

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

A Prophet from Palmyra?

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1



Joseph Smith Jr. was born on December 23, 1805, in Vermont, on the border between the villages of South Royalton and Sharon, to Lucy Mack Smith and her husband Joseph Smith Sr., a merchant and farmer.¹ He was one of eleven children. At the age of seven, Joseph suffered a crippling bone infection and, after receiving surgery, used crutches for three years.² After an ill-fated business venture and three successive years of crop failures culminating in the 1816 “Year Without a Summer,” the Smith family left Vermont and

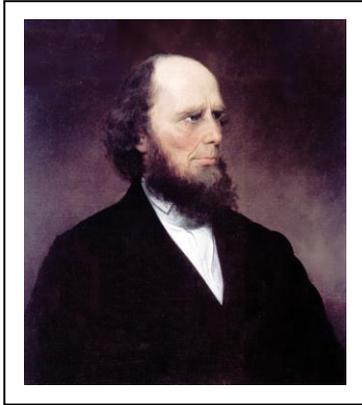
¹ Bushman, Richard Lyman (2005). *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf), 9,30); Smith, Joseph, Jr. (1832). “History of the Life of Joseph Smith”. In Jessee, Dean C (ed.). *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book [published 2002], 1).

² Bushman (2005), 21.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

moved to the western region of New York State,³ and took out a mortgage on a 100-acre farm in the townships of Palmyra and Manchester.

The region of New York was a hotbed of religious enthusiasm during the Second Great Awakening.⁴ Mormon historians like to point out that between 1817 and 1825, there were several camp meetings and revivals in the Palmyra area.⁵ While this statement is true it is, nonetheless, not entirely precise. The statement *does not say* that there was a revival in Palmyra in 1820, which is the year that Joseph Smith claims the First Vision occurred. Wesley Walters has done extensive research using contemporary records that “the revival, which Smith claimed occurred in 1820, did not really occur until the fall of 1824. We also show that in 1820 there was no revival in any of the churches in Palmyra or its vicinity. In short, our investigation shows that the statement of Joseph Smith, Jr. *can not be true* when he claims that he was stirred up by an 1820 revival to make his inquiry in the grove near his home.”⁶



Evangelist Charles Grandison Finney, one of the foremost preachers and revivalists of the Second Great Awakening, first brought his ministry to upstate New York in 1825. Over the next few years, he began perfecting what became known as “Finneyism,” the distinctive form of revivals for which he would later gain notoriety in Rochester, which became a center of what is known as the “Burned-Over District” in the antebellum period. This moniker referred to the series of intense revivals that swept the area and which produced large numbers of conversions and the births of new churches.

Finney arrived in Rochester in late 1830, and his Rochester revival lasted from September 1830 to March 1831. While he was based in Presbyterian churches, the revival was notable for its ecumenical character. Finney’s preaching attracted Protestants from multiple denominations, and he worked deliberately to effect this. The revival was certainly not confined to residents of Rochester. Numerous individuals from surrounding areas

³ Bushman (2005), 27–32.

⁴ Martin, John H. (2005). “An Overview of the Burned-Over District”. *Saints, Sinners and Reformers: The Burned-Over District Re-Visited*, published in the *Crooked Lake Review*. No. 137. Fall 2005; Bowman, Matthew (March 3, 2016). Butler, Jon (ed.). “Mormonism”. *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of American History*. Oxford University Press.

⁵ Bushman (2005), 36–37; Quinn, D. Michael (1998). *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View* (2nd ed). (Salt Lake City: Signature Books), 136.

⁶ Walters, Wesley P. (1967). “New Light on Mormon Origins From Palmyra (N.Y.) Revival.” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 10(4), 228.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

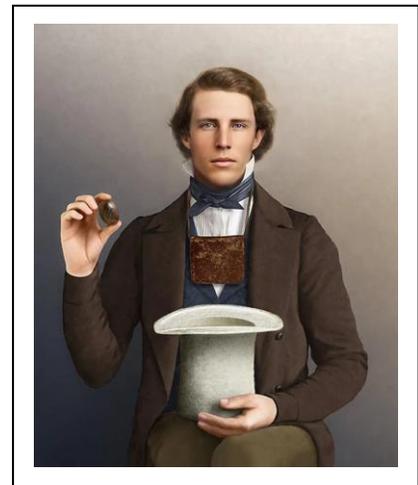
traveled from distances of up to one hundred miles to the city to hear Finney preach.⁷ It is significant that Joseph lived at that time in Palmyra, only 23 miles southeast of Rochester, and would have known all about Finney.

Smith's parents disagreed about religion, but the family was caught up in this excitement.⁸ A few years later most of the members of the family had joined the Presbyterian church, but Joseph was undecided as to which church he should join. There was so much strife among the denominations, he felt, that he could not decide who was right and who was wrong.⁹ Smith later recounted that he had become interested in religion by age 12, and as a teenager, may have been sympathetic to Methodism.¹⁰

3

Treasure Hunting

With other family members, Joseph Smith also engaged in religious folk magic, a relatively common practice in that time and place.¹¹ Folk magic and occult beliefs were a part of early American and Mormon culture, affecting practice and doctrine in profound ways. Despite the scientific enlightenment movement that swept across Europe, Americans of diverse social classes and education levels inherited superstitions and supernatural beliefs from the colonial period. Publishers produced many volumes and almanacs that contained astrological and mystical information. Despite a predominantly uneducated citizenry in rural New England areas, an



⁷ © 2023 The Association of Religion Data Archives. Retrieved July 15, 2023.

<https://www.thearda.com/us-religion/history/timelines/entry/?etype=1&eid=246>

⁸ Vogel, Dan (2004). *Joseph Smith: The Making of a Prophet*. (Salt Lake City: Signature Books), p. xx; Hill, Marvin S. (1989). *Quest for Refuge: The Mormon Flight from American Pluralism*. (Salt Lake City: Signature Books), 10–11; Brooke, John L. (1994). *The Refiner's Fire: The Making of Mormon Cosmology, 1644–1844*. (New York: Cambridge University Press), 129.

⁹ Hoekema, A. A. (1963). *The Four Major Cults: Christian Science, Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormonism, Seventh-Day Adventism*. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company), 9.

¹⁰ Vogel (2004), 26–7; D. Michael Quinn (July 12, 2006). "Joseph Smith's Experience of a Methodist 'Camp-Meeting' in 1820" (PDF). *Dialogue Paperless*, 3. Archived from the original on September 27, 2011. Retrieved July 25, 2023.

¹¹ Quinn, D. Michael (1998), *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View* (2nd ed.), (Salt Lake City: Signature Books), 30–31; Bushman (2005), 51; Shipps, Jan (1985). *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition*. (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press), 7–8; Remini, Robert V. (2002). *Joseph Smith*. Penguin Lives. (New York: Penguin Group), 16, 33; Hill, Donna (1977). *Joseph Smith: The First Mormon*. (Garden City: Doubleday & Co.), 53.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

abundance of libraries across the region provided a vast array of books of all types, including texts on folk magic and alchemy.¹²

Numerous foundational Mormon families actively believed in apparitions, divining rods, talismans, seer stones, planetary superstitions, lunar cycles, astrology and enchantments. The Smith family's involvement in ritual magic is now widely acknowledged by the LDS Church. Smith family descendants eventually donated and displayed folk magic items, including amulets, talismans, parchments, daggers, and even magical canes and handkerchiefs. While it is easy to acknowledge and dismiss these beliefs as non-doctrinal, they become problematic when a careful examination of Mormonism reveals that there is no extricating these folk beliefs from the visions of Joseph Smith, his translations and much of the text of the Book of Mormon.¹³

D. Michael Quinn, a prolific historian of Mormonism, observed that "the official version of early Mormon history is often incomplete in its presentation of material facts and evaluation of evidence; therefore it is inaccurate in many respects. The Smith family's folk beliefs, treasure digging ventures and their effect on Mormon revelation are perhaps the most troubling topics for Mormon apologists and polemics, who often deny legitimate sources while selectively embracing items which conveniently fit the official Mormon narrative meticulously polished over a span of two centuries." Quinn's, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, is highly recommended to anyone seeking to understand how folk magic impacted early LDS Church leaders.¹⁴

While this topic is "troubling...for Mormon apologists and polemics" it must be remembered that both Joseph's parents and his maternal grandfather reported having visions or dreams that they believed communicated messages from God.¹⁵

The First Vision

Joseph Smith said that, although he had become concerned about the welfare of his soul, he was confused by the claims of competing religious denominations.¹⁶ Years later,¹⁷

¹² See article from Mormon Stories at <https://www.mormonstories.org/truth-claims/joseph-smith/treasure/>. Retrieved July 26, 2023.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Quinn (1998), 14–16, 137; Bushman (2005), 26,36; Brooke (1994), 150–51; Mack, Solomon (1811), *A Narratve [sic] of the Life of Solomon Mack*. (Windsor, VT: Solomon Mack), 25; Smith, Lucy Mack (1853), *Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith the Prophet, and His Progenitors for Many Generations*. (Liverpool: S.W. Richards), 54–59, 70–74). See *The History of Joseph Smith by His Mother Smith*.

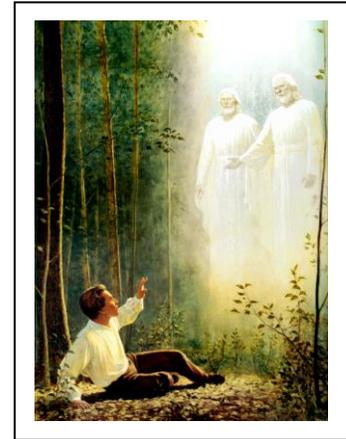
¹⁶ Bushman (2005), 38–39; Vogel (2004), 30; Quinn (1998), 136; Remini (2002), 37.

¹⁷ See Chapter Two for a more detailed examination of the First Vision.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

Smith wrote that he had received a vision—now known as The First Vision—that resolved his religious confusion.¹⁸ He claimed that in 1820, while he had been praying in a wooded area near his home, God the Father and Jesus Christ together appeared to him in bodily form, told him his sins were forgiven, and said that all contemporary churches had “turned aside from the gospel.”¹⁹

According to Joseph Smith, he told the story of the vision immediately after it happened in the early spring of 1820. As a result, he said, he received immediate criticism in the community. Smith said he recounted the experience to a Methodist minister, who dismissed the story “with great contempt.”²⁰ According to historian Steven C. Harper, “There is no evidence in the historical record that Joseph Smith told anyone but the minister of his vision for at least a decade”, and Smith might have kept it private because of how uncomfortable that first dismissal was.²¹



It is significant that there is little if any evidence that by the early 1830's Joseph Smith was telling the story in public. At least if he were telling it, no one seemed to consider it important enough to have recorded it at the time, and no one was criticizing him for it. Not even in his own history did Joseph Smith mention being criticized in this period for telling the story of the first vision. The interest, rather, was in the Book of Mormon and the various angelic visitations connected with its origin.²²

During the 1830s, Smith orally described the vision to some of his followers, though it was not widely published among Mormons until the 1840s.²³ This First Vision later grew in importance to Smith's followers, who eventually regarded it as the first event in the restoration of Christ's church to Earth.²⁴ Some Mormon scholars suggest that Joseph Smith himself may have originally considered the vision to be a personal conversion.²⁵

¹⁸ Bushman (2005), 39; Vogel (2004), 30; Quinn (1998), 136.

¹⁹ Remini (2002), 37–38; Bushman (2005), 39; Vogel (2004), 30.

²⁰ Vogel (2004), 30; Remini (2002), 40; Harper, Steven C. (2019). *First Vision: Memory and Mormon Origins*. (New York: Oxford University Press), 9.

²¹ Harper (2019), 10–12.

²² Allen, James B., “The Significance of Joseph Smith's ‘First Vision’ in Mormon Thought,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Vol. 1 No. 3 (1966), 30.

²³ Harper (2019), 1, 51–55.

²⁴ Allen, James B. (Autumn 1966). “The Significance of Joseph Smith's “First Vision” in Mormon Thought”. *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*. 1 (3):29–46.

²⁵ Bushman (2005), 39; Vogel (2004), 30; Remini (2002), 39.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

The importance of The First Vision to the veracity of Mormonism can best be seen in the public declaration of Mormon Prophet Gordon B. Hinckley: “Our entire case as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints rests on the validity of this glorious First Vision. It was the parting of the curtain to open this, the dispensation of the fulness of times. **Nothing on which we base our doctrine, nothing we teach, nothing we live by is of greater importance than this initial declaration.** I submit that if Joseph Smith talked with God the Father and His Beloved Son, then all else of which he spoke is true. This is the hinge on which turns the gate that leads to the path of salvation and eternal life.”²⁶

6

Without question the “First Vision” of Joseph Smith stands as the chart and compass to the genuineness of all his subsequent revelations. It is a vision that conflicts with virtually every major doctrine that Christians have held since the first century Church. Since the late nineteenth century Latter-day Saints authorities have agreed on the importance of the first vision for the authority of their Church. If the first vision is a fabricated and evolving story, then the entire foundation of Mormonism is defective.²⁷

Before losing faith in the Book of Mormon in his final days, Mormon Historian B.H. Roberts organized and edited much of the Mormon history. Roberts understood the importance of Smith’s first vision. He states: “The facts in which Mormonism had its origin are of such a character that they cannot be resolved into delusion or mistake. Either they were truth or conscious Simon-pure invention. It is not possible to place the matter on middle ground. **Joseph Smith was either a true Prophet or a conscious fraud or villain.**”²⁸

The Golden Plates

According to Smith’s later accounts, while praying one night in 1823, he was visited by an angel named Moroni. Smith claimed this angel revealed the location of a buried book made of golden plates, as well as other artifacts including a breastplate and a set of Interpreters composed of two seer stones set in a frame, which had been hidden in the Hill Cumorah near his home.²⁹ These Interpreters became known as the Urim and Thummim. Smith said he attempted to remove the plates the next morning, but was

²⁶ Hinckley, Gordon B. (1998). “What Are People Asking about Us?” General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, October 1998. Retrieved July 26, 2023.

<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/1998/10/what-are-people-asking-about-us?> (Emphasis added).

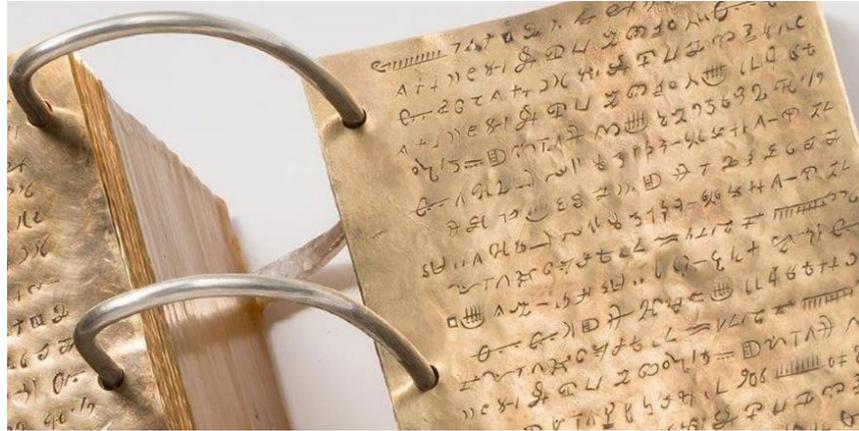
²⁷ Harrod, Allen F. (2011), *Deception by Design: The Mormon Story*. (Bloomington, IN: WestBow Press), 69.

²⁸ Roberts, B.H. (1907), *Defense of the Faith and the Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret), 1:59. (Emphasis added)

²⁹ Quinn (1998), 136–38; Bushman (2005), 43; Shipps (1985), 151–152.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

unsuccessful because Moroni returned and prevented him.³⁰ He reported that during the next four years he made annual visits to the hill, but, until the fourth and final visit, each time he returned without the plates.³¹



Robert Moray how these golden plates came to be buried in the Hill Cumorah in *The Encyclopedia of Practical Christianity*:

The Book of Mormon is the purported history of the origins of two great civilizations which existed in the Americas before 1492. According to the book's account, there have been two great ancient migrations to the New World. The first one was about 2250 BC. These people originally lived around the tower of Babel. The Lord told a prophet to build barges for a transoceanic trip to a New World. The Lord gave the prophet a complete blueprint for the barges and they were built accordingly.

After the barges were finished, the people complained to the Lord that He had forgotten to put something in the design of the barges. God had forgotten to put windows or holes in the barges and the people knew that once they closed the door, they would suffocate. The Lord commanded two round windows to be cut in the barges. One was to be cut in the roof and one in the bottom of each barge. The people again complained that the water would rush in the barge if a hole was cut in the bottom. The Lord then commanded them to plug up the hole in the bottom of the barges. The people then left the Old World, and after 340 days at sea all the barges landed in the same place at the same time on the west coast of Central

³⁰ Bushman (2005), 50; Jortner, Adam (2022), *No Place for Saints: Mobs and Mormons in Jacksonian America*. Witness to History. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press), 38.

³¹ Quinn (1998), 163–64; Bushman (2005), 54.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

America. Here the Jeredites built a large civilization. Unfortunately, the Jeredites were extremely warlike and they exterminated themselves.

The second and more important of the two migrations occurred around 600 BC. This migration was headed by Lehi and his sons. The Lord told Lehi to leave Jerusalem and to come to the New World. God again gave the blueprints for the ship. The ship was constructed, and they crossed the ocean and landed in Central America. There they built a large and industrious civilization. Laman, a son of Lehi, was so rebellious and wicked that God cursed him with a black skin (2 Nephi 5:21). His descendants are the American Indians. These people were called the Lamanites. Nephi, the other son of Lehi, and his descendants became the Nephites. These two civilizations were constantly at war with each another.

After His resurrection, Jesus came to the Nephites, preached the Gospel to them, instituted baptism, the Lord's Supper and other church institutions. The Lamanites proved too strong for the Nephites, and after several great battles the Nephites were annihilated except for one warrior by the name of Mormon. He is the one who collected the history of his people and engraved them on golden plates. Upon his death, his son, Moroni, finished the work then took the plates and hid them in a hill near modern-day Palmyra, New York. He was killed after this.

In 1823, Moroni—who had become an angel after death—revealed the location of the plates to Joseph Smith. Smith found the plates and in 1827 he was allowed to retrieve the plates. He then translated the “Reformed Egyptian” with the aid of a pair of magical spectacles. His translation of these golden plates is the present-day Book of Mormon.³²

Meanwhile, Smith's family faced financial hardship, due in part to the death of his oldest brother Alvin, who had assumed a leadership role in the family.³³ Alvin may have taken the lead because his father, Joseph Sr., could not.³⁴ Family members supplemented their meager farm income by hiring out for odd jobs and working as treasure seekers,³⁵ a type of magical supernaturalism common during the period.³⁶ Smith was said to have an

³² Morey, R. A. (2004). *The Encyclopedia of Practical Christianity*. (Las Vegas: Christian Scholars Press), 555-556.

³³ Bushman (2005), 42.

³⁴ Bushman (2005), 42. Smith Sr., worn down by setbacks, may have partially abdicated family leadership. “I have not always set that example before my family that I ought,” he confessed in 1844.

³⁵ Bushman, Richard Lyman (2008). *Mormonism: A Very Short Introduction*. Very Short Introductions. Vol. 183. (New York: Oxford University Press), 21; Bushman (2005), 33, 48.

³⁶ Taylor, Alan (Spring 1986). “The Early Republic's Supernatural Economy: Treasure Seeking in the American Northeast, 1780–1830”. *American Quarterly*. 38 (1): 6–34.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

ability to locate lost items by looking into a seer stone, which he also used in treasure hunting, including, beginning in 1825, several unsuccessful attempts to find buried treasure sponsored by Josiah Stowell, a wealthy farmer in Chenango County.³⁷ In 1826, Smith was brought before a Chenango County court for “glass-looking”, or pretending to find lost treasure; Stowell’s relatives accused Smith of tricking Stowell and faking an ability to perceive hidden treasure, though Stowell attested that he believed Smith had such abilities.³⁸

Some scholars are of the opinion that the result of the proceeding remains unclear because primary sources report conflicting outcomes.³⁹ But this much is known: On March 20, 1826, Smith was arrested by Constable Philip De Zeng⁴⁰ and brought to court in Bainbridge, New York, on the complaint of Josiah Stowell’s nephew, who accused Smith of being “a disorderly person and an imposter.”⁴¹ An anonymous writer claimed to have been given access to an account of court proceedings, which was published in Fraser’s Magazine during 1873. In it, Smith described his divination methods.

[Joseph Smith said] he had a certain stone which he had occasionally looked at to determine where hidden treasures in the bowels of the earth were; that he professed to tell in this manner where gold mines were a distance under ground, and had looked for Mr. Stowel several times, and had informed him where he could find these treasures, and Mr. Stowel had been engaged in digging for them. That at Palmyra he pretended to tell by looking at this stone where coined money was buried in Pennsylvania, and while at Palmyra had frequently ascertained in that way where lost property was of various kinds; that he had occasionally been in the habit of looking through this stone to find lost property for three years, but of late had pretty much given it up on account of its injuring his health, especially his eyes, making them sore; that he did not solicit business of this kind, and had always rather declined having anything to do with this business. ... And therefore the Court find the Defendant guilty. Costs: Warrant, 19c. Complaint upon oath, 25

³⁷ Newell, Linda King; Avery, Valeen Tippetts (1994). *Mormon Enigma: Emma Hale Smith* (2nd ed). (Urbana: University of Illinois Press), 17; Brooke (1994), 152–53; Quinn (1998), 43–44, 54–57; Persuitt, David (2000). *Joseph Smith and the Origins of the Book of Mormon*. (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co.), pp. 33–53; Bushman (2005), 45–53; Jortner (2022), 29.

³⁸ Jortner (2022), 29–31.

³⁹ Jortner (2022), 33; Vogel, Dan. “Rethinking the 1826 Judicial Decision”. *Mormon Scripture Studies: An e-Journal of Critical Thought*. Archived from the original on June 9, 2011.; “Introduction to State of New York v. JS–A”. The Joseph Smith Papers. Archived from the original on December 20, 2022. Retrieved December 26, 2022.

⁴⁰ Madsen, Gordon A. (Spring 1990), “Joseph Smith’s 1826 Trial: The Legal Setting,” *BYU Studies*, 30 (2): 93.

⁴¹ Vogel (2004), 81.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

1/2c. Seven witnesses, 87 1/2c. Recognisances, 25c. Mittimus, 19c. Recognisances of witnesses, 75c. Subpoena, 18c. - \$2.68.⁴²

This account has been corroborated by later discoveries, such as Justice Neely's bill of costs which refers to Joseph Smith as "The Glass Looker," (i.e., a diviner), discovered in 1971 by Wesley P. Walters.⁴³ The total costs exactly matched the amount in *Fraser's Magazine*. However, other contradictory accounts of the trial have also been published⁴⁴ which brings the authenticity of the accounts into question.⁴⁵ In 1838, Joseph Smith stated that he had, in fact, worked for Josiah Stowell but Smith avoided mentioning the court hearing and downplayed his role by claiming to be a mere bystander. Smith said that Stowell had heard of a lost Spanish silver mine near Harmony, Pennsylvania, and wanted to find it. According to Smith, Stowell "took me, with the rest of his hands, to dig for the silver mine, at which I continued to work for nearly a month, without success in our undertaking, and finally I prevailed with the old gentleman to cease digging after it. Hence arose the very prevalent story of my having been a money-digger."⁴⁶

10

Emma Hale Smith



While boarding at the Hale house, located in the township of Harmony (now Oakland) in Pennsylvania, Smith met and courted Emma Hale. When he proposed marriage, her father, Isaac Hale, objected. The "official" reason for this refusal, according to Smith's autobiography, was the persecution which attended Smith because of the vision he claimed to have seen.⁴⁷ Fawn M. Brodie, however, in her biography of Joseph Smith, gives documentary evidence to prove that the real reason for Mr. Hale's refusal was that at this time Smith's only occupation was that of digging for money with the help of a "peepstone" into which he would gaze to determine the

⁴² A visitor to Salt Lake City (1873), "The Original Prophet", *Fraser's Magazine*, 7: 229.

⁴³ Hill, Marvin S. (1972), "Joseph Smith and the 1826 Trial: New Evidence and New Difficulties", *BYU Studies*, 12:2.

⁴⁴ Purple, W.D. (1877), "Joseph Smith The Originator of Mormonism," *Greene*, April 28, 1877; Benton, A.W. (1972), "Mormonites," *Evangelical Magazine and Gospel Advocate*, Utica, N.Y., April 9, 1831.

⁴⁵ Hill (1972), 12:2.

⁴⁶ Smith, Joseph. "Joseph Smith History 1:56," Joseph Smith—History 1:56. Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Retrieved July 26, 2023.

⁴⁷ Joseph Smith—History, 58.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

location of the treasure.⁴⁸ Hale also considered Smith a stranger who appeared “careless” and “not very well educated.”⁴⁹

Smith and Emma eloped and married on January 18, 1827, after which the couple began boarding with Smith’s parents in Manchester. Later that year, when Smith promised to abandon treasure seeking, his father-in-law offered to let the couple live on his property in Harmony and help Smith get started in business.⁵⁰

Smith made his last visit to the Hill Cumorah shortly after midnight on September 22, 1827, taking Emma with him.⁵¹ This time, he said he successfully retrieved the plates, along with the Urim and Thummin.⁵² Smith said Moroni commanded him not to show the plates to anyone else, but to translate them and publish their translation. He also said the plates were a religious record of Middle-Eastern indigenous Americans and were engraved in an unknown language, called reformed Egyptian.⁵³ Furthermore, Smith told associates that he was capable of reading and translating them.⁵⁴

Although Smith had abandoned treasure hunting, former associates believed he had double crossed them and had taken the golden plates for himself, property they believed should be jointly shared.⁵⁵ After they ransacked places where they believed the plates might have been hidden, Smith decided to leave Palmyra.⁵⁶

⁴⁸ Brodie, Fawn M. (1957). *No Man Knows My History* (New York: Knopf), 29–33; see also her Appendix A, 405–18; Bushman (2005), 53; Vogel (2004), 89; Quinn (1998), 164.

⁴⁹ Newell & Avery (1994), 17–18.

⁵⁰ Bushman (2005), 53–54.

⁵¹ Shippo (1985), 12; Quinn (1998), 163–64; Bushman (2005), 54, 59; Easton-Flake, Amy; Cope, Rachel (2020), 126. “Reconfiguring the Archive: Women and the Social Production of the Book of Mormon”. In MacKay, Michael Hubbard; Ashurst-McGee, Mark; Hauglid, Brian M. (eds.). *Producing Ancient Scripture: Joseph Smith’s Translation Projects in the Development of Mormon Christianity*. (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press), 105–134.

⁵² Bushman (2005), 59–60; Shippo (1985), 153. A description attributed to Martin Harris added that the glasses were about two inches in diameter, perfectly round, and five-eighths of an inch thick at the center, thinning at the edges. *Tiffany’s Monthly*, Aug. 1850, 164-165; *Latter-day Saints Millennial Star*, Jan. 20, 1882, 87; Cf. William Smith (1883), *William Smith on Mormonism: A True Account of the Origin of the Book of Mormon*. (Lamoni, Iowa: Herald Stream Book and Job Office), 12.

⁵³ Shippo (1985), 9; Bushman (2005), 54; Howe, Daniel Walker (2007). *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815–1848*. Oxford History of the United States. (New York: Oxford University Press), 313–314; Jortner (2022), 41.

⁵⁴ Bushman, Richard Lyman (2004). Neilson, Reid L.; Woodworth, Jed (eds.). *Believing History: Latter-day Saint Essays*. (New York: Columbia University Press), 238–242; Howe (2007), 313.

⁵⁵ Bushman (2005), 61; Howe (2007), 315; Jortner (2022), 36–38.

⁵⁶ Shippo (1985), 12; Remini (2002), 55; Bushman (2005), 60–61.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

The Move to Harmony, Pennsylvania

In October 1827, Joseph and Emma moved to Harmony to live near Emma's parents, aided by a relatively prosperous neighbor, Martin Harris.⁵⁷ While living there, Smith transcribed some characters that he said were engraved on the plates and dictated their translations to Emma.⁵⁸

In February 1828, after visiting Smith in Harmony, Harris took a sample of the characters Smith had copied to a few prominent scholars, including Charles Anthon.⁵⁹ According to Smith's autobiography, Professor Anthon identified the characters supposedly copied from the plates as "Egyptian, Chaldaic, Assyriac, and Arabic," and affirmed that the translation of them was correct, "more so than any he had before seen translated from the Egyptian."⁶⁰ Walter Martin points out: "It should be observed that to combine Arabic script and Egyptian characters (whether hieroglyphic, hieratic, or demotic) would be a linguistic monstrosity." Further, note the letter from Charles Anthon to E.D. Howe, reproduced by Walter Martin, in which Anthon asserts, "The whole story about my having pronounced the Mormonite inscription to be 'reformed Egyptian hieroglyphics' is perfectly false."⁶¹

Joseph Smith did say that Anthon initially authenticated the characters and their translation, but then retracted his opinion after learning that Smith claimed to have received the plates from an angel.⁶² Anthon denied Harris's account of the meeting, claiming instead that he had tried to convince Harris that he was the victim of a fraud.⁶³ In any event, Harris returned to Harmony in April 1828 and began serving as Smith's scribe.⁶⁴

The Manuscript Disappears

Although Harris and his wife Lucy were early supporters of Smith, by June 1828 they began to have doubts about the existence of the golden plates. Harris persuaded Smith to let him take 116 pages of manuscript to Palmyra to show a few family members, including

⁵⁷ Remini (2002), 55–56; Newell & Avery (1994), 2; Bushman (2005), 62–63.

⁵⁸ Easton-Flake & Cope (2020), 133; Bushman (2005), 63; Remini (2002), 56.

⁵⁹ Shipps (1985), 15, 153; Bushman (2005), 63.

⁶⁰ Hoekema (1963), 12.

⁶¹ Martin, Walter (1962). *The Maze of Mormonism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan), 42.

⁶² Bushman (2005), 63–66; Remini (2002), 57–58.

⁶³ Howe (1834), 269–72. (Anthon's description of his meeting with Harris). But see Vogel (2004), 115 (arguing that Anthon's initial assessment was likely more positive than he would later admit).

⁶⁴ Easton-Flake & Cope (2020), 129.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

his wife.⁶⁵ Harris showed the manuscript to his wife, who allowed him to lock them in her bureau. He then showed the pages not only to the named relatives but “to any friend who came along.”⁶⁶ On one occasion Harris picked the lock of the bureau and damaged it, irritating his wife.⁶⁷ The manuscript then disappeared. According to Pomeroy Tucker (1802-1870), who was an acquaintance of the Harris family, Lucy Harris took the manuscript while Harris was asleep and burned it, keeping that fact a secret until after publication of the Book of Mormon. “A feud was thus produced between husband and wife, which was never reconciled.”⁶⁸ A neighbor in Harmony said that prior to burning it, Lucy Harris hid the manuscript and told Smith to find it with his seer stone, but that Smith was unsuccessful.⁶⁹ For other theories of what happened to the missing pages see Dan Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2000), 3:480-481. [It should be remembered that—decades later—master forger Mark Hofmann may have been working on a forgery of the 116 pages before he was convicted of murder.⁷⁰]

Thus, the manuscript—of which there was no other copy—was lost during the summer of 1828.⁷¹ The “lost 116 pages” were the original manuscript pages of what Joseph Smith said was the translation of the Book of Lehi, which he originally intended to be the first part of the Book of Mormon.

Along with the Book of Lehi, Royal Skousen, editor of The Book of Mormon Critical Text Project, says that in the printer’s manuscript of the Book of Mosiah, the first chapter is listed as Chapter 3. Skousen proposes that all or part of the first two chapters were lost with the 116 pages. Skousen notes that every other book in the Book of Mormon is named for its primary author; but the Book of Mosiah begins with King Benjamin and is not named for him. Also, Mosiah does not begin with an introduction of the author or an

⁶⁵ Shippes (1985), 15–16; Easton-Flake & Cope (2020), 117–119; Smith (1853), 117–118.

⁶⁶ Bushman (2005), 67.

⁶⁷ Bushman (2005), 67. Lucy Harris was described by Lucy Mack Smith as a woman of “irascible temper,” but Harris may also have abused her. Lucy Harris also suggested that her husband may have committed adultery with a neighboring “Mrs. Haggart.” [Smith (1853), 1:367] “Lucy Harris statement,” in *Early Mormon Documents*, 2:34-36: “In one of his fits of rage he struck me with the butt end of a whip, which I think had been used for driving oxen, and was about the size of my thumb, and three or four feet long. He beat me on the head four or five times, and the next day turned me out of doors twice, and beat me in a shameful manner....Whether the Mormon religion be true or false, I leave the world to judge, for its effects upon Martin Harris have been to make him more cross, turbulent and abusive to me.” In March 1830, a revelation from Smith warned Harris not to “covet thy neighbor’s wife.” D&C 19:25.

⁶⁸ Tucker, Pomeroy (1867), *Origin, Rise and Progress of Mormonism*, (New York: D. Appleton), 46. Also at *Early Mormon Documents* 3:11.

⁶⁹ Mather, Frederic G. (1880), “Early Days of Mormonism”, *Lippincott’s Magazine*, 26 (152): 202.

⁷⁰ See Allen D. Roberts, “‘The Truth Is the Most Important Thing’: The New Mormon History According to Mark Hofmann,” *Dialogue* 20 (1987), 89-90.

⁷¹ Shippes (1985), 16; Easton-Flake & Cope (2020), 117–118.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

explanatory introduction as is typical with other Book of Mormon books but “begins in the middle of things.” Skousen speculates that the original first chapter related Mosiah’s flight from the land of Nephi to Zarahemla and that the second chapter discussed King Benjamin’s early reign and wars.⁷²

Shortly after Harris left Harmony, Smith’s wife gave birth to Smith’s firstborn son, who was “very much deformed” and died less than a day after delivery.⁷³ Smith was devastated by the loss of the 116 pages of his manuscript, especially since it came at the same time as he lost his first son.⁷⁴ Emma Smith nearly died herself, and Smith tended her for two weeks. As she slowly gained strength, Smith left her in the care of her mother and took the first stagecoach north to Palmyra in search of Harris and the manuscript.⁷⁵

As soon as Joseph arrived at his parents’ home in Palmyra, the Smith family sent for Harris, expecting him at eight for breakfast. The morning hours dragged by, and he did not come. At half past twelve, Lucy Smith reported, “we saw him walking with a slow and measured speed towards the house, his eyes fixed thoroughly upon the ground. On coming to the gate, he stopped instead of passing through and got upon the fence, and sat there some time with his hat drawn over his eyes.” When Harris finally came in and sat down for the long-delayed breakfast, he “took up his knife and fork as if he were going to use them, but immediately dropped them.” He “pressed his hands upon his temples, and cried out, ‘Oh, I have lost my soul! I have lost my soul!’” Joseph sprang up and demanded to know about the manuscript. “Have you broken your oath, and brought down condemnation upon my head, as well as your own?” “Yes, it is gone,” replied Martin, “and I know not where.”⁷⁶

Smith urged Harris to search his house again, but Harris told him he had already ripped open beds and pillows. Lucy Smith surmised that Mrs. Harris stole the manuscript with the intention of altering it. The discrepancies between the second translation and the first would make the whole appear a fraud. Whether she intended to do this—or merely burned the manuscript—the result would be the same. Whatever the reason for the disappearance of the 116 pages, the manuscript was gone, never to be recovered. Smith moaned, “Oh, my God! ... All is lost! all is lost! What shall I do? I have sinned—it is I who

⁷² De Groote, Michael (26 June 2010), *Chapters of Mosiah among stolen pages?*, Mormon Times, archived from the original on 10 July 2010, retrieved 29 June 2010.

⁷³ Sophia Lewis, 1834, quoted in *EMD* 4: 298. Lewis, who was present at the birth, said that the baby was stillborn.

⁷⁴ Shipp (1985), 16; Easton-Flake & Cope (2020), 117–118.

⁷⁵ Bushman (2005), 66–67; Smith (1853), 118; Howe, Eber Dudley (1834), *Mormonism Unveiled*, (Painesville, Ohio: Telegraph Press), 269.

⁷⁶ Bushman (2005), 67; Smith (1853), 120–121.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics

tempted the wrath of God.”⁷⁷ Smith said that as punishment for his having lost the manuscript, Moroni returned, took away the plates—Moroni would have also taken away the Interpreters (the Urim and Thummim) as well—and revoked his ability to translate.⁷⁸

It is my personal opinion that Joseph Smith—having been slammed, as it were, into a brick wall—went through a time of deep despondency and turmoil of soul. Obviously, for reasons just stated, he could not attempt to duplicate the lost 116 pages. But what could he do to alleviate his dilemma? During this period, strangely enough, Smith briefly attended Methodist meetings with his wife, until a cousin of hers objected to inclusion of a “practicing necromancer” on the Methodist class roll.⁷⁹

After returning to Harmony without Harris, Smith dictated to Emma his first written revelation,⁸⁰ which both rebuked Smith and denounced Harris as “a wicked man.”⁸¹ The revelation assured Smith that if he was penitent he would regain his ability to translate.⁸²

There is a discrepancy if or when the angel returned the Interpreters to Smith.⁸³ Years later in 1838, Smith said, “Immediately after my return home [to Harmony in about July 1828], I was walking out a little distance, when Behold the former heavenly messenger appeared and handed to me the Urim and Thummin.”⁸⁴ Smith said he used the Interpreters to receive a revelation (today known as Section 3 of the Doctrine and Covenants); then the angel again took away the plates and interpreters before returning them a few days later.⁸⁵ Nevertheless, Lucy Smith’s recollection was that an angel had promised that the plates and interpreters would be returned to Smith on September 22, 1828, if he were sufficiently worthy.⁸⁶

⁷⁷ Bushman (2005), 67; Smith (1853), 121.

⁷⁸ Shipps (1985), 17.

⁷⁹ Bushman (2005), 68–70.

⁸⁰ The revelation is today Doctrine and Covenants, section 3 (LDS Church ed.).

⁸¹ Phelps, W.W., ed. (1833), *A Book of Commandments, for the Government of the Church of Christ*, (Zion: William Wines Phelps & Co.), sec. 2:5. Archived from the original on 2012-05-20, retrieved December 16, 2006.

⁸² Bushman (2005), 68; Phelps (1833), 2:7; Doctrine and Covenants 3:10–11.

⁸³ Bushman (2005), 578, n. 46.

⁸⁴ Vogel (2004), 147; “History, 1838–1856, volume A-1 [23 December 1805–30 August 1834],” 10, The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-a-1-23-december-1805-30-august-1834/12>. Retrieved July 27, 2023.

⁸⁵ Vogel (2004), 147; “History, 1838–1856, volume A-1 [23 December 1805–30 August 1834],” 11, The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-a-1-23-december-1805-30-august-1834/13>. Retrieved July 27, 2023.

⁸⁶ Vogel (2004), 148.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

Although the assertion clashed with other accounts, David Whitmer said that Moroni did not return the Urim and Thummim (the Interpreters) in September. Instead, Whitmer claims that Joseph used a seer stone for the remaining translation.⁸⁷ Whitmer said, regarding Smith's translation of the Book of Mormon: "Joseph Smith put the seer stone into a hat, and put his face in the hat, drawing it closely around his face to exclude the light; and in the darkness the spiritual light would shine. A piece of something resembling parchment would appear, and on that appeared the writing. One character at a time would appear, and under it was the interpretation in English. Brother Joseph would read off the English to Oliver Cowdery, who was his principal scribe, and when it was written down and repeated to Brother Joseph to see if it was correct, then it would disappear, and another character with the interpretation would appear. Thus the Book of Mormon was translated by the gift and power of God, and not by any power of man."⁸⁸

Emma Smith confirmed this: "The first that my husband translated, was translated by use of the Urim and Thummim, and that was the part that Martin Harris lost, after that he used a small stone, not exactly black, but rather a dark color."⁸⁹

Between the loss of the pages during the summer of 1828 and the rapid completion of the Book of Mormon in the spring of 1829, there was a period of quiescence as if Smith were waiting "for help or direction."⁹⁰

The Book of Mormon

Joseph Smith completed the Book of Mormon without retranslating the Book of Lehi (which was intended to be the first sections in the Book of Mormon), replacing it with what he said was an abridgment taken from the Plates of Nephi.⁹¹

Smith said that Moroni returned the plates to him in September 1828,⁹² and he then dictated some of the book to his wife Emma.⁹³ In April 1829, Joseph Smith met Oliver

⁸⁷ *Kansas City Journal*, June 19, 1881; *Omaha Herald*, October 17, 1886; Interview (1885), in Whitmer, *Interviews*, 72, 157, 200.

⁸⁸ Whitmer, David (1887). *An Address to All Believers in Christ* (Richmond, Missouri: David Whitmer), 12; Quinn (1998), 172.

⁸⁹ Emma Smith Bidamon to Emma Pilgrim, March 27, 1870, in Vogel, Dan (1996). *Early Mormon Documents*, 5 vols. (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1996-2003), 1:532. After Smith's murder in 1844, the seer stone went to Cowdery, then to his widow, then to Brigham Young's brother, then to Young himself, who was Smith's successor in the Utah church. After Young died, one of his wives, Zina D. H. Young, donated it to the LDS Church. It is now on display at the Church History Museum in Salt Lake City.

⁹⁰ Bushman (2005), 70-71.

⁹¹ 1 Nephi 1:17.

⁹² Shipp (1985), 18; Bushman (2005), 70, 578n46; Phelps (1833), sec. 2:4-5; Smith (1853), 126.

⁹³ Bushman (2005), 70.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

Cowdery—a fellow Vermonter and a distant relation who had also dabbled in folk magic—with whom he replaced Harris as scribe.⁹⁴ With Cowdery, Smith began a period of “rapid-fire translation.”⁹⁵ The two worked full time on the manuscript, and the pace of the transcription then increased so dramatically that between April and early June 1829, nearly the entire remainder of the manuscript of the Book of Mormon was completed.⁹⁶ Smith and Cowdery then moved to Fayette, New York, where they continued the work at the home of Cowdery’s friend, Peter Whitmer.⁹⁷ When the narrative described an institutional church and a requirement for baptism, Smith and Cowdery baptized each other.⁹⁸ Dictation was completed about July 1, 1829.⁹⁹

The Three Witnesses

Although Smith had previously refused to show the plates to anyone, he told Harris, Cowdery, and Whitmer’s son David that they would be allowed to see them.¹⁰⁰ These men, known collectively as the Three Witnesses, signed a statement stating that they had been shown the golden plates by an angel, and that the voice of God had confirmed the truth of their translation. Later, a group of Eight Witnesses — composed of male members of the Whitmer and Smith families — issued a statement that they had been shown the golden plates by Smith.¹⁰¹

Where are the golden plates now? According to Joseph Smith, Moroni took back the plates once Smith finished using them.¹⁰² How convenient!

A Final Thought about the Lost Manuscript

According to Smith, he did not retranslate the material that Harris had lost (the Book of Lehi) because he said that if he did, evil men would alter the manuscript in an effort to discredit him. Smith said that instead, he had been divinely ordered to replace the lost material with Nephi’s account of the same events.¹⁰³ When Smith reached the end of the book, he said he was told that God had foreseen the loss of the early manuscript and had prepared the same history in an abridged format that emphasized religious history, the

⁹⁴ *Early Mormon Documents*, 1: 599-600, 604, n. 11.

⁹⁵ Bushman (2005), 70.

⁹⁶ Bushman (2005), 73.

⁹⁷ Bushman (2005), 70–74.

⁹⁸ Quinn (1994), 5–6, 15–20; Bushman (2005), 74–75.

⁹⁹ Bushman (2005), 78.

¹⁰⁰ Bushman (2005), 77.

¹⁰¹ Bushman (2005), 77–79.

¹⁰² Remini (2002), 68.

¹⁰³ Doctrine and Covenants 10:17–18, 31 for Smith’s description of the plans to alter the manuscript.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

Small Plates of Nephi.¹⁰⁴ Smith transcribed this portion, and it appears as the first part of the book. When published in 1830, the Book of Mormon contained a statement about the lost 116 pages, as well as the Testimony of Three Witnesses and the Testimony of Eight Witnesses, who claimed to have seen and handled the golden plates.

According to Jeffrey R. Holland, an apostle in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS Church), “it was not tit for tat, this for that — you give me 116 pages of manuscript and I’ll give you 142 pages of printed text. Not so: We got back more than we lost. And it was known from the beginning that it would be so.”¹⁰⁵ Really?

Nevertheless, the loss of the manuscript provided opponents of Mormonism, such as the 19th century clergyman M.T. Lamb, with additional reasons to dismiss the religion as a fraud.¹⁰⁶ Fawn Brodie has written that Smith “realized that it was impossible for him to reproduce the story exactly, and that to redictate it would be to invite devastating comparisons. Harris’s wife taunted him: ‘If this be a divine communication, the same being who revealed it to you can easily replace it.’”¹⁰⁷ Ex-Mormons Jerald and Sandra Tanner argued that the lost manuscript suggested that Smith was not a misguided

¹⁰⁴ Bushman (2005), 74. The translated version of these “small plates” includes the books of 1 & 2 Nephi, Jacob, Enos, Jarom and Omni. The unabridged version, not retranslated, Smith called “The Book of Lehi.”

¹⁰⁵ “At least six times in the Book of Mormon the phrase ‘for a wise purpose’ is used in reference to the making, writing, and preserving of the small plates of Nephi (see 1 Nephi 9:5; Words of Mormon 1:7; Alma 37:2,12,14,18). We know one such wise purpose — the most obvious one — was to compensate for the lost 116 pages of manuscript. But it strikes me that there is a ‘wiser purpose’ than that. ... The key to such a suggestion is in verse 45 of Section 10. ... He says, ‘Behold, there are many things engraven upon the [small] plates of Nephi which do throw *greater views upon* my gospel.’ So clearly ... it was not tit for tat, this for that — you give me 116 pages of manuscript and I’ll give you 142 pages of printed text. Not so: We got back more than we lost. And it was known from the beginning that it would be so. We do not know exactly what we missed in the 116 pages, but we do know that what we received on the small plates was the personal declarations of three great witnesses, [Nephi, Jacob, and Isaiah], ... testifying that Jesus is the Christ. ... I think you could make a pretty obvious case that the sole purpose of the small plates was to give a platform for these three witnesses.” (*CES Symposium*, BYU, Aug. 9, 1994, quoted in *Latter-day Commentary on the Book of Mormon* compiled by K. Douglas Bassett, 198).

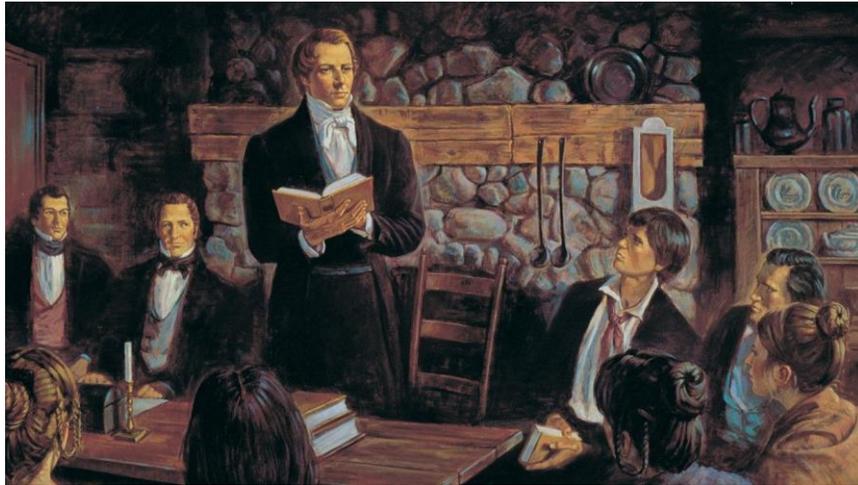
¹⁰⁶ Lamb, M.T. (1887). *The Golden Bible* — an early critical view of the lost manuscript problem. Lamb noted that the plates from which the 116 pages were translated had been preserved for 1,400 years by the special providence of God, but that a “wrathful woman” had undone His plans; neither God nor the angel stopped Smith from translating the wrong plates until Harris lost the manuscript; God scolded Smith for his loss of the manuscript, even though its loss was “the best thing that could have happened for the cause of truth.” Although Smith said that “evil men” would produce an altered manuscript if he were to translate the same part of the golden plates again, no such attempt has been uncovered. Nor did Smith ever announce what had become of the lost pages despite his followers’ belief in his prophetic gift.

¹⁰⁷ Brodie, Fawn (1986). *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith the Mormon Prophet*, 2nd ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf), 54.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

individual who believed in his own creative imagination but was at least minimally aware of his own deception.¹⁰⁸

Martin Harris was permitted by Smith to be one of the Three Witnesses. He mortgaged his farm for \$3,000 (equivalent to \$99,492 in 2023) as security in the event that the Book of Mormon did not sell, and when in fact, it did not, he lost both his farm and his wife.¹⁰⁹ He later disavowed Joseph Smith, left the church, joined several different varieties of early Mormon-related congregations, then at 87 joined the LDS Church and recanted what he'd earlier said about Smith. He never disavowed the gold plates, however.¹¹⁰



The Church of Christ is Organized

The completed work, titled the Book of Mormon, was published in Palmyra by printer Egbert Bratt Grandin¹¹¹ and was first advertised for sale on March 26, 1830.¹¹² Less than two weeks later, on April 6, 1830, Smith and his followers formally organized the Church of Christ [not to be confused with the modern church of that name which grew out of the

¹⁰⁸ *Utah Lighthouse Ministry Newsletter*, <http://utlm.org/newsletters/no72.htm>.

¹⁰⁹ Bushman (2005), 80. Lucy Harris swore (and had corroboration) that her husband intended to make money through his relationship to Smith and the Book of Mormon. *EMD* 2:35.

¹¹⁰ On his death bed, Harris said, "The Book of Mormon is no fake. I know what I know. I have seen what I have seen, and I have heard what I have heard. I have seen the gold plates from which the Book of Mormon is written. An angel appeared to me and others and testified to the truthfulness of the record, and had I been willing to have perjured myself and sworn falsely to the testimony I now bear I could have been a rich man, but I could not have testified other than I have done and am now doing for these things are true." Martin Harris, Cited by George Godfrey as "Testimony of Martin Harris", from an unpublished manuscript copy in the possession of his descendants, quoted in Eldin Ricks, *The Case of the Book of Mormon Witnesses* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1971), 65–66.

¹¹¹ Jortner (2022), 43.

¹¹² Shipps (1985), 154.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

Campbellite Restoration movement], and small branches were established in Manchester, Fayette, and Colesville, New York.¹¹³ The Book of Mormon brought Smith regional notoriety and renewed the hostility of those who remembered the 1826 Chenango County trial.¹¹⁴ After Cowdery baptized several new church members, Smith's followers were threatened with mob violence. Before Smith could confirm the newly baptized, he was arrested and charged with being a "disorderly person."¹¹⁵ Although Joseph was acquitted, both he and Cowdery fled to Colesville to escape a gathering mob.

It was likely around this time that Joseph Smith would later claim that the Apostles Peter, James, and John had appeared to him and had ordained him and Cowdery to a higher priesthood.¹¹⁶

Smith discerned that his authority was being severely weakened when Cowdery, Hiram Page, and other church members also claimed to receive revelations.¹¹⁷ This could prove to be a serious challenge to his leadership among the people. In response, Smith dictated a revelation which clarified his office as a prophet and an apostle, stating that only he had the ability to declare doctrine and scripture for the church.¹¹⁸

Smith then dispatched Cowdery, Peter Whitmer, and others on a mission to proselytize Native Americans.¹¹⁹ Cowdery was also assigned the task of locating the site of the New Jerusalem, which was to be "on the borders" of the United States with what was then Indian territory.¹²⁰

On their way to Missouri, Cowdery's party passed through northeastern Ohio, where Sidney Rigdon and over a hundred followers of his variety of Campbellite Restorationism converted to the Church of Christ, swelling the ranks of the new organization dramatically.¹²¹ After Rigdon visited New York, he soon became Smith's primary

¹¹³ For the April 6 establishment of a church organization, see Shipps (1985), 154; for Fayette and Manchester (and some ambiguity over a Palmyra presence), see Hill (1989), 27, 201n84; for the Colesville congregation, see Jortner (2022), 57.

¹¹⁴ Bushman (2005), 117; Vogel (2004), 484–486, 510–512.

¹¹⁵ Hill (1989), 28; Bushman (2005), 116–118.

¹¹⁶ Quinn (1994), 24–26; Bushman (2005), 118.

¹¹⁷ Hill (1989), 27; Bushman (2005), 120.

¹¹⁸ Hill (1989), 27–28; Bushman (2005), 121; Phelps (1833), 67.

¹¹⁹ Hill (1989), 28; Bushman (2005), 112; Jortner (2022), 59–60, 93, 95.

¹²⁰ Phelps (1833), 68; Bushman (2005), 122.

¹²¹ Parley Pratt said that the Mormon mission baptized 127 within two or three weeks "and this number soon increased to one thousand". See McKiernan, F. Mark (Summer 1970). "The Conversion of Sidney Rigdon to Mormonism." *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*. 5 (2): 71–78; Bushman (2005), 124; Jortner (2022), 60–61.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

assistant.¹²² With growing opposition in New York, Smith announced a revelation (now known as Doctrine & Covenants 37:1-4) that his followers should gather to Kirtland, Ohio, and establish themselves as a people and await word from Cowdery's mission.¹²³ They lived with Isaac Morley's family while a house was built for them on the Morley farm. Many of Smith's followers and associates settled in Kirtland, and also in Jackson County, Missouri, where Smith said he was instructed by revelation to build Zion.

Kirtland, Ohio

When Smith moved to Kirtland in January 1831, he encountered a religious culture that included enthusiastic demonstrations of spiritual gifts, including fits and trances, rolling on the ground, and speaking in tongues.¹²⁴ It should be remembered that these "enthusiastic demonstrations" are identical to what was taking place during Charles Finney's Rochester crusade which was going on at the same time (September 1830—March 1831)—events that Joseph Smith would have been well aware of and may have witnessed firsthand! Rigdon's followers were practicing a form of communalism. Smith brought the Kirtland congregation under his authority and tamed ecstatic outbursts.¹²⁵

He had promised church elders that in Kirtland they would receive an endowment of heavenly power, and at the June 1831 general conference, Smith introduced the greater authority of a High ("Melchizedek") Priesthood to the church hierarchy.¹²⁶

Zion! In Missouri?

Mormon converts poured into Kirtland. By the summer of 1835, there were fifteen hundred to two thousand Latter Day Saints in the vicinity,¹²⁷ many expecting Smith to lead them shortly to the Millennial kingdom.¹²⁸ Though his mission to the Native Americans had been a failure,¹²⁹ Cowdery and the other missionaries with him were charged with finding a site for "a holy city." They found Jackson County, Missouri. After

¹²² McKiernan, F. Mark (Summer 1970). "The Conversion of Sidney Rigdon to Mormonism." *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*. 5 (2): 71–78; Bushman (2005), 124.

¹²³ Bushman (2005), 124–125; Howe (2007), 315.

¹²⁴ Bushman (2005), 150–152; Remini (2002), 95.

¹²⁵ Bushman (2005), 154–155; Hill (1977), 131.

¹²⁶ Quinn (1994), 31–32; Bushman (2005), 125, 156–160.

¹²⁷ Arrington, Leonard; Bitton, Davis (1979). *The Mormon Experience: A History of the Latter-day Saints*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf), 21.

¹²⁸ Shipps (1985), 81.

¹²⁹ Turner, John G. (2012). *Brigham Young: Pioneer Prophet*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press), 41; Bushman (2005), 161.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

Smith visited in July 1831, he pronounced the frontier hamlet of Independence the “center place” of Zion.¹³⁰

For most of the 1830s, the church was effectively based in Ohio.¹³¹ Smith lived there, though he visited Missouri again in early 1832 to prevent a rebellion of prominent church members who believed the church in Missouri was being neglected.¹³² Smith’s trip was hastened by a mob of Ohio residents who were incensed over the church’s presence and Smith’s political power.

On March 24, 1832, Joseph was dragged from his bedroom in the dead of night. His attackers strangled him, tore off his clothes, beat him, and attempted to force him to ingest poison. They then tarred and feathered his body, and left him for dead.¹³³ According to recorded accounts of the event, the mob broke down the front door, took Smith’s oldest surviving adopted child from his arms,¹³⁴ dragged Smith from the room, leaving his exposed child on a trundle bed and forcing Emma and the others from the house, the mob threatening her with rape and murder.¹³⁵ The child was knocked off the bed onto the floor in the doorway of the home as Smith was forcibly removed from his home.¹³⁶ The child died from exposure (many accounts say pneumonia) five days after the event¹³⁷ from the condition that doctors said he developed the night of the mob violence.¹³⁸

The historian Fawn Brodie references an account that one of John Johnson’s sons, Eli, meant to punish Smith by having him castrated for an intimacy with his teenage sister, Nancy Marinda Johnson,¹³⁹ but author Bushman disputes this. He feels a more probable motivation for Smith’s tar-and-feathering is recorded by Symonds Ryder, a participant in the event, who felt Smith was plotting to take property from members of the community

¹³⁰ Bushman (2005), 162–163; Joseph Smith, Jr.; Oliver Cowdery; Sidney Rigdon; Frederick G. Williams, eds. (1835). *Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of the Latter Day Saints: Carefully Selected from the Revelations of God*. (Kirtland: F. G. Williams & Co.), 154.

¹³¹ Arrington & Bitton (1979), 21.

¹³² Bushman (2005), 180–182.

¹³³ Remini (2002), 109–110; Bushman (2005), 178–180.

¹³⁴ McKiernan, F. Mark (1971), *The Voice of One crying in the Wilderness: Sidney Rigdon, Religious Reformer, 1793-1876*, (Lawrence, KS: Coronado Press).

¹³⁵ Johnson, Luke (1864), “History of Luke Johnson, by Himself,” *The Latter Day Saints’ Millennial Star*, 16:834.

¹³⁶ Hill (1977).

¹³⁷ Newell & Avery (1984).

¹³⁸ Smith (1853).

¹³⁹ Brodie (1971), 119; Kelley, E. L.; Braden, Clark (1884). *Public discussion of the issues between the Reorganized church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day saints and the Church of Christ (Disciples)*, 202.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

and a company of citizens violently warned Smith that they would not accept those actions.

In Jackson County, existing Missouri residents resented the Latter Day Saint newcomers for both political and religious reasons.¹⁴⁰ Additionally, their rapid growth aroused fears that they would soon constitute a majority in local elections, and thus “rule the county.”¹⁴¹ Tension increased until July 1833, when non-Mormons forcibly evicted the Mormons and destroyed their property. Smith advised his followers to bear the violence patiently until after they had been attacked multiple times, after which they could fight back.¹⁴² Armed bands exchanged fire, killing one Mormon and two non-Mormons, until the old settlers forcibly expelled the Latter Day Saints from the county.¹⁴³



Zion's Camp

In response, Smith led a small paramilitary expedition from Ohio, called Zion's Camp, to aid the Latter Day Saints in Missouri.¹⁴⁴ As a military endeavor, the expedition was a failure. The men of the expedition were disorganized, suffered from a cholera outbreak and were severely outnumbered. Smith sent two church representatives to petition Missouri governor Daniel Dunklin for protection and support, but Dunklin declined to aid the Mormons. By the end of June, Smith deescalated the confrontation, sought peace

¹⁴⁰ See Remini (2002), 113–15; Arrington & Bitton (1979), 61.

¹⁴¹ Bushman (2005), 222.

¹⁴² Bushman (2005), 181–183, 235; Quinn (1994), 82–83.

¹⁴³ Quinn (1994), 83–84; Bushman (2005), 222–227.

¹⁴⁴ Remini (2002), 115.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics

with Jackson County's residents, and on July 25, 1835, disbanded Zion's Camp.¹⁴⁵ Nevertheless, Zion's Camp transformed Latter Day Saint leadership because many future church leaders came from among the participants.¹⁴⁶

Notwithstanding the failure of the expedition to regain the land, many camp members "believed heaven had watched over them." Heber C. Kimball said angels were seen.¹⁴⁷ "Most camp members felt more loyal to Joseph than ever, bonded by their hardships," and the next generation of leaders came from members of Zion's Camp: two of the next three church presidents, 56% of the first 25 apostles of the church,¹⁴⁸ all seven presidents of the seventy,¹⁴⁹ and 63 other members of the seventy. "Joseph's own devotion to Zion and the gathering grew more intense," and when offered an opportunity to "start again elsewhere, he refused."¹⁵⁰

After the Camp returned to Ohio, Smith drew heavily from its participants to establish various governing bodies in the church.¹⁵¹ He gave a revelation announcing that in order

¹⁴⁵ Hill (1989), 44–46 (for the petition to Dunklin and his declination as well as Smith deescalating and disbanding the camp); Bushman (2005), 235–46 (for the numerical limitations, social tension, and cholera outbreak in the camp).

¹⁴⁶ Bushman (2005), 246–247; Quinn (1994), 85.

¹⁴⁷ Godfrey, Matthew C. (January 2020). "We Believe the Hand of the Lord Is in It' Memories of Divine Intervention in the Zion's Camp Expedition." *BYU Studies Quarterly*. 56 (4) 2017: 99–132. Bushman (2005), 239–240.

¹⁴⁸ "Zion's Camp: A Study in Obedience, Then and Now | Religious Studies Center". rsc.byu.edu. Retrieved July 28, 2023.

¹⁴⁹ General Authority Seventies are Church leaders called by the First Presidency to be "especial witnesses" and to assist the Twelve in "building up the church and regulating all the affairs" and "preaching and administering the gospel" throughout the world (Doctrine and Covenants 107:25, 34, 38). They act under the keys and direction of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. In a revelation to Joseph Smith, the Lord taught, "It is the duty of the [Twelve Apostles] to call upon the Seventy, when they need assistance, to fill the several calls for preaching and administering the gospel" (Doctrine and Covenants 107:38).

General Authority Seventies serve full-time in the Church. They are generally released in the year they turn 70 years old and are granted emeritus status. Like the Quorum of the Twelve, they travel widely to teach the gospel of Jesus Christ, to support and counsel with Church leaders, and to assist in directing missionary work, humanitarian aid, temple building, family history, and other Church efforts. Some General Authority Seventies serve in the Presidency of the Seventy; others serve in Area Presidencies. Many Seventies live near Church headquarters and assist in directing important Church efforts from there. Though all Seventies have equal authority, some are designated as General Authorities and others are designated as Area Seventies.

¹⁵⁰ Bushman (2005), 247.

¹⁵¹ Bushman (2005), 247; see also Remini (2002), 100–104) for a timeline of Smith introducing the new organizational entities.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

to redeem Zion, his followers would have to receive an endowment¹⁵² in the Kirtland Temple.¹⁵³ In March 1836, at the temple's dedication, many who received the endowment reported seeing visions of angels and engaged in prophesying and speaking in tongues.¹⁵⁴

When a Bank is Not a Bank

In January 1837, Smith and other church leaders created a joint stock company, called the Kirtland Safety Society, to act as a quasi-bank; the company issued banknotes partly capitalized by real estate. Smith encouraged his followers to buy the notes, in which he invested heavily himself. Not surprisingly, the bank failed within a month.¹⁵⁵ As a result, Latter Day Saints in Kirtland suffered extreme high volatility and intense pressure from debt collectors. In the aftermath, Smith, founder of the Latter Day Saint movement, was fined for “running an illegal bank,” though he was employed as the institution's Cashier. While Smith appealed the fine and made arrangements to have Oliver Granger settle the affairs of the quasi-bank, many financially harmed Latter Day Saints— including many of Smith's closest advisers—left the church because they believed Smith had established the institution in order to enrich himself and church leadership.¹⁵⁶



The failure of the bank was but one part a series of internal disputes that led to the demise of the Kirtland community.¹⁵⁷ Cowdery, who by then was Assistant President of the Church,¹⁵⁸ had accused Joseph Smith of engaging in a sexual relationship with a teenage

¹⁵² The word Endowment means “a gift.” Mormons believe that only in a Mormon Temple can one receive the ordinances necessary to be exalted in the celestial kingdom. They believe that Temple ordinances, including the Endowment, lead to the greatest blessings available through the Atonement of Jesus Christ and help them focus on the Savior, His role in their Heavenly Father's plan, and their commitment to follow Him. In this context, Mormons believe that the Temple Endowment is literally a gift from God whereby He bestows sacred blessings which can only be received in His way and in His holy temple.

¹⁵³ Brodie (1971), 156–57; Smith et al. (1835), 233; Prince, Gregory A (1995). *Power From On High: The Development of Mormon Priesthood*. (Salt Lake City: Signature Books), 32 & n.104.

¹⁵⁴ Bushman (2005), 310–19.

¹⁵⁵ Remini (2002), 122–123; Bushman (2005), 328–334.

¹⁵⁶ Adams, Dale W. (1983). “Chartering the Kirtland Bank” (<https://byustudies.byu.edu/content/chartering-kirtland-bank>). *BYU Studies*. 23 (4): 467–482. Retrieved July 28, 2023; Remini (2002), 124; Bushman (2005), 331–332, 336–339.

¹⁵⁷ Brooke (1994), 221.

¹⁵⁸ Cluff, Randall (February 2000). *Cowdery, Oliver (1806–1850), Mormon leader*. American National Biography Online. Oxford University Press.

Zion and Lamb Apologetics'

servant in his home, Fanny Alger.¹⁵⁹ Construction of the Kirtland Temple had only added to the church's debt, and Smith was hounded by creditors.¹⁶⁰ Having heard of a large sum of money supposedly hidden in Salem, Massachusetts, he traveled there and announced a revelation that God had "much treasure in this city."¹⁶¹ After a month, however, he returned to Kirtland empty-handed.¹⁶² After a warrant was issued for Smith's arrest on a charge of banking fraud, he and Rigdon fled for Missouri in January 1838.¹⁶³

Adam-ondi-Ahman

By 1838, Smith had abandoned plans to redeem Zion in Jackson County, and instead declared the town of Far West, Missouri,¹⁶⁴ in Caldwell County, as the new "Zion."¹⁶⁵ In Missouri, the church also took the name "Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints." In the weeks and months after Smith and Rigdon arrived at Far West, thousands of Latter Day Saints followed them from Kirtland.¹⁶⁶ Smith encouraged the settlement of land outside Caldwell County, instituting a settlement in Adam-ondi-Ahman, in Daviess County¹⁶⁷ about five miles south of Jameson. It is located along the east bluffs above the Grand River. According to the teachings of the LDS Church, it is the site where Adam and Eve lived after being expelled from the Garden of Eden. It teaches that the place will be a gathering spot for a meeting of the priesthood leadership, including prophets of all ages and other righteous people, prior to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. The Latter Day Saints once proposed building a Temple on the site.¹⁶⁸ Such efforts were halted in the 19th century as a result of the 1838 Mormon War to evict the Latter Day Saints from Missouri. Their having declared Adam-ondi-Ahman as a sacred site for a Temple was a flash point in that confrontation.

During this time, a church council expelled many of the oldest and most prominent leaders of the church—including Cowdery, John Whitmer, David Whitmer, and W.W.

¹⁵⁹ Bushman (2005), 322; Compton, Todd (1997). *In Sacred Loneliness: The Plural Wives of Joseph Smith*. (Salt Lake City: Signature Books), 25–42.

¹⁶⁰ Bushman (2005), 217, 329.

¹⁶¹ Quinn (1998), 261–64; Bushman (2005), 328.

¹⁶² Bushman (2005), 328–329.

¹⁶³ Remini (2002), 125; Bushman (2005), 339–340; Hill (1977), 216.

¹⁶⁴ Far West is approximately 55 miles to the Northeast of Independence.

¹⁶⁵ Hill (1977), 181–82; Bushman (2005), 345, 384.

¹⁶⁶ Remini (2002), 125; Bushman (2005), 341–346.

¹⁶⁷ Walker, Jeffrey N. (2008). "Mormon Land Rights in Caldwell and Daviess Counties and the Mormon Conflict of 1838: New Findings and New Understandings." *BYU Studies*. 47 (1): 4–55; LeSueur, Stephen C. (Fall 2005). "Missouri's Failed Compromise: The Creation of Caldwell County for the Mormons." *Journal of Mormon History*. 31 (2): 113–144.

¹⁶⁸ Brodie (1971), 210, 222–23; Quinn (1994), 628; Remini (2002), 131.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

Phelps—on allegations of misusing church property and finance amid tense relations between them and Smith.¹⁶⁹ Smith explicitly approved of the excommunication of these men, who were known collectively as the “dissenters.”¹⁷⁰

The Danites

Political and religious differences between old Missourians and newly arriving Latter Day Saint settlers provoked tensions between the two groups, much as they had in Jackson County. By this time, Smith’s experiences with mob violence led him to believe that his faith’s survival required greater militancy against anti-Mormons.¹⁷¹ Around June 1838, Sampson Avard formed a covert organization called the Danites to intimidate Latter Day Saint dissenters and oppose anti-Mormon militia units.¹⁷² Though it is unclear how much Smith knew of the Danites’ activities, he clearly approved of those of which he did know.¹⁷³ After Rigdon delivered a sermon (known as the “Salt Sermon”¹⁷⁴) that implied dissenters had no place in the Latter Day Saint community, the Danites forcibly expelled them from the county.¹⁷⁵ While no summary or text of Rigdon’s sermon remains, eyewitnesses indicated that Rigdon took the subject of his text from the fifth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew:

“If the salt have lost its savor, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.” (Matthew 5:13)

According to Rigdon, the dissenters were like the “salt” spoken of by Jesus (part of the metaphors of salt and light in the Sermon on the Mount) and must be “trodden under foot.” Rigdon was then followed by Smith with a short speech, in which he seemingly sanctioned what Rigdon had said.¹⁷⁶

¹⁶⁹ Marquardt, H. Michael (2005). *The Rise of Mormonism: 1816–1844*. (Grand Rapids: Xulon Press), 463; Remini (2002), 128; Quinn (1994), 93; Bushman (2005), 324, 346–348.

¹⁷⁰ Bushman (2005), 347–348.

¹⁷¹ Quinn (1994), 92; Brodie (1971), 213; Bushman (2005), 355.

¹⁷² Quinn (1994), 93; Remini (2002), 129.

¹⁷³ Bushman (2005), 346–352; Quinn (1994), 93; Hill (1977), 225.

¹⁷⁴ The salt sermon was an oration delivered on 17 June 1838 by Sidney Rigdon, then First Counselor in the First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, and frequent spokesman for Joseph Smith, the founder of the Latter Day Saint movement, against church dissenters, including Book of Mormon witnesses Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and John Whitmer, and other leaders including W. W. Phelps. The Salt Sermon is often confused with Rigdon’s July 4th oration.

¹⁷⁵ Quinn (1994), 94–95.

¹⁷⁶ McKiernan, Mark F. (1970), “Sidney Rigdon’s Fourth of July [1838] Oration,” *The Historians Corner*, Provo, Utah: *BYU Studies*, 11 (1).

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

Ebenezer Robinson (who remained with the church after 1838), recalled that the next day a letter was “gotten up in the office of the First Presidency,”¹⁷⁷ which Danite leader Sampson Avard later charged was written by Sidney Rigdon.¹⁷⁸ This statement (the so-called Danite Manifesto) was signed by eighty-three Mormons, including Joseph Smith’s brother, and fellow member of the First Presidency, Hyrum. Robinson later asserted that all of the signers were Danites.¹⁷⁹ According to John Corrill, an early church member and leader,

...the first presidency did not seem to have much to do with [the Danites] at first,
[but] some of the Danites clearly saw the salt sermon as a sign of approval.¹⁸⁰

Corrill stated that “although [Rigdon] did not give names in his sermon, yet it was plainly understood that he meant the dissenters or those who had denied the faith.”¹⁸¹ The dissenters and their families interpreted these words as threats, and they quickly left Caldwell County, Missouri. Their stories helped stir up anti-Mormon feeling in northwestern Missouri and contributed to the outbreak of the 1838 Mormon War.¹⁸²

Whatever its origins, the letter was addressed specifically to the principal dissenters: Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, John Whitmer, W.W. Phelps, and Lyman E. Johnson. It made several accusations concerning the actions and character of these dissenters and then stated:

“We have solemnly warned you, and that in the most determined manner, that if you do not cease that course of wanton abuse of the citizens of this county, that vengeance would overtake you sooner or later, and that when it did come it would be as furious as the mountain torrent, and as terrible as the beating tempest; but you have affected to dispise [sic] our warnings, and pass them off with a sneer, or a grin, or a threat, and pursued your former course; and vengeance sleepeth not, neither does it slumber; and unless you heed us this time, and attend to our request, it will overtake you at an hour when you do not expect, and at a day when

¹⁷⁷ Quinn (1994), 94.

¹⁷⁸ *Document Containing the Correspondence, Orders &c. in Relation to the Disturbances with the Mormons; And the Evidence Given Before the Hon. Austin A. King, Judge of the Fifth Judicial Circuit of the State of Missouri, at the Court-House in Richmond, in a Criminal Court of Inquiry, Begun November 12, 1838, on the Trial of Joseph Smith, Jr., and Others, for High Treason and Other Crimes Against the State.* Fayette, Missouri, 1841, 102.

¹⁷⁹ Quinn (1994), 94.

¹⁸⁰ Corrill, John (1839), *A Brief History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Commonly Called Mormons)*, (St. Louis: Privately printed for the author), 31.

¹⁸¹ Corrill (1839), 218.

¹⁸² Bushman (2005), 349-353.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

you do not look for it; and for you there shall be no escape; for there is but one decree for you, which is depart, depart, or a more fatal calamity shall befall you,"¹⁸³

The letter had the desired effect as the dissenters quickly fled the county, relocating to Liberty and Richmond in neighboring Clay and Ray counties. Their families were forced to follow later, leaving their property behind. One of the expelled dissenters, John Whitmer, claimed that they had been "driven from their homes" and robbed "of all their goods save clothing & bedding &c." (John Whitmer, p. 184). Reed Peck agreed, asserting that "the claims by which this property was taken from these men were unjust and perhaps without foundation cannot be doubted by any unprejudiced person acquainted with all parties and circumstances."¹⁸⁴

Joseph Smith (who later denied any direct involvement with the Danites) noted in his journal that the dissenters "took warning and soon they were seen bounding over the prairie like the scape Goat to carry off[f] their own sins."¹⁸⁵ According to Peck, Sidney Rigdon likewise approved and asserted that the Mormons were within their rights to expel a undesirable minority from their midst, saying that:

"When a country, or body of people have individuals among them with whom they do not wish to associate, and a public expression is taken against their remaining among them and such individuals do not remove it is the principle of republicanism itself that gives that community a right to expel them forcibly and no law will prevent it."¹⁸⁶

Just a few days later, in a speech given at Far West's Fourth of July celebration, Rigdon declared that Mormons would no longer tolerate persecution by the Missourians and spoke of a "war of extermination" if Mormons were attacked.¹⁸⁷ Smith implicitly endorsed this speech,¹⁸⁸ and many non-Mormons understood it to be a thinly veiled threat. They unleashed a flood of anti-Mormon rhetoric in newspapers and in stump speeches given during the 1838 election campaign.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸³ *Document* (1841), 103-106.

¹⁸⁴ Peck, Reed (1839). *The Reed Peck Manuscript*, 28.

¹⁸⁵ Faulring, Scott, *An American Prophet's Record: The Diaries and Journals of Joseph Smith*, (Salt Lake City: Signature Books), 187.

¹⁸⁶ Peck (1839), 33.

¹⁸⁷ Remini (2002), 131-133.

¹⁸⁸ Quinn (1994), 96; Bushman (2005), 355.

¹⁸⁹ Remini (2002), 133.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

The Extermination Order

On August 6, 1838, non-Mormons in Gallatin, Missouri, tried to prevent Mormons from voting,¹⁹⁰ and the election day scuffles initiated the 1838 Mormon War. Non-Mormon vigilantes raided and burned Mormon farms, while Danites and other Mormons pillaged non-Mormon towns.¹⁹¹ In the Battle of Crooked River, a group of Mormons attacked the Missouri state militia, mistakenly believing them to be anti-Mormon vigilantes. During 1838 there was an escalation in tensions between the members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and their neighbors in northwestern Missouri. Ray County was located immediately south of the Mormon-dominated Caldwell County. The two counties were separated by a no-man's land 24 miles long and 6 miles wide, known as "Bunkham's Strip" or "Buncombe Strip." This unincorporated strip was attached to Ray County for administrative and military purposes.

The citizens of Ray County and their neighbors to the west in Clay County, first began to have concerns about the Mormons to the north when a group of "dissenters" from the church was expelled from Caldwell County. These dissenters, including David Whitmer, William Wines Phelps, John Whitmer and Oliver Cowdery, had been the leaders of the Latter Day Saint church in Missouri. They relocated their families to Richmond and Liberty, the county seats of Ray and Clay, respectively, and claimed that their lives had been threatened and their property had been stolen by the Mormons.¹⁹²

On the night of October 24, 1838, Captain Bogart's unit had camped along the banks of Crooked River in Bunkham's Strip. Patten and the Mormon rescue company approached from the north along the main road, having traveled the 12 or so miles from Far West in the five hours since midnight. At daybreak on the 25th, the Mormons encountered the militia's sentries. A brief firefight ensued, with each side testifying that the other had fired first.¹⁹³ One of the sentries, John Lockhart, shot Patrick O'Bannion, the Mormons' scout. O'Bannion later died from this wound. Lockhart and the other guards fled down the hill to the militia camp which took up a defensive position.¹⁹⁴

The Mormon company approached the camp of the Ray militia and formed a battle line in three columns, led by David W. Patten, Charles C. Rich, and Patrick Durfee. Rich later recalled that soon after the Mormons had formed their lines, the militia "fired upon us

¹⁹⁰ Bushman (2005), 357.

¹⁹¹ Remini (2002), 134; Quinn (1994), 96–99, 101; Bushman (2005), 363.

¹⁹² Peck (1839), 27–28.

¹⁹³ Baugh, Alexander L. (2000). *A Call to Arms: The 1838 Mormon Defense of Northern Missouri*, BYU Studies, 103.

¹⁹⁴ *Document* (1841), 142.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

with all their guns.”¹⁹⁵ A general firefight commenced, but the militia were situated behind the riverbank and held the tactically superior position. Patten decided to charge the militia position, shouting the Mormon battle cry of “God and Liberty!” The Missourians were without swords and so broke their lines and fled across the river in all directions.

The battle resulted in four fatalities and the mutilation of Samuel Tarwater. It served as a catalyst for a massive escalation of the Mormon War. Exaggerated reports of the Mormon incursion into Daviess County and of the battle (some claiming that half of Bogart’s men had been lost) made their way to Missouri Governor Lilburn Boggs. He responded by issuing an executive order calling out 2,500 state militiamen to put down what he perceived to be open rebellion by the Mormons. Two days later, Governor Boggs issued an order that “the Mormons must be treated as enemies and must be exterminated or driven from the state”¹⁹⁶ and directed the militia to carry this into effect.

On October 30, 1838, a party of Missourians surprised and killed seventeen Mormons in the Haun’s Mill Massacre.¹⁹⁷ (While the spelling “Haun” is common when referring to the massacre or the mill where it occurred, the mill’s owner used the spelling “Hawn” in legal documents¹⁹⁸). The Massacre occurred when a mob/militia unit from Livingston County, Missouri, attacked a Mormon settlement in eastern Caldwell County after the Battle of Crooked River.¹⁹⁹ By far the bloodiest event in the 1838 Mormon War in Missouri, it has long been remembered by the members of the Latter Day Saint movement.

Liberty Jail

General Samuel D. Lucas, leading a militia of 2500 men²⁰⁰ informed the Mormons at Far West that “they would massacre every man, woman and child” if Smith and several others were not given up. Smith, Sidney Rigdon, Parley P. Pratt, Lyman Wight, and George W. Robinson surrendered on November 1²⁰¹ and agreed to forfeit their property and leave the state.²⁰² A secret and illegal court martial was held following Smith’s

¹⁹⁵ Baugh (2000), 104.

¹⁹⁶ Bushman (2005), 364–365; Quinn (1994), 100.

¹⁹⁷ Bushman (2005), 365–366; Quinn (1994), 97.

¹⁹⁸ Baugh, Alexander L (2010). “Jacob Hawn and the Hawn’s Mill Massacre: Missouri Millwright and Oregon Pioneer.” *Mormon Historic Sites Foundation*. Mormon Historical Studies. Retrieved December 7, 2015.

¹⁹⁹ Quinn (1994), 99-100.

²⁰⁰ LeSueur, Stephen C. (1987). *The 1838 Mormon War in Missouri*, (Columbia: University of Missouri Press), 1.

²⁰¹ Whitney, Orson F. (1888). *Life of Heber C. Kimball*, (Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructors Office), 229.

²⁰² Bushman (2005), 366–367; Brodie (1971), 239.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'



surrender. Smith and his companions were not aware of the proceeding until after it was over. At about midnight on November 1, General Lucas issued the following order to General Alexander William Doniphan: "Sir: -- You will take Joseph Smith and the other prisoners into the public square at Far West, and shoot them at 9 o'clock tomorrow morning."

Joseph Smith was immediately brought before a military court, accused of treason, and sentenced to be executed the next morning, but Alexander Doniphan, who was Smith's former attorney and a brigadier general in the Missouri militia, refused to carry out the order. "It is cold-blooded murder. I will not obey your order. My brigade shall march for Liberty [township] tomorrow morning at 8 o'clock; and if you execute these men, I will hold you responsible before an earthly tribunal, so help me God."²⁰³ Smith was then sent to a state court for a preliminary hearing, where several of his former allies testified against him.²⁰⁴ Smith and five others, including Rigdon, were charged with treason, and transferred to the jail at Liberty, Missouri, to await trial.²⁰⁵

General John Bullock Clark had been appointed by Governor Lilburn Boggs to enforce the extermination order. He arrived and took command of the combined force on November 4. On November 5, he had an additional 56 men arrested and gave a speech in the public square at Far West. He outlined the terms of the treaty that General Lucas had previously negotiated which stripped the Mormons of all their arms and property and required them to leave the state immediately.²⁰⁶

Smith's months in prison with an ill and complaining Rigdon strained their relationship. Meanwhile, Brigham Young—as President of the church's Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, one of the church's governing bodies—rose to prominence when he organized the move of about 14,000 Mormon refugees to Illinois and eastern Iowa.²⁰⁷

Smith bore his imprisonment stoically. Understanding that he was effectively on trial before his own people, many of whom considered him a fallen prophet, he wrote a personal defense and an apology for the activities of the Danites. "The keys of the

²⁰³ *History of Caldwell and Livingston Counties*, (St. Louis: National Historical Company, 1886), 137; Bushman (2005), 242, 344, 367; Brodie (1971), 241.

²⁰⁴ Bushman (2005), 369; Brodie (1971), 225–226, 243–245.

²⁰⁵ Bushman (2005), 369–370.

²⁰⁶ *History of Caldwell and Livingston Counties*, 140.

²⁰⁷ Brodie (1971), 245–251; Bushman (2005), 375–377.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

kingdom," he wrote, "have not been taken away from us."²⁰⁸ Though he directed his followers to collect and publish their stories of persecution, he also urged them to moderate their antagonism toward non-Mormons.²⁰⁹ On April 6, 1839, after a grand jury hearing in Daviess County, Smith and his companions escaped custody, almost certainly with the connivance of the sheriff and guards.²¹⁰

In late 1975, President Lyman F. Edwards of the Far West stake of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, invited then Missouri Governor Kit Bond to participate in the June 25, 1976, stake's annual conference as a good-will gesture for the United States Bicentennial.²¹¹ As part of his address at that conference, 137 years after being signed and citing the unconstitutional nature of Governor Boggs' directive, Governor Bond presented the following Executive Order:²¹²

WHEREAS, on October 27, 1838, the Governor of the State of Missouri, Lilburn W. Boggs, signed an order calling for the extermination or expulsion of Mormons from the State of Missouri; and

WHEREAS, Governor Boggs' order clearly contravened the rights to life, liberty, property and religious freedom as guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States, as well as the Constitution of the State of Missouri; and

WHEREAS, in this bicentennial year as we reflect on our nation's heritage, the exercise of religious freedom is without question one of the basic tenets of our free democratic republic;

Now, THEREFORE, I, CHRISTOPHER S. BOND, Governor of the State of Missouri, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the State of Missouri, do hereby order as follows:

²⁰⁸ Remini (2002), 136–137; Brodie (1971), 245–146); Quinn (1998), 101–102.

²⁰⁹ Bushman (2005), 377–378.

²¹⁰ Bushman (2005), 375; Brodie (1971), 253–255; Bushman (2005), 382, 635–636; Bentley, Joseph I. (1992). "Smith, Joseph: Legal Trials of Joseph Smith." In Ludlow, Daniel H (ed.). *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*. (New York: Macmillan Publishing), 1346–1348. Retrieved May 5, 2023.

²¹¹ "The Extermination Order and How it was Rescinded" John Whitmer Historical Association.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20110526042751/http://www.jwha.info/mmff/exorder.htm>

²¹² Whitman, Dale A. "Extermination Order." *LDSFAQ. BYU Studies*. Archived on October 20, 2006.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20061020144758/http://ldsfaq.byu.edu/emmain.asp?number=74>.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

Expressing on behalf of all Missourians our deep regret for the injustice and undue suffering which was caused by the 1838 order, I hereby rescind Executive Order Number 44, dated October 27, 1838, issued by Governor Lilburn W. Boggs.

In witness I have hereunto set my hand and caused to be affixed the great seal of the State of Missouri, in the city of Jefferson, on this 25 day of June, 1976.

(Signed) Christopher S. Bond, Governor.²¹³

Beautiful Nauvoo!

Many American newspapers criticized Missouri for the Haun's Mill massacre and the state's expulsion of the Mormons.²¹⁴

In April 1839, Smith rejoined his followers who, having fled east from Missouri, had spread out along the banks of the Mississippi, near Quincy, Illinois. There, for both humanitarian and political reasons, the refugees had been welcomed.²¹⁵ Fawn Brodie writes, "There was chronic border friction between Missouri and Illinois, and the 'Suckers' welcomed the chance to demonstrate a nobility of character foreign to the despised 'Pukes.' More important, a presidential election was in the offing, and the Democratic Association, which controlled the votes in the Quincy area, was eager to make friends with this huge new voting bloc. Fearful lest the Mormons turn Whig in bitterness against the Democratic government in Missouri they solicited funds for relieving the Mormons' distress and did their best to provide housing."²¹⁶

Purchasing waterlogged wilderness land on credit from two Connecticut speculators (who drove a hard bargain during this period of economic recession), Smith established a new gathering place for the Saints along the Mississippi in the hamlet of Commerce, Hancock County.²¹⁷ He renamed the area "Nauvoo", which means "beautiful" in Hebrew.²¹⁸ The soggy low land and river eddies were exceptional breeding grounds for

²¹³ "Governor Bond's Rescission order." The Missouri Mormon War collection. Missouri State Archives. http://www.sos.mo.gov/archives/resources/findingaids/miscMormRecs/eo/19760625_RescisOrder.pdf

²¹⁴ Brodie (1971), 246-247, 259; Bushman (2005), 398.

²¹⁵ Bushman (2005), 381.

²¹⁶ Brodie (1971), 248-249.

²¹⁷ Bushman (2005), 383-384. Smith also purchased land across the river in Iowa from a dishonest recent convert, Isaac Galland. Galland sold his land cheaply enough, but when courts finally straightened out the titles, Gallands' proved worthless. The 250 Mormon families who had settled had to return "penniless to Nauvoo." Brodie (1971), 262.

²¹⁸ A similar Hebrew word appears in Isaiah 52: 7. Latter Day Saints often referred to Nauvoo as "the city beautiful", or "the city of Joseph" — which was actually the name of the city for a short time after the city charter was revoked — or other similar nicknames) after being granted a charter by the state of Illinois.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

mosquitoes, and the Saints suffered plagues of malaria in the summers of 1839, 1840, and 1841. (In 1841 malaria killed Joseph's brother Don Carlos and his namesake, Joseph's son Don Carlos, within a few days of one another.)²¹⁹

Smith attempted to portray the Mormons as an oppressed minority and unsuccessfully petitioned the federal government for help in obtaining reparations. Late in 1839, Smith went to Washington to seek redress from the federal government for the Saints' losses in Missouri. He met briefly with President Martin Van Buren, but neither man seems to have thought much of the other, and the trip produced no reparations. Whatever sympathy VanBuren or Congress might have had for Mormon victims was canceled out by the importance of Missouri in the upcoming presidential election.²²⁰ Nevertheless, Smith shrewdly made Missouri a "byword for oppression" and "saw to it that the sufferings of his people received national publicity."²²¹

In a bold stroke, during the summer of 1839, while Mormons in Nauvoo suffered from a malaria epidemic Smith sent off the Twelve Apostles to Great Britain to serve as missionaries for the new faith. All left families in desperate circumstances struggling to establish themselves in Iowa or Illinois. While Smith had been imprisoned, Brigham Young, the senior member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, had with indefatigable skill, brought the believers out of Missouri, and the Saints "had obeyed him implicitly."²²² But with Young and the others in Europe, Smith recovered his earlier prestige and authority. Meanwhile, the missionaries found many willing converts in Great Britain, often factory workers, poor even by the standards of American saints.²²³ Many converts came from dissatisfied members of English sects "along the margins of conventional church life."²²⁴ The Mormon missionaries were shocked by the poverty they witnessed, and as Fawn Brodie has written, they "began to preach the glory of America along with the glory of the gospel." The Mormon *Millennial Star* published in Liverpool "frequently

²¹⁹ Bushman (2005), 384, 425.

²²⁰ Bushman (2005), 392-393; 398-399; Brodie (1971), 259-260.

²²¹ Brodie (1971), 259. The editor of the *Chicago Democrat* wrote, "We will not go so far as to call the Mormons martyr-mongers, but we believe they are men of sufficient sagacity to profit by anything in the shape of persecution. ... The Mormons have greatly profited by their persecution in Missouri ... let Illinois repeat that bloody tragedies of Missouri and one or two other states follow, and the Mormon religion will not only be known throughout our land, but will be very extensively embraced." March 25, 1840, in Brodie, 259.

²²² Brodie (1971), 258.

²²³ Bushman (2005), 409; Brodie (1971), 258, 264-65.

²²⁴ On the previous religious beliefs of these Mormon converts, see Grant Underwood, *The Millenarian World of Early Mormonism* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1993).

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

had the ring of a real estate pamphlet."²²⁵ These first trickled, then flooded, into Nauvoo, raising Smith's spirits.²²⁶

Smith also attracted a few wealthy and influential converts, including John C. Bennett, the Illinois quartermaster general.²²⁷ Bennett used his connections in the Illinois state legislature to obtain an unusually liberal charter for the new city, which Smith had renamed "Nauvoo" (Hebrew נָאוּוּ, meaning "to be beautiful").²²⁸ The charter granted the city virtual autonomy, authorized a university, and granted Nauvoo *habeas corpus* power—which allowed Smith to fend off extradition to Missouri. Although Latter Day Saint authorities controlled Nauvoo's civil government, the city guaranteed religious freedom for its residents.²²⁹ The charter also authorized the Nauvoo Legion, a militia whose actions were limited only by state and federal constitutions. Smith and Bennett became its commanders and were styled Lieutenant General and Major General respectively. As such, they controlled by far the largest body of armed men in Illinois.²³⁰ Smith appointed Bennett as Assistant President of the Church, and Bennett was elected Nauvoo's first mayor.²³¹

The Nauvoo Temple

The early Nauvoo years were a period of doctrinal innovation. Smith introduced baptism for the dead in 1840, and in 1841 construction began on the Nauvoo Temple as a place for recovering lost ancient knowledge.²³² An 1841 revelation promised the restoration of the "fullness of the priesthood"; and in May 1842, Smith inaugurated a revised endowment or "first anointing."²³³ The endowment resembled the rites of Freemasonry that Smith had observed two months earlier when he had been initiated "at sight" into the Nauvoo Masonic lodge.²³⁴ At first, the endowment was open only to men, who were initiated into a special group called the



²²⁵ Brodie (1971), 264.

²²⁶ Bushman (2005), 410.

²²⁷ Bushman (2005), 410–411.

²²⁸ Brodie (1971), 267–268; Bushman (2005), 412, 415.

²²⁹ Quinn (1998), 106–108.

²³⁰ Brodie (1971), 271.

²³¹ Bushman (2005), 410–411.

²³² Bushman (2005), 448–449; Park, Benjamin E. (2020). *Kingdom of Nauvoo: The Rise and Fall of a Religious Empire on the American Frontier*. (New York: Liveright), 57–61.

²³³ Quinn (1994), 113.

²³⁴ Bushman (2005), 449; Quinn (1994), 114–115.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

Anointed Quorum. For women, Smith introduced the Relief Society, a service club and sorority within which Smith predicted women would receive “the keys of the kingdom.”²³⁵ Smith also elaborated on his plan for a Millennial kingdom; no longer envisioning the building of Zion in Nauvoo, he viewed Zion as encompassing all of North and South America, with Mormon settlements being “stakes” of Zion’s metaphorical tent.²³⁶ Zion also became less a refuge from an impending tribulation than a great building project.²³⁷ In the summer of 1842, Smith revealed a plan to establish the millennial Kingdom of God, which would eventually establish theocratic rule over the whole Earth.²³⁸

It was around this time that Smith began secretly marrying additional wives,²³⁹ a practice called plural marriage.²⁴⁰ He introduced the doctrine to a few of his closest associates, including Bennett, who used it as an excuse to seduce numerous women, wed and unwed.²⁴¹ When rumors of polygamy (called “spiritual wifery” by Bennett) got abroad, Smith forced Bennett’s resignation as Nauvoo mayor. In retaliation, Bennett left Nauvoo and began publishing sensational accusations against Smith and his followers.²⁴²

By mid-1842, popular opinion in Illinois had turned against the Mormons. After an unknown assailant shot and wounded Missouri governor Lilburn Boggs in May 1842, anti-Mormons circulated rumors that Smith’s bodyguard, Porter Rockwell, was the gunman.²⁴³ Though the evidence was circumstantial, Boggs ordered Smith’s extradition. Certain he would be killed if he ever returned to Missouri, Smith went into hiding twice during the next five months, until the U.S. Attorney for Illinois argued that his extradition would be unconstitutional.²⁴⁴ (Rockwell was later tried and acquitted.) In June 1843, enemies of Smith convinced a reluctant Illinois Governor Thomas Ford to extradite Smith to Missouri on an old charge of treason. Two law officers arrested Smith but were intercepted by a party of Mormons before they could reach Missouri. Smith was then

²³⁵ Quinn (1994), 634.

²³⁶ Bushman (2005), 384, 404.

²³⁷ Bushman (2005), 415.

²³⁸ Quinn (1994), 111–112.

²³⁹ See the Appendix “The Plural Wives of Joseph Smith.”

²⁴⁰ Bushman (2005), 427–428.

²⁴¹ Bushman (2005), 460; Brodie (1971), 311–312.

²⁴² Ostling, Richard; Ostling, Joan K. (1999). *Mormon America: The Power and the Promise*. (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco), 12; Bushman (2005), 461–462; Brodie (1971), 314.

²⁴³ Bushman (2005), 468; Brodie (1971), 323; Quinn (1994), 113.

²⁴⁴ Bushman (2005), 468–475.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

released on a writ of *habeas corpus* from the Nauvoo municipal court.²⁴⁵ While this ended the Missourians' attempts at extradition, it caused significant political fallout in Illinois.²⁴⁶

In December 1843, Smith petitioned Congress to make Nauvoo an independent territory with the right to call out federal troops in its defense.²⁴⁷ Smith then wrote to the leading presidential candidates, asking what they would do to protect the Mormons. After receiving noncommittal or negative responses, he announced his own independent candidacy for president of the United States, suspended regular proselytizing, and sent out the Quorum of the Twelve and hundreds of other political missionaries to campaign for his election.²⁴⁸

The Council of Fifty

In March 1844 – following a dispute with a federal bureaucrat – Joseph Smith organized the secret Council of Fifty, which was given the authority to decide which national or state laws Mormons should obey, as well as establish its own government for Mormons.²⁴⁹ The Council of Fifty (also known as “the Living Constitution”, “the Kingdom of God”, or its name by revelation, “The Kingdom of God and His Laws with the Keys and Power thereof, and Judgment in the Hands of His Servants, Ahman Christ”)²⁵⁰ was created to symbolize and represent a future theocratic or theodemocratic “Kingdom of God” on the earth.²⁵¹ Smith “prophetically” claimed that this Kingdom would be established in preparation for Second Coming of Jesus and the Millennium.

The political Kingdom of God, organized around the Council of Fifty, was meant to be a force of peace and order in the midst of this chaos. According to Latter-day Saint teachings, while Jesus himself would be King of this new world government, its structure was in fact to be quasi-republican and multi-denominational; therefore, the early Council of Fifty included both Mormons and non-Mormons.²⁵² Although the Council played a significant role during the last few months of Joseph Smith’s life, particularly in his campaign for President of the United States, the Council’s role was mostly symbolic throughout the 19th century within The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This

²⁴⁵ Bushman (2005), 504–508.

²⁴⁶ Bushman (2005), 508.

²⁴⁷ Brodie (1971), 356; Quinn (1994), 115–116.

²⁴⁸ Quinn (1994), 118–119; Bushman (2005), 514–515; Brodie (1971), 362–364.

²⁴⁹ Bushman (2005), 519; Quinn (1994), 120–122.

²⁵⁰ Quinn, D. Michael (1980). “The Council of Fifty and Its Members, 1844 to 1945”, *BYU Studies*, 20 (2):167; Ehat, Andrew F. (1980). “It Seems Like Heaven Began on Earth: Joseph Smith and the Constitution of the Kingdom of God”, *BYU Studies*, 20:256.

²⁵¹ Quinn (1980), 165.

²⁵² Ehat (1980), 256–257.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

was largely because the Council was primarily meant for a time when secular governments had ceased to function. Regular meetings of the Council ended in 1884 after the church publicly abandoned its theocratic aspirations. Some contend that the organization was technically extinguished when member Heber J. Grant died in 1945.²⁵³

One needs to understand that in early Mormonism, God's Kingdom was thought of as an amalgamation between two distinct yet intimately related parts. The first is the Spiritual Kingdom of God which is represented on earth by the Church of Christ. This, Latter-day Saints believe, was described in the Book of Daniel 2:44–45 as the stone "cut out of the mountain without hands" that will roll forth to fill the whole earth. In Daniel, this kingdom was never to "be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever."²⁵⁴ However, in conjunction with this Spiritual Kingdom, Joseph Smith and other early Latter Day Saint leaders believed that Jesus would establish a Political Kingdom of God in the turbulent times leading up to His second coming.²⁵⁵ God's Political Kingdom was to be centered around the Council of Fifty.

Before his death the Council also voted unanimously to elect Joseph Smith "Prophet, Priest, and King."²⁵⁶ The Council was likewise appointed to select a site for a large Mormon settlement in the Republic of Texas, Oregon, or California (then controlled by Mexico), where Mormons could live under theocratic law beyond the control of other governments.²⁵⁷

Jailed in Carthage

By early 1844, a rift developed between Smith and a half dozen of his closest associates.²⁵⁸ Most notably, William Law, his trusted counselor, and Robert Foster, a general of the Nauvoo Legion, disagreed with Smith about how to manage Nauvoo's economy.²⁵⁹ Both also said that Smith had proposed marriage to their wives.²⁶⁰ Believing these men were plotting against his life, Smith excommunicated them on April 18, 1844.²⁶¹ Law and Foster

²⁵³ Quinn (1980), 185.

²⁵⁴ Daniel 2:44 (KJV).

²⁵⁵ *Journal of Discourses* 1:202–3, 2:189, and 17:156–7.

²⁵⁶ "How Joseph Smith and the Early Mormons Challenged American Democracy". *The New Yorker*. March 20, 2020. Retrieved April 18, 2023.

²⁵⁷ Bushman (2005), 517.

²⁵⁸ Bushman (2005), 527–528.

²⁵⁹ Brodie (1971), 368–369; Quinn (1994), 528.

²⁶⁰ Ostling & Ostling (1999), 14; Brodie (1971), 369–371; Van Wagoner, Richard S. (1992). *Mormon Polygamy: A History* (2nd ed.). (Salt Lake City: Signature Books), 39; Bushman (2005), 660–661.

²⁶¹ Bushman (2005), 549, 531.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

subsequently formed a competing “reform church,” and in the following month, at the county seat in Carthage, they procured indictments against Smith for perjury (as Smith publicly denied having more than one wife) and polygamy.²⁶²

On June 7, the dissidents published the first (and only) issue of the *Nauvoo Expositor*, calling for reform within the church but also appealing politically to non-Mormons.²⁶³ The *Expositor* alluded to Smith’s theocratic aspirations, called for a repeal of the Nauvoo city charter, and decried his new “doctrines of many Gods.” (Smith had recently given his King Follett discourse, in which he taught that God was once a man, and that men and women could become gods and goddesses.)²⁶⁴ It also attacked Smith’s practice of polygamy, implying that he was using religion as a pretext to draw unassuming women to Nauvoo to seduce and marry them.²⁶⁵

Fearing the *Expositor* would provoke a new round of violence against the Mormons, the Nauvoo city council declared the newspaper a public nuisance and ordered the Nauvoo Legion to destroy its printing press.²⁶⁶ During the council debate, Smith vigorously urged the council to order the press destroyed,²⁶⁷ not realizing that destroying a newspaper was more likely to incite an attack than any of the newspaper’s accusations.²⁶⁸

The Prophet is No More

Destruction of the *Nauvoo Expositor* provoked a strident call to arms from Thomas C. Sharp, editor of the *Warsaw Signal* and longtime critic of Smith.²⁶⁹ Fearing mob violence, Smith mobilized the Nauvoo Legion on June 18 and declared martial law.²⁷⁰ Officials in Carthage responded by mobilizing a small detachment of the state militia, and Governor Ford intervened, threatening to raise a larger militia unless Smith and the Nauvoo city

²⁶² Brodie (1971), 373; Bushman (2005), 531, 538; Park (2020), 227.

²⁶³ Bushman (2005), 539; Brodie (1971), 374; Quinn (1994), 138.

²⁶⁴ Bushman (2005), 539; Brodie (1971), 375; Marquardt, H. Michael (1999). *The Joseph Smith Revelations: Text and Commentary*. (Salt Lake City: Signature Books). 312; Ulrich, Laurel Thatcher (2017). *A House Full of Females: Plural Marriage and Women’s Rights in Early Mormonism, 1835–1870*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf), 113–114.

²⁶⁵ Oaks, Dallin H.; Hill, Marvin S. (1975). *Carthage Conspiracy: The Trial of the Accused Assassins of Joseph Smith*. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press), 14; Davenport, Stewart (2022). *Sex and Sects: The Story of Mormon Polygamy, Shaker Celibacy, and Oneida Complex Marriage*. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press), 147–148. The text of the *Nauvoo Expositor* is available on Wikisource.

²⁶⁶ Park (2020), 228–230; Marquardt (1999), 312.

²⁶⁷ Park (2020), 229–230.

²⁶⁸ Bushman (2005), 541.

²⁶⁹ Ulrich (2017), 114; Park (2020), 230.

²⁷⁰ Park (2020), 231–232; McBride, Spencer W. (2021). *Joseph Smith for President: The Prophet, the Assassins, and the Fight for American Religious Freedom*. (New York: Oxford University Press), 186–187.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

council surrendered themselves.²⁷¹ Smith initially fled across the Mississippi River, but shortly returned and surrendered to Ford.²⁷² On June 25, Smith and his brother Hyrum arrived in Carthage to stand trial for inciting a riot.²⁷³ However, once Joseph and Hyrum were in custody, the charges were increased to treason, preventing them from posting bail.²⁷⁴ John Taylor and Willard Richards voluntarily accompanied the Smiths in Carthage Jail.²⁷⁵



Two days later on June 27, 1844, an armed mob with blackened faces stormed Carthage Jail, where Joseph and Hyrum were being detained. Hyrum, who was trying to secure the door, was killed instantly with a shot to the face. Smith fired three shots from a pepper-box pistol²⁷⁶ that his friend, Cyrus H. Wheelock, had lent him, wounding three men,²⁷⁷ before he sprang for the window.²⁷⁸ (Smith and his companions were staying in the jailer's bedroom, which did not have bars on the windows.) He was shot multiple times before falling out the window, crying, "Oh Lord my God!" He died shortly after

²⁷¹ Ostling & Ostling (1999), 16.

²⁷² Bushman (2005), 546; Park (2020), 233.

²⁷³ Ostling & Ostling (1999), 17; Park (2020), 234; McBride (2021), 191.

²⁷⁴ Bentley, Joseph I. (1992). "Smith, Joseph: Legal Trials of Joseph Smith." In Ludlow, Daniel H (ed.). *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*. (New York: Macmillan Publishing), 1346–1348. Retrieved July 31, 2023; Oaks & Hill (1975), 18; Park (2020), 234.

²⁷⁵ McBride (2021), 192.

²⁷⁶ The pepper-box revolver or simply pepperbox (also "pepper-pot", from its resemblance to household pepper shakers) is a multiple-barrel firearm, mostly in the form of a handgun, that has three or more gun barrels in a coaxially revolving mechanism. Each barrel holds a single shot, and the shooter can manually rotate the whole barrel assembly to sequentially index each barrel into alignment with the lock or hammer, similar to rotation of a revolver's cylinder.

²⁷⁷ Oaks & Hill (1975), 52; Brodie (1971), 393.

²⁷⁸ Bushman (2005), 549.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics

hitting the ground, but was shot several more times by an improvised firing squad before the mob dispersed.²⁷⁹

The opponents of Mormonism thus hurt their cause, since Smith now became in Mormon eyes a martyred hero.²⁸⁰

Ashes to Ashes, Dust to Dust

Following Joseph Smith's death, non-Mormon newspapers were nearly unanimous in portraying Smith as a religious fanatic.²⁸¹ Conversely, within the Latter Day Saint community, Smith was viewed as a prophet, martyred to seal the testimony of his faith.²⁸²

After a public funeral and viewing of the deceased brothers, Smith's widow – who feared hostile non-Mormons might try to desecrate the bodies – had their remains buried at night in a secret location, with substitute coffins filled with sandbags interred in the publicly attested grave.²⁸³ The bodies were later moved and reburied under an outbuilding on the Smith property off the Mississippi River.²⁸⁴ Members of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (RLDS Church), under the direction of then-RLDS Church president Frederick M. Smith (Smith's grandson) searched for, located, and disinterred the Smith brothers' remains in 1928 and reinterred them, along with Smith's wife, in Nauvoo at the Smith Family Cemetery.²⁸⁵

Five men were tried for Smith's murder, but all were acquitted.²⁸⁶

Joseph Smith: From Mormon Prophet to Mormon Martyr

²⁷⁹ Brodie (1971), 393–394; Bushman (2005), 549–550.

²⁸⁰ Hoekema, (1963), 14.

²⁸¹ Bushman (2005), 332, 557–559.

²⁸² Bushman (2005), 558; Brodie (1971), 396–397.

²⁸³ Wiles, Lee (Summer 2013). "Monogamy Underground: The Burial of Mormon Plural Marriage in the Graves of Joseph and Emma Smith." *Journal of Mormon History*. 39 (3): vi–59; Bernauer, Barbara Hands (1991). "Still 'Side by Side' – The Final Burial of Joseph and Hyrum Smith." *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal*, 11: 17–33.

²⁸⁴ Mackay, Lachlan (Fall 2002). "A Brief History of the Smith Family Nauvoo Cemetery" (PDF). *Mormon Historical Studies*. 3 (2):240–252.

²⁸⁵ Bernauer (1991), 11:17–33; Mackay (Fall 2002), 3 (2):240–252.

²⁸⁶ Oaks & Hill (1975), 185.