” from the posse came in the form of a bounding cannonball—which smashed through the fort, taking lives and inflicting serious injury, and sent the Morrisites rushing to defend themselves.

By 15 June they could no longer fight off the Mormons. Morris, not knowing that his life was all but spent, received the following from the Lord:

My faithful people have nearly spent their physical strength, and used up their ammunition, and when they have done so, and are not able to defend themselves against their enemies any longer, they will have done their part, and will be pronounced faithful before me, having done their duty. Until my people have come to this point, I cannot lawfully come to their release.⁵⁸

As the posse entered the fort, Burton shot Morris dead with his revolver at close range. Bigler notes that “[i]t had the look of an execution.”⁵⁹ William Banks was also shot in the neck, but survived until his suspicious death later that night, supposedly having his neck unhinged as Bro. Watts had suggested. And like many who found themselves on the wrong side of the law in the old West, their bodies were displayed in a gory spectacle at City Hall as a warning to those who came to view the bodies. It begs the question of which *law* were they on the wrong side of?

⁵⁸ Spirit Prevails 304:3, 629-30.

⁵⁹ Bigler, *Forgotten Kingdom*, 213.

Burton later reported during a trial that he felt that Morris was attempting to retrieve a weapon; others there recorded that Morris was moving towards the steps of a building so that he could address his people, the weapons stacked off in the distance. Two women rushed up just as their prophet was being slain, and in the confusion they were also killed. Burton was tried for the murder of those slain but was found not guilty by a Mormon jury, that the deaths were accidental or in self-defense and that the posse commander was only fulfilling his duty towards the territory. But if his focus was solely on the good of the territory, it contradicts the histories of at least three Morrisites who recorded that the commander from the territorial militia entered the fort using religious language.

Two reported Burton's words as, "I want no more of your *damned* apostasy"⁶⁰; and, speaking to Morris, "give yourself up, in the name of the Lord."⁶¹ The historical records of the period are either incomplete or contradictory as to whether Brigham Young sent Burton on a theocratic mission to exterminate Morris. Howard states:

To what extent Burton's actions were motivated by sectarian commitment is difficult to determine exactly, but it may be presumed substantial. Mormon authorities took a hard line toward apostate groups at that time, and Burton was close to Brigham Young and the heartbeat of Mormon orthodoxy. Young himself, traditionally uncharitable toward his enemies, publicly equated the Morrisites with the devil, directed that they be ostracized, and forbade their reentry into Mormonism.⁶²

⁶⁰ George Dove, an eyewitness leaves out "damned," which is included by Eardley as he compiled a history for the Morrisites; see Anderson, *Joseph Morris*, 134, 139.

⁶¹ Anderson, *Joseph Morris*, 134.

⁶² Howard, "Men, Motives, and Misunderstandings."

Whether Young sent Burton or not to kill Morris, he was determined to see the Morrisites suffer in this life and the next: “Let them wait a thousand years,⁶³” he announced “from the pulpit of the Salt Lake bowery shortly after the siege.”

But the US Attorney General for the territory, Sumner Howard, writing to the Justice Department in Washington D.C., felt strongly that Brigham Young was responsible, and should be tried and arrested for the “murders.” His report of July 28th, 1877, states that Young “sent his ‘Danite⁶⁴ Chief,’ Robert T. Burton, with a posse of men to break up the Morrisites and gave positive orders that neither Morris nor Banks should be brought back alive” and later that “the murder was committed by the direct order of Brigham Young.”⁶⁵ Howard then referenced a conversation that he and his superior had had with U.S. President Hayes regarding the inevitable danger when the “Mormon leaders were to be arrested for their crimes” and worried about a lack of federal troops in Salt Lake City. For this reason, the report was sent to the Secretary of War. But U.S. Attorney Howard never was able to bring Young to justice, for Brigham died one month and one day later.

In addition to this report by a “gentile” government official, and the histories of the Morrisites, a reliable history by a Mormon apostle indicates that Brigham Young was closely involved. Judge Kinney, who issued the warrant against Morris, “later told Apostle Woodruff that he had ‘not taken any step without Counciling Preside[n]t Young

⁶³ I.E., a thousand years in Spirit Prison or hell before anyone completed a proxy restoration of temple and membership blessings for any Morrisite.

⁶⁴ Danites were Mormon vigilantes, with a long and colorful history going back to Joseph Smith and at times questionable. During the theocratic period, it was usually Danites such as Burton who carried out the dirty work of the kingdom, creating great fear in the hearts of apostates.

⁶⁵ Utah State Historical Archives, Gordon M. Howard Collection: Mss. B-279, Box 2, Folder 8.

and when the men came to swear out their Affidavit I told them they must ask Preside[n]t Young.’ They came back and said ‘they had done so & Preside[n]t Young told them to go to Judge Kinney & get out there Affidavits.’⁶⁶ Young at the time was acting-governor, the theocratic State of Deseret revived after the Civil War began and the federally appointed governor had fled the territory.

But if the accounts are reliable, there is a difficulty in separating out apostate from felon in the State of Deseret. For Burton, Zion and territory, church and military, seem to have been awfully close in his mind, if not the same. Similar to those involved in the Mountain Meadows Massacre, killing Morris may have been seen as a necessary evil to preserve the kingdom. Stating that it is difficult to discern if Brigham Young “endorsed such harsh sanctions against apostates” as he had a decade earlier when Mormon theocratic rule was strongest, LeRoy Anderson states that “at least one contemporary Mormon historian [believes that he did, and] concludes that Mormons did not disturb the Morrisites prior to mid-1861, because ‘the Army was in Utah and the Gentiles were in control.’”⁶⁷ Even Morrisite revelations confirm the danger that the group faced once the federal troops were gone, but the Lord reassured them that it was necessary to bring the Mormons out against them and “when they [the Mormons] make the attempt to kill, I [the Lord] will destroy them according to celestial law.”⁶⁸

However the order came down, Morrisites and Mormons expected a struggle, and they saw it as playing out in cosmic terms. Surviving a Greatest Disappointment after the death of their prophet by Burton’s revolver, the remaining Morrisites relocated all over

⁶⁶ Bigler, *Forgotten Kingdom*, 211.

⁶⁷ Anderson, *Joseph Morris*, 82.

⁶⁸ Bigler, *Forgotten Kingdom*, 211.

the West, existing for about a hundred years after their second Martyrdom, neither the first martyr Smith nor second martyr Morris living long enough to see their visions of Zion completely realized. While sociological factors such as immigration, socioeconomic status, and institutional stratification led to the division between Mormons and Morrisites, it was their respective ideologies that led to violent conflict and not just an easy relationship. To understand the mindsets of the participants inside and out of Kingston Fort, I'd like to review Morrisite and Mormon theologies, within their historical contexts, that led to the Morrisite War.

Theology, Theocracy, and Violence

When reading Morris's revelations, it becomes apparent that he perceived Jesus as an exalted Man, with many of the same constraints that a human might face. In one revelation, the Lord spoke about how many enemies He could slay per minute, compared to how many an angel could slay; He talked of traveling back and forth between Heaven and Earth, of meetings with His Father, of being very busy and frustrated with foiled plans, of not knowing exactly when things will happen. But one constant is the Lord repeatedly assuring Morris that when He would arrive, he would hand things over to him, because it would be Morris's place to preside over the Earth. Even the Lord answers to Morris on some things. A contemporary of Morris, Ludwig Feuerbach, provides a partial answer to this startling endowment of power in a human: as one of the young Hegelians (which included Marx), Feuerbach pushed his mentor's teachings beyond a realm of synthesis between man and an actual Divine, but saw the Divine as a projection of idealized humanity. For Feuerbach, theology is but anthropology; for Morris, in a

believer's sense, he would have also seen theology as anthropology, but the reverse as well: anthropology as theology.⁶⁹

This is not just a feature of Morrisite Anthropology.⁷⁰ Orson Pratt, writing in his newspaper *The Seer*, equated the necessity of polygamy in the context of populating worlds. As a potential god, Pratt expected that if he had two wives, he could produce spiritual offspring twice as fast as having just one. And once he and his wives had a critical mass of spiritual offspring, then it would be time to organize a planet in the same fashion as described in Genesis 1. For someone like Brigham Young or Joseph Smith who had many, many wives, they would reach Godhood all the faster. This isn't unique to Utah Mormonism. Smith's most famous exposition on exaltation, the King Follett discourse (delivered during the funeral of Elder Follett, the deceased's first name being "King"), is not accepted throughout the Restoration—some questioning the transcription. In his funeral address in April of 1844, shortly before his death, Smith purportedly said,

*God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man,
and sits enthroned in yonder heavens! That is the great secret.*⁷¹

But as early as 1832, in his "Vision of the Three Degrees of Glory," he stated of the redeemed of Christ in the Celestial Kingdom, as members of "the Church of the Firstborn," "are gods, even the sons of God."⁷² This vision is much more widely accepted in the Restoration, although interpretations vary. Morris's Human God wasn't

⁶⁹ This fits well within the Snow couplet of "As man is, God once was; as God is, man may become." In a non-Mormon, secular setting, Morris's (and Mormon views on exaltation in general) do not contradict but only reinforce Feuerbach's thesis.

⁷⁰ N.B. the capital "A" in Anthropology.

⁷¹ Joseph Smith, "King Follett Discourse," *History of the [LDS] Church, Vol. 6* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book, 1946), 302-317.

⁷² D&C 76:54, 58 (LDS); see also Community of Christ D&C 76:5e, 5h.

foreign to Joseph Smith. Even Brigham Young's Adam-God doctrine is but an effort to explain Smith's principles, not expand upon them.

While the climax of Smith's theology can be found in Nauvoo, it all began to form once the *prophet* shifted more to *president* and made the millennium contingent upon good works. In Zion's Camp is the genesis of King Follett, the dormant concepts of man's potential and God's boundaries in Restoration scripture awakened and magnified until potential human exaltation was possible. While Smith may have been departing from primitive Christianity in doctrine, he was in step with the reactions of the descendants of first-generation Christians. Grant Underwood states that "[a] theme common in the study of early Christianity is the 'delay of the "Parousia" (Coming).'"⁷³ For the Saints, it was the delay of Zion. Both resulted in routinization for the sake of survival.

Underwood continues that when the End did not come in the lifetimes of the earliest saints, "the Catholic Church was born. [...] Institutionalization occurred as a church hierarchy was established, creeds were formalized, and a canon was fixed." Of course, this left the problem of why the prophecies were not fulfilled, but

[b]y applying cognitive dissonance theory to early Christianity, it has been argued that the delay intensified a sense of mission, as Christians subconsciously sought to convince themselves, through successfully converting others, that the movement was right after all. Thus, disconfirmation [of an immediate Advent] did not necessarily result in discreditation.⁷⁴

Similar to Christianity, Smith telling the elders to wait and prepare, for Zion wasn't ready to be redeemed, extended the mythical journey and horizons of might have been a dead

⁷³ Grant Underwood, *The Millenarian World of Early Mormonism* (Champaign, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 14.

⁷⁴ Underwood, *Millenarian World*, 14.

end. But for William Morris and his followers, routinization and deferment was an end—a failure of the prophet, not the prophecy. Had he been in Zion’s Camp when Smith called retreat, Morris would have affixed bayonet and charged. And Morris got his chance three decades later, resulting in the end of his life.

Smith’s deferred salvation of Zion was both shaped by and shaped the theology of the Restoration, sharpening the already established focus on good works before Divine assistance would become available.⁷⁵ And so while I agree with Underwood’s statement that Mormon cosmology and soteriology, in the time of Smith, were shaped by “millenarian apocalypticism,” I assert the converse as well, that Mormon theology shaped their millennium in unique ways.⁷⁶ The year previous, Smith had received a revelation outlining three degrees of potential glory in the afterlife. Almost everyone is rewarded in this system to varying degrees of glory in the next life, based on the life led on earth. He also established a place of “outer darkness,” a fourth estate of no glory or light for the “sons of Perdition.”⁷⁷ Gradations in soteriology influenced eschatology, with corporate salvation—the redemption of Zion and the Second Coming—reflecting an earned individual exaltation, yet the routinization of Zion also pushing the possibilities of human potential as Saints prepared to purify themselves to hasten the Second Coming.

Thus, Smith’s notions of grace and works, judgment and salvation, did more than expand the traditional Christian soteriological binaries of heaven and hell: they allowed

⁷⁵ I will not pretend to know exactly what Joseph Smith believed on the subject of grace and works; however, the Book of Mormon suggests that while the grace of Christ alone produces salvation, still works are required to bring the believer into a prerequisite state of reconciliation with God before grace is received. “For we labor diligently to write, to persuade our children, and also our brethren, to believe in Christ, and to be reconciled to God; for we know that it is by grace that we are saved, *after all we can do*” (2 Nephi 25:23 LDS, italics mine). See also 2 Nephi 10:24.

⁷⁶ Underwood, *Millenarian World*, 57.

⁷⁷ See D&C 88.

room for the creation of a sacred humanism, bringing Divinity to humanity and humanity to Divinity in a sacralization and partial reversal of Feuerbach's thesis—the young Hegelian only seeing religion as imagined shackles, not a route to human exaltation. Eternal progress and Divine potential within humanity allowed Smith, near the end of his life, to inaugurate the Kingdom with himself crowned as king. Smith was not claiming to be Christ, but making the necessary earthly preparations for His Grace to then empower the Kingdom. This literal coronation took place in Nauvoo in the presence of Smith's secret theocratic Council of Fifty. His two immediate successors in the LDS Church, Brigham Young and John Taylor, held the “theocratic office of ‘King over Israel on Earth,’”⁷⁸ and in various evolutions of Smith's kingship so did at least three of his successors outside of the LDS Church: Gladden Bishop, James Strang, and Joseph Morris.

Underwood seems to miss the full seriousness of the connection between Smith's theocracy with his theology: he intentionally “mutes the connection between Mormon millenarianism and revolution” by downplaying Mormon rhetoric and theocratic preparations as merely a “symbolic formality.”⁷⁹ Though I agree with Underwood that the Mormon “transformation of the world awaited the supernaturally inaugurated millennium,”⁸⁰ still I submit that they expected an apotheosis of their earthly kingdom through the Second Coming, much as their earthly preparations, through the supernatural grace of Christ, allowed for their individual apotheosis. Hence, Smith's “formalities”

⁷⁸ “Wilford Woodruff declined to convene a meeting of the Fifty or receive its theocratic office of ‘King over Israel on Earth’”; see D. Michael Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy: Extensions of Power* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Signature Books, 1997), 303.

⁷⁹ Underwood, *Millenarian World*, 108-09

⁸⁰ Underwood, *Millenarian World*, 108

were absolutely serious—especially apparent as his vision was transplanted to Young’s Deseret. Divisions between sacred and secular, Divinity and humanity, were of degree, not ontological. As Morris revealed a very Human God, he was reflecting this tradition. With so much resting on humanity, the Mormons guarded challenges to their theocracy as seriously as they defended their faith: they had become one and the same, making holy war possible against threats to the kingdom.

Alternative visions of Zion are a threat to the exclusive authority of the institution and to the exclusion salvation and exaltation offered through their Mormonism. Still, the denial of coevalness by the Mormon institution towards other Mormons today is much less serious than the rhetoric of its nineteenth-century counterpart and actions by its members. And today, with a loss of a Mormon theocracy and millenarian action (think violence), it is impossible for Mormons to fathom events like the Morrisite War or the Mountain Meadows massacre. Both of these last two events shocked the nation and Mormons themselves in how far Mormons were willing to go to defend their sovereign interests.

The seriousness of Mormonism’s kingdom building can be found in the example of the unease of those who lived next door to Mormons in Nauvoo; Bigler notes:

Most alarming to the neighbors was the Nauvoo Legion, a semi-private army, that grew under compulsory military training to about four thousand men, roughly half the size of the regular US Army at that time. This imposing force, finely uniformed and fully equipped, was commanded by the nation’s highest ranking military officer, Lt. Gen. Joseph Smith. It stood at the “disposal of the may,” also Joseph Smith, “in executing the laws and ordinances of the city” as interpreted by the Nauvoo Municipal Court under its chief justice, Joseph Smith.⁸¹

⁸¹ Bigler, *Forgotten Kingdom*, 28.

To find a theocratic ruler in the history of the United States with more power would be difficult—that is, if you were forced to look outside of Mormonism. Morris was mimicking Smith, having himself ordained king and organizing the armies of Israel; James Strang, another contender for Joseph Smith’s office after the martyrdom, came closer, simultaneously serving as a state legislator and king over a Mormon theocracy of nearly twelve thousand followers before he, too, was killed as were Smith and Morris.

But it is Brigham Young who best fits Smith’s model of theocratic ruler. As Prophet and President of the Mormon Church, he also served as territorial governor, *de jure* from 1850 to 1856, and *de facto* until his death in 1877—though federal appointees had been sent to take his place. Young in Deseret greatly exceeded his predecessor in Nauvoo in political (but not prophetic) power, though it was not all consolidated in the man, still Young never *truly* delegated. Quinn notes that “[u]nlike Smith, Young never fully trusted anyone and kept every subordinate on a short leash.”⁸² Young never trusted non-Mormons to enter the theocratic Council of Fifty, and “barely tolerated them in political office,” subordinating everything in Deseret to the Mormon ecclesiastical hierarchy.⁸³

Within this environment, Morrisites converts risked their lives in order to embrace a more charismatic form of Mormonism—one that was more true to their worldview, to what they had been willing to sacrifice everything for. Like other theocratic states, violence can be seen as a necessary measure in purifying the people of God; during times

⁸² Quinn, *Extensions of Power*, 226.

⁸³ Quinn, *Extensions of Power*, 226.

of millennial millenarian reform, these efforts can get quite frenzied—as in Mountain Meadows.

The Mormons were deadly serious about enforcing Divine law and will. Blood Atonement, a doctrine originally taught by Joseph Smith “as early as 1843,” indicated that certain sins were so heinous they were beyond the pale of Christ’s atonement. These would require the shedding of guilty blood, poured out on the ground, as a personal atonement for certain crimes, such as adultery, murder, apostasy, and theft. Marvin Gardner, writing on capital punishment and Mormonism, notes that the “most fervent sermons on blood atonement were preached during the reformation movement in the 1850s, a period of intense Mormon revivalism bordering on fanaticism.”⁸⁴ Although the institution would eventually claim it never really happened, the concept lingered, and “[f]rom 1851 to 1888 Utah Law allowed persons to be ‘beheaded’ if found guilty of murder.”⁸⁵ But this was not just a nineteenth-century option: up until 2004 when the laws were changed due to international interest in the barbaric practice, death-row inmates in Utah had the option of “death by firing squad.”⁸⁶

This ultimate form of justice had been transplanted from Smith’s Kingdom on the Mississippi to Young’s Deseret. As part of his theocratic system in Nauvoo which later

⁸⁴ Marvin R. Gardner, “Mormonism and Capital Punishment: A Doctrinal Perspective, Past and Present,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 12.1 (Spring 1979).

⁸⁵ Quinn, *Extensions of Power*, 247.

⁸⁶ As the chief means of execution in the state since the adoption of the Deseret Constitution, this “Wild West anachronism” as one lawmaker put it, allowed convicted persons to shed their blood in an atonement of their sins; Dan Harrie reports that “in years past, the religious concept of blood atonement—holding that the spilling of blood was required to pay for the worst sins—made lawmakers reluctant to outlaw the firing squad. Early leaders of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints taught the philosophy of blood atonement, although it never was adopted as an official belief of the church. More than 80 percent of the members of the Utah Legislature belong to the LDS Church” (Dan Harrie’s “Senate votes to end firing squads in Utah,” *The Salt Lake Tribune* (Salt Lake City, Utah), Feb 20, 2004: pg. A.1.

found its way west, Smith said at a meeting of the Nauvoo City Council, “‘I was opposed to hanging, even if a man kill another.’ Instead, ‘I will shoot him, or cut off his head, spill his blood on the ground, and let the smoke thereof ascend up to God; and if ever I have the privilege of making a law on that subject, I will have it so.’”⁸⁷

Discounting the statements of “some LDS historians” who claim that “blood-atonement sermons were simply Brigham Young’s use of ‘rhetorical devices designed to frighten wayward individuals into conformity with Latter-day Saint principles,’” Quinn asserts that “Pioneer Mormons took blood-atonement sermons seriously and literally.”⁸⁸ With the coming of the US Army as part of the Utah War, “The Utah Reformation’s religious frenzy was now joined with war hysteria.”⁸⁹

The Utah War was a federal effort to put down insurrection and rebellion among the Mormons in the Utah territory. It also reflected one of the agendas of the larger revivalistic fervor in America, to root out polygamy—which was one of two prongs of reform of the newly-formed Republican party’s platform, the other being slavery. In addition to sending a replacement for Brigham Young as territorial governor, troops marched on Salt Lake, but were cut off by the Nauvoo Legion near the border with Wyoming. No major battles occurred before a peaceful negotiation was reached.

Although their surrender to federal authorities cooled the Reformation, still, by the time that the federal troops left for the Civil War, millennial hopes were on the rise. Mormons saw the Civil War as punishment from God for the death of the Prophet.

⁸⁷ D. Michael Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Signature Books, 1994), 112.

⁸⁸ Quinn, *Extensions*, 246, 249.

⁸⁹ Quinn, *Extensions*, 251.

Young seriously considered succession, and as the North battled the South he revived again the theocratic State of Deseret (without federal approval), to which he was voted governor “9,880 to zero.”⁹⁰ The Morrisites had just emerged during this period when the power of the Mormon theocracy surged for its last time, and during an age of blood atonement. Anticipating trouble, Morrisites were expecting a violent standoff with the Mormons to bring about the Millennium; and in detaining prisoners, they hoped to evoke a response so that the Lord could come out of his hiding place. The stage had been set.

Conclusion

Challenging the Mormon Theocracy was a deadly game. Mormon theology had stipulations for violence; Morrisite theology expected violence. The Mormon institution during its theocratic years—officially, 1849 to 1851, and then a brief resurgence of Deseret in 1862 with a shadow government in force until 1870—employed violence to protect its sovereign interests. Individual Mormons translated violent rhetoric, doctrines, and practices into acts of violence not sanctioned by the institution but, they thought, in Zion’s best interests. By forming an alternative Zion, and challenging Brigham Young’s authority, the doctrines of polygamy, and the nature of the Millennium, Morrisites expected and received a deadly response from their Mormon neighbors. But believing Morrisites saw the outcome differently in their minds: often immigrants, they left their homes and traveled thousands of miles to be part of something prophetic. Instead, they misunderstood Young’s Zion. It was fitting that Morris led them, for he didn’t fit into Zion, either—mistaking a revival for a *revival*.

⁹⁰ Bigler, *Forgotten Kingdom*, 205.

The Morrisites were challenging Mormon society, just as Mormons challenged American society. For both Mormons and Morrisites, on perhaps a subconscious level, courting persecution was necessary to their cosmos. Both Morrisites and Mormons were deadly serious about reviving the millennial kingdom. But while both engaged in questionable, illegal, or atrocious behavior, they were ultimately waiting for the most radical aspect of their revolution against the established order and laws: the Second Coming of Christ and worldwide implementation of His Kingdom.

Morris, unable to gain institutional support of his prophetic calling—and supposedly even asking the RLDS Church to accept him as prophet⁹¹—then stretched the boundaries of Mormonism to provide room for himself and his followers outside of the institution in Salt Lake. And it resulted in a violent ride for his group, for he followed Smith all the way to martyrdom for his cause. Among the Morrisites, charismatic prophets did not end with Morris, leading to doctrinal innovation upon innovation ever increasing the movement’s theological distance from the original Latter Day Saint founding—which perhaps was to the detriment of the movement’s life expectancy—keeping the Morrisites true to the unconditionally new, utopian vision of the Restoration as they saw it.

And true to early Mormonism’s experience, the Morrisites were persecuted and driven from their homes, unable to build the temple in Jackson County, Missouri. The Morrisite’s timing was poor, *if* they had wished to avoid conflict. Had they emerged a few years later when the Godbeites did, it is likely that the Morrisite War would have

⁹¹ In a letter to the RLDS Historian, Gordon Howard asks if the RLDS Archives have a letter that “Joseph Morris wrote to your Church President asking to come up as hed [sic] of your Church?” The RLDS Historian’s response is that such a letter is not in the archives, possibly having been lost in a fire of the Lamoni *Herald* Office. For this correspondence, see Utah State Historical Archives, Gordon M. Howard Collection, Mss. B-279, Box 1, Folder 6.

never happened. But perhaps—since so much of their millenarianism hinged upon war with the Mormons—this was an ideal period to emerge: one of high tension and conflict.

Morris's experience with Brigham Young is but one of many historical instances of conflict of believing but dissident Mormons, which often is derived from the tension between obedience to principles and obedience to a religious institution. The call for a return to primitive Mormon principles allows the believing but dissident Mormon to protest the Mormon institution without renouncing Mormonism itself. It is a survival mechanism when new institutional directions conflict with the believer's understanding of correct Mormonism, allowing Mormons to remain faithful to principles (and thus their worldview) while questioning the institution.

In all of this, the Morrisites attempted to out Mormon the Mormons. They expected at Christ's Second Coming to gather to Salt Lake City, to the site where the Salt Lake Temple now stands, and begin their march to Independence with Christ at their head, to build the unrealized city and Temple that Joseph originally envisioned.⁹² At this New Jerusalem, Edenic Hopes would be realized in Zion. Layers of Judaism, Christianity, and Mormonism all contributed to this Morrisite vision, as they recapitulated each, entering the mythical time that their predecessors has since moved out of. Morris was forever a liminal being. His followers that survived had to deal with the crisis of his death, much as the Mormons did with Smith in 1844. Future Morrisite prophets continued his prophetic impulse, creating revelation upon revelation until Morrisitism became far removed from Latter Day Saint theology but not its founding

⁹² The Spirit Prevails 21, pg. 31.

impetus. They were on a journey of greater Mormonism, finding space beyond the mainstream to experience the charismatic power of the early Restoration.

CHAPTER 3 BREAKING THE ECONOMIC BACK OF ZION

Introduction

“[M]ore of the protector than the prophet, Brigham at first was conservative, kind, and fatherly. [...] And it is but just to remark that much of Utah's subsequent prosperity is due to his wise and cautious policy. But Brigham Young was the antipodes of his impulsive predecessor, and soon transformed a religion that abounded with spiritual manifestations, to a materialistic theocracy, terribly practical and essentially Mosaic in all [its] characteristics.”⁹³

Thus spoke William S. Godbe, once protégé of and close friend to Brigham Young, who lamented the shift from a charismatic Mormonism “abounding with spiritual manifestations” to the routinized, institutional version that was devoid of primitive Mormonism’s power. As the namesake of the Godbeites, Godbe was one of a group of Mormons who, in the late 1860s and early 1870s, were fearful of the level of control the Mormon institution had in political and economic affairs. “‘Think freely—and think forever!’ was” their slogan, “devised by Godbeite co-founder E.L.T. Harrison [...] Harrison decried the idea that God intended the priesthood to do the thinking of the Mormon people.”⁹⁴

The plans of the Godbeites started with breaking the economic back of Zion through the introduction of mining to the territory. This, they felt, would undermine Brigham’s theocratic and religious power. With the institution weakened, they planned to reshape Mormonism, turning it to a more charismatic message that was at the same time more modern. Harrison, at his Church disciplinary court jointly held with Godbe’s,

⁹³ "The Situation in Utah" an address by W. S. Godbe, Esq., of SLC, delivered in Cavendish Rooms, London, on Sunday Evening, December 10, 1871--Reported in *The Medium and Daybreak*, December 15th, 1871, pg. 406

⁹⁴ Hampton C. Godbe Papers, MS 664, Special Collections: Manuscripts, Marriot Library, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah. See box 7, folder 8.

stated that he didn't want to leave the Church, but only “wanted to bring about some reforms and make Mormonism respectable, so that it would bear the light of day and of the Nineteenth Century.”⁹⁵ For them, the simultaneously “new and everlasting”⁹⁶ message of the Restoration was the universalism and spiritualism of early and British Mormonism.

Like the Morrisites, the Godbeites were rejecting institutional Mormonism while embracing the spirit and message they knew in Great Britain. Unlike Morris, Godbe was successful both financially and within the Mormon priesthood. He was not shocked by polygamy, and was a close associate of Young. Instead, Godbe and his fellow Mormon Protestants, in what he termed “The New Movement,” represent the intellectual appeal of Mormonism in Great Britain. Where Morris’s response might be seen as literalistic, Godbeites mirrored German Higher Criticism in their response to scripture and revelation, and they charted a liberal course that championed the individual and human progress. The Godbeite experience underscores elements of early Mormonism’s universalism and spiritualism not present within Morrisitism, but speaks to the same urge to return to a more charismatic Mormonism.

This chapter, through the experience of the Godbeites, again substantiates the gravity of a Mormon worldview. Viewing the institution at the center of Mormonism, centripetal forces, created by the institution, hold Mormons close to the center of

⁹⁵ “Lawrence Testifies,” *The Daily Tribune*, Friday Morning Edition, Nov 22, 1889. Available at the University of Utah, Marriot Library, Special Collections, Manuscript Division, Hampton C. Godbe Papers MS 664, Box 4, Folder 8.

⁹⁶ Joseph Smith referred to the Restored Gospel and its ordinances as being both “new and everlasting.” Not a contradiction, Smith was stating that his message had ancient origins but had been lost to humanity at the death of Christ’s apostles. Restored again to the earth, the true Gospel was new to the nineteenth-century.

institutional authority and sanction. But, when the axis of rotation is altered—i.e., through the shifting of targets by an adaptive institution—the momentary asymmetry results in centrifugal force for those near or beyond the new fringes, often sending them into orbits. This is moving-target orthodoxy. It is intended to ensure institutional perpetuity, patch potential cracks in the Mormon cosmos, and keep the faith of the members secure. Mormon institutional leaders known collectively as “the Brethren” take an “eternal,” “unchanging” message and change it, while claiming that in doing so they are reaffirming the eternal nature of ongoing revelation, and of the power of the priesthood that they represent. Thus, the act of setting of new axes of rotation is more essential than any previous axis established during a former period. The idea of *Follow the Prophet*, more aptly termed “Follow the President,” has the potential to override any original principles established by Smith.

Mormon scholar Newell Bringhurst captures this best when he said that “Obviously, Joseph Smith would be excommunicated today for practicing polygamy. That’s the supreme irony.” Those who are converted to the principles of a particular period, and not the process of *Follow the Prophet*, face the crisis of being believing but dissident Mormons. The institution would say that they are not Mormons, for Mormonism is to follow the Brethren above all else. But the experience of believing dissidents suggests that, as they continue to embrace a Mormon cosmos, they are experiencing a larger Mormonism outside of institutional definition. These Mormons are not able to condone the institution when, in their eyes, it uses Mormonism as an excuse to pull power unto the Brethren at the cost of a charismatic, or more primitive message to which they were converted.

The Godbeites represent a liberal faction within Mormon schisms, but still was true to the paradigmatic moment of Mormon apostasy. Through their liberalism they were affirming Mormon principles over Mormon presidents—specifically, individual liberties over institutional authority. They were, in effect, telling Young that he had moved orthodoxy (and thus the definition of all things Mormon) too far, for all the wrong reasons, and at a terrible price. In the process of reclaiming an earlier Mormon practice and belief, they were seeking to reconcile and heal dissonance within their Mormon cosmos. By decentering and removing the institution from the center of the Mormon narrative, for the believing but dissident it is not about leaving Mormonism behind but returning to what they see as true Mormonism, devoid of institutional aberrations. They are leaving a dead religion and returning to the spirit-filled message that the institution has left behind. This is the story of the Godbeites.

Godbeite research is most indebted to the work of Ron Walker, especially in his 1998 book *Wayward Saints: The Godbeites and Brigham Young*. Walker's book reflects that the Godbeite movement was much larger than Godbe himself—even Godbe disagreed that his name should be shorthand for the New Movement. Walker's book examines "the challenges of modern religious and intellectual life" as dissent played out in their individual development.⁹⁷ Walker links his methodology, which is very conducive to this thesis, to John G. Gager's *Kingdom and Community: The Social World of Early Christianity*. He states that Gager's work "first suggested to me that religious dissent in history has a broader meaning than simply identifying the arguments of a controversy. Gager argued that if the early Christian church 'had not encountered

⁹⁷ Walker, *Wayward* xiv.

heretics, it would have created them.”⁹⁸ Walker’s conclusion is that “dissent and schism serve to help define what a religious community accepts and what it believes in”; expanding on this insight, he states that by “[u]sing dissent as a historical tool, my hope is to tell a larger story than Godbeitism.”

Generally speaking, Walker succeeds in this hope. However, he does not decenter the Mormon narrative and discover the larger epic of Mormonism in which the Godbeites were engaged in. For Walker, much of the Godbeite experience is spiritualism; instead, I intend to demonstrate that they were searching for a universal and enthusiastic Mormonism that they had known in Great Britain which empowered the individual—a concept almost foreign in Brigham’s corporate Deseret which was symbolized by the beehive.⁹⁹

In Godbe’s day, the institutional message was that “when our leaders speak, the thinking has been done.”¹⁰⁰ Terryl Givens, in *People of Paradox*, states that “freedom and authority is an ever-present tension in Mormon culture.”¹⁰¹ Mormons are caught “between submission to an ecclesiastical authoritarianism without parallel in modern Christianity and an emphasis on the veneration of the principle of individual moral agency.”¹⁰² The core individuals in the Godbeite movement, as British immigrants and

⁹⁸ Walker, xiv-xv.

⁹⁹ This is still true today, Utah being known as “the Beehive State.” The original name planned for the state, “Deseret,” was derived from a Book of Mormon word for “honeybee.” With the beehive as a Masonic symbol, it is another connection of early Mormon history to esoteric rites and practices.

¹⁰⁰ Terryl L. Givens, *People of Paradox: A History of Mormon Culture* (Oxford UP, 2007), 15. To some extent this is true today, especially in a popular sense, although the phrase itself has been denounced by the institution.

¹⁰¹ Terryl L. Givens, *People of Paradox: A History of Mormon Culture* (Oxford UP, 2007), 15.

¹⁰² Terryl L. Givens, *People of Paradox: A History of Mormon Culture* (Oxford UP, 2007), 15.

intellectuals, resented the amount of control Young had over their lives—as Godbe put it, dictating “even to the minutest details of daily life.”¹⁰³ Having joined a Mormonism in Great Britain that empowered them as individuals and provided a source of universal truth, the Godbeites were painfully aware that their Mormon cosmos and the institutional version were two different things. By breaking the grip of Young upon the economy and politics in Utah, they felt that Mormonism’s universal, enthusiastic message would be able to return.

In examining the Godbeite’s response to this dissonance, the first section in this chapter begins with Godbe’s history, and relates his moment of dissent and the resulting trial, then concludes with Brigham’s Young theological solution to the individual-corporate paradox. It also discusses Godbe’s New Movement. The next section examines British Mormonism, including Godbeite publications, and the Godbeite call for a universal and spiritualistic Mormonism. Before concluding, the chapter examines Spiritualism, as a strain of Mormon experience present from the very beginning and continuing to this day.

The Godbeite Dilemma

William S. Godbe, was born in Middlesex, England, in 1833. William was educated in literature as a young man. Defying his well-educated parents at age 13, Godbe ran away to become a sailor, intent on seeing the world for himself and not just through books. By the time of his conversion to Mormonism at 17, he had fulfilled that desire, having seen many of the world’s major ports. Adventurous and willing to take risks, after arriving in Salt Lake he became a successful businessman through making

¹⁰³ Godbe, “Situation in Utah,” 406.

several trips back East for goods that other stores in the valley couldn't keep on hand. Mormons and Gentiles alike quickly learned that Godbe, whose trips East kept his shelves stocked, charged a great deal less. The bold undertaking quickly made him one of the richest men in the territory.

Before his confrontation with the Mormon institution, Godbe was also a protégé and close friend of Brigham Young. Investing a great deal of his money, Godbe had reformed Main Street—then known as “Whiskey Street”—into a thriving business district that was more pleasing to church leaders. And he had accompanied Young on preaching tours. But continued interference into territorial business and politics by the Church President left Godbe questioning just how much power the Prophet and President should have over extra-ecclesial matters. Further, Godbe linked Mormonism's then-current lack of charisma and prophecy, which he had enjoyed in the early days of the Church, to Young's institution. Suffering from the conflict, Godbe was ready to end Mormon isolation and theocratic endeavors and re-embrace its universalism and human progress.

After rising in prominence among Mormon circles and favor with Brigham Young, Godbe was in his mid-thirties when he first opposed the institution. The *Utah Magazine*, which was funded by Godbe, was originally a literary magazine. But as Godbe's doubts grew, it became the outlet of his complaints. It was here that Godbe and co-conspirator Harrison issued their first open and direct challenge to Young's economic policy, calling for mines to be opened in Utah. The dissenters knew—as did Brigham Young—that mining would bring in outsiders, and a freer market, thereby diminishing theocratic control.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴ Later in his life, Godbe recalled just how incendiary this move was; Brigham Young had said “on one occasion in public that he wanted to make a wall so thick and so high around the Territory that it would be

But Young was not simply interested in an economy of yeoman farmers. It was self-sufficiency, combined with isolation, that would fulfill the contingent requirements of Zion's redemption. Young stated that Smith "lived just as long as the Lord let him live. But the Lord said—'Now let my servant seal up his testimony with his blood,' and that sealed up the damnation of the United States, not of individuals, but of the nation."¹⁰⁵ With Deseret being so close to breaking free of the "damned" United States and forming an independent sovereignty for the Lord to claim, Young's greatest fear was that the Saints would delay His Advent through unrighteousness. And mining was at the heart of his fears:

Now is it for us to love gold, revelings, or drunkenness? No, gentlemen; no, Elders of Israel. Take up your cross and prepare yourselves for the *regeneration*. [...]. If you Elders of Israel want to go the gold mines, go and be damned.¹⁰⁶

Two factors drove Godbe to oppose Young when he did. The first, during a business trip to New York, Godbe and Harrison experienced a series of remarkable communications with the other world. In them, they were told that Young had brought Mormonism as far as he could, and it was their time to restore it to its universal, spirit-filled status that they knew in Great Britain—then life it to new heights, becoming a beacon of progress to the world. These two men returned from New York in early

impossible for the Gentiles to get over or through it. Of course his entire motive [...] was that of exclusiveness [for] he knew that contact with the outside world would be hurtful to him and his interests. In view of this fact you can see how very aggravating it would be to him to have such an article published" on the potential of mining in Utah: Hampton C. Godbe Collection, MS 664, Box 3, Folder 5. In fact, Young linked mining to apostasy. Whenever a gold rush came on, the Mormons were tempted to leave behind hardscrabble farming in Utah. Young's response: "If you Elders want to go to the gold mines, go and be damned."

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, emphasis mine.

October of 1869 with a plan to overthrow the Mormon institution and reform Mormonism from within.

Still, Godbe and Harrison likely would have waited to make their move were it not for the second factor, a visit with Vice President Schuyler Colfax shortly after their New York experience. Among those in the territory who could be trusted with such a message, Colfax shared Grant Administration's plans with Godbe and Harrison¹⁰⁷ to break Young's theocracy and restore political and economic freedom through sending U.S. troops—a second Utah War. In turn, the two men shared with the vice president their plans (which they had yet to voice but privately) to end Young's political and economic interference by introducing mining to the territory, and they asked for the government to hold off with military force, but allow the influential, liberally-minded dissidents in the territory to reform Mormonism from within. The Vice President offered the administration's backing to the plan. The time had come for Godbe and Harrison, prompted by the urgency of the situation, to out themselves. The move was to be made in the pages of the *Utah Magazine* on 16 October, 1869.

The *Utah Magazine*, which had begun as a literary magazine and turned into their platform for dissent, had been publishing Spiritualistic and other “questionable” material throughout 1868 and into 1869 without much complaint (See Table 2-1). Historian D. Michael Quinn notes that, “[d]espite denials by its advocates, the spiritualist fad in America from the 1840s until the early twentieth century was the occult transfigured.”¹⁰⁸ For a church so closely connected to magic, spiritualism within the *Utah Magazine*

¹⁰⁷ Walker, *Wayward Saints*, 2.

¹⁰⁸ D. Michael Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Signature Books, 1998), xvi.

wasn't itself cause for concern. The *Deseret News*—Church-owned organ of the State of Deseret, and with a member of the First Presidency as its editor—in its inaugural printing in 1850 had included an advanced astrological calendar; and at least a year before the *Utah Magazine* first started printing in 1868, this church-owned paper was still printing astrology charts.¹⁰⁹ Certainly such topics were common in nineteenth-century publications, elements of a magic worldview lingering in their early industrial world after centuries and centuries of legitimacy.

But then in late September the paper struck a nerve. After publishing “Steadying the Ark” on 11 September 1869, E.L.T. Harrison, editor, and William Shearman, writer, were unexpectedly¹¹⁰ called on Church missions, which would have possibly ended publication—or, at least, publication of ideas that had struck a nerve with the institution, for Harrison was seen as the mastermind behind the dissent.

In “Steadying the Ark,” they had stated that “whenever an independent idea is presented in the territory, people call out that the person is attempting to steady the ark or ‘dictate the church.’”¹¹¹ Decrying the mindset associated with this phrase, the *Magazine* writers continued:

the moment one of their *own* brethren expresses a thought ahead of their own, will point him out and say—“That's a dangerous kind of thinker—he's trying to steady the ark.” And, with a whip of this kind—which, of course, is unsanctioned by the spirit of our divine priesthood—they unintentionally crush free thought out of their brethren's souls.¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, Fig. 21a, 21b.

¹¹⁰ Unexpectedly because mission calls generally were announced during general conferences of the Church, one scheduled to be held in October.

¹¹¹ “Steadying the Ark,” *Utah Magazine* 3.19, 11 September 1869 (Salt Lake City, Utah):295.

¹¹² “Steadying the Ark,” *Utah Magazine* 3.19, 11 September 1869 (Salt Lake City, Utah):295.

The article concluded with: “Think freely, and think forever; and above all, never fear that the ‘Ark’ of everlasting truth can ever be ‘steadied’ by mortal hand or shaken.”¹¹³ A call for intellectual freedom was dangerous in a place that honored individual agency only when it was “correctly” applied for the corporate good. But like Godbe’s silence on joining the cooperative, the mission calls went unanswered, and the *Magazine* continued.

Having hid the true extent of their feelings until the visit by Colfax, E.L.T. Harrison’s “The True Development of the Territory” was designed to lay down all their cards. Printed on 16 October, 1869, it had been edited and added to by some of the leading and dissenting or gentile minds in the territory. Walker notes of this group of contributors who made up the core Godbeites that

most were all in their middle or late thirties. Excepting [two], they were all British converts who had not known Joseph Smith nor his Zion teachings firsthand; nor had most of them traveled the unifying Mormon hegira from Ohio, Missouri, and Illinois to the Great Basin.¹¹⁴

Their combined efforts produced an article which argued that it was senseless to push agriculture when Utah was falling behind its neighbors, and not necessarily so when Utah’s mineral deposits were potential gold mines (literally and figuratively). Further, the article argued that since the transcontinental railroad was complete, the Saints might as well face that they are going to be absorbed into the Gentile world.

Young took this message as “steadying the ark” or dictating to *the* dictator. In the next meeting of the Salt Lake School of the Prophets, held in the Tabernacle each week for priesthood leaders, he called on Godbe and Harris to account for the article. The two

¹¹³ “Steadying the Ark,” *Utah Magazine* 3.19, 11 September 1869 (Salt Lake City, Utah):295.

¹¹⁴ Walker, *Wayward Saints*, 135.

men were not present but should have been had they been tending to their duties as Mormon elders. Walker records that

Young then spoke as the “prophet of the Lord,” a mantle he seldom formally assumed that that on this occasion seemed required. He announced that a ‘great and secret rebellion’ was underway, and he angrily predicted that it would “shake the entire church.”¹¹⁵

Faced with a challenge that Mormonism under his watch had departed from its original charismatic course, the Mormon President “assumed” this role of Prophet which “seemed required” to reassert his authority. The display was to remind Zion that he wasn’t just an institutional dictator, but the theocratic mouthpiece of God.

Young called for suspension of the memberships of Godbe and Harrison, as well as that of two other members of the core group, Stenhouse and Tullidge, until they accounted for the article. Their attendance at the next School was formally requested to answer for their rebellion. In the interim, Orson Pratt and others were sent to speak to Godbe and Harrison. Pratt’s biographer England records that “almost to a man” the group had “converted in Great Britain under Orson Pratt’s written influence.”¹¹⁶ England states, “Brigham Young believed that they would listen to Orson Pratt more willingly than to other authorities [...] but Orson labored with his old friends in vain.”¹¹⁷ Having experienced this firsthand, and also having learned to survive within the institution (if not forever on its fringe), “Orson told them candidly that he thought they were fools: ‘No

¹¹⁵ Walker, *Wayward Saints*, 5.

¹¹⁶ England, *Life and Thought*, 237.

¹¹⁷ England, *Life and Thought*, 238.

man, when his is commanded by the voice of the priesthood ... [is] to be his own judge ... That is not the way of Heaven.”¹¹⁸

Godbe and company, parting with their mentor Pratt, pushed forward. Before the next School of the Prophets, the entire city was abuzz with talk of apostasy among the Church’s influential business leaders and intellectuals. Young, perhaps sensing that the dissenters were more powerful as a group, dismissed the charges against Tullidge and Stenhouse, leaving only Godbe and Harrison to answer. The group was stunned, having literally prepared how they would take on the institution together. As Godbe took the stand to speak to the priesthood, Brigham Young made another unexpected move: he depreciated Godbe’s complaints by mocking his position, not denouncing them in thunderous tones, but making Godbe look foolish in front of the assembly. Mirroring Young’s belittling during the School of the Prophets, he would later call the Godbeites “the church of ‘the great unappreciated.’”¹¹⁹ During the meeting, one observed that Young, by not dignifying Godbe’s complaints with a direct rebuttal, was playing “more fox than lion.”

That is until E.L.T. Harrison took the stand. Instead of facing the congregation as Godbe had, Harrison positioned himself between the congregation and Young, who, as presider, sat on the dais behind the pulpit. This forced a confrontation as the dissenters had planned. Looking him directly in the eye and raising his voice, Harrison challenged the Lion of the Lord, in his own den, for taking too much power unto himself. The moment is singular in Mormon history. In recalling the scene, Godbe, stated that

¹¹⁸ England, *Life and Thought*, 238.

¹¹⁹ Brigham Young, “Correspondence [to Albert Carrington, editor]” *Millennial Star* 32.24, June 14, 1870 (Liverpool, England), 378.

Luther thundered against the fallibility of the Pope, but asserted the infallibility of the Bible. We proclaim against infallibility in both men and books, [...] but assert the infallibility of the Creator as He has revealed Himself in *His* holy book—the book of universal nature. [...] Man-made books [...] must be tested by the infallible standard of Nature (and not *vice versa*).”¹²⁰

With Harrison daring to confront Brigham, the Church President was no longer playing the fox. Enraged, he called for disciplinary proceedings. A vote was then taken, regarding whether the assembled priesthood would sustain the *Utah Magazine*. Henry Lawrence—a wealthy and influential Mormon, and the former marshal of the territory who had refused to lead the posse against the Morrisites but instead traveled outside of his jurisdiction—later recalled

Some man jumped up near me and said: “Henry Lawrence voted to sustain the Utah Magazine.” Brigham Young called me to the stand, and I got up and asserted my claim that I could not give up my manhood and my identity, and that I was in favor of the paper.¹²¹

Note well his use of the word “identity.” Lawrence understood well the conflict between the corporate vision of Zion and the Mormon exaltation of the individual, the latter losing out in Brigham’s theocracy.

In an article on Lawrence in *Differing Visions: Dissenters in Mormon History*, McCormick and Sillito state that in Lawrence’s

view, allegiance to one’s conscience was not easy for members of the Mormon church unless their ideas corresponded to those of church leaders. As [Lawrence] saw it, Mormons “were essentially required to give up their agency,” and the consequences for those who questioned “priesthood authority” were serious.¹²²

¹²⁰ “The Situation in Utah” an address by W. S. Godbe, Esq., of SLC, delivered in Cavendish Rooms, London, on Sunday Evening, December 10, 1871--Reported in *The Medium and Daybreak*, December 15th, 1871, pg. 406

¹²¹ John S. McCormick and John R. Sillito, “Henry W. Lawrence: A Life in Dissent,” *Differing Visions: Dissenters in Mormon History*, Roger D. Launius and Linda Thatcher, eds. (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 224.

¹²² McCormick and Sillito, “Henry W. Lawrence,” *Differing Visions*, 224.

For Lawrence, his excommunication meant that his lucrative business was over almost overnight; further, it meant that he was a social outcast. McCormick and Sillito, stating that “Utah was a satisfying place to live for those who shared the views of the majority and a difficult one for those who did not,” then quote Lawrence as saying that “[t]o object to any of the counsel of the [Mormon Church] leaders was worthy of excommunication and ostracism [...] from society, ostracism from all family relations, ... you were almost isolated by yourself.”¹²³

The incident at the Tabernacle marked the beginning of the end of Lawrence’s time as a socially-accepted Mormon, and his beginning as a Godbeite. While it was Godbe and Harrison who were quickly summoned before a church court, Lawrence would again stand up for and with the men during the disciplinary proceedings—knowing the cost of doing so, but feeling as though he didn’t have a choice if he was to remain true to himself and to his understanding of Mormonism, which he saw Young as abusing.

The Trial of Godbe and Harrison

Two days after the incident at the Tabernacle, Godbe and Harrison were arraigned before the Presiding High Council, then seated at the Salt Lake Stake, and now a defunct ecclesiastical body that was once tasked with judicial matters of the Church.¹²⁴ Walker

¹²³ McCormick and Sillito, “Henry W. Lawrence,” *Differing Visions*, 224.

¹²⁴ Young dissolved the Standing Presiding High Council in 1877, but Mormon scripture states that it is equal in authority to the Apostles, who are designated as a “Traveling Presiding High Council” (See D&C 107:37). It is likely because of potential challenges to apostolic authority that the body was discontinued, as have other presiding sacred offices—the latest being the office of Presiding Patriarch to the Church, which was held by patrilineal right through the Smith family line, discontinued by Spencer W. Kimball in 1979. At the time, the last Presiding Patriarch, Eldred Smith, challenged an Apostle, telling him that it was incorrect to limit his power; Eldred Smith then stated that together they “went to the First Presidency, and I told them that it was contrary to the Doctrine and Covenants, and they said to me, “You agree that we can make changes?” Smith agreed with the First Presidency that it was their right to make changes, but disagreed that he had to like it or agree that it was right: Personal Interview with Eldred Smith, Patriarch Emeritus to the Church, March 6, 2007, Joseph Smith Memorial Building, Salt Lake City, Utah. “We [The

notes that the entire city was excited over the trial, which “convened on Monday, 25 October, at 10:00 A.M. in the Council Chambers of City Hall (a venue that showed how easily the spiritual¹²⁵ mixed with the civil in pioneer Utah).” The two men were charged with “harboring the spirit of apostasy,” and as evidence, the *Utah Magazine* was presented before the council.

As the trial progressed, Orson Pratt, having been on the receiving end of such a council, defended Godbe’s character. Pratt “acknowledged that ‘up to the present time’ he had esteemed Godbe as ‘one of the best men’ in the Kingdom.”¹²⁶ No one had such kind words for Harrison, who was blamed as the true apostate behind the *Utah Magazine*’s errors. One of the ward teachers,¹²⁷ sent with Pratt to visit the men after the confrontation at the School of the Prophets, reported that the two men “believed it was their privilege to have ‘their own ideas and notions in relation to the doctrines, ordinances, and institutions.’”¹²⁸ He continued that “they were responsible only to ‘the light of the spirit that was within them, not to the authorities of this Kingdom.’”¹²⁹

When Godbe was given the floor, he defended his right to present views that were contrary to the institution’s position, and that this “could not be taken as evidence of apostasy. For he had always believed in openness and discussion—from the moment of

First Presidency] can make changes” is but another reiteration of “Follow the Prophet” over any principles, even those established by Smith, and a reaffirmation of moving-target orthodoxy.

¹²⁵ I question the use of “spiritual” here and suggest “ecclesiastical.”

¹²⁶ Walker’s *Wayward Saints*, 154.

¹²⁷ The same office held by Morris during the Mormon Reformation; in the LDS Church today, teachers still visit the homes of members at least once a month.

¹²⁸ Walker’s *Wayward Saints*, 155.

¹²⁹ Walker’s *Wayward Saints*, 155.

his conversion in Great Britain. ‘Hence I have not apostatized,’ he claimed. ‘I stand [on these same principles] today.’”¹³⁰ Godbe’s statement is most revealing. While claiming the right to disagree in a civil manner with the Mormon Church and still retain membership, he goes even further to declare that he is only living up to the same principles he was converted to in Great Britain. If these principles of openness and discussion have changed, it has been since Godbe’s arrival to Utah. Thus, if the institution finds him apostate, it is only verification for Godbe that the institution—not himself—has forsaken the true principles of Mormonism that he was converted to in Great Britain.

Supporting this conclusion, he later asserted “the existence of a power behind the veil which influence & instructions do come and have always come by which the will may be guided in its onward path.”¹³¹ This is not “apostasy, he insisted, as ‘God will in the early future make fully apparent.’”¹³² Here he alluded to his experience in New York and his belief that he and Harrison were led by a higher power, and would be the means of reforming Mormonism.

Like Morris who mirrored the spirit of Smith’s prophecies until he exceeded them, and Smith who mirrored the revelatory impulse of Biblical prophecy until he exceeded the Bible, Godbe wasn’t all that foreign among the prophetic characters of the Restoration. It is an interesting reversal, in that the Restoration began as revolution against institutional Christianity, that Harrison railed against the Pope of Brigham Young, but affirmed the Mormon bedrock of revelation. Godbe, Harrison, and Morris all sought

¹³⁰ Walker’s Wayward Saints, 155.

¹³¹ Walker’s Wayward Saints, 157.

¹³² Walker’s Wayward Saints, 157.

this course because the institution had in their eyes betrayed them; because the resulting cognitive dissonance demanded action, their identities and worldview too caught up in Mormonism to see it taken into unacceptable directions, or simply discarded. Like Smith before them, the result was reaffirming the charismatic over the institutionalized.

Harrison drove this point home several times during the trial, attacking institutional authority where it interfered with individual freedoms and departed from the liberating principles of Mormonism he held to and was first taught in Great Britain. “[M]embers should accept President Young's teachings only if they believed them,” he said, but “not because of his authority. Why was it right in Great Britain to question ‘sectarianism,’ but not now to ‘think’ about Mormonism, Harrison asked[?] The monitor of the inner light was then acceptable. Why not now?”¹³³ As Godbe had done earlier, he indicated that he was no apostate to the orthodoxy of Mormonism that he converted to in Great Britain, that the institution had betrayed its original prime directive.

Godbe’s and Harris’s focus during the trial was not upon specific politics, but upon individual freedom and independence from church interference in non-spiritual matters. For the Godbeites, not one of them had devoted their lives and hopes to a theocracy that empowered a president to dictate to them in all matters, temporal and spiritual. Just the opposite, Mormonism for them was a universal message of hope and liberation, led by a charismatic prophet. But for Young, his vision of complete control and isolation of Zion was required to prepare the kingdom for the Second Coming. Godbeites were dangerous to his power, and therefore a threat to the conditioned salvation of Zion.

¹³³ Walker’s Wayward Saints, 158.

Young spoke during the trial and argued for the need of compliance among the laborers of Zion. This was not a denial of individualism, he contended, but the corporate good was necessary to enjoy further individualism in the eternities. His argument was based upon his unique understanding of Mormon theology. In his views, to assert individualism outside of priesthood authority would lead to the destruction of the individual in the next life.

He believed that each person had lived before they were born as a spirit to Heavenly Parents. Before that, spirit persons existed in an unorganized form of primal spiritual matter known as “intelligences.” Like cells to the body, intelligences make up spirits, and provide the person individuality. The spirits who were faithful in the pre-existence to God’s authority, the priesthood, were rewarded with coming to earth to receive bodies and continue their eternal progression; those who were not were damned, or not allowed to progress, and remained spirits, becoming devils. Likewise, in the next phase of existence, those mortals who are faithful will be rewarded with immortal bodies, with the potential of becoming a God and producing their own spiritual offspring.

If humans are not faithful to the priesthood, in the next life they enter a state known as “Perdition,” and they decompose back into the most elemental form of existence, intelligences. Having returned to their native state, perhaps the intelligences formerly associated with their souls would be reused by a God at a later time, but the new compositions would result in new identities. Thus, Young is assuring those present that there really is no paradox between the individual and the institution in Mormonism. A statement from the trial is illuminating:

The only thing that can sustain and uphold us in the Eternities that are to come and that will preserve our Identity is perfect submission to the will of God [and the

priesthood]. Those that go down to perdition, that that have had the privilege that our brethren [Godbe and Harrison] have & turn away and break off by degrees from these pure and Holy principles, will go back to their native element. ... They will taste the second death and lose their identity. Now is [asserting individuality] liberty or does it take away our liberty?¹³⁴

Walker points out that Young did not attack the two men or even defend himself directly, but instead he “suggest[ed] the limits to a ‘personal liberty’ that ignored ‘priesthood,’ which he defined both as ecclesiastical leadership and as a unifying, transcendental essence of God's creations.”¹³⁵

Note well that Young sees the LDS institution as the exclusive source of authority and salvation, a God-ordained, genetic bottleneck on a cosmic scale to determine if individuals continued to exist and propagate beyond this life, with only those obedient to the institution passing through. In that Godbe and Harrison weren't lining up for that eternal voyage towards the Light that only Young could issue tickets for, it is no surprise that the trial resulted in them being cut off from the Church. They simply didn't belong anywhere in Young's cosmos.

After the decision was read to excommunicate the two, a vote was taken to sustain the decision; six persons present voted in the negative, and of those six, two openly defended Godbe and Harrison. This was enough for Young to call for the summary dismissal of one of them, Eli B. Kelsey, from the Church, the motion being carried.¹³⁶ The other, Henry Lawrence, would soon discover a similar fate. Lawrence recalled that Young had begged him to stay in the Church, the wealthy merchant having previously contributed \$30,000 dollars to Young's cooperative, and being “a good paying member

¹³⁴ Walker's Wayward Saints, 164.

¹³⁵ Walker's Wayward Saints, 165.

¹³⁶ Walker's Wayward Saints, 166.

of the church [...] whereas, he pointed out, Eli B. Kelsey, ‘a poor man,’ was excommunicated immediately.”¹³⁷

The New Movement

Having but cut free by Young, the Godbeites went on to form their own church, The Church of Zion. A historian wrote twenty years later that “[s]upported as it was by a portion of the wealth and intelligence of Utah, the Walker brothers, the Tullidge brothers, Stenhouse, Lawrence, and Eli B. Kelsey, the reformation gathered weight.”¹³⁸ It’s first meetings could not find a hall large enough to hold all those who wanted to attend; after they built a new hall, the Liberal Institute, it was more popular on Sunday evening than the meeting in the Tabernacle.¹³⁹

Over time, interest faded, and Godbe in the end was no longer willing to fund the church to keep it together. For several of these members of the New Movement, their experience outside of the LDS Church would allow them to ease out of Mormonism altogether, though still connected to the culture and values of the identity. At least one, Edward Tullidge, joined the RLDS Church. Others would return to the Utah Church. The Godbeites, and especially their efforts in the Liberal Party—a political platform which countered church-endorsed candidates—helped reshape the life in Utah, and, in turn, Mormonism.

Like Lawrence, Godbe knew the result of his trial before the decision had been rendered. Yet, unable to reconcile the paradox between individual and corporate good,

¹³⁷ McCormick and Sillito, “Henry W. Lawrence,” *Differing Visions*, 222, 224.

¹³⁸ History of Utah, 1540-1886, by Hubert Howe Bancroft, [1889], CHAPTER XXIII, Schisms and Apostasies, 1844-1869, pg. 649.

¹³⁹ Walker’s “When the Spirits did Abound: Nineteenth-Century Utah’s Encounter with Free-Thought Radicalism,” *Utah Historical Qtrly* 50:4 1982, 312.

he chose individual freedom and re-embraced the liberating principles of the Mormonism he had known in Great Britain. The Church of Zion would champion a liberal agenda, placing the individual before the institution, embracing universalism and shunning Mormon exceptionalism, and turning to spiritualism for connections with the heavens through spiritualist mediums. Eventually, anti-institutionalism led to no institution.

After his excommunication, Godbe's Mormon debtors refused to pay. He had been "turned over to the buffetings of Satan" by Young, which meant ostracism in Mormon Utah, even (and maybe especially) by those who owed him money. To make matters worse, Young formed Zion Drug Store as a Mormon alternative to Godbe's once prosperous business, and the cooperative altogether shut him out of business.

Unable to sell his store full of goods from the east, and with his debtors refusing to settle with an apostate, Godbe was in debt \$100,000 in 1864, around \$1.5 million today.¹⁴⁰ He stated in 1889 that

the debts which were owing to me were outlawed by reason of the position I had held. In a year or so after leaving, cut off from the church, instead of being worth at least \$100,000 which I should have been worth, I found myself owing that much and paying interest at a rate that would average at least \$1000 a month. Well, to meet all that I put myself to work with all my might and main and commenced mining as being about the only thing open to me and finally succeeded in discharging my indebtedness and recovering my former footing.¹⁴¹

As one of the richest men in the territory before his excommunication, Godbe knew that standing against the institution meant ruin, and the financial recovery that he enjoyed was not foreseeable. Yet he knowingly accepted ruin and ostracism because he could not stay true to his Mormon cosmos—and, therefore, to himself—while simultaneously

¹⁴⁰ Using the Consumer Price Index.

¹⁴¹ Statement made by William S. Godbe to a historian (Bancroft) in Salt Lake City on 2 September, 1884. Hampton C. Godbe Collection, MS 664, Box 3, Folder 5.

supporting an institutional Mormonism that had lowered and shifted the ceiling of the cosmos until it provided no spiritual power.

Reconciling cognitive dissonance as a believing and dissident Mormon, like Orson Pratt before him, Godbe felt as though he had no choice but to oppose his close friend, mentor, and spiritual leader. In a letter to Young shortly after his excommunication, Godbe stated:

And however mythical you may regard my humble avowal of Divine Guidance, with me it is the strongest reality for, were it not for the knowledge that God has required me to do what I have done, believe me, I would not have dared to have assumed the great responsibility that now rests upon me. But the question was not one of friendship or feeling but principle and right and as such *left no alternative*.¹⁴²

Citing “the very unpleasant feelings that [Godbe feels] assured [Young] must entertain toward [him],” he says that it causes him “more pain than I can express”; he concludes this thought by stating that he desires Young to “[view him] simply as a deluded, and as a bad man, but this [he is] afraid under existing circumstances is impossible.”¹⁴³ Godbe, like Pratt, was caught between two very painful realities, but insisted that he must honor his conscience over obedience to the Church President, no matter the pain or cost, because Mormonism was much more than just a Church that he could separate himself from.

British Mormonism

There is a reason why both Godbeites and Morrisite leaders, mainly as English converts, embraced a universal Mormonism. “The agitations of Victorian reform,” Walker notes, made radical and liberal causes “familiar issues prior to immigration.

¹⁴² Handwritten copy of letter from Godbe to BY explaining his situation, dated Nov. 9th, 1869, in Hampton C. Godbe Papers MS 664, Box 2, Folder 7. Emphasis mine.

¹⁴³ Handwritten copy of letter from Godbe to BY explaining his situation, dated Nov. 9th, 1869, in Hampton C. Godbe Papers MS 664, Box 2, Folder 7.

Likewise, science, progress, and reform were Victorian ideals that many British converts carried to Deseret.”¹⁴⁴ Mark H. Forscutt, Joseph Morris’s scribe, stated that the Morrisite religion was

Pantheistic in unfoldment [sic]. It embraced within its fold celebrities of every species of religion, Patriarchal, Judaic, Christian, Mohammedian, Oriental, every class and grade, from the ancient and noble Brahmie to the lowest heathen which recognized the spiritual element in man were all provided for in its cosmopolitanism.¹⁴⁵

This philosophy led to “[n]o polygamy, no discrimination based on race, priesthood to all regardless of race or gender,” and a belief in “reincarnation.”¹⁴⁶

In many ways this echoed the cosmopolitan philosophy of the Godbeites, who renounced polygamy as “clearly at variance with the doctrine of women’s equality with man,” which “cannot endure the progressive civilisation [sic] of the present” age.¹⁴⁷ ““We are not only tending toward universalism,’ Godbe soon announced” during the early days of the New Movement, ““but are there already.””¹⁴⁸ For the Godbeites, the universalism of British Mormonism embraced spiritualism—for the Morrisites, reincarnation. But both reincarnation¹⁴⁹ and spiritualism had their roots in Mormon

¹⁴⁴ Walker’s “When the Spirits did Abound: Nineteenth-Century Utah’s Encounter with Free-Thought Radicalism,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 50:4 1982, 320.

¹⁴⁵ *2nd Book of Revelations*, Joseph Morris MS, LDS Church Historian’s Office (CHO); Forscutt MS, CHO. An alternate source, in the CHO records are likely to be unavailable, is located at the Utah State Historical Society, Gordon M. Howard Collection, Mss B-279, Box 1, Folder 3. See chapter 5, page 38, of a handwritten document regarding John Banks.

¹⁴⁶ Utah State Historical Society, Gordon M. Howard Collection, Mss B-279, Box 1, Folder 3. This quote is taken from chapter 5, page 39, of the handwritten document regarding John Banks.

¹⁴⁷ Godbe’s “The Situation in Utah,” 407.

¹⁴⁸ Walker’s “When the Spirits did Abound: Nineteenth-Century Utah’s Encounter with Free-Thought Radicalism,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 50:4 1982, 307.

¹⁴⁹ In early-Utah Mormonism, a type of reincarnation known as “baby resurrection” was taught by Orson Hyde, an early Mormon Apostle, and believed among some of the people. For teaching this doctrine, that deceased spirits could be reincarnated into new bodies supplied by babies just being born, Brigham Young

experience, both popularly and within the life and teachings of Joseph Smith—though the institution later took measures to curtail and conceal. Liberalism and universalism were unique components of Mormonism in Great Britain, which had some precedent in Smith’s teachings, but were magnified through the articles of the church’s British organ, *Millennial Star*.

For those Mormons in Great Britain, the environment was much more stable and insulated than their counterparts in the United States. It allowed some—the educated such as Harrison and Tullidge—to have such high hopes. Reflecting these hopes which fused Mormonism and universal thought, in 1860 he wrote a series of articles entitled “The Tokens of Divinity”; the articles vaulted Smith’s spiritual humanism to new heights, almost if not beyond the need for a Christ, which is mainstream Mormon doctrine, but saw Divinity expressed best throughout all of humanity, and Christ’s life as a model for emulation.

Atonement and the Fall all took a backseat to the glorious progress and potential of and in mankind. These ideas were closely related to the teachings of the *Star’s* editor, Apostle Lyman, both men potentially influencing each other. The thoughts were far from the material and mundane concerns back in Utah, European Mormons being separated in space, language, culture, and education from the realities of the Mormon experience in America. While immigration was a difficult experience, some, after arriving in Utah, were absolutely disturbed and devastated, for it seemed another Gospel was being taught

rebuked Hyde: See Wilford Woodruff’s Journal, 6:364; Bergera, *Conflict in the Quorum*, Ch. 12, Footnote 6. Brigham Young’s Adam-God doctrine also involved a type of reincarnation. Orson Pratt—during one of his many times of difficulty with Young—stated, “I heard brother Young say that Jesus had a body, flesh and bones, before he came, he was born of the Virgin Mary, it was so contrary to every revelation given”: E. Jay Bell Papers, University of Utah Special Collections, Manuscript Division, Box 37, Folder 20. As a type of reincarnation, Young’s Adam-God doctrine allowed exalted, resurrected Humans such as Christ and God the Father/Adam to reenter a mortal body, only to be resurrected again.

in Utah from that they first heard across the Atlantic. This affected the educated Godbeites and the poorer Morrisites alike.

It would seem that the message of Mormonism in Europe—a universal liberation of the poor through recognizing the divinity within all mankind—appealed to the educated as well. Focused on restoring Christ’s Church, embracing universal and liberating truths, and building the New Jerusalem, it offered a new start for all—an exciting break from the mundane and entry into sacred time on a spiritual journey. Theocracy, polygamy, temples, and the politics of Mormon leaders and in Mormon communities, were often as foreign to these Mormons as they were to the continent. Zion in Utah didn’t always live up to hopes and expectations they brought from across the Atlantic.

Through the press, British immigrants remembered the charisma of Mormonism when they were first converted. Resurrected versions of the *Millennial Star* became a connection to these disconnected Mormons. Consider the literary genealogy of the *Salt Lake Tribune*, or voice of the New Movement: it was the successor to the *Utah Magazine*; and the *Utah Magazine* was a retooled version of the the *Peep O’day* with new benefactors, a new name, but the same message; and the *Peep O’day* was an extension of ideas presented in the *Millennial Star* during Tullidge’s time as assistant editor, connecting Utah dissent to the universalism of Mormonism in Great Britain.

Spiritualism

It would be incorrect to say that in embracing spiritualism, the Godbeites were stepping outside of the Restoration. The official LDS version of the Book of Mormon’s origins states that it was “translated by the gift and power of God.” What isn’t often shared is that Smith spent much of the translation process with his head in a hat, blocking

out the light so that he could see a peep stone. This trick had been taught to him by his family and local seers who used peep stones to search out buried treasures, as was later applied in his prophetic endeavors. Magical devices were used in receiving revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants as well.

Section 8 of the LDS Edition, written in April of 1829, refers to Oliver Cowdery as having the “Gift of Aaron.” Some have supposed that this means the Aaronic Priesthood, but this is not possible because the Aaronic Priesthood was restored on 15 May 1829 through the angelic ministration of John the Baptist to Smith and Cowdery. Instead, the “Gift of Aaron” refers to Cowdery serving as spokesman for Smith as Aaron had been for Moses. And like unto the Aaron of old, Cowdery too had a magical staff in the form of a dowsing or divining rod, which he used in connection to his calling.

The 1833 Book of Commandments—forerunner to the modern Doctrine and Covenants, and the first bound and printed source of Smith’s revelations—records the revelation differently from the later Doctrine and Covenants, for any reference to the magical rod had been removed in subsequent editions; the original edition states,

Now this [the Gift of Aaron or of being the prophet’s spokesman] is not all, for you have another gift, which is the gift of working with the rod: behold it has told you many things: behold there is no other power save God that can cause this rod of nature to work in your hands, for it is the work of God; and therefore whatsoever you shall ask me to tell you by that means, that will I grant unto you, that you shall know.¹⁵⁰

Thus, in like manner as Joseph using an occult seer stone for prophetic revelation, Cowdery was to use a dowsing or divining rod to receive guidance from on high.

¹⁵⁰ Book of Commandments, VII:3 pg. 19

Smith was not the first to link a dowsing rod to the Biblical Aaron. Consider an article written in 1850, “A History of the Divining Rod; With the Adventures of an Old Rodsman”:

With a large portion of the simple-hearted people in the agricultural districts of the country, from the earliest ages there has been an implicit belief in the powers and virtues of the Divining Rod—either for the discovery of water, mines, or hidden treasures. This belief, it would seem, has originated from the wonderful powers of the miraculous rod in the hands of Moses and Aaron, imparted to it by the Almighty. Their rod was made from a simply twig of the almond tree; with this, water was discovered and brought forth from the flinty rock.

This example reflects popular New England lore and folk magic that connects dowsing rods and the rod of Aaron were one and the same. Just as Smith used peep stones before he became a prophet, Cowdery was a rodsman before he met Smith—and the connection to Moses and Aaron of old are telling of how Smith connected magic to religion.

Returning to the article, after his general introduction to dowsing, the “old rodsman” tells of his own history, of his home in Maine which was filled with “witch stories” of treasures left behind by pirates; and following his ancestors, who were “originally from Wales, a land of sight-seers and believers in the divining rod,” he went in search of these treasures.¹⁵¹ His correlation of seers to divining rods is interesting, for Smith claimed to be a seer, and is known to have been a treasure hunter. Perhaps only incidentally, in his travels the “old rodsman” spent a year living in Palmyra, New York,¹⁵² the town of Joseph Smith’s youth, where the boy prophet experienced his “First Vision.”

¹⁵¹ Ibid, 221.

¹⁵² Ibid, 223.

From this narrative, several similarities arise with Smith's history. When the "old rodsman" needed information, he "consulted the rod in the matter," asking *yes* or *no* questions, and by the way that the rod dipped in his hands he was able to obtain revelation.¹⁵³ This explains the uncensored Book of Commandments section which informs Cowdery that the gift of the rod "has told you many things: behold there is no other power save God that can cause this rod of nature to work in your hands."¹⁵⁴

The second connection between Smith and the dividing rod narrative has to do with the Book of Mormon. The "old rodsman" stated that during one trip,

they found the [treasure] mound very readily, and after digging a few feet I came to the flat stone over the pot, when [my companion] involuntarily cried out, 'By the Lord we have got it!' when instantly, with a low rumbling sound, it settled down out of sight. It is said such searches must always be conducted in silence, as the sound of the human voice irritates the evil spirit who has charge of hidden treasures, and they vanish away.¹⁵⁵

Strikingly similar to the narrative, Smith would state that he found his gold plates on a "hill, not far from the top, under a stone of considerable size, [...] deposited in a stone box."¹⁵⁶ Removing from the ground the gold plates whereon the Book of Mormon was engraved, and placing them on the ground, Smith replaced the stone cap. A close associate of Smith's related what happened next:

after he had Covered the place he turned round to take the Book and it was not there and he was astonished that the Book was gone. He thot he would look in the

¹⁵³ Ibid, next month's edition, April 1850, 319.

¹⁵⁴ Book of Commandments, VII:3 pg. 19

¹⁵⁵ "A History of the Divining Rod," 320.

¹⁵⁶ Pearl of Great Price, "Joseph Smith-History" 1:51.

place again and see if it had not got Back again. He had heard people tell of such things. And he opened the Box and Behold the Book was there.¹⁵⁷

Joseph's mother Lucy would inform us that the plates *reburied* themselves into the ground and reappeared back into the box because, just after he had removed the plates,

the unhappy thought darted through his mind that probably there was something else in the box, besides the plates, which would be of some pecuniary advantage to him. So, in the moment of excitement, he laid them down very carefully, for the purpose of covering the box, lest some one might happen to pass that way and get whatever there might be remaining in it. After covering it, he turned round to take the Record again, but behold it was gone, and where he knew not, neither did he know the means by which it had been taken from him.¹⁵⁸

Not only did Joseph's plates "swim" back into the ground because the right conditions were not met, but the Angel Moroni guarded the plates, not allowing Smith to obtain them for four years until he was properly prepared and worthy.

Much of this is analogous to the "old rodsman's" experience with treasure buried beneath a stone, guarded by a spirit, that "swims" back into the earth if the right conditions are not met. But not only Smith's story of retrieving the gold plates is remarkably similar, but the verses within the Book of Mormon itself. No less than four verses throughout the Book of Mormon speak of treasures disappearing into the earth because of a curse. Consider one of them from Mormon 1:18, when, during a period of iniquity, people "began to hide up their treasures in the earth; and they became slippery, because the Lord had cursed the land, that they could not hold them, nor retain them again."

¹⁵⁷ Dean Jessee's "Joseph Knight's Recollection of Early Mormon History," *BYU Studies*, 1976, 2. Available online at <https://byustudies.byu.edu/shop/PDFSRC/17.1Jessee.pdf>, last accessed 12 October 2008.

¹⁵⁸ Lucy Smith, *Biographical Sketches*, pp. 85–86.

Mormon Magic, including the use of seer stones or diving rods, was not limited to the early New York or Kirtland periods of the Church. Mormon historian D. Michael Quinn states that “during the Nauvoo period, Apostle Heber C. Kimball ‘inquired by the rod’ in prayer.”¹⁵⁹ Magic was carried West as Apostles continued these practices, and were known to display seer stones, such as when laying out the boundaries of the University of Deseret in 1850, or dedicating the Manti Temple in 1888.

Quinn traces Cowdery’s divining rod to Utah, stating that “Bro. Phineas Young,” brother-in-law of Oliver Cowdery and brother of Brigham Young, “got [the rod] from” Cowdery “and gave it to President Young who had it with him when he arrived in” the Salt Lake “valley and that it was with that stick that” Brigham Young “pointed out where the Temple should be built.”¹⁶⁰ This is most intriguing, for Young, who rarely called himself a prophet, stated during the corner stone ceremony of the Salt Lake Temple:

I scarcely ever say much about revelations or visions, but suffice it to say, five years ago last July I was here, and saw in the spirit the temple not ten feet from where we have laid the chief corner stone. [...] I saw it plainly as if it was in reality before me.¹⁶¹

During this rare prophetic moment, Young was holding the divining rod. The symbol of Utah Mormonism and literal center of the city, the Salt Lake Temple had its position determined by Brigham Young as he assumed all aspects of his forerunner, the magician-prophet-president Joseph Smith, Jr.

But to avoid embarrassment or the negative effects it might have upon new members, later editions of the Doctrine and Covenants and Church history have been

¹⁵⁹ (Quinn “Latterday Saint Prayer Circles” 3; Origins 20n17).

¹⁶⁰ (Quinn “Latterday Saint Prayer Circles” 3; Origins 20n17).

¹⁶¹ Brigham Young, *Discourses of Brigham Young*, ed. John A. Widstoe (Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, 1998), 410.

scrubbed to exclude reference to the “rod” (although Section 8 does not currently make much sense without it), and the LDS Church today almost never refers to seer stones, only Urim and Thummim, and then only in connection with Smith.

Here’s the point: Mormonism and Spiritualism were not foreign to each other then, and still are not now. Separating out Mormonism and Spiritualism to indicate that the Godbeites were dissidents and apostates who left Mormonism in their New Movement is viewing former orthodoxies through the shifted lens of the present orthodoxy supported by the institution. More importantly, it overlooks that Spiritualism was both tolerated and even valid if it supported the Mormon institution, as in the following example:

When told how the William Cogswell family had been led from Los Angeles to Salt Lake and then commanded to join Mormonism by a spiritualistic planchette [...], Brigham confirmed the instrument’s direction, and the Cogswells became leading figures of the Salt Lake Theatre.¹⁶²

Brigham had been around long enough to know that Mormonism appealed to many because of its supernatural element. Richard Bushman states that, like others in the nineteenth century who were attracted to the message of the Joseph Smith, “[m]agic and religion melded in Smith family culture” and they “had no difficulty blending Christianity with magic” such as “rod and stone divining”¹⁶³ and astrology. Early Mormon converts found the new religion appealing, not because they were among the disenchanting, but were starved for everyday enchantment, “seeking the direct divine

¹⁶² Walker, “When the Spirits Did Abound,” 310.

¹⁶³ Richard Lyman Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Vintage Books, 2007), 50-51.

experience” including supernaturalism “that orthodox Protestantism generally suppressed.”¹⁶⁴

Around the late-nineteenth century, the Mormon institution went to great lengths, for the sake of institutional perpetuity, to exorcise the demons of magic from among present Mormons, and retroactively edited the past so that the sacred history conformed to this new agenda. But the people continued to practice spiritualism, Mormons testimony meetings occasionally mentioning communications beyond the grave that assist with their genealogical research for temple ordinances for the dead. But it would be wrong to say that the institution has lost all its magic; in his book *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, D. Michael Quinn quotes the following from historian Alan Taylor:

Today’s Mormons are set off from their progenitors less by their renunciation of a magic world view than by their concession to their church leaders of a monopoly over the exercise of rituals that can be defined as magical [...]. Rather than extinguishing magic, Mormon leaders (since 1830) steadily renamed, consolidated, centralized, and regulated its practice.”¹⁶⁵

Quinn then states that Taylor’s statement “echoe[s] sociologist Thomas F. O’Dea’s earlier discussion of the Mormon ‘process of binding charisma within organization forms.’”¹⁶⁶

This routinization of magic, for institutional perpetuity, allows Church Presidents supernatural experiences, but limits those of the members; despite this, an LDS folklorist has stated that “Many Mormons today still divine the future, seek hidden treasure, use

¹⁶⁴ Stephen J. Fleming, “The Religious Heritage of the British Northwest and the Rise of Mormonism,” *Church History* 77:1 (March 2008): 75.

¹⁶⁵ D. Michael Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View* (Salt Lake City, Utah: 1998), 320.

¹⁶⁶ Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, 320.

home remedies, tell ghost stories, experience dreams and visions, invoke angels and spirits, exorcise devils, seek information from the spirits of the dead, heal the sick through ceremonial means, and use talismans to ward off evil.” Quinn notes that while this might not be normative, still it is common. Godbe fit within the Mormon cosmos, but betrayed the rule that magic must support the institution.

Messages from the dead, like those received in New York by Godbe and Harrison, are common throughout Mormon history. Beyond popular experience, consider the statements of two Mormon Church Presidents, one near the end of the nineteenth century, and the other the twentieth. The fourth Church President, Wilford Woodruff, told the Saints on one occasion, “The dead will be after you, they will seek after you as they have after us in St. George.” Recounting that experience, he said:

Every one of those men that signed the Declaration of Independence with General Washington called upon me as an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, in the Temple at St. George, two consecutive nights, and demanded at my hands that I should go forth and attend to the ordinances of the House of God for them.¹⁶⁷

This nineteenth-century tale was reiterated and confirmed by Ezra Taft Benson, thirteenth Church President from 1985 to 1994, who said of the U.S. Founding Fathers and Declaration of Independence signers:

All these appeared to Wilford Woodruff when he was president of the St. George Temple. President George Washington was ordained a high priest at that time. You will also be interested to know that, according to Wilford Woodruff’s journal, John Wesley, Benjamin Franklin, and Christopher Columbus were also ordained high priests at that time.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁷ Wilford Woodruff, “All Powers of Earth and Hell,” Transcript of the 69th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, April 1898, Sunday Overflow Session, Salt Lake City, Utah.

¹⁶⁸ In LDS temple proxy work for the dead, only males are ordained to the priesthood, and almost always to the office of elder. To have a proxy ordination to High Priests is unheard of beyond this example.

Godbe entertaining spirits in New York was apostasy, not because of the spiritualism, but because it did not fit within the institutional framework.

Conclusion

A larger story of the Godbeites suggests that they were more Mormon schism than aberration, that they were not deviating but returning to a more enchanted Mormon cosmos that empowered the individual. Greater Mormonism involves decentering the narrative from the gravity of the Mormon institution led by Brigham Young and his successors. The Restoration at large is best understood as a single narrative, and not through binaries of good and bad, true and wayward, orthodox and unorthodox. But do not mistake “single narrative” for “simple narrative”: instead, Restoration history involves networks of religious exchanges that are part of larger, global systems. To not accept the situated nature of Mormonism within larger contexts reaffirms the essentialism and exceptionalism of institutional authority to define who Mormons are and what Mormonism is. But Mormons and Mormonism are much bigger than this institutional definition, even if a majority of Mormons think in binaries, or think that these binaries are absolute, natural, or ordained by God.

Accepting that embeddedness affects construction of Mormon history, I am not claiming a godtrick by pretending not to be situated. Instead, I assert that to tell a larger story, one must reject the *sui generis* and bounded organism presented in Mormon sacred histories. To understand dissent from both sides, historical approaches must connect the Restoration within larger contexts and flows, allowing Godbeite involvement with spiritualism to be understood as an attempt at primitive Mormonism, not a bastardization of it. Neither the Godbeites (nor the Morrisites for that matter) were not fighting against

traditional Mormonism, but against the institution. They were seeking to establish what they saw was the essential expression of Mormonism.

The Godbeites were calling for the Mormonism they knew in Great Britain that empowered the individual. And in many regards, they were ahead of their times; Hans A. Baer, in *Recreating Utopia in the Desert: A Sectarian Challenge to Modern Mormonism*, highlights this, stating that

What the Godbeites were actually calling for was accommodation to the larger political economy that the Mormon hierarchy was to undertake only a few decades later. In recognizing this, Klaus J. Hansen (1967, 183) notes that ‘It is an ironic commentary on social change that the liberalism of the Godbeites has become the conservatism of twentieth-century Mormons.’¹⁶⁹

Thus, Godbeite experimentation beyond the institutional pale of Mormonism might be seen as a revitalization of Mormonism itself.

In this vein, Manuel A. Vásquez notes that

grassroots religious actors have a relative degree of autonomy that allows them to improvise and innovate. Attempts by elites to co-opt these actors are never fully successful, leading to yet more hybridity and heterogeneity. Thus, unintended effects of disciplinary practices are often the vehicle through which institutions generate change.¹⁷⁰

Building on this framework, greater Mormonism, then, necessarily embraces those on and beyond the institutional fringe, as well as those within its boundaries. Or, better put, a larger Mormonism emerges through decentering, accommodating all who hold all forms of Mormon identity and worldview. And within this expanded field, interactions are best understood between those within and outside of institutional sanction.

¹⁶⁹ Hans A. Baer, *Recreating Utopia in the Desert: A Sectarian Challenge to Modern Mormonism*, 31 -- SUNY Press, 1988 -- ISBN:088706681X).

¹⁷⁰ Manuel A. Vásquez, “Historicizing and Materializing the Study of Religion: The Contribution of Migration Studies, Immigrant Faiths: Transforming Religious Life in America, ed. Karen I. Leonard et al. (New York: Altamira Press, 2006), 222.

Table 2-1. *Utah Magazine* and spiritualism, universalism, and “questionable” topics

Vol	Num	Page	Date	Article titles, topics
I	8	87	29 Feb 1868	“Latest ghost talk”
	9	104	07 Mar 1868	“Swedenborg's Curious Powers”
	12	141	28 Mar 1868	“Curious spiritual manifestation”: spirit writing
	19	222	16 May 1868	“Testimony of supernatural, or life after death”
	25	293	27 June 1868	“Spirit writing”
II		38		“Our right to expect a revealed religion”
		161	26 Dec 1868	“Chinese spiritual mediums”
		199	19 Jan 1869	“Spiritualism & priesthood”
		204	19 Jan 1869	“Article on the planchette*—part 1 of 2”
III	19	295	11 Sep 1869	“Steadying the Ark”: An appeal for independent thinking; a human cannot steady or unsteady the designs of God
	22	340	02 Oct 1869	“Things unaccountable. Clairvoyants, oracles, visions and seers”
	25	390	23 Oct 1869	“We are nothing, if not spiritual”

*A planchette is a heart-shaped device with two castors near the top of the heart, and a pencil at the point. As one or more persons place their hands on the device, it was believed that spirits or other supernatural forces could use the device to write out messages. As its early nineteenth-century forerunner, the planchette became a Oujii or spirit board in the late-nineteenth century once the pencil was replaced with a third castor, and a board with letters, numbers, and the words “Yes” and “No” was included.

CHAPTER 4 IN SEARCH OF *NEW NEW* JERUSALEMS

Introduction

The nature of Mormonism, with an open canon and institutional leaders accepted as prophets, ensures that doctrinal adaptation is ongoing. Thus the most basic or essential principle of Utah Mormonism has to be *Follow the Prophet*. This ensures that, in altering orthodoxy, the institution is not seen as betraying Mormonism but being most true to it. When this happens, some within the Church do not accept the changes because of the integral nature of the altered principle to their understanding of the faith. In that the faith is central to their worldview, this crisis of faith bleeds over into issues of identity and existence; for the believing dissident, he or she cannot accept the prophetic institution and remain true to themselves and their understanding of truth and existence without some sort of reconciliation of the cognitive dissonance.

Orson Pratt, who was ill prepared for the scope of Smith's views on polygamy, was distraught to find that top church leaders were engaged in polyandry, and especially that they had made advances towards his wife. He would remain in tension with the institution for the rest of his life, rejecting prophetic infallibility while embracing strict literalism. Joseph Morris could not accept the routinization of Zion and the prophetic office; instead, he recapitulated Mormonism as Mormonism had recapitulated Christianity and reentered sacred motion towards the Eschaton. William Godbe was at odds of the economic practices of the church which interfered with individualism and denied the early, spiritual manifestations; to overcome this, he focused on the universalism of British Mormonism and the Spiritualism of early Mormonism.

Key to all of this is the difficulty for Mormons to simply "leave the church." Why didn't they just walk away? Why was it so serious that Pratt contemplated suicide? Some distraught Mormons, and even one being far too many, are so conflicted that they actually carry out what

Orson Pratt was contemplating on the bank of the Mississippi. These nineteenth-century journeys of believing but dissident Mormons are relevant today. They assist in understanding the very real and serious battles at the intersections of Mormon orthodoxy and identity.

Among those today who have the most difficulty reconciling their identity with the orthodox position of the Church are homosexual Mormons. Rick Phillips states that

Sociologists have long observed that people use religious beliefs to construct their worldview and order their reality, yet also note that sexuality, or sexual preference, is an essential element of one's identity. Thus, the homosexual Mormon is caught between two conflicting statuses, both of which are often highly salient. On the one hand, the person is sexually attracted to members of his or her same sex, and, on the other, the person can possess strong religious beliefs and deep spiritual convictions that make it difficult for him or her to leave the church.¹

In outlining the options that homosexual Mormons consider to resolving crisis, suicide is on that list, again reaffirming the time transcending nature of the crisis faced by Pratt.

In this conclusion, I will be taking a more theoretical approach to understanding journeys within the larger spaces of non-institutional Mormonism. First, I will consider Mormonism as an NRM influenced by the prophetic impulse. I will then consider the essentiality of conflict to Mormonism, and its role in seeking New Jerusalem.

Mormonism, NRMs, and the Prophetic Impulse

Institutional adaptation after Smith has added little to the canon. Smith was ever expanding core dogmas, while the institution only shuffles peripheries (with notable exceptions). Here we see again an example of a Weberian shift in authority, moving from a charismatic leader to traditional and then institutional authorities—the later two lacking the power of self-authenticating, radical charisma that is necessarily volatile to produce revolution and movement, but simultaneously threatening itself. Moving-target orthodoxy is not an evolution of dogma, but

¹ Rick Phillips' *Conservative Christian Identity and Same-Sex Orientation: The Case of Gay Mormons*, pg. 1.

an adaptation of doctrines to new environments that seeks to minimize peril to the church, religion, institution, and members. The key for believing Mormons who seek to avoid historical vertigo is to always view the past through the eyes of the living president.

In submitting that Mormon orthodoxy is a moving target, I suggest that—if an objective comparison is even possible, then—“apostate” versions of Mormonism may have resembled primitive Latter Day Saint teachings and organization more than the theocracy of Brigham Young, or any institutional configuration since. However, institutional Mormonism has never accepted any one period of Mormon history as *more* correct than another, especially a past period over the present which has the virtue of being presided over by a living Church President. Instead, orthodoxy is determined by the current and official position of the Church, which might be different from the official position of the church at a previous time. Hence, the supreme directive for Mormons is “Follow the [Living] Prophet,” for statements, practices, and even doctrines have a potential shelf-life—even if they can be traced to Joseph Smith.

This was a necessary evolution to ensuring the survival of the church started by Smith. Very few new religious movements survive their founding, especially those which are shaped by millennial expectations as Mormonism was. Generally speaking, millennial-focused religions are almost always new religions. The few that survive often do so through institutionalizing their millennialism until it is no longer basic to the message and motivations, but becomes a self-perpetuating hope and horizon.

Survival is difficult: dominant groups, identifying the newcomer as an intruder or threat to the status quo, often take measures to curtail or altogether end the existence of the competitor. That goes twice over when the newcomer is expecting a radical Escaton that will completely destroy or replace the dominant elements of society. NRM leaders face severe challenges in

keeping harmony among the members, especially if the movement survives into a second generation; and these internal problems are only compounded when external pressure mounts, resulting in high probability of failure. Thus, surrounded by intolerance, NRMs often isolate themselves (either geographically or through ideological barriers) in a defensive effort to remove or silence elements from the social topography that are frustrating to their purposes; yet, ironically and importantly, it is the tension and sacrifice of being surrounded by opposition that instills the religious currency with value for the believers.

The Morrisites and Godbeites received treatment from the Mormons similar to that which the Mormons received in the Eastern United States. A general principle provides at least one answer to the reversal: “given that new religions are offering an alternative to the status quo,” Eileen Barker states that “it is not surprising that they are frequently greeted with ignorance, suspicion, fear, and hostility.”² The resulting *give and take* between NRMs and dominant structures provides identity maintenance for both. As not just an NRM but a new people, Mormons are an example of Fredrik Barth’s position that ethnic groups are interdependent, needing the “other” to define themselves, maintaining fluid boundaries through processes of inclusion and exclusion.³ Related to this concept, Armand Mauss, the preeminent Mormon sociologist, states that NRMs which are most successful balance the two antipodes of accommodation of and militancy against their host society.^{4 5} Mainstream Mormonism has

² Eileen Barker, “What Are We Studying? A Sociological Case for Keeping the ‘Nova’,” *Nova Religio* 8.1

(2004): 96. Citing Rodney Stark’s figures, and surprisingly reminiscent of the Morrisites, she states that “probably no more than one religious movement out of 1,000 will attract more than 100,000 followers and last for as long as a century,” and even then these “modest results will become no more than a footnote in the history of religions” (97).

³ Fredrik Barth’s *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference*, (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1969).

⁴ Mauss, 5.

followed a pendulum-like course between these gauntlets, and now seems to be entering a period of retrenchment, possibly ensuring its place as an established sect that is tolerated when it does not interfere with the status quo, and perennially misunderstood by those on the outside.

In all of this, it is important to understand the environments that are most likely to produce prophetic movements. Victor Turner places the emergence of millenarian or revivalistic movements such as Mormonism during periods of liminality, or moments that fall outside of time. Similar to what Tillich calls “kairos,” they are times full of power and possibility, that translate nicely into Latter Day Saint terminology as “the Fulness [sic] of Times.” These transitional, liminal periods are when social relations fall to their lowest common denominator: they are periods of crisis, rife with conflict or the potential of conflict, both individual and social. Millenarian leaders emerge from the shadows during these moments, claiming a new source of light and hope, and calling for a stabilization—a death and rebirth, or movement from darkness and chaos to light and order.

Appropriate to this Turnerian model, Smith’s prophetic ministry begins with him overwhelmed by darkness as Satan attempted to destroy him; but just in his moment of peril, he states: “I saw a pillar of light” and “I was [told by God] that I must join none of [the other churches].”⁶ Smith experienced his First Vision during the Second Great Awakening, in an area so well known for its revivals that it was named “the burnt-over district,” because everything that could have “caught flame” from the revivalistic fires had long since burned up.

⁵ Some critics describe Mormonism as being more like Judaism than Christianity. This holds true in terms of Mormonism’s evolutionary strategies—as an established, ethnic sect—which are in many ways more reminiscent of Judaism than Christianity. See Kevin MacDonald’s *A People that Shall Dwell Alone: Judaism as a Group Evolutionary Strategy* (1994), and *Separation and Its Discontents: Toward an Evolutionary Theory of Anti-Semitism* (1998).

⁶ Joseph Smith-History 1:16, 19 (LDS *Pearl of Great Price*)

Fittingly, Morris appeared during the Mormon Reformation, during a period of revival in not only Utah but the nation. His first revelation came when he was “most utterly cast down,” according to two close allies.⁷ He fit the bill, as did Smith, of an organizer of a millenarian NRM: a charismatic, prophetic leader. His movement, like Smith’s, called for separation from the world, to empower the disenfranchised and prepare for the millennial reign of Christ. And like Smith, he fully expected his religion to take control of the world, the content of his message being conquer, Messianic hope, and radical change.

Godbe is more difficult to place within this framework than Morris. As an intellectual and not an ecstatic or charismatic leader, he might be better thought of as a Mormon Protestant—and in fact, Godbeite writings suggest that they saw themselves as such. Along with Harrison, the Mormon Luther, Godbe first makes his stand during a time of crisis, when the transcontinental railroad has shattered the geographical isolation that Young thought was necessary to bring about the Millennium. Both Harrison and Godbe, citing the stagnant state of Mormonism and the necessity to embrace the modern world, called for a return to origins by moving forward.

Within a Christian vocabulary, Godbeites often referred to Young as Mosaic, and implied that they were the Mormon Enlightenment and Mormon Protestants. Young was a necessary foundation, but now a hindrance to God’s new testament. Young has been called the American Moses, but unlike the original, he entered the Salt Lake Valley. Still, thereon out, Utah Mormonism entered a holding pattern, and while remaining in sacred time, had very little sacred motion. The narrative was done. At this point, Young entered into a Deuteronomic phase, retelling the law and story in such a way that it could be retold forever. He was solely looking

⁷ Roger’s 2006 JWHA Presentation, Slide 4.

back to Smith, to the myth of origin, and felt that they would only move forward once they had mastered the lessons of the past.

Bigler notes that as a “committed follower of the faith’s founding prophet, Joseph Smith,” Brigham Young “called himself an apostle of Smith, never his equal.”⁸ Perhaps this is why Young produced only one canonized revelation while Morris was a prolific writer of revelations, and why Godbe and Harrison were open to new revelations through spiritualism. Godbeites and Morris were looking forward through the lens of primitive, charismatic Mormonism, while Young felt that it was time to walk like a man and put away childish ways. It was a clash between conservative and liberal idealism, or Young looking solely to origins or Eden and the others to utopias or New Jerusalems built upon but exceeding the origins.⁹

Important to the paradoxes of Smith, the first Mormon *prophet-president*, the Garden of Eden and the site of the New Jerusalem were one and the same in Joseph Smith’s Americanized geography of the Bible. Smith’s sacred geography implies that a return to the Origin can only come by moving forward to Utopia. One might say that, in that Mormonism was originally utopic, Young’s vision was shortsighted, not capturing the full thrust of Smith’s original vision. Yet as a routinizer and implementer, Young was only concerned with the future in the ways that it played out within the already established parameters of the past. If he was seeking a Utopia, it was one already laid out by Smith in Nauvoo but waiting to be realized through the faithfulness of the Saints.

⁸ Bigler’s *Forgotten Kingdom*, 24.

⁹ In Utah Mormon theology, in that the Fall is a positive event—allowing eternal progress—a return to Eden is not enough. Were humanity to revert to the state of Adam and Eve before the Fall, it would be a regression; instead, knowing good from evil, humanity is to build paradise, the New Jerusalem, through choosing good. The New Jerusalem is a Utopian project that restores or fulfills Eden by moving beyond it.

Tillich's writings, more true to the Zion of Morris and the Zion of Godbe, states that Utopia involves a prophetic demand "which points to an 'unconditional new'"; this unconditional new in liberal fashion "break[s] the myth of origin" through its "unconditional demand."¹⁰ Tillich then identifies this demand as "not 'foreign' to man" but one that "places his own essence before himself as a demand. It is based on his own origin. But it is, in relation to the origin, an "unconditionally new."¹¹ Morris's and Godbe's "unconditionally new" visions of the New Jerusalem allowed them to surpass Smith as Smith had surpassed his own origins of Christianity. Yet Smith, Morris, and Godbe would all claim that in their unconditionally new doctrines, they were holding true to the original vision of the Gospel while rejecting its institutionalization. They were holding true to themselves and to their ultimate potential that the institutions had forsaken.

Returning to Tillich, these moments of the unconditionally new occur during "kairos,"¹² a time that the whole universe hinges upon; it is mythical time, transformative time. Basic to this time is a prophetic demand, a time when new visions are required like those provided by Smith and Morris, and sought by Godbe. Theories on *kairos* in Christian studies are applicable here: "The time of Jesus is *kairos*—and so it is a time of opportunity. To embrace the opportunity means salvation, to neglect it disaster. There is not a third choice."¹³ This surely holds up with Morris, who stated his claims as an enthusiastic prophet to the institutional Young—and

¹⁰ Paul Tillich's *Main Works, Volume 3: Writings on Social Philosophy and Ethics*, Carl Heinz Ratschow, ed. Walter De Gruyter Inc (July 1998) Berlin, New York Pg. 24

¹¹ Paul Tillich's *Main Works, Volume 3: Writings on Social Philosophy and Ethics*, Carl Heinz Ratschow, ed. Walter De Gruyter Inc (July 1998) Berlin, New York Pg. 24

¹² Kairos: "a propitious, fateful, decisive moment; divinely-appointed" (*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 3:455ff).

¹³ In *A Theological Word Book of the Bible*, Richardson, ed., 252.

expected Young to recognize that Mormonism needed him, a visionary, much more than he needed their recognition. Godbe, ever the intellectual, took a more Protestant path, but still felt that the moment was divinely appointed—that he was divinely appointed to continue the mission of the Restoration and see it to necessary, new heights.

Morris and Godbe did not see the other side, that even the principle of prophetic demand takes a backseat to the institutional leaders always coming first over any principle. Especially in the case of Godbe, *follow the prophet* no longer, as a source of spiritual insight and comfort, worked for him. Consider his statement that Mormons reading the *Utah Magazine* “were faint for the food that we were but too glad to bestow. We gave them the rich, ripe corn of spiritual truth instead of the husks of the Mosaic theology upon which they had so long been fed, rendered fearfully practical by a dictatorial priesthood.” Godbe was too situated to see that other Mormons, all too tired from the rollercoaster of early Mormonism, desperately yearned for the structure and consistency that Young provided. To them, a dictatorial priesthood provided meaning that Godbe could no longer grasp.

I believe this to be the answer why some Mormon immigrants were drawn to Morris: they converted for a charismatic, spirit-filled message; but the Mormons who had been at it longer, who had experienced the intensity of mobs and martyrdom, were all too ready for some stability. They wanted to follow the institution because it was heading towards constancy that neither Godbe nor Morris could nor wanted to provide. That’s not to say that mainstream Mormons beyond 1860 were out of the woods; in fact, persecution continued for several more decades largely due to external pressures coming for the U.S. Government regarding polygamy, giving the next generation a cause and helping the transition from new to established religious movement. But Young and his successors were not expanding the Mormon cosmos as Smith

had, only adapting it to new times and locations and challenges. For the most part, these adaptations were meant to shore up the faithful, to patch cracks in the cosmos, and to protect the institution, which they felt protected the Mormonism and Mormons. In this endeavor, they expected, and still expect, absolute compliance from those who wish to be under their umbrella.

But dissidents do not choose to abandon this institutional model; but they cannot honor it, for their entire worldview is Mormonism, yet institutional Mormonism—which claims to represent all of Mormonism—no longer represents them. One moment the believing dissident was safe inside the fold, and during a moment of housekeeping and boundary maintenance, the umbrella shifted and she found herself exposed to the elements. But to her, one thing is sure: she was a Mormon when the institution approved of her, and she is a Mormons even after the institution did not.

Thus dissident believers are not just making new space, or a new Mormonism outside of the institution's sanction: they find themselves existing within new space, ironically created by the moving orthodoxy and tightening boundaries of the institution. The existence of Mormons outside of the Mormon Church, as in the case of the Morrisites and Godbeites, represents but one manifestation of New Mormonism. Honoring the prophetic demand and returning the believers back into the mythic time and sacred motion or the *kairos* of the early Restoration, New Mormonism is necessarily opposed (in its genesis) to routinization; it abhors tampering with what they deem the sacred principles abandoned by the institutional Church.

And as they move forward with a competing vision of Zion, these New Mormons are engaging in the epic of Greater Mormonism, or experiencing a cosmos that is untethered from the one-to-one isomorphism of the Mormon institution and Mormonism. Recognition of coevalness within the Mormon universe of other Mormons, or even the potential thereof, is a

threat to institutional exclusivity, leading to tension. For the Morrisites, it meant a life-or-death struggle which they saw as playing out in cosmic terms. The most popular institutional response towards dissidents seems to be a denial of any Mormon that does not honor the Mormon fundamental of “Follow the Prophet.” This is clearly illustrated whenever the LDS Church denies that practicing polygamists should be called “Mormon” and that there is no such thing as a “Mormon Fundamentalist.” And within the institutional perspective, they are right, for the only fundamental is following the president, which the polygamists surely are not doing. But blinded by their own orthodoxy, the institution cannot see the absurdity of denying a Book of Mormon believing group of Mormon-pioneer descendents the right to self describe as Mormon. Just as modern polygamists are, Orson Pratt, Joseph Morris, and William Godbe all faced the challenge of being denied the right to their worldview, identities, and beliefs, because they did not fit within the institutional definition of Mormonism.

The Necessity of Conflict

It is quite possible that Mormonism is a religion best served oppressed, with a Babylon counterpoint to differentiate Zion; or, in other words, Mormonism in its various forms requires opposition, perceived or actual, within the surrounding host society.¹⁴ R. Laurence Moore, in his book *Religious Outsiders and the Making of Americans*, states that “opposition gives value to struggle and inculcates self-confidence” (Moore 35). Consider the following statement from Joseph Smith, which perhaps best portrays the optimism of the oppressed: he states, “I should be like a fish out of water, if I were out of persecutions. [...] The Lord has constituted me so curiously that I glory in persecution.”¹⁵

¹⁴ Mauss’s *The Angel and the Beehive*, 4.

¹⁵ *LDS Church History*, Vol. I, pg. 408.

There is little point to a millenarian revolution if the fallen host society is alike enough to Edenic or Utopian reforms that it offers no serious resistance to their revolution. Moore continues that “[i]t is difficult to imagine a successful Mormonism without suffering, without the encouragement of it, without the memory of it. Persecution arguably was the only possible force that would have allowed the infant church to prosper.”¹⁶ Victor Turner, writing about millenarian movements, states that one characteristic is an “acceptance of pain and suffering (even to the point of undergoing martyrdom).”¹⁷ Telling to the fundamental “Follow the Prophet” mantra of institutional Mormonism, he also lists “total obedience to the prophet or leader.”¹⁸

To this day, over four hundred expressions of Joseph Smith’s Restoration have existed, but this is nothing compared to the 38,000 forms of Christianity. The seemingly endless productions of new religious movements, and especially for this thesis, of new Mormonisms, represents the integral nature of a Mormon cosmos to the identity of believers, even after they find themselves beyond the pale of the institution’s sanctioned variety. It is the very nature of cognitive dissonance, of identity and existential crises, to find a solution, which often involves partial acceptance and partial reinvention of what the Kingdom means to them.

Part of the diversity in the expressions of the Latter Day Saint movement reflects that nineteenth-century Mormons were a diverse group, with converts coming from all over the world. But quite intentionally and actively, they built upon a common mythos of the Restoration. Their religion combined Christianity, esoteric Judaism, American folklore and occult practices, Freemasonry, democracy, and other elements, which were fused together as

¹⁶ Moore, 35.

¹⁷ Victor Turner’s *Ritual Process: Structure and Antistructure*, 112. 1969 Aldine Publishing Chicago 5th ed.

¹⁸ Turner, 111.

converts became owners of a new, hybridized system. But it was not only a synthesis of the elements: it was the difficult, unpredictable, exciting, disappointing, and spirit filled journey that forged not just a new religious movement, but a new people.

And in this hybridity, Smith taught that they were reclaiming the most ancient Truths. Their religion, which was Adamic, would usher in a new world: it was the beginning and the end, a simultaneously “new and everlasting” message. They had transformed their landscape into sacred space: the Garden of Eden in Missouri was also the site of the New Jerusalem, and they expected that Adam would return when Christ appeared for the Second time, and together, before the assembled Mormons at Adam-ondi-Ahman,¹⁹ the Millennium would start. Thus, in restoring each of the previous dispensations of time, they were recreating the true or primitive vision of Christianity and Judaism. Facing an uphill battle to survive amongst “corrupt” Christians, Mormons took their quest for peoplehood into the political sphere, attempting to create a separate, sovereign theodemocracy: first in Nauvoo by Smith, and then in Deseret under Young. Especially in the latter example, the theocratic leaders aspired to create a state within a state, and at best hoped that Deseret would become a separate nation from the United States.

Not a new people, but the most primal people, Mormons felt that they were the only true Americans; that the Constitution was inspired but the federal government fallen just as the Bible was inspired but Christianity fallen. As more than just a denomination, they were challenging the homogeneous American identity and renegotiating their own. Fitting to their Adamic, primal outlook, Mormons sought to incorporate Native Americans into their new society. The Book of Mormon, an economic justice narrative, grouped poor Americans and the mistreated Indians together as God’s Israel. Together, as builders of the New Jerusalem, they would overtake the

¹⁹ “Adam-ondi-Ahman,” according to Smith is the Adamic name of the Garden of Eden, near Independence, Missouri. It supposedly means “the land where Adam dwelt with God.”

U.S., and all nations, as the seat of power of Christ's millennial government. But where gentile Americans could be adopted into the New Israel, Native Americans had the most basic right to entrance. Identified as the Lamanites in the Book of Mormon, Native Americans were literal Israelites within the new religion. Smith and later Young's intent to incorporate indigenous, Hebraic peoples into the Mormon nation was an effort of grafting Gentile branches into the roots of Israel.²⁰

The ethnogenesis of the Mormon people set them apart from the rest of America. The average Mormon did not think of him or herself as American, but Mormon: it was a religious category, sure—but importantly, too, it encompassed social and political categories as well. Once created, and replicated over generations, the new religious movement became at least an established sect and perhaps, time will tell, a new world religion. If the institution accomplishes its vision, the message will fill the earth. Fully embracing a new worldview and identity, however, is a radical change for a convert, and retention rates of only half of the new members reflect this. More than coincidentally, only a little more than half of the Saints followed Young west once they learned that Mormonism meant moving beyond primitive Christian and American identities.

Most believing Mormons, and especially those in leadership positions at any level, tend to be multiple generation Saints, tracing their genealogy to those that originally followed Young, or even before. While these later generations didn't experience the welding process of the death of Smith and the grueling journey across the backbone of the continent, still the dominant culture

²⁰ This idea is not limited to 19th-century Mormons. Again, as an economic justice narrative, the Book of Mormon predicted a sudden overthrow of the wealthy, proud gentiles who had sinned against the poor, whether white or indigenous. As an echo of this concept, the Mormon institution engaged in "Lamanite" adoption programs until 1970s, placing Native American children in Mormon homes to instruct them of their heritage and glorious future.

in Mormon communities cements the cosmos in place for many, making it integral to all aspects of their lives.

Then it is no surprise that disrupting that sacred Mormon canopy can have devastating results, individually and collectively. The institution has ensured the survival of Mormonism, facing a variety of challenges but perhaps none greater than the discontinuance of polygamy which was central to the Mormon concepts of the cosmos. Still, this shifting of orthodoxy for the sake of institutional perpetuity is a betrayal for some of the original, spirit-filled message of Mormonism. Some have found momentary comfort from the dissonance in movements such as that of the short-lived Godbeites, and the Morrisites who lasted a century. Still others go back to the Succession Crisis, and decide that they no longer wish to side with Young, and like Tullidge, a founding Godbeite, they join the RLDS Church.

There is something to be said for the RLDS experience in the life of believing but dissident Mormons. It is an alternative that has the oldest pedigree while maintaining an emphasis on individual freedom and liberty. These Saints never denied anyone the priesthood based on race, hated polygamy, and do not believe in exaltation. Thus, it is not surprising that Morris called on Joseph Smith III, and so did Godbe—although Morris wanted to take the lead of the RLDS Church and Godbe was looking for Smith to be the leader for his New Movement. It was a viable option: Brigham Young had recognized the patrilineal right of Smith's sons to lead the Utah Mormon Church, if they would but accept polygamy. Of course, Young knew his position as President was quite safe with that condition attached.

Unfortunately, some European Saints did not understand the differences in the Restoration after the death of Smith, and arrived in Utah not knowing about the Utah practice of plural wives. Like Pratt, who had returned home from a mission to England, the news was

devastating. Their first introduction came after they had sold everything and risked their lives to travel around the world to a desolate location. It must be remembered that for those Mormons in Europe (the bulk being in Great Britain), the environment was much more stable and insulated than their counterparts in the United States. It allowed some—educated converts, such as E.L.T. Harrison—to have such high hopes about Mormonism as a universal message, and others—the poorer immigrants such as Morris, separated in space and possibly language from the London church headquarters—to be unaware of the realities of the Mormon experience in America. While immigration is a difficult experience, some, after arriving in Utah, were absolutely disturbed and devastated, for it seemed another Gospel was being taught in Utah from that in Great Britain or Europe.

The message of Mormonism in Europe had appealed to the poor. Focused on restoring Christ's Church, embracing universal and liberating truths, and building the New Jerusalem, it offered a new start—an exciting break from the mundane and entry into sacred time on a spiritual journey. Theocracy, polygamy, temples, and the politics of Mormon leaders and in Mormon communities, were often as foreign to these Mormons as they were to the continent. These factors and others related to institutionalization led to, and continue to fuel, divisions within the Latter Day Saint movement.

Conclusion

“And Enoch and all his people walked with God, and he dwelt in the midst of Zion; and it came to pass that Zion was not, for God received it up into his own bosom; and from thence went forth the saying, ZION IS FLED” (Moses 7:69).

This scripture was written by Joseph Smith in December of 1830, his church founded but seven months earlier. It reflects the young prophet's hope that, like the City of Enoch, the Latter-day Saint New Jerusalem would be received by God. In their efforts to build a heavenly city, they would not achieve the first line, “[God] dwelt in the midst of Zion,” but instead, “ZION

IS FLED.” When Smith marched at the head of Zion’s Camp, and realized that the redemption of Zion could not yet be, institutionalization was the solution. Marching home, he formed an entire hierarchy from his soldiers, anticipating that priests were needed to properly instruct the people before they could achieve the full thrust of the prophetic journey.

Mormon leaders, however, would expect to retain their prophetic role. They would expect that a message meant to liberate individuals also meant that individuals would unwaveringly support the institution. Morris and Godbe were caught within this multifaceted paradox which is a reflection of Smith. In Great Britain, where the situation was much different from the United States, a charismatic, universal message remained—free of the doctrinal innovations that led to conflict with Orson Pratt. Immigrants like Morris and Godbe sensed that something was lost in the codification of Smith’s Mormonism, taking it outside of the realm of the spirit which was so essential to their cosmos. The loss of charisma was apparent as they approached, in space and time, the intent of Young’s institution. Their beliefs and reality clashing, cognitive dissonance finally reached a breaking point. Needing to heal their cosmos, the anguish of an existential crisis propelled them on a journey to rediscover themselves—and this meant a rediscovery of primitive Mormonism.

Both men symbolically entered the mythic moment of Zion’s Camp, and decided to push forward to Zion—unlike Smith who retreated to fight another day that never came. For the believing dissidents, it meant painful conflict, and in the case of Morris, death. They were, however, being true to themselves and to their universe.

As long as the Mormon institution claims the right to adapt the definition of who and what falls under the Mormon cosmos, new Pratts and Morrises and Godbes will find their cosmos shattered, their identity lost, their existence non-absolute. And in this moment of

existential anguish, some will push forward to reclaim the Mormonism that no longer exists in the institution but which is essential to them. In this process, they will be taking part in an epoch journey within a greater Mormonism; and despite the terrible cost, will be moving forward to claim their *new* New Jerusalems.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Seth L. Bryant was born in Salt Lake City, Utah. Son of Dan and Susan Bryant, and oldest of their three children, he grew up in Sandy, Utah. Spending his teenage years living near the mouth of Little Cottonwood Canyon, he was more interested in hiking and fishing than attending classes. At the age of sixteen, he spent a summer in Kentucky teaching canoeing and sailing. Looking for further adventure, he enlisted in the United States Army Reserve at the age of seventeen while still attending high school. Completing basic training at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, during the summer between his junior and senior years, he returned to Skyline High School to (barely) graduate in 1999. After a year of further Army training and duty in Georgia and Utah, he spent two years on ministerial leave from the military, serving a mission for the LDS Church in Raleigh, North Carolina.

Returning from missionary service in 2002, he resumed his military duties in the Utah Army National Guard, training at Fort Eustis, Virginia, to become an Apache Helicopter crew chief. One year to the day of his return from Raleigh, in March of 2003 he married a fellow missionary, Jennifer Graham, and began studies at LDS Business College in Salt Lake City. These educational plans were short lived, for he was deployed on an eighteen-month tour of duty as part of Operation Enduring Freedom later that same year. His first son, Lincoln, was born as he was leaving to mobilize at Fort Carson, Colorado. Through correspondence and online courses during off time, he attended Weber State University, where he graduated with an AS general studies, high honors, in 2005. He also completed his coursework at LDS Business College, and graduated at the same time with a certificate in accounting.

After his deployment and graduation, Seth enrolled in Westminster College in Salt Lake City as an English major and religion minor. While he was writing his senior theses, his daughter, Ella, was born. Around that time, having reached the rank of sergeant in the Army,

Seth completed his enlistment contract and, deciding that he had had enough adventure (at least in the Army), opted not to reenlist. Graduating in 2007 from Westminster with a BA English, summa cum laude and as distinguished graduate, he applied and was accepted as a graduate student in the Department of Religion at the University of Florida. After graduation in December with his MA, he hopes to enter a PhD program studying American religious history.